Internet Policy Research:

Critical Epistemological and Methodological Considerations

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Introduction

This chapter was commissioned to address research methods and techniques in the political economy of communication tradition that can be applied in the study of internet policy in the context of globalization. This presents a challenge. Under the rubric of 'Internet policy and governance', the OECD states simply that 'the Internet is a fundamental infrastructure with a still largely untapped potential'.[1] The *Internet Policy Review* journal publishes research on "public regulatory changes as well as private policy developments' encompassing media, information technology, telecommunications and internet governance".[2] The *Policy & Internet* journal is interested in "innovative research in areas where the internet already impacts public policy, where it raises new challenges or dilemmas, or provides opportunities for policy that is smart and equitable".[3]

Additional journals explore the causes and consequences of digitalization and its implications for society generally, for the economy, politics, human rights, democracy, ethics, sociality and culture. Topics include digital content, freedom of expression, hate speech and violence, disinformation, media diversity, privacy, data protection, surveillance, security, market- or commons-based economies, employment and labor, standardization, innovation and infrastructure development, artificial intelligence (AI), and algorithmic assemblages – the list could go on. These are investigated drawing upon multiple social science, humanities, and computing science disciplines.[4] Within the political economy of communication tradition itself, the *Political Economy of Communication* and *TripleC* journals publish a wide range of articles relating to internet policy and regulation, focusing on technology (blockchain), social media, news media, digital labor, and the geopolitics of knowledge production and consumption, to mention only a few topics.

It is fair to say that there are virtually no boundaries that convincingly confine what 'internet policy' is. The internet infrastructure has achieved global, if uneven, reach and research is

often concerned with geopolitical tensions or within country or region conflicts. There is a maze of digital or internet state-led governance or regulatory initiatives, self-regulatory practices by smaller and very large "tech" companies, and civil society actors are involved in resistance movements and in multi-stakeholder governance. If we shift our focus away from "the internet" and digital technology as the subjects of internet policy and towards the phenomenon of platformisation, we can zero in on subjects related to the structures and processes "in which data are continuously collected and absorbed" (van Dijck, 2020, p. 5). This orients our concern about internet policy towards investigations of platform or surveillance capitalism, or data colonialism, thereby linking digital technology (including internet protocols and its infrastructure and AI) to the dynamics of capitalism.[5] In view of the diversity of internet policy research topics, it is unsurprising that methodologies are similarly diverse. Knowing what topics might be addressed tells us little about what methodologies are relevant for research in the political economy tradition.

The selection of methodology and technique when topics cut across multiple boundaries requires an essential step to reflect on what it is that we want to know. This means returning to first principles – that is, to a theory-informed perspective, to assumptions, and only then to empirical methods and techniques. This chapter begins by identifying what a political economy of communication approach to internet policy in a globalizing world is likely to identify as core problems and appropriate theories. This is followed by a discussion of epistemological and methodological considerations with illustrations of methods used to study the structure and dynamics of markets and to examine various aspects of datafication and platformization. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that, while research methods and techniques relevant to the analysis of internet policy may change over time, core problematics retain their significance because developments in this area are conditioned by capitalist market dynamics.

Political Economy of Communication Traditions

A political economy of (media and) communication analytics seeks to reveal the causes and consequences of power asymmetries. It does so by studying historical and contemporary manifestations of power asymmetries – in this chapter, in relation to internet policy, broadly

understood. To locate a study in the political economy of communication tradition, it is essential to identify "proper" subjects for research, to position research theoretically and epistemologically, and then to decide what empirical methods are to be used. This differentiates research in the political economy of communication field from other approaches.

The "Proper" Subject

What then is the "proper" subject for a political economy of communication inquiry into internet policy? In an interview in 1986, political economist, Dallas Smythe, said this: "It seems to me from the standpoint of understanding where we are, we'd better find out how we got this way, and we'd then be better able to deal with where we are" (Lent, 1995, p. 42 interviewing Smythe). The study of "proper" subjects should be informed by critical theory where "the nature of theory itself is also subject to continual critical scrutiny' (Smythe, 1978, p. 171). For Smythe, resisting the rising tide of "scientism" or positivism meant balancing "empiricism with a methodological 'open-door' policy" (Smythe, 1976, p. 20). It meant acknowledging that all research is political because "science and technique necessarily involve choices of problems to be studied and knowledge to be put into practice " (Smythe, 1978, p. 172), with the whole research process being embedded within the structure of power relationships.

With care in defining subjects for research, investigation can focus on power relations articulated through institutions – in addition to focusing on individuals – so that "new and stimulating insights may be revealed by admitting institutional observations as evidence" with a view to revealing "increasing concentrations of authority" (Smythe, 1976, p. 25).[6] Thus, a political economy of communication examines the articulation of political and economic power through institutional relations embedded in technology and in the content of communication (Fuchs et al., 2014). In the case of internet policy, this extends to encompass private, state and civil society institutions as well as multi-stakeholder institutions – and their norms and practices.

Smythe's observations resonate with other noted contributors to the political economy of

communication. Raymond Williams asserted that institutions should be analyzed in the context of "wider analysis of capitalist society, capitalist economy and the neo-capitalist state" (Williams, 1977, p. 136). Nicholas Garnham observed that "we can only understand the main drivers of cultural industry development if we look at the system of production in general against the background of the problems raised for capitalist reproduction" (Garnham, 2011, p. 60). This similarly is applicable in the case of internet policy. The "proper" subject for analysis is defined by Vincent Mosco as "the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources" (Mosco, 2009, p. 1). The internet infrastructure and the resources required for commercial platformization clearly are important sites of study in this context. The goal is to examine how commodification leads to exploitation, injustices, inequalities, or infringements of individual autonomy. The mode of production and consumption of the media, communications - and now, the internet infrastructure – should be examined as a social totality within specific social formations (Mattelart, 1978).[7] Historical analysis is helpful in identifying contradictory transformations through time with a view to considering what ought to be (Wasko et al., 2011, p. 2).

Varieties of Political Economy of Communication

While "scientistic", positivist or administrative research might examine the role of the internet infrastructure in enabling novel ways of marketing digital goods and services and achieving efficiencies in their production, critical research is interested in institutional structures, policies, practices and their immiserating consequences, and "it is informed by critical theory (Marxist or quasi Marxist)" (Smythe, 1994, p. 256).[8] Notwithstanding this theoretical positioning, there are schisms around what critical theory is. Smythe's reference to "quasi-Marxist" marks ongoing disputes about whether "critical" refers to Marxist theory or it admits to other theorizations of asymmetrical power. This chapter is not the place for an in-depth discussion of what counts as critical theory (which is itself debated across the academy), but it is important to acknowledge certain distinctions when methodologies are being deployed.[9] By way of illustration, this section highlights some differences between

"critical" research in the "old" institutionalist/political economy and the "critical political economy of communication" traditions.

"Quasi-Marxist" (and sometimes, non-Marxist) political economy or *"old" institutionalism* has its roots in a scholarly tradition which acknowledged the political character of marketized social relations. It seeks to enhance public interests through market reform in the face of anti-competitive conduct and to promote democracy (See Winseck, D, 2011 for sources). [10] In arguing that critical research requires attention to institutional detail – turning away from neoclassical economics – scholars argue that economies are not self-regulating and that they do not move eventually or automatically towards welfare enhancing equilibria. Concerned with "an ever-managed *control* economy" (Whelen, 2022, p. 1009), the "old" institutionalists tradition aims to understand the workings of capitalist production and consumption – in our case – involving the internet infrastructure - by examining "the customs, the habits, the laws of the land, and the Constitution, all of which are tacitly setting the rules within which … individuals deal with each other" (Commons, 1950, pp. 128–129). Holistic approaches are central, recognizing that "facts do not organize themselves into concepts and theories just be being looked at" (Myrdal, 1969, p. 9); empirical information always requires interpretation.

The concern in this tradition of the political economy of communication is with power asymmetries where institutions are treated as systems of socially embedded norms and rules. These are expected to be relatively durable and consistent with prevailing distributions of power in society. This tradition is normative insofar as it attends to public values and to what the boundary should be between public and private responsibility. Private ownership, for example, of the internet infrastructure under capitalism is not deemed to be inevitably exploitative, though it can be demonstrably harmful. The analysis of uneven relational power focuses on norms, rules and standards as well as market structures and strategies that extend or reinforce the ability of corporate, but also state, actors to influence or coerce others. In the context of the internet and digital services, attention typically focuses on "the increasing centrality of markets and government policies in shaping that structure" and on the negative consequences when corporate strategies and practices are "left to the market alone" (Melody, 2007, p. 58). When actors are found to be

engaged in bad behaviors - through overt exercise of power or covert coercion - policy or regulatory responses are justified. In the case of internet policy and platformisation, in view of empirically documented asymmetries of power between companies (or states) and individual consumers or citizens, policy reform generally is called for, for example, to maintain network neutrality, to address perceived security issues, to stimulate competition or to uphold fundamental rights.

In contrast, a *critical political economy of communication* (CPEC) "attempts to decentre the media [or the internet] and emphasise capital, class, contradiction, conflict and oppositional struggles" (Wasko, 2018, p. 234). It is concerned with the necessarily exploitative conduct of capitalism and seeks means to constrain or contest the exercise of this power. It investigates the production of public culture and seeks means to make it equitable rather than exploitative and destructive. "How far does what is produced deliver the diversity of information, analysis, debate and insight into the lives of others required for effective participatory citizenship on a basis of respect and tolerance, and are these resources available on an equitable basis without significant social exclusions?" (Murdock & Golding, 2016, p. 765).

Where "the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'" (Marx, 1887, p. 35), it can be assumed that the commodification process under capitalism is exploitative (McGuigan and Manzerolle, 2014). In the digital sphere, the "proper" subject is how class differences give rise to differential experiences and how structures and processes of oppression are recreated. Thus, digitalization under private ownership was greeted as bringing "more menace than promise" (Schiller and Miège, 1990: 166) insofar as commodity capitalism is "marked by the inequality of exchanges" (Mattelart, 2000: 107); and the internet infrastructure and platformization are similarly criticized. Advertising-based business models, biased algorithms and exploitative labor practices are examined to reveal how they produce unequal economic exchange and surplus value by influencing beliefs and economic, social, cultural and political actions, consistent with private owners' interests in profit (Fuchs, 2014; Viljoen et al., 2021). A CPEC analysis may propose alternatives such as public ownership or public governance. It is also assumed that even if individuals' rights are

negated or weakened, they are not vanquished. Contradictions within capitalism can give rise to resistance to the material and ideological determinants of exploitation and research aims to reveal how this occurs (Freedman, 2015).

It is important to be aware of the criticisms leveled by researchers in the "scientistic" or positivist sciences. Scholars working in the media effects tradition complain that political economy offers no *direct* measures of effects, that concepts of power and dominance are too vague to establish causal relationships, and that assumptions about capitalism and ideology are unjustified. The Marxist variety of scholarship is also criticized for what is taken to be a "proper" research subject claiming that there is an unjustified focus on class (rather than race, culture, or gender), and that there is little scope for individual agency. Scholars in the cultural studies tradition accuse both varieties of political economy of economic reductionism, despite the fact that they do examine "individuals' lives and practices" (Corrigan, 2018, p. 2764). It is also maintained that there is insufficient attention to textual representations and the symbolic (Babe, 2009). Splits, reconciliations and further splits have occurred with not always successful calls for "cultural studies to engage not only with cultural forms and practices but also with economic strategies and market forces" (Garnham, 1987, p. 23 Hartley preface to republication of Garnham article).

In addition, "new" institutional economics, an off shoot of neoclassical economics, focuses on the competitive behavior of "big tech" companies. It abandons some of the assumptions of neoclassical theory, acknowledging that "ideas, ideologies, myths, dogmas, and prejudices matter" (North, 1990: 362), but it retains a relatively narrow focus on market-based competition. It does not challenge the capitalist mode of production. In the context of internet policy and digital markets, some proponents of "new" institutional economics (Cunningham et al., 2015), argue that the varieties of political economy of communication, especially CPEC, are "simplistic, reductionist and totalizing" in their conception of power relations (Fitzgerald & Winseck, 2018, p. 92).

Research in the political economy of communication traditions is also strongly criticized for its Western-centricism. Smythe insisted that researchers working beyond the boundaries of North America must not accept theoretical claims and empirical research undertaken in that

context as being politically natural and beneficial (Smythe, 1978, p. 171). However, scholarship focusing on "the West" continues to mask itself as global (Willems, 2014) making it difficult to imagine "alternative digital futures and pluriverses" (Escobar, 2018). There are efforts to build on concepts of coloniality, multiple knowledges and being with a view to retheorising core political economy concepts and developing a decolonial critical political economy of communication (Chiumbu & Radebe, 2020). These frameworks very helpfully inform studies of internet policy, especially in a global context.

Epistemology and Methodologies for a Political Economy of Internet Policy

A distinguishing feature of the varieties of the political economy of communication is their epistemological orientation which is realist, interpretative and normative (Mosco, 2009). This has implications for what researchers can claim to know and for their values.[11] Revealing elusive structures and processes means moving "from the realm of theory and the abstract to the realm of the specific and empirical and back again" (Bettig, 1996, p. 6). Furthermore, when the aim is to achieve epistemic freedom by resisting "scientistic" or universal epistemologies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018), this requires navigating "the borderlands of multiple knowledge traditions" (Schoon et al., 2020, p. 3). With respect to normativity, scholars working in the political economy traditions often pursue emancipatory (or empowering) internet policy and regulatory interventions, aimed at curtailing or eliminating commodification through platformization.

When it comes to selecting methods, it is claimed that scholars of the political economy of communication fail to make their research methods transparent or to provide justifications for their normative claims (Corrigan, 2018; Hanska, 2021). This may be so, but it is not the case that the political economy of communication tradition has neglected methodological issues. First published in 1999, *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis - Third Edition*, edited by political economy of communication scholars, argues for multi-method approaches and welcomes cross-disciplinarity (Deacon et al., 2021). Methods are seen as means of gathering evidence to be interpreted in the light of critical theory (Deacon et al., 2021). *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*

emphasizes that empirical research needs to be grounded historically and in the analysis of material and symbolic conditions, with individuals treated neither as passive agents nor as unconstrained rational choice makers (Wasko et al., 2011).

Investigations of the internet and platformisation phenomena have encouraged the publication of handbooks on analytic frameworks and methods such as *Researching Internet Governance: Methods, Frameworks, Futures* (DeNardis et al., 2020) or *The Palgrave Handbook of Methods for Media Policy Research* (Van den Bulck et al., 2019). Some of the approaches are common to science and technology studies (STS) and to "old" institutional or CPEC analytical traditions as well as to critical political and sociological theories. And the synergies especially between STS and political economy are increasingly being acknowledged (Mosco, 2009).

Despite the emphasis in a political economy of communication study on multi-method empirical investigation, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods is controversial. For some, both are admissible. Smythe, for example, did not oppose the use of mathematical and statistical tools; his objection was "to their predominant use in administrative research where the social context of the research is uncritically accepted by the researcher as given, where values are excluded in the assumptive context of the research" (Smythe, 1978, p. 175). When context is treated as extraneous, as is often the case in the use of quantitative methods, the results can "flatten or homogenise social experiences". They stand in the way of any contextualized interpretation and make it very hard to achieve a decolonization of research methods that departs from "imperial mindsets and relationships" (Schoon et al., 2020, p. 3).

Research Methods for "Proper" Subjects

Returning to our interest in internet policy and platformisation, research in the political economy traditions is likely to focus on why internet policy and digital platforms are misaligned with public values and fundamental rights. Research subjects encompass the structures and processes of power accumulation that enable the control of gateways to digital information and content, and the collection, commodification and flows of data. If

the whole internet infrastructure and its platformized operation under capitalism is antithetical the emancipation (empowerment) of people and to democracy, how are market structures, ideas, norms, and practices are perpetuating these conditions? What special interests predominate in policy formation and implementation and how can this be revealed? What resources (money, information, digital content, time) are unequally distributed? Who should take action to reduce inequality, to achieve justice and to alleviate oppression of exploited classes and other disadvantaged groups? Producing answers requires scrutiny of the material and the symbolic with a focus on relations of production and consumption and of class or other divisions, on worker organizations (unions) or on opportunities for activism. It may mean focusing on industry sectors (e.g., advertising, film, newspapers, television, or the layers of the internet infrastructure, including the development of technical standards and protocols).

Methods that are used within a political economy framing of some of the "proper" subjects of research on internet policy and platformization are highlighted in this section.

Case Studies and Comparative Methods

A political economy analytics directed to the questions noted above may employ historical or contemporary case studies to identify "critical junctures" when market structures and institutions are being configured through governance measures. Local, national, and sometimes regional, case studies are often undertaken in isolation – sometimes falling prey to unwarranted universal claims and to colonialism. There is nevertheless a growing need for comparative research which is well-theorized drawing upon critical theories to avoid the risk of "measurement out of context" (Livingstone, 2003, p. 482). Given the reach of the internet infrastructure beyond borders, global analysis is clearly needed. As Nederveen Pieterse (2021, p. 195) says "a wide database is not a matter of choice or preference; it is an existential given".

Market Structure and Dynamics Analysis

In the study of internet policy and platformisation, research may examine market structures, firm behaviors, competition, and consumer or citizen behavior. The methods may seem superficially like those used in other research traditions, but a political economy orientation should ensure that the results are interpreted in the light of asymmetrical power or, more broadly, in the context of exploitative capitalism. A challenge is identifying what should be defined as the boundary of a market (Winseck, 2022a). Much internet policy and platformization research focuses on Google, Amazon, Facebook/Meta, Apple, and Microsoft (GAFAM) with others commanding some attention. Because market dominance and consolidation which enable harmful datafication strategies and practices is occurring across multiple economic sectors and the polity, Kemmerling and Trampusch (2022) call for analysis of how data, technologies and digital infrastructures are leading to new configurations of "digital power resources" (DPR) across all economic sectors.

Methods of research rely on quantitative data including indictors of investment and R&D, revenues, service adoption, pricing and profitability, labor time and employment, and output and the aim is to reveal the operations of "digital(ized) capitalism". Data on capital holdings, interlocking relationships, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and strategic alliances may also be gathered. The key to a departure from a "scientistic" approach is a critical theory-informed interpretation of change in internet infrastructure and platformization which "takes the place of the apologetic-normative economic theories of competition" (Knoche, 2021, p. 371).

Research may also involve detailed case studies of corporations and governance institutions based on interview and survey methods for data collection. In some cases, participant observation and situated ethnographies of specific sites of production or internet use may be undertaken, for example, to study the impact of social media on labor practices (Zhou & Xiang, 2021). A key issue here is to avoid falling prey to journalistic accounts and the claims of particular interest groups (Winseck, 2022b) Comparative studies may be undertaken to highlight common and distinctive characteristics of markets or corporate (and state) labor processes, often mapping and classifying data derived from secondary official data sources, market statistics and business and government reports (Bonifaz, 2022; Larroa, 2020).

Additionally, content analysis, media framing theory and discourse analysis can be used to reveal hegemonic and anti-capitalist struggles (Dyer-Witheford & Mularoni, 2022).

Interpretative Data Studies

As internet policy and digital governance (from competition law to content moderation and AI regulation) is being applied to platformisation, the Critical Data Studies tradition offers research techniques that complement those typically used in political economy of communication analytical traditions. Synergies are due to adherence to critical analytical (interpretative) frameworks. The dominant approach to data analytics is "scientistic". Large datasets are treated as neutral phenomena (Iliadis & Russo, 2016, p. 1) in the name of "digital positivism" (Mosco, 2014).[12] In contrast, critical data analytics are enabling investigations of the cultural, ethical, economic and political challenges presented by data assemblages. When the results of these methods are interpreted critically, they potentially can yield insight into injustices and exploitations associated with digital capitalism, although there are open questions about whether and how epistemologies and techniques can be harmonized (Mansell, Forthcoming).

Scholarship in the political economy of communication tradition, whether derived from scraping web sites (when permitted by site owners), from corporate or public "big" datasets, or from machine learning simulations, benefits from a coupling with research designed to reveal who sets the parameters for data collection, analysis and its interpretation. The methods literature in this area is replete with cautionary tales about the derivation and manipulation of large data sets,[13] so it is important not simply to assist corporate data analytics companies to perform their discriminatory and harmful strategies and practices more effectively.

Researchers also analyze machine learning processes to investigate how they produce visual representations, providing insight into how AI assemblages operate and "their heteronomous materiality and contingency" (MacKenzie & Munster, 2019, p. 3). These techniques investigate how data ensembles can yield new perceptions and provide insight into symbolic ideations and platformized nudging. Undertaking both connotative and

deconstructive readings (Poirier, 2021) of datasets can also support critical analysis, offering a departure from "scientistic" approaches such as sentiment analysis (Atteveldt et al., 2021). Sentiment analysis and similar data analysis techniques do not address "proper" questions because they are rarely contextualized by an analysis of incentives to operate online systems in the interests of the owners of algorithms and of data. Data analytics techniques may involve the generation of knowledge graphs or heat maps or capturing and analyzing images from mobile cameras, the analysis of social networks or the tracing of members assigned to algorithmically classified groups (Gandy Jr, 2019). These techniques raise ethical and legal issues around consent, transparency, non-invasiveness, the role of participants, and platform terms of service. Algorithm audit methods are being devised (Sandvig et al., 2014) aimed at revealing harmful discrimination. These methods can be developed in a way that helps to reveal the determinants of "digital structural violence" (Macgilchrist, 2021, p. 243).

At the intersections of STS methods, critical data studies and the political economy of communication, a variety of other qualitative methods is used to study the features of internet policy. Anthropological and ethnographic methods are used to study the mediation of everyday life by digital technologies, including the internet (Fielding et al., 2016; Hewson, 2003; Silverstone & Hartmann, 1998). Novel methods, such as the walkthrough method, provide ways to critically examine software applications by walking through stages of app development and use (Light et al., 2016) and participant observation methods can also be revealing of the development of datasets and the values instantiated in this process (Plantin, 2021).

Conclusion

Whatever the decision about the "proper" subject of research in the political economy of communication research traditions and whichever research method(s) is selected to examine internet policy and the global encroachment of platformization into people lives, the aim is to go beyond descriptive analysis to reveal how and why structures and processes of exclusion or immiseration emerge under particular circumstances. Similar quantitative

and qualitative research methods may be used by researchers undertaking "scientistic" research on internet policy issues, but their application in the hands of the critical researcher differs. In the face of concern about the risks and harms associated with all the components of the internet infrastructure and with platformisation, a critical orientation in research is essential if we want to understand and resist "the constraints on human agency and their consequences for the quality of human life" (Couldry, 2020, p. 1145) that emerge out of the dynamics of commodification. Even if the internet's presence confers benefits on some, constant innovation in the strategies and practices of platformization, commercial datafication and increasing reliance on algorithmic assemblages, all depending upon an internet infrastructure, means that we need to ask: "Do we have the tools to get in view what is problematic about datafication for social life? Do we have a clear enough idea any more of what should count as critique, and on what empirical and normative resources it depends?"(Couldry, 2020, p. 1136)

Answers to these questions are urgent. A political economy of communication inspired analysis of internet policy incorporating methods such as those discussed in this chapter can offer insight. The greater challenge, however, is to work towards enabling all forms of critical research to contribute to a deeper understanding of the consequences of departing from an open, decentralized, internet infrastructure as this infrastructure becomes fragmented in the wake of geopolitical conflicts. Platformization techniques are undergoing continuous change when corporate and state actors innovate to meet the requirements of internet policies and digital governance guardrails. The deeper implications of their efforts to conceal how internet infrastructure operations on all levels can exacerbate harms experienced by populations, in different ways, throughout the world, require scrutiny from critical vantage points which, in turn, are informed by a broad array of methods.

The risks faced by those who undertake research in the political economy of communication (and other critical) traditions are not addressed in this chapter. Corporate actors exercise power over what is knowable by declining access to data needed for research, mystifying the provenance and structures of datasets, requiring researchers to sign non-disclosure agreements, applying pressure to alter research results, and seeking to ruin researchers' reputations directly or via social media. Similarly, states engage in similar practices when

their policy positions are questioned. These risks are not specific to critical research, but they arguably are greater because researchers are intent on exposing how institutional formations (structures and processes) result in harmful strategies and practices. This means that it is crucial for internet policy research to be undertaken in ways that ensure the safety and independence of individual researchers and their teams. This is a "proper" subject for a future paper on the institutional conditions required to undertake critical research on internet policy issues.

Notes

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[1] See https://www.oecd.org/sti/ieconomy/internet-policy-and-governance.htm.

[2] See https://policyreview.info/about

[3] See https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/19442866

[4] Examples of journals publishing in English on internet policy include *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance, Digital Society: Ethics, Socio-Legal and Governance of Digital Technology, Internet Research: Journal of Societal and Ethical Issues, Journal of Information Technology & Politics* as well as *Policy Studies*, *Global Political Economy* or the *Socio-Economic Review.*

[5] See (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Mansell & Steinmueller, 2020; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019).

[6] And see (Mansell, 1995).

[7] See (Jin, 2018, p. np).

[8] For distinctions between "critical" and "administrative" research see (Lazarsfeld, 1944; Melody & Mansell, 1983; Smythe & Dinh, 1983).

[9] See (Winseck, D, 2011) and (Winseck, 2024). See also (Winseck & Jin, 2011). Other labels are mushrooming (e.g. (Curran, 2016; Hardy, 2014; Hoebanx, 2022; Karlidag & Bulut, 2020).

[10] See (Bannerman & Haggart, 2014; Hodgson, 1989) for discussions of varieties of institutionalism.

[11] On Critical Realism, see (Bhaskar, 2008).

[12] See also (boyd & Crawford, 2012).

[13] See, for example, (Crawford, 2021; Hewson, 2003; Jones, 1999; Markham & Baym, 2009; Rogers, 2019) and (Chun, 2021).

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