What could social media have become?

Workshop organized by Jasmin Degeling, Maja Figge and Oliver Leistert

International Research Center – Gender and Performativity (ICGP)
Library Gender and Beyond
(Building E, 1st floor)

mdw – University for Music and Performing Arts Vienna
Anton-von-Webern-Platz 1
1030 Wien

November 19 , 2026, from 2:00PM
November 20, 2026, from 9:15AM

VolkswagenStiftung
mdw universität für musik und darstellende kunst wien
Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

Starting from the diagnosis that, with the widespread implementation of AI, social media in its current form has come to an end, this workshop asks what social media could have been. In light of an ascendant tech feudalism and transnational tendencies of fascisation—characterized by the intensification of inequalities, extreme forms of exploitation and disenfranchisement, colonial practices, and fossil extractivism—this workshop is driven by the aim to explore whether and how transformative infrastructures of solidarity can emerge in post-digital media cultures, both with and against hegemonic digital platforms.

To trace the (lost) potentials of social media on the one hand, and to focus on the conditions of change and the transmission of knowledge and experiences on the other, we adopt an archaeological approach. By looking at specific net-activist projects and movements, we ask: which socio-medial forms of relation and organization direct which demands and desires at socio-technical media infrastructures? To which needs respond specific digital media experiments? Which approaches were/are found in each case to circumvent, disrupt, or transform specific practices of internet censorship, forced dis/connectivity, digital surveillance and relational control, as well as logics of extraction? How did/do the offline movement, the post-naive internet movement, Black Twitter, cyberfeminism, radical tech collectives, or Indymedia respectively respond to a political economy of internet infrastructures, organizational forms, and modes of relating? Which public spheres are (not) secured through struggle in such experiments and movements? What possibilities (still) remain today to anchor infrastructures of solidarity? What can we learn from these earlier internet infrastructures for our current situation? Furthermore, what current initiatives exist that experiment with and implement transformative infrastructures of solidarity?

The workshop takes place within the framework of the research project "Infrastructuring Solidarity," funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, which addresses the question of how solidarity could be infrastructured in contemporary post-digital media cultures. The concept of solidarity emerged in tandem with the formation of capitalist class societies with their complex socio-economic dependencies, divisions of labor, and material inequalities: It responds to the necessity of redistribution within socialized forms of inequality and explores possibilities of resistance against the perpetuation of segregated social classes.

In order to organize and practice solidarity, infrastructures are required. So when we ask about transformative infrastructures of solidarity, we also have to keep in mind that these must be sustained through care work, and it is therefore necessary to critically examine the relationship between organization, division of labor, positioning, and technical infrastructures. The workshop aims to provide a transdisciplinary forum for discussing these open questions based on the theses, reports, and texts presented.

Workshop Programme

Thursday, 19.11.2026

14.00 Arrival / Coffee

14.30-15.30 Introduction by Maja Figge, Jasmin Degeling and Oliver Leistert with Round of Introductions

15.30-16.15 Oliver Leistert: What was the success of indymedia based on?

16.15-16.45 Break

16.45-17.30 Anne Roth: The idea was not to have comments

17.30-18.15 Tobias Stadler: Working as Intended

18.15-18.30 Break

18.30-19.15 Felix Stalder: Encouraging and discouraging learnings from the Fediverse.

20.00 Dinner at Han Restaurant

Friday, 20.11.2026

9.15-10.00 Sam Hopkins: Social Media Otherwise: Fieldwork and Artistic Experiments in Digital Sharing

10.00-10.45 Maxigas: Supply Chain Attacks as Extrastatecraft

10.45-11.00 Break

11.00-11.45 Mary Shnayien: Security, Safety, Solidarity?

11.45-12.30 Marcell Mars: Working the Risk

12.30-13.30 Lunch at mdw-Cafeteria

13.30-14.15 Wrap-up by Maja Figge and Jasmin Degeling

14.15-15.00 Concluding Discussion

15.00 End

Abstracts and Biographies

Jasmin Degeling (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar)

Jasmin Degeling is an organizer of the Co-PI Volkswagen research project „Infrastructuring Solidarity: Towards Careful Abolition…“, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar and works on (digital) fascism and right-wing violence, media of care, media anthropology, gender, queer and affect studies, and cultures of commemoration and politics of memory.

Maja Figge (mdw – Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien)

Maja Figge is an organizer of the Co-PI Volkswagen research project „Infrastructuring Solidarity: Towards Careful Abolition…“, mdw – University for Music and Performing Arts Vienna and works on postcolonial (digital) media theory, politics and aesthetics, gender/queer media studies, affect studies, anti-racism and memory politics.

Oliver Leistert (Universität Innsbruck)

What was the success of indymedia based on?

When indymedia went online, it instantly became a huge success for autonomous subjective online publishing. What were the conditions that made this possible and what can we learn from that for our current situation?

Oliver Leistert works at the University of Innsbruck on media dynamics and social change, most recently on the effects of AI on media and society, as well as the related issues of climate change and structural violence. He is currently preparing an edited volume on trust in digital cultures.

Sam Hopkins (Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln)

Social Media Otherwise: Fieldwork and Artistic Experiments in Digital Sharing

What if we understood social media not through the platforms that dominate our digital lives, but through the social practices that sustain them? Drawing on artistic research into informal networks of digital sharing in Nairobi, alongside Baze, a Dortmund-based artistic experiment in collectively collecting and sharing digital content outside dominant platforms, this presentation explores alternative relationships between digital technologies, social practices and infrastructures. Rather than looking exclusively to the lost possibilities of the early internet, it asks what we might learn from existing cultures of sharing, and how artistic experimentation might help us imagine other forms of digital sociality.

Marcell Mars (Rijeka)

Working the Risk

I have gone through many collapses, around me and in front of me. Most of them buried the hopes attached to them along the way. Still, with not much hope left, I remain keen to take more risks or to stand in solidarity with those who do. The AI collapse is the first one we are facing with no hope and with no one naive anymore.

Maxigas (Critical Infrastructure Lab, Amsterdam/Utrecht)

Supply Chain Attacks as Extrastatecraft

I compare our current experiences of building mesh networks between autonomous community spaces with the recent repression of Autistici/Inventati. I characterise supply chain attacks as contemporary politics that nonetheless mobilise the legacies of internet governance infrastructures. Current efforts towards technological sovereignty thus focus on derisking supply chains, no matter at which scale we look.

Anne Roth (Berlin)

The idea was not to have comments

When Indymedia started more than 25 years ago it was one of the first interactive websites that invited users to add content to what others had published. We could have known from the already existing forums and boards with their netiquettes that people have a hard time to discuss online in a constructive way. Still, there was hope that different perspectives might help readers to get a better picture. Soon we found out that moderating comments can be quite intense. And then commercial platforms took over.

Anne Roth is senior policy advisor on digital policy for Die Linke im Bundestag, the German socialist party's parliamentary group at the federal parliament. She recently lost her blog of 19 years when the Italian tech collective Autistici/Inventati had to close due to being labeled terrorist by the US govt. She had met Autistici at the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001 in one of Europe's first independent media centers.

Mary Shnayien (Paderborn University)

Security, Safety, Solidarity?

Drawing on a broader definition of social media, this contribution explores the role of feminist IT security for constructing and shaping shared online spaces and forms of communication beyond major platforms. How can practices of solidarity emerge when negotiating security needs?

Mary Shnayien comes from a background of theatre, media and gender studies and works as an Academic Councillor at the Institute for Media Studies at Paderborn University. Her current research focuses on political affects, the philosophy of mathematics, and the intersection of gender, race, and digital media.

Tobias Stadler (Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg)

Working as Intended

The enclosures of our social infrastructures was always the plan, and it worked well: The reformatting of our social relations for the needs of capital accumulation was an enormous success for its driving actors, and fascist forces are thriving in their wake, as they so often do. From this perspective, all the collectives and projects of building alternative spaces within the walled gardens of capital may be important as experiments and temporary places of protection and/or resistance, but ultimately they must learn to leave behind all of what we now understand as 'social media'.

Tobias Stadler is researching digital infrastructures academically, maintains them at his day job and cares for them in activist contexts.

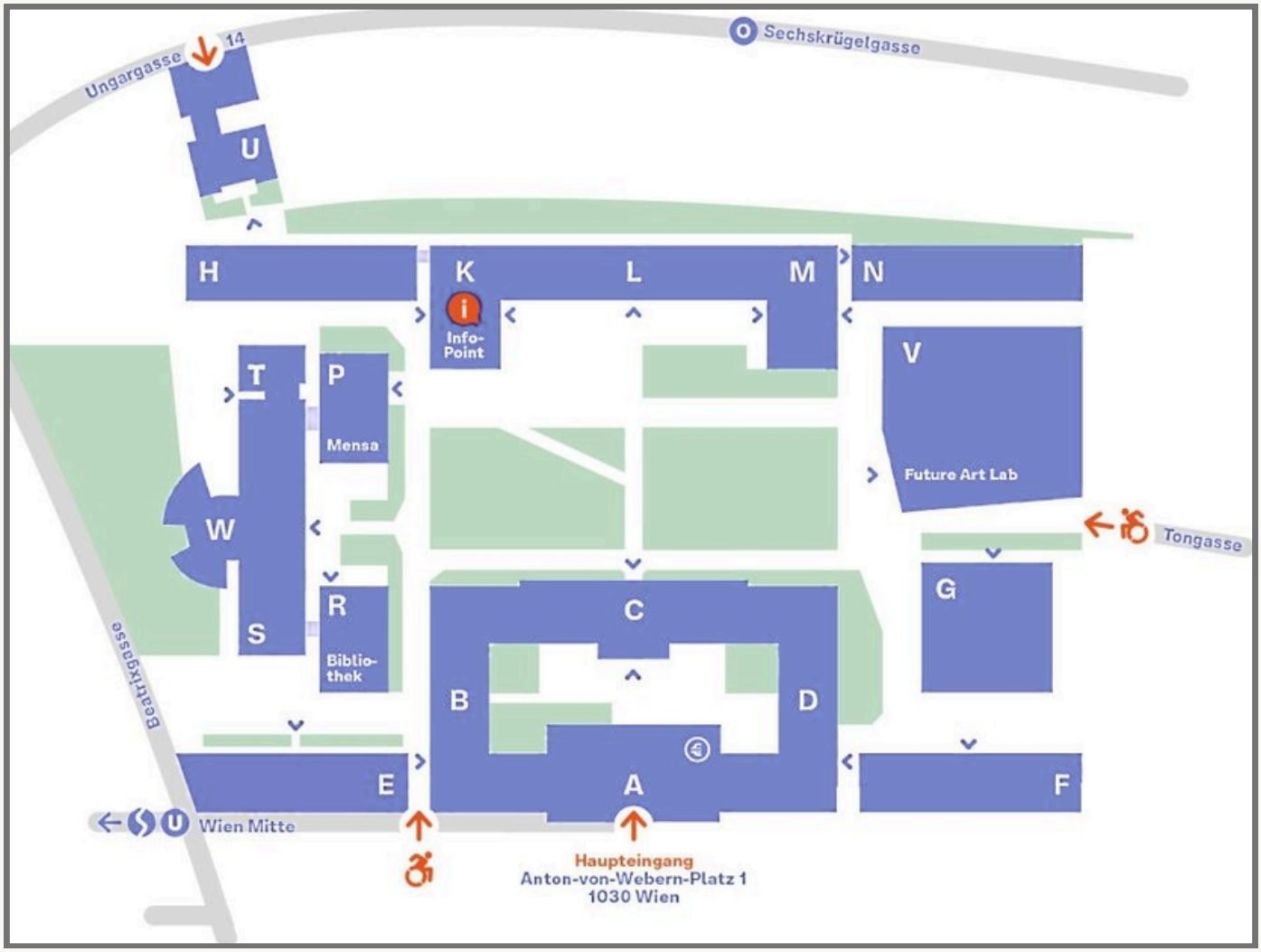
Felix Stalder (Zurich University of the Arts)

Encouraging and discouraging learnings from the Fediverse.

Survey after survey shows, most people hate social media, yet remain avid users because the platforms still provide utility in terms of entertainment and connections. For a decade now, the fediverse has promised to provide (some) of this utility, without the enshittification and exploitation that poisons commercial social media. And it has largely succeeded, yet seems unable to break out of a small niche, despite continuous technical improvements. While being niche is not necessarily a bad thing, and growth is not a positive value in and of itself, the small curtails its political potential for digital communication to escape its commercial framing.

Felix Stalder is a professor at the Zurich University of the Arts, teaching in the Department of Fine Arts "art:ifical studies" major. His work focuses on the intersection of cultural, political and technological dynamics, in particular on new modes of commons-based production, copyright, datafication, AI, and transformation of subjectivity.

Venue and Directions



The Library Gender and Beyond at the mdw campus (Building E, 1st floor, Anton-von-Webern-Platz 1, 1030 Vienna) is easily accessible by public transport, approximately 15 minutes from Vienna Main Station and 30 minutes from the airport.

From Vienna Main Station: Take the S-Bahn to Wien Mitte/Landstraße or tram line O to Ungargasse/Neulinggasse or Sechskrügelgasse. From there, the campus is a 5–7-minute walk.

From Vienna Airport: Take the S-Bahn to Wien Mitte/Landstraße or the faster, more expensive City Airport Train (CAT), which also stops at Landstraße.

Accommodation: All participants will stay at MAGDAS Hotel, Ungargasse 38, 1030 Vienna. The hotel is close to campus and accessible via the S-Bahn, U3 or U4 to Wien Mitte/Landstraße, or tram line O to Sechskrügelgasse.

To reach campus from the hotel, exit through the rear entrance (through the restaurant) and walk towards Tongasse and access the campus there (see campus map above).