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The Gig Public and the Hypermodern Condition: Platforms, Algorithmic Governance and the Transformation of Publicness. Reflections on Slavko Splichal's Book "The Gig Public"

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Abstract: This article is a reflection on Slavko Splichal's (2026) book *The Gig Public: AI-Driven Contractual and Habits Performativisation of Publicness*.
Splichal, Slavko. 2026. *The Gig Public: AI-Driven Contractual and Habitual Performativisation of Publicness*. London: Anthem Press.
Topics addressed in this review include theories of publicness, the rise of the gig public, the performativisation of publicness, communification, the neutralisation of public discourse, hypermodernity, hypermodern techno-capitalism, algorithmic governmentality, and digital labour.

Keywords: platforms, capitalism, publicness, knowledge, performativity, gig public, gig economy, techno-capitalism.

1. Introduction

In *The Gig Public: AI-Driven Contractual and Habits Performativisation of Publicness*[1], Slavko Splichal analyses changes of the public sphere using the concept of the gig public, referring to fragmented, ephemeral, constrained and publicised forms of public engagement conditioned by the architecture, interfaces, ergonomics and algorithmic mechanisms of digital platforms. The book is part of the critical tradition in public sphere studies, with a view to rethinking the transformations of publicness in the era of platforms and artificial intelligence. Splichal proposes an epistemology of these technologies and platforms that is focused on their structure and fundamental mechanisms. He understands platforms as a system for exchanging knowledge, outsourcing human memory, enabling the archiving, dissemination and critique of information, freed from space and time. From the introduction onwards, he describes

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[1] Splichal, Slavko. 2026. *The Gig Public: AI-Driven Contractual and Habitual Performativisation of Publicness*. London: Anthem Press.

AI as systems capable of processing information autonomously, the effects of which affect the nature of information and the relationship it constitutes. The era of algorithmic platforms simultaneously redefines the modes of existence and production of information, the forms and objectives of social interactions, and the conditions for public opinion in the public sphere. This change is part of a longer history of mediation techniques. Printing, press, audiovisual and mass media, and the WWW have successively revolutionised the conditions of information circulation and the forms of communication. In hypermodernity (Djouad 2025), these effects can be seen in other contexts, the automation of information processing, the intensification of connectivity and the integration of digital devices into all social activities are creating unprecedented disruptions. AI appears to be an extension and an intensification of the transformations introduced by techno-platforms, social networks and information interfaces. In this context, publicness occupies a critical and unprecedented position.

AI treats information as a commodity and communication technologies are developed according to economic and financial logics that are gradually reshaping cultural norms and social practices. Public reciprocity is moving from a logic of sharing towards a transactional logic in which interactions contribute to the production of economic value that can be capitalised on. Social networks are a particularly good illustration of this transformation. Initially designed as virtual spaces for personal and recreational interaction, they have become central venues for social, professional, economic, financial, political and informational communication. Companies find them an infallible means of reaching audience levels that would be unattainable in the physical world. For users, they are a *visible* place for public expression of the self in innovative forms of self-presentation. In this context, Splichal introduces the concept of the gig public, which he defines as "digitally mediated, algorithmically structured discursive networks in which human-algorithmic interactions unfold through short bursts of attention and performative expressions" (Splichal 2026, 3). This definition highlights the two central dimensions of the phenomenon he presents. On the one hand, the algorithmic mediation of publicness and on the other the resulting temporal and spatial but also discursive fragmentation. The term "gig" refers explicitly to the platform economy and the kind of labour that results from it. Slavko Splichal suggests that contemporary practices of public participation follow a similar logical pathway. Civic and political engagement becomes fractionalised, sporadic, and aestheticised.

The gig public refers to the *post-platformised* public evolving in discontinuous and micro-situated performative interactions. It is a performative publicness geared towards visibility rather than the mutual building of a genuine relationship which has meaning, a shared common purpose. Engagement in the public sphere is gradually losing its deliberative and collective dimensions. Spontaneous, multi-situated and oriented discussions remain loosely structured and have little impact. In an environment saturated with information, topics appear as quickly as they disappear. Added to this are the discursive frameworks imposed by platforms, which constrain the multiplicity and singular complexities of the shapes that public exchange takes. The

gig public goes beyond the analysis of virtual interactions on social hypermedia. It allows us to question the broader transformations of the contemporary socio-technological regime. The transformations of the public sphere thus appear to be manifestations of a more profound change in the forms of individuation, communication, the *sociolexicon,* and social cohesion in hypermodernity.

This paper discusses Slavko Splichal's analysis by articulating the concept of the gig public with the transformations of the hypermodern regime of subjectivation. This discussion is structured around three main points. Section 2 examines the transformation of publicness in the age of platforms and artificial intelligence, drawing as Splichal does, on classical theories of the public and the crowd, notably those of Ferdinand Tönnies and John Dewey. Section 3 analyses the *platformisation* of social interactions and the economy of visibility, highlighting the mechanisms of fragmentation and performativisation of intermediated public discourses. Section 4 offers a critical reading of the gig public based on what I call the hypermodern regime of work and subjectivation, showing how the logic of the gig economy defined by Splichal is gradually spreading to all areas of our existence.

2. From Classical Theories of the Public to the Rise of the Gig Public

For Slavko Splichal, to understand how the gig public emerges, it is essential to return to the sociological definitions of the public, the crowd, and public opinion. It tends to enlighten "the structural conditions and social forces that shape the emergence and coherence of publics" (Splichal 2026, 25). He argues that using an historical approach, one can investigate "the historical context in which the term [of the public sphere] gained prominence and highlights its implications for imagining shared spaces […] to engage in reasoned deliberation" (Splichal 2026, 26). Splichal "traces the conceptual evolution from proletarian publics to self-enclosed 'counterpublics', focusing on the changing nature and composition over time" (Splichal 2026, 26). This historiographical approach reminds us that the notion of publicness is never representative of a stable, consistent or universal entity. It is constituted under specific communicational conditions, determined by informational frameworks, mediation devices, and information circulation systems. As Splichal wrote, "publicness has always been tied to the mechanisms via which individuals and group interact, share ideas and shape decision-making process" (Splichal 2026, 2). The forms of collective existence associated with the public thus appear as the product of socio-technical arrangements that structure communication and organise the dissemination of knowledge. Splichal bears in mind that each transformation of information mediation alters the existential conditions of the public and public opinion. They must therefore be revisited, because relational network technologies represent a revolution in the organisation, dissemination, and reception of information, a revolution in the conditions under which information circulates, into the structures of the modes of circulation of ideas and in the forms of organisation of collective debates.

According to Splichal, the rise of AI marks a further acceleration of these hypermedia devices, which he explores as "epistemic technologies, which externalise and automate cognitive processes once performed exclusively by the human brain" (Splichal 2026, 121). Splichal says that this process, that produces information autonomously, can determine the very conditions of our relationship to knowledge. This change, he argues, constitutes radical transformations of the communicational and relational conditions of society and the human capacity to build collective representations, "a transformation further amplified by the emergence of epistemic technologies such as generative AI" (Splichal 2026, 122). Capitalism seems to have changed society and social relations once again, "altered (by) socio-technical conditions", which "reframe the public sphere as a dynamic and contested domain shaped by competing interest and persistent tensions" (Splichal 2026, 122).

2.1. The Crowd and the Public

To understand the scope of these new mechanisms of dissemination and reciprocity, Splichal draws on a set of theoretical traditions that have conceptualised the relationship between communication and the cultivation of the public since the late 19th century. The establishment of these theories of the public corresponds to historical moments marked by industrialisation, urbanisation, and the expansion of the mass media. The industrialised distribution of newspapers, widespread literacy among the population, and the foundations of an information economy have brought about new frameworks for publicness. One of the first systematic conceptualisation of the public appears in the work of Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies and Loomis 1887/2002). In his seminal work on modern sociology, Tönnies proposes an analytical distinction between two forms of social organisation. "Gemeinschaft" refers to traditional communities based on mechanical, direct relationships, structured by family, religion, local traditions and ritualisations. "Gesellschaft" characterises modern societies in which social relations become impersonal, contractual, and mediated by political, economic, and social institutions. In this Durkheimian context, public opinion appears as a symbolic regulation mechanism that is specific to modern societies. For Tönnies, public opinion is a form of collective consciousness that helps guide moral judgements, social norms, and political orientations. It plays a structuring role in public life by influencing legislative processes. This conception implicitly relies on the existence of a discursive and linguistic space in which opinions can circulate and come into conflict. Media infrastructures, particularly the press at that time, played a central role in creating this space by enabling the circulation of ideas and the formation of public debates that transcended local interactions (Splichal 2026, 2). To explain this, he draws on Dewey and Lippmann "mainly because they championed freedom of expression and academic freedom while also engaging with a wide range of social issues extending beyond publicness, covering topics from journalism and the press to psychology, education, democracy and international politics" (Splichal 2026, 27).

At the same time, Gabriel Tarde (1901/2008) developed a complementary analysis that expands on this distinction in a work published in 1901 titled *"L'opinion et la foule"* ("Public Opinion and the Crowd"). Tarde introduced a fundamental distinction between two forms of social aggregation, the crowd and the public. The crowd is a community based on physical proximity and emotional contagion. Individuals gathered in crowds share a common emotional state that spreads through imitation and psychological contagion. The resulting collective behaviours are often impulsive and spontaneous. The public, on the other hand, is a form of social aggregation mediated by communication. The individuals who make up a public do not necessarily gather in the same physical space. They participate in a common symbolic discursive space through the technically mediated circulation of ideas and opinions. For Tarde, newspapers and magazines structure the way the public deploys itself from those large-scale networks of mediated information. Public opinion thus appears as an emerging social phenomenon, produced by the discursive structure and interactions that permeate the public sphere.

These distinctions between crowds, public opinion, and public were taken up and explored in greater depth, as Splichal notices, by sociologists from the Chicago School in the early 20th century. For him "they redefined the public as a fluid and dynamic entity, in contrast to earlier static, normative conceptualisations and the notion of stable, cohesive traditional groups governing collective behaviour" (Splichal 2026, 27). A crowd is a collective organisation characterised by simultaneous reactions and emotional intensity. The individuals who constitute a crowd react collectively to immediate stimuli, which often produces unpredictable behaviour. The public, on the other hand, is forged through prolonged discussions on reciprocal topics. The individuals participate in discursive exchanges in which opinions are confronted, modified, inter-influenced and gradually stabilised. For Park, the public is therefore a collective that is structured over time through processes of communication and deliberation. The temporal dimension is essential here: the existence of the public presupposes continuity of exchange and the possibility of sustained confrontation of viewpoints. On this point, Splichal quotes Alvin Gouldner (1976, 98): "Publics engage at a relatively rational level of discourse – 'in the sense that is *critical*; meaning that what has been said may be questioned, negated, and contradicted', and done so without fear of societal domination inhibiting dialogue" (Splichal 2026, 29).

John Dewey's (1927/1991) thinking extends theses analyses by introducing a pragmatic perspective. For Dewey, as Splichal reminds us, the public exists when the indirect consequences of social actions become significant enough in the social sphere to require collective regulation. Individuals join a public when they realise that they are affected by these consequences and seek to participate in their regulation. The public thus appears as a dynamic collective that forms around specific issues. The public arises, undergoes change, and vanishes as society evolves. Dewey's understanding of the public emphasises the processual nature of the public: it does not pre-exist the issues that mobilise it; it arises from collective awareness of the social consequences

of certain actions. The controversy between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey in the 1920s illustrates the tensions around the concept of publicness. Lippmann (1922) is sceptical about citizens' ability to understand the complexity of modern societies. According to him, people do not react directly to social reality, rather to simplified representations that he describes as mental images or mental landscapes. Public opinion is the product of symbolic constructions mediated by technical devices and propaganda strategies. Dewey, in contrast to Lippmann, argues that the crisis of the public sphere is not the result of citizens' inability but of the very form of communication systems that organise the circulation of information and collective deliberation, thereby neutralising the emergence of coherent opinions. For Dewey, the problem of the public sphere is above all a problem of communication. Without institutional mechanisms for the dissemination of information and for coordinating collective discussions, publicness cannot develop properly.

These debates taken to a new level by the work of Jürgen Habermas (1962/1998), a valuable analytical tool for Splichal, offering a historical analysis of the structuration of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe. "It inadvertently contributed to the marginalisation of a rich sociological tradition in public opinion theory and research" (Splichal 2026, 34). Private institutions such as social clubs, coffee houses, and newspapers were spaces for critical discussions among citizens of a specific social class. At that time, publicness was based on the ideal of rational deliberation as the starting point for practical conversions in society. Habermas emphasises that this public sphere gradually shifted with the rise of mass media and the increasing adoption of new communication strategies in the economy and the political system. Speaking about Habermas' book *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas 1962/1998), Splichal says that "it remains a catalyst for constructive debates on topics like public life, civil life and the future of democracy" (Splichal 2026, 37). Drawing on Habermas's structural analysis of public opinion, Splichal discusses the process of its fragmentation. "By producing data-driven representations of the 'public', polling fundamentally reconfigured the understanding of public opinion – shifting it […] to a statistical construct that increasingly guided political decisions and media narratives" (Splichal 2026, 36). Advertising, strategic communication, and the cultural industries have contributed to transforming the public sphere into an entirely mediatised and privatised space, in which the circulation of information is largely structured by economic, financial and entrepreneurial interests.

2.2. Hyper-Mediated Social Relations

Media and communication studies has demonstrated that the history of the public is inextricably linked to that of the news media. Writing, printing, the mass media, and digital networks are technical devices that externalise knowledge and mould exchanges, changing the conditions under which information travels and the ways in which people participate collectively. Each new infrastructure leads to a restructuring of the public sphere. The Internet and its decentralised network structure have

introduced new means of communication characterised by global connectivity, accelerated circulation of information within networks, and a multitude of spaces for public expression. As Slavko Splichal endeavours to demonstrate, these structures lead to the increasing segmentation of public discourse, as do all other forms of dialogue, confronted with a proliferation of discursive-based identities and the emergence of a plurality of fragmented opinions circulating simultaneously in complex communication networks. As he notices "these developments have foregrounded the challenge of establishing a 'transnational public sphere' and cultivating 'transnational publics' – further diluting the capacity of publics and public opinion to shape political decision-making" (Splichal 2026, 38).

Public opinion is increasingly divided, fragmented, compartmentalised, and disunited. It becomes a constellation of discourses and stances that depend on techno-capitalist flows. This fragmentation is accompanied by a transformation in the relationships between the public, the public sphere, and the counterpublic sphere. The work of Negt and Kluge, cited by Splichal (Splichal 2026, 39) has shown that modern societies are structured by a multiplicity of publics and counterpublics that coexist and interact. The counterpublics refer to social collectives that develop forms of public expression distinct from those that prevail in the public sphere. The central question for Splichal then becomes that of the level of entitativity as he calls it, that is publicness' ability to constitute itself as a collective entity capable of producing lasting and effective dialogue. "The absence of entitativity is a defining characteristic of the public, as entitativity strengthens with greater privacy withing a group" (Splichal 2026, 45). In contemporary digital environments, this capacity seems to be weakening. Discursive interactions are fragmented into a multiplicity of spaces that do not necessarily converge towards processes of collective deliberation : "the proliferation of adjectival modifiers – suggesting that virtually any form of communication can be seen as constituting some king of public sphere, especially in empirical research – has turned the public sphere into a floating or empty signifier" (Splichal 2026, 47). The effect is an "echo chamber effect, where insular user groups are exposed primarily to, and actively seek, content that aligns with their own interests and ideologies. This dynamic exacerbates social divisions, fragmentation and political polarisation" (Splichal 2026, 47).

Based on these observations, Splichal introduces the notion of the gig public, which he defines as the result of the structure of "digitally mediated, algorithmically structured discursive networks in which human-algorithmic interactions unfold through short bursts of attentions and performative expressions (Splichal 2026, 6). The term "gig" refers explicitly to the characteristics of labour in the gig economy in which activities are fragmented into temporary micro-tasks mediated through platforms. These activities often are forms of precarious labour. Splichal suggests that contemporary forms of public engagement follow a similar logic. Discursive interactions become intermittent. Public discussions take on the form of micro-interventions that appear and disappear quickly in a saturated information environment, undermining their impact

and their ability to transform multi-situated opinions into influential public spheres. The gig public is the result of a shift in communication patterns brought about by the conditions imposed on information in the age of platforms. Splichal explains that "as the volume of information continues to grow exponentially, our capacity to engage with it meaningfully diminishes" (Splichal 2026, 52). Traditional public discourse, based on sustained discussion and the gradual formation of collective opinion, is being reconfigured by privatised communication environments furthermore "the fragmentation of discourse and the loss for contextual understanding create ideal conditions for the erosion of authenticity, allowing fake news, misinformation and conspiracy theories to proliferate" (Splichal 2026, 52).   The acceleration and proliferation of information are further changing the landscape.

2.3. Cognitive Constraints, Attention, and the Structural Conditions of the Gig Public

These transformations in human communication structures must also be understood in terms of the cognitive constraints involved in receiving and processing information. The plasticity of our cognition does not seem to be infinitely adaptable (Aubert 2006). As early as the 1970s, Herbert Simon pointed out that an abundance of information does not necessarily lead to an increase in collective cognitive abilities. In an article that has become a classic, Simon (1971, 40) observes that "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention". In other words, the more abundant information is, the scarcer human attention becomes. This observation constitutes an epistemological innovation that sheds light on the evolution of the public. The concepts developed by Tönnies, Park, Tarde and Dewey were implicitly based on the existence of an information environment in which public relations could develop in a relatively stable timeframe. The public presupposed the possibility of sustained collective attention, allowing arguments to be debated, opinions to mature, and collective positions to stabilise.

What structures does mediation produce? What organisational adaptations does it involve? And how does it influence the information at stake? If the objective of the structure is no longer legibility and clarity of contents but rather an economic strategy that diverts information from its initial value and function, platform capitalism is the most accomplished version of hypermodern capitalism. Splichal echoes the more pragmatic position of a "platform state" outlined by Henri Isaac (2021): If everything is structured with the aim of capitalising on attention, communication is no longer a social issue, but a game. Traditional relationships of the public are unable to reorganise themselves in these *new spaces.* Splichal reminds us that "media platforms are increasingly shaped by algorithmic logics that commodify information and user behaviour, reinforcing corporate dominance and constraining the capacity for independent, democratic discourse" (Splichal 2026, 57). The consequence is large-scale dislocation. Dislocation of humans' power to act beyond discourse and virtual activities and the dislocation of attention that cannot be monetised. Splichal, when he defines the gig public, highlights

the cognitive dimension of the phenomenon: the fragmentation of public interaction also corresponds to a fragmentation of the regime of attention. "Contemporary processes of communification and societal fragmentation under surveillance capitalism further complicate this challenge" (Splichal 2026, 57). The gig public can therefore be understood as something that strives to emerge as public civic power, but which is structurally deprived of the means necessary for its transformation due to the structure of communication. The scarcity of attention caused by the overabundance of informational stimuli seems to make it difficult to institutionalise these opinions, which have never been so numerous and yet seem to converge and are more fragile than ever. The gig public is "not a normative but an atypical concept, referring to the rapid formation of short-lived communicative relations in which multiple voices compete for attention within an oversaturated information environment" (Splichal 2026, 13).

Public interaction mediated by platforms takes the form of one-off contributions, which are more performative than constructive and appear and disappear quickly in communication flows that are in constant competition with all the data collected and disseminated. The classic form of the public sphere, based on dialogical continuity to stabilise opinions, is gradually being replaced by spontaneous forms of expression, which simultaneously conceal the algorithmisation of content and personal data integrated into these interaction systems designed to generate market value.

Understanding the gig audience requires grasping hyper-mediatisation. Experience shows that in any productive system; humans seek to adapt and adjust. Platform capitalism utilises users' free labour. The attention economy reinforces the objectification of content in these exchange systems. This may mark the end of the system of perception. Proxemics, which is the ability to emotionally invest in the other in a process of otherness, was already weakened by television and the aesthetics of war that it has enabled. It now also seems to suffer from the new interactional mechanisms advanced by the gig public.

3. Platforms, Algorithmic Visibility, and the Performativisation of Publicness

Contemporary transformations of the public sphere cannot be understood without analysing the role of digital platforms in the organisation of social interactions. One of the arguments developed by Splichal is that contemporary digital platforms should not be viewed as new opportunities for public expression but above all as socio-technological devices that profoundly shape the conditions of public opinion, the modalities of collective participation, and the forms of existence of the public itself. Platforms host and enable social interactions. They organise them *visibly* according to the laws and rules of information architecture specific to digital platforms. These standards make it possible to differentiate between different types of spaces. Social networks, newspapers, news sites, forums, themed sites focusing on sports, pets, various hobbies and even romantic relationships, which have also found new ways of developing and structuring themselves within the *platformised* communication systems. A whole part of these worlds is played out in the invisible realm of algorithms,

codes, and automated management systems that rank, guide and promote front-end user data, thereby adjusting the value of what is made more or less visible to the public as well as capturing everything that can potentially produce economic value and that passes through "the contractual architecture of visibility, data extraction and behavioural governance that increasingly defines public engagement in digital environments" (Splichal 2026, 85). Doom scrolling is the radical result of an injunction to pay attention. It is a sensory defection from the limits of time and space, a form of the domestication of social relations and publicness where "the gig public become entrapped in a self-perpetuating system" (Splichal 2026, 84).

While classical theories of publicness, from Tönnies to Dewey, assumed the existence of relatively autonomous discursive spaces in which opinions could be formed and confronted, contemporary digital environments introduce the permanent algorithmic evaluation of public content. Marshall McLuhan's works showed that each media revolution transforms the conditions of perception and the organisation of the social world (McLuhan 1964). He emphasises that the media are channels for transmitting information and environments that restructure forms of social interaction and regimes of collective perception. The famous sentence "the medium is the message" (McLuhan and Fiore 1967) reminds us that media shape social relations, creating a culture of representation that produces value. The emergence of digital platforms corresponds to the establishment of a new global information architecture capable of simultaneously integrating the production, dissemination, and economic exploitation of information. Media are now complex systems that link communication, data-processing, and markets. This economic dimension is central to Splichal's analysis. One of the most striking aspects of the contemporary transformation of communication lies in the gradual integration of communication into the logic of digital capitalism. Social interactions are becoming productive resources whose fundamental value is personal data. The goal of platforms is not to connect people or create spaces in which the same individual and collective structures can be redeployed. It is intrinsically economic. Communication, a symbolic and relational process, becomes an activity that operates on the basis of the systematic economic exploitation of behavioural data. This goes as far as instrumentalising the concept of the public and the processes of opinion structuration. Splichal explains that "the advent of integrated public-private digital communication networks and platforms, alongside hybrid modes of interaction, has fundamentally altered the conditions in which publicness and privateness are generated, maintained and potentially compromised" (Splichal 2026, 86).

3.1. Communification

It is this phenomenon of reconfiguring the concept of audience that Splichal refers to as *communification*. Splichal defines it as "the pervasive integration of digital communication technology into virtually every facet of our lives" (Splichal 2026, 49). Platforms as structures for relationships are becoming ubiquitous in work,

consumption, leisure, social relations, and political engagement. Communication is caught up in a persistent performative dimension. It hides that all interactions produce digital traces.

For the public, information is no longer simply content intended to circulate in a shared space that produces meaning and desire, actions and imaginations, utopias and revolutions. Information is becoming an economic resource integrated into platforms owned by private stakeholders. Personal and informational data merge with the goal of capturing attention and influencing attention. Shoshana Zuboff (2019), quoted by Splichal (2026, 10), describes this process as the result of surveillance capitalism, in which human behaviour is transformed into economically exploitable data. Digital platforms that *visibly* organise social interactions systematically exploit all behavioural traces. Visibility becomes a central resource and seems to contribute to the reconfiguration of the public sphere. Seeing and being seen, rather than observing, learning, knowing and participating, is becoming central in the public sphere. Existence becomes a product and a commodity. Visibility becomes a mechanism that structures online existence, determining the social and economic value of content. Splichal argues that this modification profoundly changes the nature of public participation. Digital interactions constantly produce content likely to attract attention in a saturated information environment. Individual contributions become micro-interventions designed to maintain or increase the actors' visibility.

3.2. The Performative Publicness

This dynamic leads to emergence of what Splichal describes as performative publicness, "a reimagined form of the pre-Enlightenment mode of *representative publicness*, which was rooted in the elitisation and instrumentalisation of visibility" (Splichal 2026, 94). In this communicational regime, public expression becomes inseparable from the logic of visibility specific to platforms. Public interactions are gradually transformed into performances designed to generate attention and recognition, adherence and validation. Platforms thus become spaces in which self-assertion takes the form of a permanent staging of individuality. Emotions, personal experiences, political opinions, and biographical trajectories become resources capable of generating visibility. While self-assertion has historically been based on collective symbolic mediations, Splichal tells us that digital visibility tends to produce a form of individualised self-assertion that is based on views, shares, comments, subscriptions, and likes. Social interactions thus become symbolic, geared towards the production and maintenance (and continuous upkeep) of individualised visibilities. Observation, explanation a co-construction are neutralised in favour of scenarios, strategic self-presentations, and scripts prescribing ways of sharing personal life experiences. The new theatre of social games transforms relationships with others into performative self-promotion. Personal experiences become resources mobilised in a constant competition for attention. Private life becomes integrated into platform capitalism. A new society of entertainment has emerged.

3.3. Hop-On-Hop-Off Effect

This logic of visibility is profoundly transforming the reality of public engagement. Interaction is shortened and economically exploited. Discussions emerge quickly, attract momentary attention, then disappear and reappear elsewhere. To illustrate this phenomenon, Splichal uses the metaphor of "hop-on-hop-off" buses, which are common in modern urban tourism (Splichal 2026, 109). He compares digital public spaces to bus tours that allow passengers to hop on and off freely at different stops throughout the city. On social media, individuals can *visibly* participate for as long and as intensely as they wish without committing to long-term discursive processes and without a *tangible* commitment that constitutes social ties. This intermittent participation corresponds precisely to the logic of the gig public. Public interactions become comparable to the forms of work characteristic of the gig economy. They are fragmented, temporary, precarious, and heavily mediated by platforms. Consequently, public engagement is an intermittent, intermediated activity. Digitised social interaction becomes information production encapsulated into economic systems based on data exploitation. As Splichal says, "commercial imperatives – now enforced and amplified by algorithms – entangle gig publics in a relentless cycle of generating the habitualised and contractualised will to visibility, overshadowing ideals of democratic public engagement" (Splichal 2026, 111).

The algorithmic systems that organise the flow of information contribute to what Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns have described as algorithmic governmentality (Rouvroy and Berns 2013). Rouvroy and Berns show that algorithmic devices do not merely analyse human behaviour: they contribute to the norms and rules of online social games, whose effects extend beyond the immediate, as there is no a priori fragmentation of the spaces where existence plays out. Recommendation systems, visibility algorithms, and personalisation mechanisms produce an information environment that influences individual behaviours and positions, without going through the traditional forms of democratic political regulation. Communification is therefore the result of the dissolution of the barriers separating consumption and knowledge. Capitalist platforms are systems for rationalising social life and relationships. They contribute to the disintegration of society.

3.4. Algorithmic Infrastructures, Hyper-Saturation and the Neutralisation of Public Discourse

One of the most significant effects of this platformisation of social interactions lies in the transformation of information circulation systems. Digital platforms are based on the virtually unlimited production and dissemination of content. The informational architecture of platforms is characterised not only by the proliferation of communication channels, but also by the creation of a hyper-saturated discursive environment in which content circulates at unprecedented speed and volumes. These devices are ontologically based on neutral technical elements. Splichal highlights the politics of

how they operate and the way the structure incorporates modalities that are no longer restrictive but transformative of meaning. Informational hyper-saturation is one means of action among others, made possible by instruments of dissemination and capture, determined by entrepreneurial policies of use. Public discussions tend to run out of steam. Hyper-saturated with information, the actors are no longer able to control the debate. The structure of platforms imposes invisible rules and determines what is visible and what is not. Even as platforms multiply spaces for public expression, they simultaneously contribute to weakening the ability of discourse to stabilise over time. Public controversies follow one another without necessarily producing the conditions for sustainable collective deliberation. Public discourse is losing its power and its means: "personal engagement and structural regulation coalesce, shaping the nature of digital interaction and its far-reaching implications for public discourse" (Splichal 2026, 112). For Splichal, this techno-capitalist mechanism jeopardises democracy by neutralising its foundations. As for Splichal, there's no doubt about "the influence of *capitalist economic dynamics* and governmentality strategies on reshaping the public realm, fundamentally altering the nature of the public and its democratic potential" (Splichal 2026, 3).

3.5. The Neutralisation of Discourse

Platform capitalism and its digital culture produce a phenomenon of discursive neutralisation. When discourse proliferates in an environment saturated with information, its ability to produce real, structuring effects weakens. Neutralisation manifests itself through the gradual dilution of positions in a continuous flow of information. Topics of public interest become just one item among many in an information environment flooded by massive amounts of data. This discursive neutralisation is reinforced by the algorithmic interfaces that organise the circulation of information. Recommendation systems favour content that is likely to generate engagement.

The negative transformations that Spichal analyses have also been studied by Bernard Stiegler (2006), who shows that online platforms contribute to the re-inscription of individual and collective psychological individuation processes. Individuals and groups are caught up in a persistent data-encrypted existence. Mediated social interaction is turned into informational events where data is made visible and is economically captured, which reinforces the dynamics of discursive neutralisation. When information flows are structured around the competition for attention, public discourse tends to fragment into short formats and discontinuous sequences. Political or social controversies become temporary events that circulate online without necessarily producing lasting effects.

There is no *hop-on-hop-offing* but rather a persistent tension between visibility and invisibility based on uncontrollable criteria which manage the circulation of data, a relational system that oppresses the subject. The subject is never free of his online activities, but always part of a silent production line.

3.6. The Silent Eco-Dynamic of Hypermodern Techno-Capitalism

A new public sphere has emerged that is made up of a multitude of places where deliberations are vague, diffuse, and constantly ongoing. The structure of relationships prevents collective processes from taking place. Algorithms and AI favour content that generates immediate engagement rather than in-depth debate. The interaction scripts offered by digital interfaces, such as likes, shares and comments, encourage rapid and performative forms of expression. The gamification of interfaces also plays an important role. Perhaps Splichal does not sufficiently discuss gamification's power. Notification systems, popularity indicators, and recommendation mechanisms encourage users to continuously produce content that is likely to increase their visibility. Online activity turns into a constant game where algorithms define the rules of the game.

McLuhan's statement "the medium is the message" resonates today as never before. All information has become a product and commodity in the techno-capitalism of platforms. The governance of social interactions tends to become entrenched in the technical infrastructures that organise the data flow. The power between humanity and technology is unbalanced and overdetermined by the capitalist economy. Rouvroy and Berns' (2013) notion of algorithmic governmentality highlights what is at stake in these power relations. The drivers of social regulation become non-humans, namely algorithms that feign intelligence, empathy, emotions, and attitudes.

Splichal's analysis of platforms, their economy of visibility and mechanisms of algorithmic governmentality, permits us to understand the structural, organisational and social conditions in which the gig economy emerges. It represents a profound change in the regimes of subjectivation, the definition of work and in the public's participation in democratic debates.

4. Hypermodernity, Digital Labour, and the Political Extension of the Gig Regime

The concept of the gig public developed by Slavko Splichal allows us to think more broadly about the socio-technological regime that characterises hypermodern societies. The changes observed in the digital public sphere are part of a more profound reconfiguration of social infrastructures, forms of work, and processes of individuation. In my own work, I have integrated the notion of the gig public with that of the factory of hypermodernity (Djouad 2025). In my book *The Hypermodernity Factory: Working with Relational Technologies*, I analyse the history of computerisation in France, its policies and economic investments, the forms of management that emerged, the disappearance of blue-collar workers who have been replaced by white-collar workers who are now ageing. I have shown that the gradual integration of digital technologies into social and professional environments is not limited to an instrumental transformation of professional practices. It is producing new forms of collective organisations. This echoes Splichal's reasoning that given their economic nature, platforms cannot be neutral. In the digital world, the production and coordination of

activities tend to merge. Social interactions, professional practices and forms of public expression (informal, trade union, inter-hierarchical) are now part of mechanisms common to work activities. Digital platforms are architectures where user behaviour becomes a data resource integrated into the economic workflows of techno-capitalism.

4.1. Digital Labour and the Gig Regime

The transformation of public communication analysed by Splichal can be linked to contemporary changes of digital work. The hypermodern organisation of office life, which involves activities on interconnected platforms that coordinate, control, measure, and reward workers using the logic of gamification, has resulted in the transformation of workplaces so that they are shaped by the algorithmic structures of platforms. These platforms determine the condition of access to work, the distribution of tasks, and the mechanisms for evaluating performance.

Splichal's concepts of the gig economy and the gig public allow us to understand the continuity between these hypermodern forms of work and contemporary changes in public participation. The organisational logic that structures platform-mediated work extends to the forms of public engagement in the public sphere. Publicness is gradually adopting a structure like that of digital labour.

The economic logic and the production system that together structure hypermodern work are extended into contemporary forms of public and civic engagement. The gig public is structured around a gig regime that redefines the boundaries between acting and producing, thinking and reacting, knowing and acculturating, between social networks and social ties. Digital platforms are now central and decisive in the public sphere. It seems that nothing exists without them. These changes develop new processes of subjectivation. Maryse Carmes and Jean-Max Noyer (2014) emphasise the role of technological narratives in shaping our collective actions and psyche. In the professional sphere, the discourse accompanying the development of digital technologies contributes to the construction of collective machines capable of producing new forms of social organisation where individuals cannot control the imposed dynamics and structures. The gig public is one of the political manifestations of this socio-technological regime. The transformations of the public sphere cannot be understood independently of the broader changes that simultaneously affect forms of work, processes of individuation, and the increasingly fragmented construction of social reality.

Both Splichal's notion of the gig public and my notion of hypermodernity show how platform capitalism and techno-capitalism work.

4.2. A Socio-Technological Structure of Generalised Mediation

Techno-capitalism is based on a socio-technological structure of generalised mediation that organises the circulation of information, the visibility of content, and the modalities of individual and collective participation. The structure of digital platforms simultaneously integrates communication, data production, and attention

management. This structure transforms human interaction into continuous information flows. Platforms are environments in which all communication and actions undergo the same mediation. As form impacts content, communication becomes a constitutive dimension of the interlacing of the economy and technology.

4.3. Productive Performance: The Manufacture of Hypermodern Regimes

Techno-capitalist platforms must be understood as productive work systems that generate competition for visibility. Social interaction constantly feeds production circuits in which seemingly ordinary actions (posting, commenting, sharing, reacting) become investment criteria whose values fluctuate continuously and are made up of data and attention. These flows circulate through technical architectures that transform human interactions into economic resources and signals of visibility.

Platforms clearly make technology the master of practical and intellectual existence, reifying our relational systems. Slavko Splichal shows how capitalist platforms democracy: Democracy no longer seems to be capable to exist in response to techno-capitalism.

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