

The 2nd NKL PhD training event

NKL 2nd PhD-training event December

To provide support with specific research projects, a PhD-training event will be organized by a multidisciplinary group of NKL members. If you would like to participate, please submit an abstract focusing on an empirical, analytical or theoretical challenge that concerns digitalization, digitization, or the digital sociology.

Participating PhD students will be expected to do a 10 minutes presentation on the basis of their submitted abstract (if accepted). A short list of texts will be distributed to the accepted students that will need to be read prior to the event. After the PhD-training the PhD-students, will be invited to revise their abstracts, informed by the discussions and training. Participants will receive a certificate to confirm their participation. . In the same way as the PhD-training event in Ljubljana 2019, it will be up to the PhD-student's home university and supervisor(s) whether they accept the PhD-training event as part of the PhD-students official training.

Organisers of the conference and PhD-training event

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ABSTRACTS

1. COVID-19, Coercive Vaccination and Testing Certification: Applying the Principle of the “Least Restrictive Solidarity”

Jon Rueda*, University of Granada (Spain)

COVID-19 pandemic has raised the ethical value of solidarity to paramount importance. Wearing masks, social distancing, diagnostic testing, isolation, or general lockdown are public health measures that aim to break the spread of infection by requiring the engagement of individuals to achieve communitarian goals. According to the value of solidarity, people should assume some personal costs that are necessary to benefit other particular individuals, specific groups, and/or society in general. Vaccination is a prominent case in which solidarity is at stake. In this talk, I will address the debate about coercive vaccination against COVID-19. My argument will run as follows. First, I will clarify two types of coercive vaccination: mandatory and compulsory vaccination. Then I will present three ethical arguments that, in theory, support the case for coercive vaccination: the argument of harm-to-others, social utility, and fair distribution of the costs. This model is based primarily on nonoptional solidarity. I will then show that this strategy can be objected on the basis of ethical and practical problems. Consequently, other alternatives should be envisioned. My proposal is based on a reformulated tenet. Call it the Principle of the Least Restrictive Solidarity. It states that between two public health policies that have the same solidarity-based consequences, the least restrictive must be chosen. Following this principle, I will defend that a programme of voluntary vaccination along with routine testing certification would be a less restrictive and equally solidary alternative.

*The content of this talk is partially based on previous common research develop by Íñigo de Miguel Beriain and myself.

2. Covid-19 disinformation and the protection of freedom of expression Mario Santisteban Galarza. Pre-doctoral researcher in the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

As the European Commission has outlined, disinformation is a major challenge for Europe. Health misinformation has increased considerably during the pandemic of the Covid-19, leading to a situation defined as an “infodemi” by the World Health Organization. With the Covid-19 vaccines around the corner, this disinformation is expected to grow, putting at stake the vaccination schedule of the EU member states.

Covid-19 hoaxes set out several issues that the legal systems do not usually regulate. Only France has developed a law against disinformation, with a small scope which does not enable a response to this misleading sources. In a similar vein, law researchers had pointed out that the problem behind this phenomenon is that the spread of disinformation is able to undermine the integrity of European political processes. However, the relationship between disinformation and the protection of public health has not been studied deeply. This arises some problems. For instance, it is not clear if the ideologies of whom negate the existence of Covid-19 are sheltered by freedom of expression, and if the protection of public health can limit the spread of this ideas. False content is often not banned in European legal frameworks, and even thought is undeniable that has a negative effect in democratic systems, deletion of news and social media content arises some democratic issues as well.

Besides, we must bear in mind that the forums where disinformation is expanded are owned by private companies. Until now, these companies, in compliance with the “EU Code of Practice on Disinformation”, had had a respectful policy with freedom of expression, deleting only the most dangerous forms of disinformation. Nevertheless, with the arrival of Covid-19 these policies have experienced a major change. Tech companies’ intervention has been significantly strong in this context, ignoring the European guidelines to tackle misinformation and erasing, or tagging as inappropriate content that they find misleading. These actions are particularly troubling when they affect the speech of elected candidates or information of democratic institutions.

All in all, it is necessary to consider if companies are required to respect the freedoms of users, and which response EU member states have to provide in order to face Covid-19 disinformation.

3. How do psychological factors correlate with digital activity and physical isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Doctoral student: Vanja Kopilaš, MA

Throughout history, psychological factors are associated with almost any significant life events. Psychological factors can be described as influences on the functioning of mental health. Whether the event is positive or negative, there are equivalent psychological factors. Therefore, positive events are more likely to be associated with positive psychological factors, while negative events are more likely to be paired with negative psychological factors. For this research, the focus will be on the impact of adverse events, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic and its association with the observed psychological factors and life in general. The specificity of the current pandemic is the involvement of virtually all countries of the world in a globally connected post-industrial digital society, and there is not much relevant research related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study aims to explore the association of psychological factors with digital activity and physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Validated psychological measures assessing depression, anxiety, stress, and loneliness will be used. Also, questionnaires exploring digital activity and physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic will be validated. We anticipate that level of psychological factors will be associated with the levels of digital activity and physical distancing. Our findings can be a valuable assessment of individuals' reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project consists of several phases that are spread over different periods. In this way, we wanted to examine the extent to which the occurrence and mere spread of the COVID-19 pandemic affect the psychological state and daily activities. The first phase began on March 4 in Croatia, at a time when the number of infected was 10. We included in the project several groups that differ in the degree of vulnerability to infection, country of origin, education, and age. The total number of participants in all groups is about 1500.

Given that the pandemic disrupted activities globally, the results of our study should suggest a possible association of psychological factors with digital activity and personal isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The creation and validation of digital activity questionnaires and physical isolation questionnaires would contribute to a general understanding of the impact of digital content, and epidemiological restrictions on mental health. We hope that our results

will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus to the development of the necessary expert programs to successfully mitigate and minimize the negative effects.

4. High-risk but legal AI applications: lessons from SyRI Guillermo Lazcoz Moratinos, Researcher FPU-MECD (Universidad del País Vasco (UPV/EHU), G. I. Cátedra de Derecho y Genoma Humano, Spain)

The Dutch government's risk indication system (SyRI) is a risk calculation model based on processing large amounts of data to predict the likelihood of an individual committing benefits fraud. On February 5th, 2020, the District Court of The Hague ruled (1) that such instruments are lawful whenever a public interest is involved and appropriate measures are taken to guarantee the minimum interference in the right of privacy; and (2) that SyRI legislation does not offer those and, hence, it does not respect article 8 ECHR in connection with the principles of transparency, data minimisation and purpose limitation of the GDPR.

However, the Court does not assess whether SyRI's opacity contravenes the ECHR from the perspective of the prohibition of discrimination in Article 14. The applicants, supported by the amicus curiae of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, claimed that the deployment of this algorithmic tool has a discriminatory and stigmatizing effect. The Court even acknowledges that SyRI has only been used in so-called 'problem neighbourhoods'. Nevertheless, the judges do not consider that this kind of deployment, in itself, is contrary to the ECHR.

This conclusion would mean that a government algorithm aimed at profiling vulnerable communities does not threaten the privacy of individuals as long as it contains sufficient legal safeguards for transparency, such as the individual exercise of the right to information or the obligation to carry out a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). It is true that the Article 29 WP has referred to the importance of DPIA as a tool to mitigate discriminatory effects, but are those governance mechanisms enough to mitigate the extraordinary risks involved in such data processing?

In the light of the risk-based approach adopted by the European Commission's White Paper on AI, SyRI should be considered a high-risk AI application: due to the sector it belongs to (public sector application) and to the significant risks that are likely to arise concerning its use (it produces legal or similarly significant effects on the rights of individuals). In this regard, the White Paper states that certain requirements should apply to such applications in the future regulatory framework. Among those requirements, measures shall be taken to ensure that the systems do not lead to outcomes entailing prohibited discrimination, that they are robust and accurate or that they achieve an appropriate human involvement.

The banning of SyRI is good news. However, the reasoning of the Court seems to limit the legitimacy of these systems to GDPR compliance. Whether we agree that government algorithms such as SyRI are high-risk AI applications, it would be reasonable not to focus all our hopes on the fact that the GDPR will be enough to meet the requirements introduced by the White Paper. Taking a precautionary approach, shouldn't we ban the use of these systems if the current regulation does not meet these requirements? What regulatory changes are the most urgent?

5. Developmental aspects of the Monetization of Digital Data and its Algorithmic Architectures Maruška Nardoni, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana

The research interests for my PhD thesis are, broadly speaking, focused around digital datafication. A significant number of social scientists and thinkers (Bridle 2018; Greenfield 2017; O'Shea 2019 etc.) are describing technological breakthroughs in collecting and analysing vast amounts of data as 'opaque' or claim that at this point of computational progress, algorithmic technologies 'know more about us than we do' and even proclaiming algorithmic technologies as the human unconsciousness. This technological opacity is situated in the performative aspect of big data analytics, related to common black-boxing of data collection, quantitative methods, and analyses that are embedded in the entanglement between corporate data economies and research analytics. A critical approach towards datafication has to take into account different set of problems: data politics and agency, data economies and ownership, and data epistemologies. My research questions will try to bind the three sets, driven by a more profound question originating in political economy: how does big data produce surplus value or how can big data be monetized.

This PhD thesis asserts the pivotal role of big data in analysing the functioning of contemporary digital oligopolies, namely Amazon, Google, Facebook, IBM, Apple, and Microsoft. However, researching the relationship between the advanced platform business models, its profitability, and big data, is bound to be limited due to professional secrecy. Since the gates to the aforementioned companies are closed, the PhD thesis focuses on trying to solve the riddle of the monetization of big data by examining the organization of the local (e.g. Slovenian) data industry in a two-fold manner: first, the dissertation needs to confirm the monopolistic position of the above mega-platforms and secondly, the thesis pinpoints the relationship between the corporate utilization of big data and profitability in lowering marginal and transactional costs on a level of business rivalry.

Furthermore, when we try to investigate the liquidity and monetization of big data on the background of platform capitalism in the European digital environment (which is governed by GDPR), this poses another challenge: according to GDPR, personal data can not be directly sold as a product or raw material under ordinary legal circumstances in an ordinary business to business interaction. The doctoral dissertation wants to solve this analytical challenge by assuming that information-intensive companies can maintain a similar role to the data brokers business entities of the American digital environment.

An adequate mixed method or quantitative-qualitative methodological framework consists of first measuring the centrality of the corporate influence of mega-platforms with a two-mode network analysis: links between Slovenian data industry companies and mega-platforms will be represented by partnerships sharing common API's (application programming interface). In the second step, I will try to locate the link between profitability and corporate utilization of big data with in-depth interviews with the developers and directors/managers of the representative companies of the local data industry. In the end, I am hoping to provide a clearer picture in determining whether the platform economy and its giants are diffusing algorithmic automatisations (on a business to business level) that leads to producing, consuming, and commercialising even more data, e.g. interpreting the trends of datafication in

the near future. The synthesis of the PhD work will therefore try to sketch the internal platform structures in the shape of the existent algorithmic architectures and analyse their economic and cognitive concentration of power regarding the justification of an open theoretical issue: whether the emergence of new social classes, that of vectoral capitalists and hackers, is in place (Wark 2004, 2019).

6. Home museums and contemporary private practices of memory making: from inadvertent to amateur curatorship.

Maria Sokolova, 3rd year PhD student, Department of Cultural Studies, FDV, University of Ljubljana

The early modern and renaissance cabinets of curiosities in rich homes across Europe gave life to modern institutional museums. Today, fascinated by the poetics of the ordinary and equipped with a memory studies lens, we observe our own familiar bookshelves and cupboards – these new cabinets of curiosities – filled with cheap souvenirs, postcards and family photographs; we bring the museum circle back home. This proposal aims to outline and illustrate the phenomenon of creating a dedicated home space for memory making and examine how the normative discourses about curating such spaces manifest themselves in routine private memory-making practices.

I propose to conceptualize sets of memory objects displayed and archived at homes of ordinary people as home museums. An average home museum holds a photo album, a scrapbook, grandmother's sewing machine, a train ticket from a memorable trip, a sea shell, travel journals, several postcards, a 3rd grade math notebook, a teddy bear, etc.

Although the owners of such collections often do not consider them as museums, their functions speak for themselves: preserving, exhibiting, voicing and celebrating (hi)stories. Home museums create, organize and illustrate narratives of one's personal or family story. They can be curated by one person or collectively. Objects of memory are put on shelves, often placed in front of the books, they are stored in (shoe)boxes, pinned to cork boards, framed and hung on walls, filed and archived in albums, etc. Normative discourses on memory making have been for centuries inconspicuously present in a variety of forms: home-making recommendations, ethical homilies, political doctrines, traditions, "common sense", films, novels, songs etc. However, since the early 2000s, with the arrival of the digital age, more media address the issues of memory making explicitly. If you do not get an extra nudge for analogue memory making, you might as well lose your yet more ephemeral digital memory – hence all these reminders.

While scholars reflect upon the "affective turn" and "memory boom", the mass market responds with numerous books, magazine articles and blogs, which offer practical advice on how to select objects for "memory boxes", organize digital and printed photographs, curate souvenir shelves and display cases, and keep the family archive in order.

Familiar practices are interpreted differently. The process of assembling a photo album would not have been seen as active memory making by those who performed it some 50 years ago – they were "merely" putting the photographs into a book form. Now, we may be consciously creating (or just ordering online) a memory object, even though we doubt the necessity for the

existence of memory-making manuals and ridicule the self-evident advice that they provide. It always takes an effort of observation for a home museum to emerge conceptually, though less an effort to be assembled. The more media products cover memory making explicitly, the less inadvertent the routines become.

7. The Security-Liberty Dilemma in the Case of War on Terrorism, Teodora Tea Ristevska, PhD student and Junior Researcher at the Defence Research Centre, Faculty of Social Sciences - University of Ljubljana.

Since the September 11 attacks, one of the most important and difficult challenges for Western democratic societies is how to deal with terrorism. Governments and political leaders face a security-liberty dilemma as they create policies to combat terrorism. The above dilemma stems primarily from the desire to achieve maximum efficiency in the fight against terrorism while maintaining the liberal democratic character of the country. According to Ganor (2005), democratic governments must protect liberal values, damaging these values in the fight against terrorism may compromise its legitimacy. In contrast, other authors argue that a democratic government must provide security for its citizens, especially after facing a real threat such as the September 2001 attacks (Cushman, 2005; Tesón, 2005). Some scholars argue that the war on terror has allowed erosion of human rights, detachment from the rule of law, and violations of fundamental liberties in the United States (Hicks, 2005; Nowak & Charbord, 2018; Tesón, 2005). Others argue that the US only uses rhetoric to promote human rights when it has a greater purpose (Mertus, 2005; Neier, 2005; Wallach, 2005).

The goals of my research are (1) to examine the dilemma between security and liberty in the research literature. The goal is to start with these two categories and further subdivide them into smaller subcategories using framing analysis. (2) To describe the war on terror strategy, to see how the US government conceptualized and how the public perceives US counterterrorism through the prism of social constructivism in security studies. (3) The main empirical focus is to investigate the problematic aspects of the war on terror and approach them from the perspective of the security-liberty dilemma, consulting both pro- and anti- arguments. I aim to understand if the disclosure of these problematic cases has any impact on US support for the war on terror. (4) The ultimate aim is to link existing US and European research about extraordinary rendition and secret prisoning in Europe through social constructivism in security studies.

The main research questions and hypotheses are analyzed through the lenses of social constructivism in security studies, which addresses “the processes by which people jointly construct their understandings of the world” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

The main progress that I have made within the past year is within the theoretical chapter and the chapter about the extraordinary rendition and secret prisoning in Europe.

Most of my research difficulties are connected to selection of sources, because there is many existing data about this topic. In addition, I am unable to do expert in-depth interviews in Washington DC, in USA as I planned in the end of this year, which probably will be postponed until next spring.

8. Religious and secular epistemologies and phenomenologies of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Halida Đonlagić, 3rd year Ph.D candidate at the Faculty of Social Science, University of Ljubljana

There are numerous researches and treatises on war, military skills, warfare skills, conflicts, violence, etc., while on peace substantially less. Peace is customarily understood as the absence of war. Indeed, for the peace ontology, the fact of peace in the sense of non-existence of war is the elementary starting point. It is the initial phase of the problematization of peace in general, but it still cannot be observed as the existence of peace in its universal and actual possibility and reality (Bubonja, 1993). Therefore, an epistemological approach is required which—specifically in this dissertation—refers to the determination of the term peace, what peace is, and the method of comprehending peace, its content, extent, and scope. Also, how and when peace is cognized and what lies in the basis of concepts of peace in observations of political philosophers and sociologists, and various religions found in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The concept of peace “within” tries to bring to light not only what peace is, but also the way it is and the way it could be. On the other hand, the phenomenological approach reveals specific external experiences of peace as starting points. It is, therefore, required to differentiate between the phenomenon of peace and occurrence of peace, because that is how we come to the phenomenon itself.

The objectives of my research are as follows:

(1) Within the set theoretical framework, to deeper study and explore different concepts of epistemology and phenomenology of peace, thus gaining the insight into how much it is even possible to compare certain concepts and what are the greatest challenges; to examine the dichotomy peace–violence and their categorization into economic, political, and cultural peace or violence; to put a special emphasis on cultural peace/violence, which includes religion, ideology, language, art, empirical and formal sciences (Galtung, 2009).

(2) To examine the phenomenon of epistemology of peace in a religious and secular perspective and its potentials and capacities which could be used, within certain spheres in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to induce the process of positive peace building; to begin with the fundamental concepts of cognizance of peace through the prism of political philosophers and sociologists; to critically study the key perceptions of peace in the analytical philosophy; to elaborate on Galtung’s concept of positive and negative peace in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(3) Within the case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to make a comparison of peace conceptions found in traditional monotheistic religions (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam); as the control group, to choose minority, non-traditional religions, some of them being so-called “new religious movement (NRM)” or “new religions” present, active and registered as religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina for decades already (Judaism, Adventists, Baptists, Evangelists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and ISKCON – International Society for Krishna Consciousness).

(4) To set, as the main empirical focus, examination of all problematic aspects that obstruct positive peace building: (a) different aspects of cultural violence with a role of justifying direct and structural violence, (b) ongoing cultural violence which represents a substratum that direct and structural violence feed on, (c) phenomenological aspect of the culture of violence which

consists of several violent aspects, (d) negative peace, which implies segregation of society through a national and religious prism, religion as the identifying factor of the nationalistic, nationalistic/chauvinist ideologies, institutionalization of ethnic divisions, social injustice, not confronting the past, moral crisis, constant tensions.

(5) To set, as a final objective, analysis of temptations in the eternal quest for the culture of peace, since the culture of peace cannot be comprehended as a static concept; thus, it is necessary to take the responsibility for its shaping and establishing supporting instruments through the corresponding institutions and organizations and public policies.

The main progress that I have made within the past year is within the theoretical part, as well I collected relevant contacts for my empirical part of researching. A big challenge to my research is the unpredictable situation with Covid 19, and I am not sure if I would be able to do my empirical part (in depth interview and focus groups) during spring time next year.