

In his master's thesis, Ioannis sets out to examine the relations between three important modern phenomena: social movements, social media, and neoliberalism. After a concise study of the background of each of these fields, Ioannis develops his own theory on their mutual effects. He seeks to show how the neoliberal order has played an important role in the development of social media: in the guise of providing a platform for uninhibited self-expression, social media actually perceives its users as customers, instilling them with a sense of comfort and self-righteousness, on the one hand, while selling their information to advertisers, on the other. This feeling of comfort and self-righteousness, however, is achieved at the price of insulating users from those with different views and opinions. This policy of "divide and rule", according to the paper, makes users (who are also opinionated citizens), less capable of collaborating and organizing social protest than they were during the 1960s, for example. In addition, Ioannis dedicates one chapter to developing a theory, or experiment, he terms "the process of abstraction", which is supposed to help explain the phenomenon and processes he discusses.

Ioannis's paper is very well written, engaging the reader in the history of the topics he describes as well as the arguments he makes. It is written with clarity and precision that students and academics too often lack. In addition, it is based on a strong theoretical basis that includes scientific landmarks, such as Max Weber and Barrington Moore, and more recent writers, such as Paolo Gerbaudo and Manuel Castells.

The paper, however, suffers from a number of academic problems, some of which are more technical in nature, whereas others are more substantial.

The technical problems mainly involve citations, which Ioannis describes as APA, while they are in fact a mishmash of APA and Chicago. In addition, the bibliography is a complete mess: it has no discernible order, titles are full of mistakes, and some recur more than once (Howard Rheingold, for example). Nonetheless, these problems are relatively minor, as citations are still understandable, and these mistakes could be easily corrected with more attention. This does not attest to the research's generally high academic level.

The substantial problems concern argumentation and data. There are a number of important assumptions in the paper that are used in order to develop the main thesis, that are completely unsubstantiated and could be easily challenged. I'll note just a few examples:

1. On page 44 Ioannis discusses the relations between social media and the neoliberal order, arguing that people are motivated to work harder because "social media [...] present the

dream world of the bourgeoisie as something tangible and achievable through [...] hard and continuous work". This might have been true during the golden age of the "American dream" but lately it seems more younger people are challenging this logic. An important example is what Guy Standing calls the "precariat": the rising number of younger people who prefer freelance jobs, such as being Wolt couriers, to contractual jobs. This trend represents not just the desire for more freedom in work hours, but also the disillusionment of many with American-dream fantasies. Therefore, the "good life" people see on social media, doesn't seem to motivate more hard work in mundane jobs, but quite the contrary: either a rejection of middle-class normalcy, or the entertaining of "fast cash" dreams which the stock market and other internet scams peddle on a daily basis. Although many obviously still adhere to fantasies of work and progress, this vision seems to have changed among many.

2. The main assumption that social media impedes the organization of social movements is flawed, because nowhere is it shown that there are fewer social movements since social media came into our lives. For the argument to work, the reader should find data proving that since the 1960s there has been a decline in the organization and effectiveness of such movements, and that this decline is due to social media, and not any other factor. Otherwise, this is purely speculative and highly debatable.
3. Moreover, contrary to his own argument, Ioannis gives multiple examples of recent movements from the Arab Spring, through the Yellow Vests, and culminating in BLT. He makes a persuasive argument that some movements, such as Black Lives Matter end up losing impetus by becoming generalized and meaningless ("All Lives Matter"), but this correct, and potentially forceful argument, remains undeveloped.
4. It seems that an important part of this argument is based on the assumption that social media has replaced public squares, an important locus for social movements. Based on this premise, Ioannis notes some of the problems of social media, such as the superficiality of arguments on Twitter (p. 46), and comes to the conclusion that "social media facilitate the mobilization of short-term movements rather than long-term ones." (p. 47). But why assume that social media replaces serious social movements? I would argue that the political and ideological debates on social media merely replicate similar pointless discussions that were previously held in local pubs and cafes. The beer-inspired "expertise"

of pub regulars has now become a phenomenon encompassing all ages, sexes, and social classes. Rants and complaints have always been a part of society. Meaningful calls for change only appear sporadically, and by no means each time there's a rise in gas prices.

These problems are fundamental to the paper's hypothesis. Having a strong and elaborate opinion about things is not enough to develop a convincing argument. Unfortunately, the paper contains many similar unsubstantiated axioms. Perhaps some of them could be avoided with more consultation.

Nonetheless, the paper offers an original and interesting connection between three fields that are central to our times. In spite of the argumentative shortcoming, the thesis raises important questions, and tries to answer them with interest, originality, and profound theoretical context. Ioannis displays daring and ability that will surely be useful in his upcoming academic endeavors. I look forward to seeing how he develops the thoughts and ideas raised in this thesis in the future.

Final grade: 2