Territorializing the Ordinary

Regressive urban futures through TikTok

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Introducing regressive urban futures on social media

"What if Elon Musk were to govern Germany? […] High-tech nation Germany: Musk loves innovation. Under his leadership, we could experience a technological revolution." (Archive 2025, 52).[1] In the TikTok video, the narrator's voiceover features Elon Musk[2] standing in front of the German Bundestag, gazing hopefully into the distance while bathed in the warm glow of the evening sun. The background music evokes a sense of departure and hope for a better future. A user comments: *"The best thing that could happen to us. Elon is a visionary. I would follow him unconditionally. Dear God, make it happen." (ibid., 52).* Later, the video shows lively urban streetscapes that merge modern and traditional architecture. People stroll leisurely through streets that appear well-maintained, orderly, and peaceful. Musk appears as the German Chancellor, presenting supposed high-tech fixes to German cities – Hyperloop networks, drones to monitor public spaces – while envisaging national spatial expansion, including a German moon base.

The question of which futures are imagined, produced, performed, and ultimately materialized has become central to debates as established structures and certainties erode. The introductory example illustrates a far-right vision of German cities as right-authoritarian technocracies. The TikTok video, likely created using AI software, conveys a somber (yet hopeful) atmosphere, staging Elon Musk and his technological solutions as remedies for the perceived threats posed by the future. While the specific crises remain vague, the video implies radical change is inevitable

1 All of the quotes, from either literature or empirical sources, which were originally in German have been translated by the author.

2 Elon Musk, initially known for being a tech billionaire and symbol of entrepreneurial and technological innovation (Tesla, SpaceX, etc.), has increasingly revealed his alignment with far-right politics – most notably through his endorsement of Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election and his brief involvement in the subsequent administration – highlighting the growing entanglement of technological capitalism and far-right political interests.

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and presents a visionary picture of urban transformation. This example shows that far-right mobilizations are not solely driven by nostalgia, as commonly assumed (Becker and Stach 2021), but instead reveal a future-oriented dynamic. It ties into recent debates emphasizing the future-oriented dimensions of far-right politics. As Rhein (2023), Braun and Schwarz (2024), and Higgins (2025) note, far-right ideologies are not devoid of futurity; they may evoke decline through fear, but might also offer hope through visions aligned with their ideological frameworks.

In this contribution, I examine regressive far-right future imaginaries of the urban through TikTok. The term regressive is used in two ways. Firstly, I adopt Jaeggi's (2023) understanding of regression as an interpretive framework for an "experiential blockage": a deficient mode of crisis management that, in response to structural deficits, perpetuates (rather than transforms) the conditions of crisis. Secondly, I draw on the broad consensus in far-right research that identifies notions of inequality and hierarchical value attribution as core ideological features (Frindte et al. 2016). *Regressive* captures both the ideological content and the mode of future-oriented crisis response.[3] However, as I argue, these regressive imaginaries do not necessarily take overt, spectacular forms, such as violent fantasies or glossy, Musk-style high-tech visions of Germany. Instead, they can manifest subtly and inconspicuously. Viewing the future as implicitly and prefiguratively performed reveals how these visions gain traction and materialize, thereby shaping urban imaginaries and their territorial formations.

Social media platforms offer a productive space to analyze how urban futures are staged and collectively materialized. Their algorithm-driven architecture also plays a key role in amplification, as algorithms systematically prioritize content that is highly engaging and emotionally charged – traits often typical of far-right messaging (Doroshenko and Tu 2023; Huszár et al. 2022). TikTok has been shown to favor such content (Shin 2024). Therefore, I will focus on TikTok as a central arena for examining far-right future imaginaries. Fielitz and Marcks (2020) describe this as "digital fascism," highlighting TikTok's relevance for researching how these imaginaries materialize. Moreover, TikTok is well-suited to exploring their future-oriented dimensions. As Anderson (2010) argues, futures in the present are enacted through models, scenarios, expectations, hopes, or in visual forms. Future imaginaries are, thus, not abstract, but are embedded in contemporary practices. They take spatial form – through architecture, planning, visual aesthetics, or media. TikTok frequently features such spatial references, with urban space becoming an important medium through which imagined futures are projected, as I will show.

3 This contribution builds on a recent debate – in which the author has participated – that examined the relationship between Jaeggi's concept of regression and far-right imaginaries of the future (Braun and Schwarz 2024).

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To analyze this, I draw upon the concept of imaginative territorializations (Seichter, Kamuf, and Ludwig 2025), which helps to examine how far-right urban futures are produced and materialized through TikTok. I focus on the racist trope of "Talahon,"[4] a term originally used in self-empowering ways by post-migrant communities, but which was later appropriated and transformed into a racializing category. Adopting a praxeological perspective, I analyze this figure as a starting point for the collective production of far-right imaginaries and their regressive territorializations. I conceptualize them as territorialization of the *ordinary* – processes of spatial reproductions, differentiations, and demarcations that create spaces that appear to be ordinary and unremarkable. My use of the ordinary draws on a Gramscian understanding of senso commune (Gramsci 1994, Notebook 11, §12, and §13), which refers not to individual opinion, but to socially and historically sedimented worldviews that seem self-evident and natural in everyday life. They often serve to naturalize specific social arrangements and are shaped by values, norms, accessible knowledge, and by affective attachments (Sutter 2016, 68f), even though unordinariness is not simply the opposite of the ordinary, but can itself be absorbed into senso comune as a sign of threat or decline. What appears as an orderly or normal representation of space is, thus, neither uncontested nor neutral, but is instead embedded in hegemonically shaped and politically contested understandings of the social world. The *ordinary*, then, is a powerful imaginary in which intentions and desires materialize as everyday aesthetics and as apparent spatial normality – a form of normality that is longed for precisely because it radiates an atmosphere of stability and ease. These spaces, while evoking familiar, positive affects, are embedded in socio-political frameworks shaped by racist and far-right ideologies.

In order to develop this argument, I will ask: What imaginaries of regressive urban futures emerge on social media, and how are they digitally co-produced and materially territorialized in a sense of the *ordinary*? To answer this, I outline my theoretical framework, present my empirical case, analyze regressive urban futures, and conclude with reflections on the hybrid territorialization of the *ordinary*.

Grounding social media spaces

Various theoretical traditions offer useful entry points to grasp urban future imaginaries on social media. A prominent one from Science and Technology Studies is the concept of socio-technical imaginaries: collectively held, publicly performed

4 The term Talahon is a linguistic derivation from the Arabic phrase *Taeal Huna*, which translates to *Come here*. It should, therefore, be understood as an imperative rather than as a designation for a person (Trappe 2024).

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visions of desirable futures that are animated by shared understandings of social life and normative orders (Jasanoff 2015). This framework is valuable for highlighting the technological embeddedness of imaginaries and their role in shaping institutional and material orderings. However, while influential in analyzing how technologies co-produce visions of the future, this concept lacks an explicit and differentiated spatial dimension – which I place at the center of my analysis. In urban studies, scholars have examined future imaginaries with a strong spatial focus (e.g., Çinar and Bender 2007; Lindner and Meissner 2018), yet such approaches often fall short of capturing the spatial, technological differentiations, and overlaps that imaginaries generate in a pluralized, fragmented society. To address this, I draw on theories of prefiguratively performed hybrid spaces and imaginative territorializations to understand social media as continuously grounded – that is, as anchored in hybrid digital-material spatial practices.

Entangled spaces of prefigurative practices

The concept of hybridity is useful to understanding social media within its material embedding between online and offline spaces. In spatial theory, hybridity refers to the dismantling of previously separated domains, such as the real and the virtual, thereby emphasizing analog-digital co-production (e.g., Bauriedl and Strüver 2018; Townsend 2013). Long-dominant views of cyberspace, as a parallel realm, have been critiqued as reductionist and the linear cause-effect model of technology's impact on space has been revised (Graham 1998). Graham (1998, 180) instead speaks of "socio-technical hybrids" that reject a strict separation between the social and the technological. De Souza e Silva (2006) was among the first to frame digital-analog co-production as hybrid, shaped by mobility, connectivity, and sociability. In their 2025 revision, she and her co-authors further stress how power dynamics influence access, perception, and agency (de Souza e Silva, Campbell, and Ling 2025). This hybridity is visible in urban contexts, where digital infrastructures increasingly shape spatial experience, governance, and everyday life (e.g., Graham and Marvin 2002). Social media, then, is not a separate digital sphere, but is instead a hybridized form of spatial production.

Understanding social media as hybrid space calls for attention to be paid to the practices unfolding within these entangled environments. This includes more-than-human practices, as social media functions like an information-processing, automated system. Kelty (2020) describes TikTok as a collective in which users act together while algorithmic relations evolve through machine learning and AI. Content creators are embedded in relational structures; they draw on experiential knowledge, but cannot fully control the structures that they operate within (Otto 2023). Continuous swiping, scrolling, and liking, along with interactions with images, data, and text, all serve to shape algorithmic logic. These interconnected

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practices co-produce widely circulated visual and textual content. Socio-technical connectivity, thus, involves more-than-human participation: algorithmic regulation is not merely technical, but instead actively contributes to the production of social realities and possible futures.

"It is not the future itself, but the future as a plan of will, that negates the given" (Arendt 1998, 39). Arendt points to how action relates to the future through practice, shaping what is considered desirable – or not. I argue that practices actively produce and prefigure the future. As Anderson (2010, 783) puts it, futures are "embodied, experienced, told, narrated, imagined, performed, wished, planned, (day)dreamed, symbolized, and sensed." Koch et al. (2016) develop this further via practice theory, showing how everyday actions performatively bring forth and prefigure futures. They define future practices as patterned ways in which actors imagine futures and integrate them into routines (ibid.). Futures, thus, emerge in situated practices that are embedded in social orders. Drawing on Sörensen (2023, 298), I refer to these as prefigurative practices – engagements involving "negotiation, influence, transformation and shifts in power relations." Such practices enact visions of what should – or should not – become reality. In this way, imaginaries are prefigured and materialized through socio-technical practices on social media, shaped by user interaction and algorithmic logic.

I understand social media as grounded in both embodied experience and in technological systems, co-producing social realities that express desired and rejected futures. Building on Jaeggi, it is crucial not only to consider what futures are being imagined, but also how they appear progressive due to the technological conditions of their production. Social media platforms present content with tools of (associated) technological modernity; smooth interfaces, high-resolution imagery, and handheld production all suggest innovation, immediacy, and relevance. This notion of progress can, however, conceal certain imaginaries' regressive dimensions. As Jaeggi (2023, 226) argues, "If progress is 'change within change,' then regression is 'regressive change within change': an inadequate response to transformation that prevents the proper confrontation with and the reality-appropriate shaping of actual processes of change." Social media's visual and affective technological registers may lend a progressive gloss to imaginaries that, rather than confronting structural conflicts, might offer insufficient responses thereto. This makes social media a particularly ambivalent site of regressive futures – not in spite of its aesthetics of innovation, but precisely because of them.

Territorializing imaginaries

The concept of imaginative territorialization (Seichter, Kamuf and Ludwig 2025; Terra-R 2025) offers a useful lens for analyzing how powerful imaginaries become spatially anchored, thereby generating dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, in

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order to examine urban future imaginaries on social media. In human geography, imaginaries are understood as constructions through which actors perceive and negotiate social and spatial relations – relations that shape socio-spatial structures in turn (Gieseking 2017). This requires moving beyond the dichotomy of materiality and imagination; realities neither precede their material construction, nor do materialities pre-exist imaginaries – they are co-constituted and materially realized (Lossau 2021).

A classic example of this is Said's Orientalism (2019), which shows how representations like the *Orient* reflect Western imaginaries, rather than being empirical geographies. Space, thus, becomes a medium for symbolic meaning and identity formation (Reuber 2012). Through this, the positioning of *Self* and *Other* produces both belonging and differentiation. The imaginary lens highlights how space is represented and mobilized in identity-making. Jasanoff (2015) and Anderson (2016) both show that imaginaries are effective at the national level, but they also operate on smaller scales and in everyday contexts. Terra-R (2025) refers to these as imaginaries of a *territory*, in which spatial classifications and social categorizations intersect to define belonging and exclusion. Such territorial representations often reproduce essentialist and racialized logics by assigning certain bodies to particular spaces in seemingly naturalized ways, thereby reinforcing boundaries of belonging and exclusion.

As Hall (1999) reminds us, however, neither identities nor spaces are fixed. Imaginaries of the nation or the *Orient* are abstract constructs that appear stable but are, in fact, fluid. Such dominant territorial representations obscure the multiplicity of spatial realities – realities shaped by ongoing negotiations, diverse uses, and varying meanings across experiences and scales. While the concept of *territory* that I outlined draws on Anglophone debates (e.g., Elden 2009; Sack 1986), Terra-R (Streule et al. 2025; Terra-R 2025) advocate integrating Latin American perspectives on *território* (Porto Gonçalves 2006; Santos 2021). This view represents *território* as a continuous process of contestation that is shaped through situated practices (Schwarz and Streule 2024). It shows that imaginative territorialization is not merely discursive. As Bialasiewicz et al. (2007) argue, but that spatial imaginaries also have a performative dimension – embodied in everyday action. Imaginative territorializations are, thus, multilayered, overlapping spatial imaginaries that manifest discursively and through practices of both belonging and exclusion. This process must be situated within hybrid spatial production, where digital and analog spaces co-constitute each other. The interplay of hybridity, prefigurative practice, and imaginative territorialization allows us to analyze social media as a space in which spatial and identity production unfold through interconnected digital-material practices that prefigure futures. Social media not only represents, but also intervenes in the making of territorial orders. This becomes evident, for example, in TikTok videos that

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frame urban futures as either under threat or desirable, as the following empirical example illustrates.

The racist trope "Talahon" on TikTok

TikTok, operated since 2017 by the Chinese parent company ByteDance, is a short video platform with integrated social networking features (Otto 2023). Otto (2023, 40) describes it as "a network with tight meshes," where few escape the logic of reproduction. The platform is shaped by the entanglement of pop-cultural and political content, and a self-referential dynamic driven by algorithmic regulation, recommendations and data collection – a serial, meme-based logic beyond user control. Social media is increasingly recognized as a key factor in far-right mobilization (Fielitz and Marcks 2020; Strick 2021). Contrary to early visions of the internet, as a space of universal freedom and participation (Winter 2010), digital platforms have become fertile grounds for exclusionary and degrading far-right structures. TikTok, in particular, has emerged as a central arena for far-right agitation – its algorithmic curation and platform aesthetics amplifying such content (Verwiebe 2024). Far-right actors no longer operate in secret, but appear increasingly in public (Strick 2021).

It is not prominent actors alone that play a role here, though. On TikTok, seemingly insignificant videos can gain wide reach, given that the specific algorithmic logic promotes content based on engagement metrics rather than the prominence of its creators (Otto 2023). In summer 2024, a trend around the term "Talahon" gained traction. Coined by young users of color, the term was initially used in self-identifying and self-empowering videos set to the song "Ta3al Lahon" by rapper Hassan (e.g., Archive 2025: 4, 5, 6, and 11) – a practice Yildiz and Hill describe as migrant youth subverting dominant representations (Yildiz and Hill 2014). Over time, the meaning shifted, and comment sections show blue hearts or airplane emojis – symbols associated with the AfD and deportations – alongside remarks like "foreigners out" (Archive 2025, 6). Simultaneously, parody videos emerged that caricatured "Talahons" using racist stereotypes. So-called explanatory videos describe them through supposed features, such as Gucci caps, waist bags, large (male) groups, riding e-scooters, or "shadow boxing" (e.g., Archive 2025, 14, 32 and 33). This *Othering* process – constructing and marking the *Other* (El-Tayeb 2016) – reveals the racist devaluation of individuals based on ascribed behavior and appearance. Under the guise of humor, young, racialized men (and occasionally women, under the label "Talahina") are both homogenized and excluded. What began as a self-designated term became a racialized insult – a new synonym for old slurs like "foreigner." This culturalist form of racism (Balibar 1995) reinforces a stigmatizing social exclusion that is grounded in racist ideologies.

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I use digital ethnography to examine imaginaries of regressive urban futures linked to the trope of "Talahon" and their territorialization. This reflexive approach studies everyday environments and how they are shaped by digital technologies, treating platforms like TikTok as embedded in daily life (Pink et al. 2016). In an exploratory phase, I created a private TikTok account, followed relevant actors,[5] and observed routines and content flows (Bareither and Schramm 2023). TikTok's algorithmic infrastructure required constant reflection, given that content is filtered and personalized. Since control over what appears is limited, I followed Markham and Gammelby's (2018) flow-oriented approach, adapting to platform logics. After encountering the term "Talahon" in various videos, I shifted my focus to this narrative, documenting recurring visual patterns and anything related to the field. I then compiled an archive of video metadata (e.g., uploader, hashtags, music, and engagement)[6] to analyze how *ordinary* urban spaces are staged as desirable futures.[7]

Socio-technically designed futures

Regressive urban imaginaries become territorialized through TikTok in multiple ways. The trope of "Talahon" reveals two far-right imaginative territorializations that have become visible within the digital TikTok spheres that I have examined. I outline these in order to show how hybrid forms enable some future imaginaries while obscuring others.

Urban threats: racialized imaginaries of disorder

One dominant frame presents the urban as a threat or as an enemy space. While far-right mobilization is often linked to rural regions (Braun 2024), TikTok videos using the term "Talahon" show that urban spaces also play a key role in far-right imaginaries – especially in framing certain areas as illegitimate, migrant spaces. The original self-designating videos are usually filmed in urban settings such as train stations or shopping streets. The regressive appropriation of the term specifically targets these spaces and conveys its messages through them.

5 I followed public accounts exclusively. All of the videos used in the digital ethnography were publicly accessible at the time of data collection.

6 The archive lists entries for each video along with individual metadata. In this text, I refer to the archive and the corresponding entry number (e.g., Archive 2025, 1).

7 Note towards ethical consoderations: While my account was private, my research activity was not disclosed – contrary to standard ethnographic ethics. For security reasons, I refrained from making my presence as researcher visible; this is common in far-right research (Hedtke and Beurskens 2025).

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Figure 1: The TikTok video stating "Never again Prinzenbad" demarcates itself from the perceived urban threat of unordinary territorializations.

Screenshot from TikTok, July 8, 2024.

A video titled "Where do they spawn near you?"[8] (Archive 2025, 20) marks cities like Hamburg, Cologne, and Berlin as migration hotspots, with Berlin's supposed "spawn rate" of 20,000. The English term spawn originally refers to laying a large

8 The original version, for a better understanding, is: „Wo spawnen sie bei euch hin?"

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number of eggs (Cambridge Dictionary 2024) and in gaming describes "the act of making a character, object, monster, or entity appear in the game world" (Streamers Visuals 2023). Both meanings imply sudden appearance or rapid proliferation. Likely borrowed from this context, the term is used to metaphorically describe the perceived spread of certain groups, thereby revealing an underlying biologistic and social-Darwinist concept of race. Blurred satellite images reinforce associations of cities as chaotic, grey, and confusing. Even more explicitly dehumanizing is a video commenting: "metropolis: frequent occurrence (10/10)" (Archive 2025).

Specific sites are repeatedly mentioned within this trend. Train stations function as spatial anchors in the original, self-designated videos (e.g., Archive 2025, 6). A user comments on a clip of teenagers dancing in front of Bremen's central station: "Nice station—just not what's in front of it" (ibid., 6). Another writes: "Every central station within a two-kilometer radius in Germany" (ibid., 1). Explanatory clips attempt to map "spaces without Talahons." One user lists: "Places where Talahons are 100% guaranteed include: shisha bars, train stations, inner cities, funfairs, public pools, and REWE supermarkets after 10 PM" (ibid., 14). Comment sections amplify these imaginaries by using emojis that affirm the narrative. A post states: "Stuttgart city library—Talahon share 70%—that's a spawn point" (ibid., 21). Public swimming pools are also frequently mentioned (e.g., ibid., 21, 25 and 28), likely due to the racially charged debates around them during summer 2023 (Klinke 2023), as suggested by a video stating: "Places without Talahons […] never again Prinzenbad" (Archive 2025, 25, see figure 1). While the tone is often ironic or humorous, the implications are serious. The baseless and arbitrarily high percentages foster a racialized sense of disorder. Visibly migrant, especially young male, groups in public space are associated with chaos and with a lack of control, thereby projecting racist imaginaries onto specific urban sites.

These projections onto urban spaces share a common perspective: the city is imagined as chaotic, disorderly, and disproportionate – a condition often attributed to migration. The imaginaries are both collectively produced and reinforced by TikTok's algorithmic logic, which privilege simplified, affectively charged, and seemingly self-evident knowledge claims aligned with hegemonic worldviews, such as those concerning migration. Particularly relevant is the socio-technical co-production of space that operates through distortion, disinformation, and a one-sided narrative. Whether these spaces exist beyond TikTok or reflect real urban experiences remains unclear. However, through a form of communication shaped by disinformation and socially exclusive humor – an amusing experience for some, a racist one for others – they reference far-right ideologies. These include notions of overpopulation and "population replacement" that portrays certain groups as overrepresented and as threatening to the spatial and cultural order (Weyand 2023, 157). The videos, thus, construct a collectively produced image of regressive urban fu-

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tures as *unordinary* territorializations – anchored in far-right ideology, but without expressly spelling that out.

Urban desires: purist imaginaries of the *ordinary*

In contrast, the urban is simultaneously imagined as a space of possibility– a canvas for aspirational futures devoid of perceived disruptions. Alongside the imaginative territorialization of spaces associated with migration—often termed "Spaces with Talahons"—there is a recurring emphasis on places presumed to be free of this constructed, racialized group. One video presents a ranking titled "*Places with the fewest talahons,*" showing not only mountains, but also primarily urban-coded spaces such as the organic supermarket Alnatura, libraries, concert halls, and churches (Archive 2025, 32) – spaces evoking elite culture, education, the fine arts and (Christian) spirituality.

Other videos refer to similar spaces, with historic city centers playing a prominent role. Polish cities—like the old town of Wrocław— are highlighted and implicitly framed as role model for restrictive migration policies (e.g., Archive 2025, 26 and 36, see figure 2). Responding to a comment asking for the location, one reply simply states: "Breslau," followed by the remark "former German territory" (ibid., 26) – a historical-geopolitical reference subtly evoking nationalist or revisionist sentiments and inscribing them into imagined spatial futures**.** Another comment about a recent trip to Poland reads: "Spent two weeks in Poland and it's beautiful [praying hands emoji] such friendly people, everything clean, 10000% better!" (ibid., 36). In a different example, a user declares their store a "Talahon-free zone", stresses the need to act, and places a sign on their shop window (ibid., 39).

Places like libraries, historic town centers, and concert halls are idealized as coveted sites of high culture within German cities. This idealization goes beyond cultural capital or aesthetic taste – it constructs a powerful imaginary of the *ordinary*. What appears to be simply normal or even civilized urban space is visually coded through quietness, order, and light. These scenes present a spatial commonness valued precisely for appearing undisturbed and self-evident. The visual language evokes care and preservation. Public libraries, for example, appear as refuges of education and tranquility; historic city centers appear as heritage sites preserved for a white, autochthon population. Human presence is often minimal – well-dressed passersby reflect bourgeois respectability. These portrayals promote a notion of *ordinariness* in which urban space is framed as racially pure and culturally stable. This idea of the *ordinary* becomes hegemonized through repeated circulation and aesthetic framing. The trope of "Spaces without Talahons" operates here as a potent, digitally co-produced imaginative territorialization of desirable urban spaces, thereby naturalizing a hegemonic vision of the *ordinary*.

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Figure 2: The TikTok video stating "Poland – the country without Talahons" is imagining the old town of Wrocław as urban desire.

Screenshot from TikTok, July 18, 2024.

Territorializing futures

Together, these two narratives shape a powerful dichotomy in urban imaginaries: on the one hand are denied spaces – marked by migration and racial *Otherness*; on the other hand, there are desired spaces – clean, *white*, and implicitly exclusionary. Both define boundaries of belonging and exclusion, yet these territorial dis-

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tinctions are not fixed. Rather, they are continuously (re)produced through sociotechnical and collective practices that are enabled by the digital realm. Users do not passively consume these imaginaries – they actively shape them: uploading content articulates territorial visions; liking affirms and boosts visibility and commenting reinforces or reconfigures them through anecdotes, stereotypes, or emotions. Even watching constitutes a performative act of witnessing (Schankweiler, Straub, and Wendl 2019), thereby reinforcing visibility and normalizing content. These practices shape how space is imagined, influencing how urban futures are collectively envisioned. *Ordinary* and *unordinary* spaces emerge as dominant imaginative territorializations that are enabled through the digital realm. As hegemonic (yet partial) representational territories, they obscure territórios – such as the empowering use of *Talahon* – and silence marginalized voices, undermining their spatial claims in the process. These effects extend beyond the platform, producing exclusion and alienation in everyday urban life. In one video, a young man expresses his fear of deportation to Bulgaria after receiving hate comments on dance clips. Regardless of the actual threat, the affective impact is real and may resonate with other racialized youth, thereby reinforcing the sense of being policed both offline and through one's digital presence.

This illustrates how platform-based discourses intersect with everyday embodied and emotional experiences, thereby producing material and affective consequences. The binary of *ordinary/unordinary* leaves little room for understanding space as processual or for understanding identities as fluid. Instead, two fixed urban futures take center stage that normalize a racialized, exclusionary vision of urban life. At its core lies the persistent framing of migration as a threat – a logic drawn from far-right discourse. Yet migration is a structural condition of the present, shaped by global crises, war, exploitation, and climate change. Framing it as inherently harmful and responding by attempting to erase it from public space – physically and digitally – is analytically misleading and inadequate as a political response. This becomes evident in TikTok videos that seek to remove figures associated with migration from public life and urban space. Though often playful in tone, they reinforce exclusionary meanings and present a regressive (yet seemingly coherent) vision of urban futures. The resulting urban imaginaries – devoid of racialized *Others* – are portrayed as desirable, promising safety, order, and a better life. Following Jaeggi (2023), their regressive core lies in their inadequate and discriminatory response to given social challenges. Hence, instead of addressing structural issues, these narratives present an appealing and (seemingly convincing) alternative vision of urban life that gains traction with many.

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Hybrid territorialization of the *ordinary*

The racist narratives of *ordinary* and *unordinary* spaces – quiet libraries vs. chaotic train stations, peaceful old towns vs. overcrowded swimming pools – serve as core motifs in regressive urban futures. As shown, TikTok enables the continuous materialization of such imaginaries through socio-technical practices. Uploading, liking, commenting, and witnessing content makes territorial boundaries tangible. Algorithmic systems reinforce this by boosting content aligned with dominant ideals, thereby fostering belonging in perceived ordinary spaces, while excluding others. The *ordinary* refers to familiar urban spaces perceived as calm, intellectually oriented, undisturbed, and publicly accessible. A defining trait is their imagined stability: they appear fixed, best preserved in their current or in a previous state, in a fashion detached from historical complexity or plural notions of belonging. Thus, the *ordinary* functions as a space of continuity, evoking regressive urban futures not through overtly dystopian aesthetics, but instead through a seemingly positive one. This is central to their appeal: they promise safety, normalcy, and non-disruption. Yet they are sustained by racist disinformation, exclusionary humor, and logics of *Othering* – reproducing socio-political structures aligned with far-right ideologies. Although its counterpart, the *Unordinary*, has been framed in postcolonial and queer theory as a site of resistance – there being associated with fluidity, hybridity, and the subversion of dominant norms – it is here mobilized within a regressive logic. The very markers of disorder and disruption are used not to open up space, but to delimit it as signs of illegitimacy. This shows how territorialization is not inherently progressive or reactionary, but rather depends on the meaning-making practices through which space is performed.

TikTok videos can be interpreted as socio-technical coproduction of far-right narratives that frame migration as a problematic threat, using tropes such as overpopulation and demographic replacement. The portrayal of desirable spaces as escapes from these threats can, following Jaeggi (2023), be understood as regressive – that is, as inadequate modes of problem-solving. While certain spaces are singled out for their high "spawn rates," others are idealized as "Talahon-free." Both forms draw on and reproduce the same narrative, blocking critical engagement and the development of progressive alternatives. These imaginaries derive their plausibility not from nostalgic retreat, but rather from appearing to be coherent, identity-forming responses to the present – seemingly modern, dynamic, and detached from overt far-right symbolism. The regressive moment lies in how these imaginative territorializations simultaneously offer a promising alternative vision of urban life, while also obscuring underlying social issues and reinforcing racial exclusion, rendering their political effect both compelling and problematic. This challenges the notion that far-right urban imaginaries are necessarily spectacular or overtly representational (Bodenschatz, Sassi, and Welch-Guerra 2015). The examples here rely on

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everyday aesthetics. Freistein, Gadinger, and Unrau (2022) similarly show that far-right visuality may manifest through seemingly benign imagery. This subtlety is key to their effectiveness: the more they blend into the surface of progressive modernity, the more persuasive and normalized they become.

Digital platforms host the negotiation of conflicting territorial imaginaries that do not merely represent symbolic visions, but that actively co-construct broader social realities. These imaginaries are prefigured through embodied and algorithmically mediated practices, making them materially grounded. What appears as coherent and appealing visual narratives emerges from contested processes of imaginative territorialization. This perspective reveals a layered landscape: dominant spatial futures gain traction, while others are marginalized or silenced – shaped by the socio-technical dynamics of digital platforms.

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