

## **“It is, like any space, full of possibilities”**

### Interview on spatial contestations and far-right mobilizations in the digital age

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*Jason Luger, Zita Seichter, and Michael Krell*

In February 2025, the president of the United States shared an AI-generated video depicting the territory of Gaza – devastated by Israeli bombardment – reimagined as the Riviera of the Middle East: streets appear lined with luxury boutiques, modern penthouses, and beach parties, featuring Elon Musk dancing beneath flying banners<sup>1</sup> (Trump 2025). This short clip, shared millions of times and viewed by a global audience, serves not only as a provocation, but also a digitally mediated fantasy of territorial transformation. This is not a technological sideshow – it is an expression of territorial desire, staging a spatial imaginary that both claims and reorders place.

This video is one among many expressions of territorial desire, formation, and contestation in the context of the global rise of authoritarian, far-right actors, movements, and parties. We have been engaging with the spatial dimension of far-right mobilization in times of intensified border regimes, exclusions grounded in powerful constructions of hierarchical difference and human devaluation, as well as shifting geographies of belonging around contested notions of identity, security, and place as part of the author collective Terra-R, of which two of us – Zita Seichter and Michael Krell – are members. We know that far-right mobilizations happen “not in a void but in concrete spaces and, as such, continue to produce far-right geographies” (Terra-R 2024, 1). Their actors appropriate spaces in a variety of ways, often employing violence, thereby shaping societies in a physically and materially tangible way. In so doing, the far-right challenges opposing hegemonies while manifesting their own. Terra-R approaches these spatial practices as territorializations, understanding them as multifaceted processes and practices that shape spatial differentiations (Terra-R 2025).

However, the introductory example of Trump’s techno-authoritarian imaginary of Gaza showed that it is insufficient to understand the far-right as being merely

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1 See: Donald Trump (2025), *Instagram*, 24 February. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/realdonaldtrump/reel/DGhfpgHsOg6/> (Accessed July 28, 2025).

physically and materially grounded. The video and its global resonance would neither have been possible in this form nor would it have achieved such an impact and level of circulation without digital technologies – AI-generated video production enabling its creation, social media platforms (first published on Truth Social) serving as its channel of distribution, and not to mention the consumerized infrastructures of digital services and internet access that allow for the consumption and spread of such content in the first place. Rather than treating such technological dimensions as peripheral, they are instead integral to contemporary spatial practices. Consequently, an analysis of contemporary society that disregards the digital dimension or treats it as isolated will fall short. Instead, digitalization is deeply intertwined with material spatial practices, shaping territorial formations that produce socially differentiated forms of inclusion and exclusion. Equally, far-right mobilizations operate in hybrid modes (Krell, Zschocke, and Ludwig 2025; see also Seichter in this edited volume). Nevertheless, these spatial formations remain insufficiently explored – particularly in terms of how they entangle digital and material modes of territorialization, in terms of their technological affordances, and in terms of their embodied, spatial effects.

In this chapter, we aim to extend the framework by engaging with digitalization as a crucial factor in contemporary territorial formations, especially among the far-right. We ask whether the digital realm reinforces far-right territorializations or whether it creates openings for counter-practices and for progressive practices of territorialization. To explore these questions, Zita Seichter and Michael Krell conducted an in-depth conversation with Jason Luger, Assistant Professor at Northumbria University in Newcastle, and a scholar with expertise in digital platforms, on-/offline spatialities, and territory (Luger 2024). His work critically engages with urban contestations, networked spaces, and authoritarian spatialities, making him an ideal interlocutor for a discussion about territorialization's materialization within digital transformation processes.

*Zita Seichter & Michael Krell: You work extensively at the intersection of body, identity, and space. Why do you choose the digital as your entry point? One might assume that body and space are most distant – perhaps even disembodied – there. Or do you see new forms of materialization emerging precisely in this realm?*

*Jason Luger: I did not begin at the digital at all. In fact, my background was in urban planning and regeneration, where I dealt much more with the built environment in a literal sense – things like planning permission, retail high streets, and regional housing.*

My early academic research took me to Singapore, around 13 years ago. I entered that project looking at the notion of 'creativity' and the arts in city-making and the paradoxes and contradictions of an authoritarian setting – like Singapore – increas-

ingly funding and providing space for the arts and culture as part of its global city ambitions. I explored the role of criticality and radicality, in terms of state-society relations, in a context where arts are on the one hand encouraged, but on the other hand, censored and highly restricted.

This is what led me to the digital, where in my interviews, with artists, activists and cultural policymakers, I heard again and again how important online space was for edges and angles of criticality and radicality that were not possible in the built environment. Physical spaces like theatres, galleries, or university classrooms were vital for catalyzing an enriched and active civil society, but were also limiting and constricting. A theatre holding an activist meeting of 50 people behind closed doors can become larger, and more impactful, when it is also circulated as an online image to millions of people globally. This research was also coincided with the rise of "Web2.0," or the age of the smartphone – when more and more people were digitally connected and social media had gone mainstream.

Whilst digital platforms are not free of censorship and various forms of governance, they did, in the context of Singapore's territorial confinement, provide some breathing room for expression and connection. Digital space allowed those connections, for example, the wider Singaporean diaspora or global critical arts community, space for shared learning, exchange, and co-production. Of course, authoritarians often use the digital for other aims, from surveillance to bullying, and this is equally important. I don't argue that the digital is an open, equitable, or democratic space. It is, like any space, full of possibilities.

I came away from this work, with some help from theorists, like Henri Lefebvre (e.g., 1991) and his framings of space as conceived, perceived, and lived, with wider conclusions about how the digital relates to authoritarian environments, in a constantly shifting relation of 'open' and 'closed' space. I think it is essential to look at how these spaces of openings and closure extend into, and out of, the digital – especially when considering illiberal environments and various territorial and material fixities and realities.

From 2016 onwards – spurred into motion by events like 'Brexit' in the UK and the first Trump election – I shifted my focus from authoritarianism writ-large to the global far-right. One of the things that I noticed immediately was the strong entanglement of the far-right and bodies, embodiment, and physical cultures (like strength training and bodybuilding) which, if you look deeply into the far-right's ideology, have specific associations with white and male supremacism and certain hierarchies of power. In particular, I noticed the emergence of a new type of 'warrior' male body-type, ethos, and series of practices and codes: a modern version, circulated through today's digital networks, of the 1930s ideal 'fascist man' that was lionized by far-right movements including Nazism. Whereas then, these ideas and images were circulated on leaflets and posters, now, they circulate virally via social media, thereby infiltrating the mainstream and becoming consumed and embodied

by digital users. These ideologies and digital bodies are pushed into view by far-right media influencers of the ‘manosphere.’

This coincided with a shifting culture of young masculinity increasingly using the body as social capital, something that Jamie Hakim (2020) suggests is emblematic of late capitalism, where industrial labour and neoliberal competition increasingly utilize the body. And the entanglements of body, the far-right, and digital are not limited to men, as we’ve seen with how women and femininity are represented through online movements like “Trad Wife”<sup>2</sup> and the way body and gender are expressed in neo-racial-pseudo-science movements like ‘Neo-Natalism,’<sup>3</sup> which is largely expressed digitally.

In short, social media platforms offered a huge, global, mainstream, and accessible space for far-right ideas, images, discussions, and practices that would have previously been the domain of specific websites and chat rooms and, previously, magazines, posters, and flyers. Social media arenas can be mainstreaming windows for the far-right and are often entry points for more serious radicalization pathways. Users not even seeking far-right material can find themselves exposed to it via algorithmic pathways which become self-perpetuating.

You ask about whether new materializations are forming in this realm. We must remember that the digital does not exist on its own. It relies on real bodies, real people, and real infrastructures. What is visible in the digital – whether they be bodies, rooms, buildings, and landscapes are very much material. Connections rapidly made between digital users can result in bodies gathering in place, as we’ve seen time and again with how the far-right mobilizes and materializes. The kinds of organizing that used to rely on politically-extremist forums and chat-rooms could now be done with wider audiences, faster, via both open social media and ‘darker’ social media like Telegram. The body is a user of a phone, and the body is present at an urban riot or political rally. Or, sometimes, at the end of the radicalization process, the body commits acts of material violence. The body can also become an ideological expression, through the act of, for example, becoming muscular or inscribing certain tattoos that are etched into the skin as visual political symbols. The body is a political becoming and, these days, it is via the digital that bodily norms, expectations, and expressions are learned and emulated.

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2 The Trad Wife movement is explained in this piece by Carter Sherman (2024) Sundresses and rugged self-sufficiency: ‘tradwives’ tout a conservative American past ... that didn’t exist. *The Guardian*, 24 July. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/ng-interactive/2024/jul/24/tradwives-tiktok-women-gender-roles> (Accessed July 28, 2025).

3 A helpful primer on the ‘Neo Natalist’ movement by Seyward Darby (2025) The Dark History of the Far Right’s Natalism. *Vogue*, 3 May. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/dark-history-of-the-far-rights-natalism> (Accessed July 28, 2025).

So, the digital helps to shape the material: they are never separate from each other. We (as humans) come to know the material world as it is represented online, and we create spaces (or bodies) that reflect this. Just look at how urban environments are transforming into spaces made for selfies, ready backdrops for that viral TikTok post. The far-right is keenly aware of this too, playing a part in how cities and places are represented online and offline. The circuitry of the digital shapes global ecologies too, of course – from the electric power needed for servers to the damage that Cryptocurrencies (popular with the far-right), to the ways that AI and bots still rely on exploited forms of labor (often in the Global South). Over time, the material world can start to mimic the online representations and imaginaries, and this is how ideology becomes brick and mortar.

What these new materializations look like is an interesting question. From an urban geographical perspective: I'd suggest that we are seeing the rise of clusters of buildings and infrastructures that serve the digital – think of warehouses by the side of highways – and these spaces are increasingly important to our world, in the way that city centers were in the past. The digital, and within that the digital far-right, does not only rely on a city's main square or central business district, but on the large, anonymous warehouse on the city's fringe, where men may be crafting their bodies into the 'superman' they wish to be or where computers are running autonomously to pump out bitcoins, AI images, or other cyber-systems. I think that the perfect material exemplification might be an Amazon warehouse by a highway, surrounded by low-slung warehouses full of logistics businesses, with maybe a gym nearby.

*Zita & Michael: You addressed how the far-right constructs and utilizes ideas of masculinity through digital spaces. We would like to follow up on this: How do digital spaces function as arenas for the performance and reinforcement of masculinist spatial claims, and how does this translate into material spatial contestations?*

*Jason:* I would go so far as to hypothesize that the digital manosphere was the birthing ground for the contemporary far-right. If you look at web archives you can see how prominent far-right content was from the late 1990s through the early 2000s in men's spaces like gaming, bodybuilding, or other 'miscellaneous' discussion forums (early Reddit, etc.). These, I'd argue, have translated over time into the 'dissident right' that we see today, led by certain male influencers. And then, we see this translating into material spatial contestations when these men get together, or act alone, for far-right expressions, from the proliferation of fight clubs or man camps, to marches on the street, to lone-wolf violence. We have these early digital spaces to blame for the birth of the 'Incel' movement: Bodybuilding forums, for example, as early as the early 2000s, regularly featured men putting other men down, critiquing their physiques or broader life choices, thereby insulting and denigrating

other bodies. This was at the time very overlooked and easily dismissed, but I think the generational impacts have been huge, given how violent 'Incel' behavior can be, and the terror it has unleashed.

Of course, the birth of social media was also a masculinist project from the beginning: Zuckerberg, from his university dormitory room setting up 'Face Book' first as a site where Harvard students could rate each others' looks – mainly men rating the looks of women. There is an undercurrent of incel within that. This followed other early 2000s sites like 'HotorNot.com,' where users voted on the attractiveness of other users. We've seen how this has grown of course into the multi-platform monolith 'Meta' (with Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others), and the power and influence of techno-feudalists today. Digital space, from its outset, has been an arena for the performance and spatial claims of masculinity. We can also see this in Trumpism and in other current far-right movements, which discursively deploy 'hot' or 'not' statements, policies, and binaries. With, of course, more power and menace, when directed toward vulnerable and marginalized groups in society.

There are exceptions where the digital can be affirming, liberatory, and transformative towards justice. McKenzie Wark (2004) for example has written from a feminist and queer lens about the emancipatory potential of digital space as a way to 'hack' against the ruling class; there are also strong voices within critical feminist geography who note the possibilities for gendered resistance offered by/through the digital. The prolific geographer Gillian Rose likewise opens up the digital as a complex space for exploration. But I think the re-assertion of the 'bros' in Trumpism 2.0 (and its axis of allied global movements) indicates the hegemony of digital space as a man-topia, as has the rise of digital finance (cryptocurrencies) and related infrastructures and geopolitics (space rockets), which often occur in consort with (male) authoritarian leaders in countries which have been receptive to crypto-and-outer-space-infrastructures, like Moroccan-governed Western Sahara, Indonesia, or Saudi Arabia.

You use the words 'arena for performance,' and I think this is really poignant. The digital manosphere is a sort of arena for masculinist debate, expression, and supremacism and it is perhaps no accident that the manosphere is obsessed with references to the arenas of Rome or Athens, and with the motifs of 'Spartans' and 'Gladiators'. Digital representations of the 'warrior masculinity' seem to proliferate, also verbalized by influencers like Andrew Tate (and others) who advocate for a brutal, 'winner takes all' version of being a man. Through digital virality, this thinking, these aesthetics, and discursive politics have captivated male digital users, especially those under 30. These would-be Spartan warriors interact with the real world everyday of course, shaping communities, families, relationships, and workplaces. As I explained in my last answer, these warrior masculinities are underpinned by far-right ideologies around racial, ethnic, and gender superiority.

In my 2022 and 2024 *Political Geography* papers (Luger 2022, 2024), I discuss how online 'Alpha-lands' translate to offline spatialities: I use the examples of fitness gyms fashioned as Roman Coliseums, or male-meccas like 'ALPHALAND,' a fitness and retail campus in Texas. But these examples are perhaps too literal. The digital manosphere, with its far-right entanglements, gives shape to the way men construct their social relationships, their families, and their daily life-worlds. And, as I mentioned, women are not absent from these worlds, of course, nor are they absent from the far-right – often envisioned as enablers and supporters, as in the 'TradWife' movement, where the woman takes the role of traditional homemaker and subservient cheerleader of the strong man. Women, too, can be far-right leaders and influencers: see for example Eviane Leidig's (2023) excellent book on women and the right.

*Zita & Michael: In our own research, questions about territorialization, which we use as a way to conceptualize these specific spatial processes you described, play a crucial role. How do you conceptualize territory and processes of territorialization in your work? How does digitalization factor into it?*

*Jason:* For me territory indicates a tangible relationship to the ground (i.e., an anchoring in place). That's not to say that territory exists independently of space, if we take from geographical theory the notion of 'relationality' (and also when thinking through the digital). So, we might think of territory as being, as Doreen Massey (2005) suggested, capable of being a static place and a dynamic place, in movement, connected, at the same time.

Going back to Singapore, I looked at the importance of the ground – literally – as an anchor for activism and civil society operating under authoritarianism. One example of this was an arts collective that I followed, which gathered thousands of people together across Singapore to make ceramic objects from Singaporean clay. The importance of this exercise was citizens collectively making art from the ground, the *terroir* – thereby making a subtle/soft political statement about the grassroots, in a state-context where most power relations are envisioned as top-down and centrally-planned.

Far-right territorialization matters, something I know the Terra-R collective has critically explored and argued for years. It is through territory that the far-right gains not only visibility, but also legitimacy. Of course, explorations of the relationship between the far-right and 'territory,' are not new, and we can look back to the 1930s phenomenology of Heidegger (making sense of the subjects relationship to the spaces around him) and Walter Benjamin (his affective wanderings through the Parisian arcades, at a time of rising fascism), or more recently, the explicit focus on architecture as a possible 'right wing space' (e.g., Oswalt, 2023).

Building on this work, I have tried to make sense of how the far-right territorializes today, in the very rapid, connected, and pop-up nature of the digital paradigm we live in. I look at the digital discourse around places – for example, how a city, a neighborhood, or a building is discussed or debated online – to gain insight into how these places materialize in the urban environment in a very real, tangible texture. I also draw upon Marxian geographic notions of ‘fixity’ and ‘motion,’ (e.g., David Harvey’s canon of work) insofar as social relations, and capital, rely on certain places, structures and spatial configurations and are constantly in the processes of making and re-making, often destroying themselves in order to create anew. The far-right can be inserted into these processes of spatial fixity and motion.

In my *Political Geography* paper in 2022, I developed the heuristic model of ‘Celebrations,’ ‘Exaltations,’ and ‘Alpha-lands’ as three ways this territorialization happens (Luger 2022). I framed ‘Celebrations’ as the daily social happenings of joy and conviviality where far-right worldviews may be encountered, but often in a sanitized and mainstreamed fashion. For example, the celebratory nature of a Trumpian social gathering in the form of a flotilla of boats on a lake, draped in flags, and drenched in alcoholic consumption. ‘Exaltations’ refer to territories of prayer and spirituality, which, as we’ve seen with movements from Christian Nationalism to Hindu Nationalism, are vital for far-right coherence. ‘Alpha-lands’ refers to the territories of masculinity and, more specifically, to a certain type of reactionary, hyper-masculinity that seems to undergird far-right movements around the world.

All of these sites rely on the digital for upscaling, broader representation, marketing and publicity, global connection, and for the developing of meaning and signification. But these territories cannot exist purely in the digital, either. So, land, wires, walls, water, plants, air and bugs, guns, germs, and steel – these things matter, too.

*Zita & Michael: In the digital age, processes of territorialization are taking place on- and offline. Do you think territorialization has to be understood as hybrid – entangled across digital and material spatialities? And what would that mean? Or do you see digital spaces operating under fundamentally different spatial logics?*

*Jason:* Firstly, yes, I think territorialization has to be understood as hybrid, ‘entangled across digital and material spatialities,’ as you phrased it in your question. The digital is inescapable today and no territory is free from it. You can argue this in terms of how our understanding and mapping of the world – the way we view it – is informed by satellites and GPS (though, of course, there are ‘blank spots’ and ‘glitches’). You can argue this in terms of finances and the global economy, which operates through a digital circulatory logic; and some elements are completely digital (e.g., Cryptocurrencies, albeit, still needing material facilities and infrastructure, labor inputs, and electric power). And of course, the digitally-networked decisions of powerful global

elites have very real impacts for the environment and climate: a digital 'click' can raise the global temperature and ocean levels, in the name of greater profits. A 'click' can release a drone or a bomb.

So, yes, territorialization is hybrid. That is not to say that everyone is actively digital: there are still ways of switching off, deactivating, or even returning to analog forms of communications and socializing, trends that seem to be growing among younger people. And of course, large segments of global population still do not have access to digital connectivity (or even basic utilities). But this does not mean that the digital is not present. The algorithmic logics of platformization continue to colonize.

I suppose practically – ontologically – this might call for the lasting utility of assemblage approaches, something that new materialists in Geography have prioritized for the past 30–40 years. I have found looking at territorial assemblages useful in my own work, given that it allows room for both the human and the non-human, the local and the global, and materials and affects (e.g., both touching and feeling). This was the approach I took in my paper in *Political Geography* (Luger 2024) where I explored how urban developments in Germany and the United States are being crafted in the image of the digital far-right, influenced by visual and discursive motifs of patriotism and hierarchies of race, or by reactionary notions of 'tradition' versus 'modernity.' I followed the idea of the 'strategic assemblage,' which the digital geographer Jason Dittmer utilizes in questions of geopolitics.

Assemblage ontologies work well, I think, amidst the 'more than human' turn – and this is also useful in thinking through how politics, too (and the far-right) often operate in a more-than-human set of processes. For example, bots and AI, which, as we've seen in recent elections, have very consequential impacts in spreading ideologies and disinformation.

Whether digital spaces operate under different spatial logics is something I'll have to consider and an answer I'm less clear on. I think that digital geographers – I could refer to authors such as Gillian Rose to James Ash, Louise Amoore or Sarah Elwood, Rob Kitchin or Agnieszka Leszczynski – would be better served for a more convincing conclusion. But – and perhaps I'm reading this wrong – the consensus seems to be that since the digital and the 'real' are inseparable (e.g., they are not 'separate places,' but are entangled and relational), then perhaps there is no easily delineated spatial logic between the two. I'm sure these musings will need an update in the near future.

*Zita & Michael: In a time of re-bordering, nationalism, expanding defense budgets, and increasing restrictions on migration, we find it crucial to highlight how various actors continuously produce territories – both through external demarcation and internal homogenization, which our approach to territorialization seeks to illustrate. Far-right actors essentialize a supposedly homogeneous group as belonging to a specific space while excluding other bodies, identities, and perspectives. Here, we have elaborated on how far-right territorialization takes place*

*by and of the far-right (Terra-R 2024). Based on your experience, could you help us further explore how these processes might unfold in entangled digital spaces?*

*Jason:* I think in many ways the bordering, demarcation, and homogenization of digital space mirrors the trends that you have explored via far-right territorialization (Terra-R 2024), insofar as digital space is a web of enclosures and different processes of inclusions/exclusions. I think one aspect of this is generational. Younger users – e.g., ‘digital natives’ – are often very canny at re-creating territorial processes online. This is true with far-right processes as well as broader social relations/processes.

Venkatesh Rao (2019) coined the term ‘the cosy web’ to describe the intimate, private niches of the internet where authenticity, familiarity, and sincerity are fostered. This means things like private (rather than public) groups, forums, or chats, such as through encryption, or even using codes that only some users will recognize. We see this, as I mentioned previously, more broadly than just with far-right users – but the far-right has really been at the forefront of carving out these ‘cosy’ spaces on the web, as a means of being able to have discussions, share images, etc., that might be censored or flagged by other users or moderators as offensive or out of bounds. Think of the far-right as a series of digital rooms, some of which are kept locked ‘by invitation only,’ others which have doors flung open, and each room is deliberately curated in a certain-way to speak to, appeal to, wrap in, or to offend/repel certain users.

This is demonstrated by how far-right users have found each other in ‘cosy’ spaces to organize marches, rallies, and riots, but also how they trade conspiracies or specific racist and prejudicial agendas, from the ‘neo-natal movement’ (which re-asserts eugenics frameworks for contemporary society), to antisemitic or misogynistic agendas. Certainly, many of the most troubling and violent episodes in recent years, from Brenton Tarrant’s horrific terroristic attack on the Mosque in New Zealand to the nasty ways Andrew Tate reaches young men – happen in these more private, enclosed digital spaces, away from public view. And often, in digital spaces that aren’t explicitly far-right – from ‘gaming’ forums to bodybuilding/fitness digital niches, which might only be accessible through signing up and joining, as opposed to the more open landscape of Instagram. And we know how much the far-right relies on encrypted platforms like Signal, Telegram, etc. We might think of these ‘cosy’ spaces of the digital far-right as mirroring a secret meeting taking place in a private home, or a private club in a building on the urban fringe with no identifiable characteristics on the outside. You have to be invited; you have to either know someone or the password/code to be let in.

But – just as some far-right territories are more publicly accessible and visible and reach into the mainstream of public space and urban life – the same is true for digital far-right space. And I think the far-right relies on *both* for their online/offline

territorialization and growth: the 'cosy'/private and the open/public/mainstream. Again, my metaphor of the hallways full of rooms.

I've explored how mainstream gyms and fitness spaces (not just 'fascist fight clubs') can be spatial portals for slow/passive radicalization. So, the same can be said of mainstream digital spaces like Instagram, Tik Tok, etc. – and through the guise of health/wellness/lifestyle, faith and spirituality, or even professional/career-related content. Those who are not aware of far-right signposts and codes may not even be aware that they are consuming far-right content or interacting with far-right users. I think the average digital user will not be aware of the ideological underpinnings of the 'trad' movements, for example; they may see only representations of users in traditional gender roles, like women in the kitchen preparing a meal for their husbands, or men getting strong for an unpredictable and often dangerous world. At first glance, these things seem banal, lovely and estimable even.

I think these open/public expressions are often deliberate: the 'minds' of the far-right know what they are doing. Far-right influencers know how to recruit and are often well-versed in psychology and even in some of the same tactics and tools used by the marketing industry. They also know how to stay hidden/invisible, when necessary. By the time a user stumbles into one of the more private or, as I described, 'cosy' far-right digital spaces, they are moving ahead on the radicalization pathway. Unless, of course, that user is a critical researcher of the far-right, who infiltrates these spaces to learn about them and to expose them – as some members of the Terra-R research network do (and thanks for that important work!).

*Zita & Michael: You have effectively described how the far-right becomes publicly accessible to a mainstream audience through digital territorializations, thereby reaching public spaces and urban life. Mullis (2024) argues that the far-right does not simply impose its positions on the rest of society, but rather mobilizes the broader societal mainstream. In relation to this, we would like to ask: What societal connections and points of engagement for the radical right do you see specifically emerging through the digital realm? To what extent are radical right mobilizations empowered by their connections to fundamental societal mechanisms of exclusion and belonging that are inherently facilitated by the digital?*

*Jason: Absolutely, I agree with Daniel Mullis (2024) on this, which ties into the larger consensus that far-right identity emerges from wider societal conditions (in a rhizomatic way, as Deleuze and Guattari (2000) have proposed in their musings on micro-fascism). And, earlier, of course, we have authors from Hannah Arendt to Theodor W. Adorno, to more recent voices like Jack Bratich (2022) (on 'everyday fascism') to Michael Billig (1995) (on 'Banal nationalism') who all point to the conditions of everyday life that give rise to fascism and far-right genesis.*

What are these wider, underlying conditions? As all of these authors have proposed, extremist politics arise out of social anxieties, fear, and perceptions of insta-

bility and change; inequality and resulting polarization and mistrust, fragmentation of community and breakdowns of social cohesion, consumer culture, and capitalist spectacle; from all of these things.

Walter Benjamin (1982), of course, noted the atmospheres and affects of these conditions amongst the Parisian Arcades of the 1930s, and if he were still with us, perhaps he'd see these conditions in Amazon.com fulfilment centers, space rockets with celebrities, Tik Tok reels, a screaming match at a store in a mall, or the obsession with airline 'status' to get three inches of extra legroom. I wrote recently with my colleague Jacob Miller (2025) on the capacity for fascism to emerge from these banal things, small things, that surround us. Credit cards. Designer watches. Food blogs. CrossFit. Golf.

The virality of the digital, as I've discussed in my previous answers, helps to give 'shape' and 'texture' to the far-right amongst these wider conditions. It allows a rapid, visual, and narcissistic medium for expression and introspection, and as you allude to in your question, new forms and feelings of belonging and exclusion. Because the algorithm always listens to us and tracks our movements, it acts like a far-right entity in giving us options that we do not actually need, and that aren't necessarily good for us, but that we feel compelled or even pressured to take. *Upgrade to Premium, for £4.99 a month! Just one click, and you can have a six-pack. Install a front-door camera – you'll be safe from crime!* This is not just a capitalist accident. Safiya Noble (2018) powerfully explores how algorithms are often programmed with certain biases and ideologies that trend toward racism and hetero-patriarchism. This is both a feature of the white-maleness of the software coding space and tech industry more broadly, but also of the propensity for far-right viewpoints to circulate among that same cohort (as we now see unleashed in the form of Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, and others).

Among all these frenetic and fragmented conditions of modern life, digital space allows users to see the ideal body; to see themselves (or a version of themselves to which they aspire) reflected back at them as a series of visual/textual promissory notes. This sense of belonging – if only to a digital community or affinity – is powerful. The digital offers rapid connections with other users (or avatars, bots, and algorithms) that tell them exactly what they want to hear, show them what they want to see, and reinforce their truths or lies. It can give affirmation where it is lacking. It can 'find friends' when real friends are absent. It justifies, it clarifies, and it simplifies.

So it is natural, in my opinion, that the far-right appropriates and utilizes this space to sink their teeth into vulnerable identities and would-be adherents. The far-right has long played the role of a mechanism for projecting illusory spectacles, lies, and conspiracies, and notions of stability, grandeur, and gain, amidst a world where all of these things seem out of reach. Meanwhile, the deportations of students and citizens, the torture of migrants, the disciplining of body types, the regulation of

intimacies, and fomenting the ongoing death cult of late capitalism – these things can happen while we are distracted, entertained, *click, click, click*.

In the digital, you can also exclude. You can end a conversation so easily. You can 'block' a user, delete a post, censor yourself or others, you can alter an image, and you can curate your life in a way that shows all the treasures and hides all of the grit and grime. Live in augmented realities. Never wake up! Doesn't this mirror what the far-right offers in its politics and aesthetics? A politics of curated lies and illusions, a politics of filters, and mirages. A politics of deletions and insertions. A digital user can 'report' or 'block' another user or post that they find offensive or ugly. The far-right can deport, detain, torture, can disregard the law, democracy, and human decency in callous and catastrophic ways. It is no surprise, then, that the digital has been so vital in far-right growth and in its resulting territorialization, and that far-right territorialization comes to mirror the architectures of digital space.

*Zita & Michael: Finally, the examination of the territorialization of far-right movements, and the associated violence, requires careful consideration to avoid reducing it to the sites of the perpetrators. In our book, we argue that it is crucial to acknowledge the perspectives of those affected by far-right territorialization in order to understand how their communities and experiences shape their own spatial understandings and territorializations that contravene the increasingly hegemonic narratives of the far-right (Terra-R, 2025, 120f.). You touched on the emancipatory potential of digital spaces in one of your previous answers. Could you elaborate on this? What opportunities do digital territorializations provide for emancipatory endeavors? Or do you believe that the digital space fosters genuinely regressive forms of social and political practice?*

*Jason:* When Manuel Castells (1996) outlined his vision for the then-emerging digital 'network society,' he noted a few possible trajectories. He predicted that the network society would likely result in new forms of exclusion, authoritarianism, and exploitation (and look how it has!), but also, new forms of democracy, organizing, resistance, and liberation. Perhaps we are less convinced by this latter potential, but I do believe it exists.

I do believe that there are 'spaces of hope' in all spaces of daily life. In my own research on authoritarianism, I have argued that digital space – in some contexts – offers vital pathways for resistance and democracy that are not possible in the built environment or within the bounds of the nation state. For example, I've explored how Singaporean civil society groups and activists/dissidents have utilized digital space to connect with the diaspora and to gain representation and influence through social media (Luger 2016, 2020, for example).

In my paper with Martin Zebracki (Zebracki and Luger 2019), we argued that digital space – for some groups – offers new forms of intimacy not possible elsewhere (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals who aren't able to meet in 'real life' or who can 'try out'

identities online in an anonymous or safe way). We also argue that far-right digital expression can be taken by progressives and remixed into humorous or satirical forms that can neutralize far-right hate or extremist ideology – for example, the way that far-right images or Memes can be altered to be just silly and cartoonish, the digital equivalent of the old ‘Look, the emperor has no clothes!’ story. Take the power of online humor into account to both platform the far-right and – importantly – to unmask and ridicule it.

The revolution will not be digital. I do not believe it will be. And I do not believe that digital resistance or digital antifascism alone are powerful enough to disarm the far-right and the authoritarian contagion that we now face. But I do believe that the digital will and must be utilized and re-appropriated away from the far-right ideologies of ‘neo-reactionary movement’ (‘NRX’) and the Techno-feudalists and that it will be vital in building consensus for the progressive and just revolution that is emerging (and it is emerging!). Making this work it will necessitate a program of de-coding and re-coding the algorithms – and artificial intelligence – to work for, and not against us. But as radical Anthropocene scholars like Wark (2019) suggest, along with the critical queer and feminist digital geographers claim, digital space can be reset and ‘glitched’ to offer hopeful alternatives and trajectories.

But this will also mean unplugging from the capitalist power of the platforms and returning digital space to the progressive grassroots through community-based networks and intranets (the equivalent of using a local monetary currency to ‘shop local’). If Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, Rupert Murdoch, Fox News, et al., no longer have the power to monopolize our digital world, then they will also lose the power to invite regressive actors to crowd ‘the cloud’.

Generation Z makes me hopeful here, because of their digital literacy and also their keen ability to ‘read’ different kinds of online code and discourse. They don’t tolerate bullshit. And they are getting tired of empty digital influencers and endless, brain-rotting content. They are creating new spaces for emancipation that we may not yet have the language for or understanding of – but watch this space. The far-right will also be led by a younger generation, and one that is increasingly digitally-savvy. So, the future is uncertain. I hope the critical work of many scholars, like you, can continue to raise awareness and hopefully, engage non-academic solidarities in antifascist ways forward. This is what we need, online and offline.

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