**Stream Title:** Borders Markets Build: New Forms of Inequality Under Neoliberalism 2.0

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**Stream Outline**

With the advent of 2.0 technologies, in communication studies the focus is on the digital divide more so than ever. This divide, separating the digital haves from the digital have nots has been conceptualised as a border that serves as a deciding factor that perpetuates specific forms of inequality. However, as pointed out by researchers (see Selwyn 2004), the digital divide is not solely determined by economic capital, but there are other forms of capital such as cultural and social that may render the digital border thicker. For example, looking from a skills perspective, Van Dijk and Hacker (2003) contend that it is the skills and usage gap that creates the divide, not the having or not having difference per se. However, the skills perspective entrenches the individual within the neoliberalism framework, where online production and consumption skills are key (see Gannon and Prothero 2016). On this platform, the ability to produce and consume posts are governed by taste regimes (see Arsel & Bean 2012). The online existence has long been conceptualised as consumption-obsessed (Kouzmin & Jarman 1999), and online space is not respective of difference (Thorne & Kouzmin 2008). On the one hand this is because the online space is not a “level-playing field” - it has little room for authenticity and democratic discourse and is under threat of the predatory actions of the apparatus of the state and corporations (Thorne & Kouzmin 2008; Thorne, 2005).

This stream aims to explore the new forms of borders that are created by the marketers and consumers alike on social media. In particular, gaining, accruing, and maintaining social and symbolic capital and the relationship of these mechanisms to the idea of the online entrepreneurial self (blogger, Instagram celebrity, Snapchat phenomenon) and the management of the online self need to be scrutinized. Furthermore, drawing on Kravets and Sandikci’s (2014) work on consumers labor towards being competently ordinary, marketers’ and cultural intermediaries’ choices of legitimation and how these choices wash away diversity is of interest. The role of acculturation in how embedded the neoliberal subject becomes in the digital divide game needs further attention.

This stream invites theoretical and empirical papers and posters from a range of disciplines, including, but not limited to management, cultural studies, communication, sociology, and history. The aim will be to collectively explore the mechanisms that tarnish diverse online subjects and their relationship with users perceptions of new forms of inequality (i.e. self-management, symbolic capital, social capital). Moreover, papers could explore the identification of resistance mechanisms that individuals utilise in order to fend off the uniformization of online identities and the management and government of individuals by corporations into being online neoliberal subjects.

**Possible themes include:**

Conceptual understandings of division mechanisms; maintaining diversity on web 2.0; micro and meso resistance strategies of online users to domination, government, and management by corporations; the impact of uniformity in practices and tastes on creativity; online inequality and conflict; inequality related discourses of corporations in the online space; experiences of symbolic inequality (on specific social media, for example, instagram); preparing young individuals for the challenges of online neoliberal world.

**Keywords**

Marketing, neoliberal subjects, inequality, digital borders

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