



A Communicological Analysis on the Influence of Neoliberal Construction and the Communicative Power of Media in Governance Systems

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ABSTRACT

The neoliberal capitalist approach, mass media, and their patterns of communication, technological services, and cultural and creative industries have developed new hegemonic economic models and ideological diversities worldwide. These neoliberal approaches have affected every aspect of socio-ideological diversity, productive systems, and the cultural archetype of the masses, with neoliberalism occupying a prominent position. These processes of economic, technological, and media globalizations have facilitated and consolidated the expansion of the marketplace within the framework of post-truth strategic ideologies through global communicative phenomena. The role of neoliberalism as a structural factor has transformed the cultural reliabilities of the nations and has contextualized the elements of economic globalization over the past decades. The monetary structures have radically transformed the earlier media and cultural models and the process of communication. This authoritative facilitation of contemporary media standardization has structured and developed customizable media consumption with different lifestyles into pseudo-cultural processes. The convergence process of these different media businesses operates within industries combining the practices of financial capitalism and creative industries. The present media communication systems have developed patterns of the behaviour of consumers, with various personal devices, such as personal computers, smartphones, digital platforms, cultural hegemony, and algorithmic power, etc. These socializing and multidimensional hegemonic approaches of communicative users and their interactions have further prolonged neoliberal experiences both vertically and horizontally within consumer society. These neoliberal communicative processes have transformed idiosyncratic socio-cultural structures and reproduced a hierarchical world order through these mutually constitutive social phenomena. The related insights of this research further emphasize qualitative methodological approaches and open up new avenues for further research. The findings presented here aim to contribute valuable insights to the field and inspire further scholarly inquiries.



1. Introduction:

Neoliberalism (Vincent, 2009) has become a dominant ideological framework in the main fields of politics and economics, shaping the governing structure of free-market capitalism, influencing key policy decisions, and driving societal change worldwide since the late 20th century. Neoliberalism is a revitalized version of classical liberalism, which has been associated with American libertarianism. Neoliberalism is a modified version of classical liberalism in the 19th century, which emphasized laissez-faire economic policies. This has become the prevailing global model by the 1990s and has promoted economic, political, and social changes through competitive market principles, as outlined in agreements such as the “Washington Consensus”. It has promoted and prioritized market rationality, deregulation, and privatization, emphasizing collective values for economic efficiency (Harvey, 2005). Although the traditional view of the media emphasizes public deliberation, the neoliberal framework has expanded its influence to encompass the development of both the industry and ideological apparatus globally. Both of these media approaches have legitimized governance systems by shaping perceptions, authority, and the consent of the masses (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Habermas, 1989).

In this post-truth era, neoliberal structures have increasingly blurred the lines between factual information and ideological construction in the realm of communication. Currently, media organizations and digital platforms function as both commercial entities and political actors, acting as gatekeepers of information and promoting neoliberal logics of individualism, competitiveness, and consumerism (Brown, 2015; Couldry, 2012). The rise of global and transnational platforms like Meta, TikTok, and Google has further consolidated communicative power, with reflective implications for democracy, governance, and socio-cultural life.

The globalization of these communication technologies has expanded the creative industries and their cultural influence, enabling neoliberal models to extend beyond geographical, social, and national boundaries while embedding economic rationalities within mediological structures. As a result of media ownership, digital penetration, and direct communication, consumer identities and market logic are increasingly shaped by deliberative democratic practices while simultaneously reproducing global inequalities and further reinforcing neoliberal ideologies.

A key research gap in this study is the limited empirical analysis of how neoliberal communicative processes operate differently across diverse socio-cultural and regional contexts. There is also a need for more micro-level investigations into audience reception and everyday user interactions within algorithm-driven media environments. Furthermore, existing analyses have not sufficiently theorized the long-term implications of algorithmic governance on democratic participation and civic agency. Finally, more interdisciplinary approaches are required

to bridge communicological theory with data-driven studies of platform economies and media infrastructures. It further encourages interdisciplinary inquiry into how communicative power structures shape emerging forms of civic engagement, cultural production, and global inequality.

Research Objectives:

- To observe the role of media as both monetary trades and ideological apparatus under neoliberalism.
- To analyze the communicative practices and their dimensions of neoliberalism in shaping governance systems.
- To evaluate algorithmic evidence on media concentration, digital dispersion, and inequality in the neoliberal era.
- To assess the implications of neoliberal communicative processes for culture, governance, and democracy.

Research Questions:

- How has neoliberalism restructured communicative practices and developed governance models to transform the existing social and cultural potentialities?
- What role do media ownership, concentration, and digital platforms play in sustaining neoliberal power?

The above research questions will enhance academic understanding and critical thinking regarding the process of neoliberalism worldwide by examining how it influences the economic system, power structures, and communication phenomena within the hierarchical global order. The logic of neoliberal rationality has strengthened and transformed media platforms, their ownership structures, and governance processes around the world.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Neoliberalism as an Economic, Political, and Social Paradigm

Neoliberalism has been viewed as a rational framework that reconfigures governance through social relations and cultural production, emerging as a dominant model in the post-global era (Harvey, 2005; Brown, 2015). Although neoliberal formations began to take shape in the late 1970s, their political dominance became evident in the 1980s under the leadership of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010). This system of social transformation advanced market-oriented solutions, emphasizing deregulation and privatization (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism, as a process, regulates and simultaneously relaxes controls over interactions and relationships shaped by

the global economy. It restored the power of dominant classes through the expansion of social welfare systems, the protection of vested interests, and the growing influence of transnational corporations (Harvey, 2005). This economic, political, and social framework shifts both citizens and governance into managerial rather than participatory roles, emphasizing efficiency, competitiveness within market terms, and the adoption of entrepreneurial logic (Brown, 2015). The core economic principles of the neoliberal paradigm include privatization, deregulation to promote competition and efficiency, austerity, monetarism, and the opening of free trade, all aimed at creating and maintaining a stable and competitive market framework. Its political principles are reflected in depoliticization, market fundamentalism, constitutional limits on democracy, restricted state functions, and selective interventions, which together reshape and redefine the roles of the state and the relationships between government, citizens, and capital. Social functions under neoliberal politics are framed as a pervasive force that profoundly redefines both individual identity and community.

Neoliberalism has become the most influential paradigm, exerting direct effects on communication and media systems worldwide. Media organizations have increasingly shifted into profit-oriented industries where information is treated as a commodity. Consequently, news, entertainment, and other social and cultural products are no longer regarded as public goods; instead, they are shaped by consumer demand, corporate ownership, advertising processes, and structural changes associated with financialization and austerity measures (McChesney, 2008). The political and economic ideologies underpinning neoliberal policies further reinforce the expansion of free-market capitalism, thereby consolidating control over communicative structures.

2.2. Communicative Power and Governance

Neoliberalism has systematically removed governmental controls and consolidated ownership, resulting in a shrinking number of large corporations that drive commercialization, development, and promotion of the media landscape. This transformation has had a profound influence on journalistic culture and news framing. Within this media environment, market logic and profit motives increasingly outweigh public interests, fostering unprecedented levels of media consolidation. Deregulation and market-driven privatization have blurred the boundaries between public interest and commercial content. Jürgen Habermas (born in 1929), a social theorist in the traditions of pragmatism and critical theory, addresses the concept of communicative rationality by emphasizing the role of the public sphere in securing democratic legitimacy (Habermas, 1989). His theoretical approach highlights that legitimacy achieved through consensus in communicative processes is more rational and sustainable than legitimacy imposed through coercion.

During the neoliberal period, the media system primarily functions as a channel of market-driven communication rather than as a facilitator of rational deliberation (Calhoun, 1992). Communicative practices in this context prioritize persuasion, branding, and image management (Habermas, 2006), relying on engineered forms of communicative power rather than those grounded in collective deliberation. Under neoliberal conditions, mediated power has diversified cultural and social interactions while simultaneously shaping political discourses on global platforms. Manuel Castells (2009), a critical theorist, emphasizes the centrality of network power within digital networks, which are increasingly replacing traditional social formations as sites of influence and authority.

2.3. Media and Cultural Hegemony

The concept of cultural hegemony, as articulated by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, highlights the exercise of dominant power through cultural and ideological leadership. Power is maintained by shaping people's beliefs, norms, and values, thereby securing consent from subordinate classes and embedding market values into the everyday lives of the masses (Gramsci, 1971). Mass media, as an instrument of hegemony, plays a central role in disseminating ruling-class ideologies and framing discourses that normalize social hierarchies, nationalism, consumerism, and other dominant worldviews. The media functions as a cultural apparatus that amplifies hegemonic discourses, influencing mass consciousness and transforming ideologies into dominant norms. On digital platforms, media narratives and framings reinforce commercial identities, align social values with consumption, and naturalize inequality by portraying success as an outcome of individual effort (Mosco, 2009). Similarly, Jean Baudrillard's (1998) notion of the pseudo-culture underscores how signs and symbols become detached from material realities, continuing to structure desires and identities. This process legitimizes neoliberal governance and demonstrates that communicative power in media is socially constructed rather than natural.

Media fosters encoding and decoding processes that emphasize hegemonic frameworks, reinforcing commodified cultures globally within neoliberal ideologies. These cultural industry patterns commodify social life and distract the masses from the structural inequalities embedded in hegemonic systems. At the same time, the audience's ability to negotiate and resist meanings illustrates that culture is never absolute or total. Cultural requirements and hegemonic structures are therefore continually contested, reproduced, and reinforced through media practices. From a Neo-Gramscian perspective, media hegemony operates on a global scale, stimulating transnational cooperation while social media platforms and their algorithmic logics further embed existing ideological values into neoliberal dominant narratives. Through this process, media exports

hegemonic cultural forms and ideologies across borders, while simultaneously providing spaces for resistance and the emergence of alternative discourses. By setting agendas, the

media determines which issues are prioritized, while marginal voices are silenced, misrepresented, or excluded thereby strengthening dominant stereotypes. Ultimately, dominant ideologies are portrayed as natural, inevitable, and universally accepted, even as counter-hegemonic discourses continue to emerge in opposition.

2.4. Political Economy of Media

The political economy of media is one of the most influential perspectives for analyzing how power transforms the structures, content, and styles of public communication by shaping ownership, markets, technology, and government policies (Mosco, 2009). Media power is thus understood as both a political and economic institution that structures how citizens see, hear, and know. These dynamics have been marked by massive consolidation, with a shrinking number of corporations controlling larger shares of global communication markets and dominating cultural production (Mosco, 2009; McChesney, 2008). For example, in 1980, more than 50 corporations dominated the U.S. media landscape. Today, fewer than 10 conglomerates—including Comcast, Disney, and Warner Bros. Discovery—control the mainstream of content production and distribution, with substantial influence over cultural industries (Bagdikian, 2004; Statista, 2022).

Digital capitalism has further intensified these dynamics through the rise of platforms such as Google and Amazon, which accumulate vast amounts of behavioral data and engage in large-scale manipulations of attention (Zuboff, 2019). These platforms restructure the core dynamics of media through intermediary distribution systems, digital advertising markets, and algorithmic data extraction designed to predict and shape user behavior. This concentration of power creates new asymmetries in the form of algorithmic curation, market dominance, and control over visibility, while also raising regulatory challenges related to competition, privacy, and political manipulation.

The political economy of media, therefore, stands as a vital interdisciplinary field, linking political theory, policy studies, economics, and media studies to analyze the power structures of data-intensive platforms in the digital age.

2.5. The Propaganda Model and Post-Truth Politics

The Propaganda Model (PM) is one of the most influential critical theories in the field of mass communication. Developed by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, it explains the structural and economic factors that shape media practices in liberal democracies, demonstrating that media often serve the interests of powerful elites rather than functioning as neutral, independent watchdogs (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). From this perspective, media do not simply reflect reality but rather filter and align information with the economic and political interests of elites. These filters create dominant perspectives while excluding or marginalizing alternative viewpoints. The key filters of the propaganda model include:

- **Ownership** – Major media outlets are owned by large corporations whose political and business interests influence editorial decisions and content.
- **Advertising** – Media organizations rely heavily on advertising revenue, which incentivizes them to avoid content that could alienate major advertisers, often limiting critical coverage.
- **Sourcing** – News organizations depend on official sources and elite perspectives for a steady and credible flow of information, reinforcing dominant viewpoints.
- **Flak** – Journalists and outlets face pressure, backlash, or disciplinary actions that discourage controversial reporting or criticism of powerful actors.
- **Anti-Ideologies** – Media often frame issues through dominant ideological lenses that justify elite agendas
- **Algorithms** – In the digital age, algorithmic curation on social media platforms extends the propaganda model, reinforcing surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), shaping visibility, and privileging content aligned with dominant market and political interests.

The defining features of post-truth politics are emotion, belief, and identity, which increasingly shape public opinion. Contemporary post-truth politics are closely associated with disinformation, fake news, echo chambers, and algorithmic manipulation within digital media ecosystems. Propaganda models in the context of post-truth politics have further evolved in digital media, bypassing traditional institutional filters through mechanisms such as:

- **Systematic vs. Emotional Manipulation** – Information is controlled structurally, while both elites and non-elites (including influencers, populists, and trolls) manipulate narratives to appeal to emotion and identity rather than reasoned argument.
- **Digital-Age Filters** – Platforms such as Google, X/Twitter, Meta, and TikTok function as new gatekeepers, with content curated through data surveillance and algorithmic targeting (Fuchs, 2017). Flak mechanisms are amplified, facilitating disinformation campaigns, online harassment, and the undermining of existing cultural and nationalist ideologies.
- **Erosion of Epistemic Authority** – Post-truth politics undermines public trust by privileging elite interests and disseminating “alternative facts.” Algorithmic functions, social media ecosystems, and disinformation campaigns fragment the public into ideological or affective “tribes,” further polarizing social discourse.

The objective facts of the post-truth politics are emotion, belief, and identity that shape public opinion. Contemporary post-truth politics are associated with disinformation, fake news, echo chambers, and algorithmic manipulation in the ecosystems of the digital media. Propaganda models of post-truth politics have

evolved in the digital media landscapes, passing through institutional filters as follows. They are:

- **Systematic Manipulation vs. Emotional Manipulation**, which control information structurally, and the elite and non-elites (influencers, populists, trolls, etc.) manipulate narratives, attracting to emotion and identity.
- **Filters in the digital age** – Digital platforms like Google, X/Twitter, Meta, TikTok, etc., are acting as new gatekeepers, and the contents in these meta versions are handled by data surveillance and algorithmic targeting (Fuchs, 2017). Flaks amplify mostly the disinformation campaigns, online harassment, and cancellations of the existing cultures and nationalism ideologies too.
- **Erosion of Epistemic Authority** and post-truth politics erodes trust with the bias towards the elite interests receiving the alternative facts. These post-truth politics, along with algorithmic functions, social media ecosystems, and disinformation campaigns, fragment the public into tribes.

2.6. Communicology and Neoliberal Communication

The conceptual and theoretical analysis reveals that neoliberalism is not only an economic system that structures governance, culture, and the everyday life of the masses (Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2005). Its interdisciplinary communication processes and systems empower its communicative supremacy, cultural hegemony, and emphasis on communicology, encompassing both symbolic and structural dimensions (Fuchs, 2020). Neoliberal perspectives mostly constitute the communicative paradigm that reshapes the codes, context of communication, and channels, developing further the structural dimensions of communication (Castells, 2010). Neoliberalism develops new forms of subjectivity and socialization processes, reinforcing neoliberal values of individual responsibility and perpetual connectivity through likes, shares, and clicks, but genuine deliberation is marginalized (Fuchs, 2020; Couldry and Hepp, 2017).

3.3 Communicative Power of Media in Neoliberalism

The core aspect of the neoliberal media landscape is the concentration of ownership. The top ten media companies control over 80% of the global media industry, creating oligopolistic structures (Statista, 2022). Google and Meta alone accounted for 63% of worldwide digital ad spending in 2021, further blending communicative and economic power (Reuters Institute, 2022). These neoliberal interests diminish diverse perspectives and align communication content with the principles of consumerism, commodification, and the profit motive. Reality TV embodies neoliberal arrangements and ideals, particularly the notion of entrepreneurial self-management (Couldry, 2008). Digital platforms reinforce one-

way hegemonic communication, serving data-extraction mechanisms under the ideological frame of supposed deliberative participation (Fuchs, 2020). The commercialization of news constructs a communicological logic that fosters pseudo-participation, once again tied to the ideals of entrepreneurial self-management (Couldry, 2012).

4.1 Digital Platforms and Algorithmic Governance

Digital platforms structure their governance interactions, attention, and knowledge productions, shaping and flowing of information as well as economic and ideological imperatives within everyday communication practices through algorithmic architectures (Fuchs, 2020). Users within these digital formations are transformed into self-managing performers, who continuously optimize their behaviors in response to the structural dynamics of social inequalities. Algorithmic governance strengthens and reinforces neoliberal subjectivities and operates as an opaque decision-making system, strengthened by echo chambers, viral trends, and attention economies. These systems shape subjectivity, regulate sociality, and mediate participation while embedding commercial imperatives within communicative processes and democratic debate. Algorithms prioritize and promote content in ways that amplify sensationalism, polarization, and misinformation. This power of algorithmic governance can be further elaborated through an examination of contemporary digital formations worldwide. For examples

- Global internet penetration has developed from 16% in 2000 to 66% in 2022 (ITU, 2023).
- Expansion of smartphone adoption has developed the users from 23% in 2010 to 78% in 2022 (GSMA, 2023).
- 4.6 billion people (58% of the world population) use social media by the year 2022 (Statista, 2022).

The algorithmic power of the world develops global digital platforms and virtual reality processors, constructing personalized mediating social perception and experiences. Virtual reality is not merely a technological interface; it can be elaborated as a socially and economically governed space.

4.2. Global Internet and Digital Penetration

The Internet is the key driver of neoliberal communication in the world. The global internet can be extended as follows.

Table 1: Global Internet Penetration (2000–2022)

Year	Global Internet Users (%)	Global Population (Billions)	Internet Users (Billions)
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2000	16%	6.1	1.0
2010	29%	6.9	2.0
2020	59%	7.7	4.6
2022	66%	7.9	5.2

Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2023).

4.2.1 Post-Truth Era and Trust in the News:

Trust in the news in the era of neoliberalism can be elaborated as follows from the period of 2015 to 2022.

Table 2: Trust in News (Selected Countries, 2015–2022)

Country	2015 (%)	2018 (%)	2020 (%)	2022 (%)
Finland	62	65	69	70
UK	51	42	40	34
USA	40	38	36	31
Brazil	56	53	48	45

Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2022).

4.2.2 Political Communication and Social Media Penetration

Social media platforms have been one of the defining features of social behaviour in the world of neoliberal communicative power.

Table 3: Social Media Usage (2010–2022)

Year	Global Users (Billions)	% of Population	Dominant Platforms
2010	0.97	14%	Facebook, Twitter
2015	2.1	29%	Facebook, YouTube, Twitter
2020	3.6	46%	Facebook, YouTube, Instagram
2022	4.6	58%	Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram

(Statista, 2022).

5. Communicative power and the governance of the Neoliberal era

According to the above quantitative and qualitative facts, the media actively participates in framing the normative task force that underpins the social compliance and policy acceptance. These neoliberal powers extend and operate through multiple channels worldwide.

Global convergence - The neoliberal communicative power and its structures extend common patterns and reinforce transnational governance logics and their models, disregarding local political and cultural variations within the countries' authorities.

Ideological framing – Neoliberal models privatize for economic efficiency and develop the market logics, marginalizing the environmental, welfare, and alternative perspectives, aiming at individual responsibility with the prioritizing of media narratives.

Behavioral influences – Citizens' behavior and the consumption patterns, personalized contents, political engagements, etc., have been changed into the elite interests and market-oriented values, reinforcing the neoliberal consumerist ideals.

Policy legitimizations – The Media work as a conduit to rationalize governance decisions, such as deregulation, privatization, austerity, reduced welfare provisions, labor reforms, and market liberalization.

These conceptual and theoretical processes examine how neoliberalism functions through contemporary communication systems and media structures within the global order. The study argues that neoliberal communication patterns and media practices are not merely symbolic or representational phenomena, but measurable mechanisms that influence economic dominance, political authority, and social governance across societies. Through the expansion of digital communication technologies, media ownership, and algorithmic governance, neoliberal ideologies have become deeply embedded within everyday social interactions and institutional structures.

The above facts further explore how media platforms function simultaneously as commercial enterprises and political actors that shape public perception, civic participation, and ideological consent. In this context, communication systems contribute to the legitimization of neoliberal policies by reproducing hegemonic narratives related to individualism, consumerism, competitiveness, and market rationality. These communicative processes restructure civic engagement and integrate global populations into hierarchical neoliberal frameworks through technologically mediated forms of governance.

Moreover, the study critically analyzes the relationship between media power, governance systems, and socio-cultural transformation in the post-global era. It highlights how

algorithmic communication and digital penetration influence social relations, cultural production, and political consciousness while reinforcing global inequalities and dominant power structures. Ultimately, this research contributes to communicological scholarship by providing a critical understanding of

how neoliberal rationalities operate through media systems to construct ideological hegemony and sustain contemporary governance mechanisms worldwide.

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