

Call for Papers



digital technologies and Gender in Arts and MEdia: creation, representation, Reception (GAMER)

International Conference

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

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Maison de la Recherche

4, rue des Irlandais 75005 (salle Athéna)

The **Institute of Communication and Media** at Sorbonne Nouvelle, in collaboration with the Departments of **Cinema and Audiovisual Studies** and **Cultural Mediation** at Sorbonne Nouvelle, the **IRMÉCCEN** research laboratory, Research Committees 14 (Sociology of Communication, Knowledge, and Culture) and 37 (Sociology of the Arts) of the **International Sociological Association (ISA)**, as well as Research Committee 38 (Political Socio-Anthropology: Media and Cultures) of the **International Association of French-Speaking Sociologists (AISLF)**, are pleased to jointly host an international bilingual conference (French and English) entitled “*digital technologies and Gender in Arts and MEDIA: creation, representation, Reception*” (GAMER).

While the intersections of gender, arts, and media have been widely explored in academic literature, their analysis remains crucial in today’s world, shaped by the pervasive influence of digital technologies. Arts and media are not only spaces where gender relations are reproduced, negotiated, and reconfigured (De Lauretis, 2007), but also function as true technologies of gender (ibid.), making their study a deeply political and essential endeavor.

To begin with gender-related issues, it is important to consider the representation of women and femininity. Despite notable progress in recent years, women remain underrepresented in the media—both in terms of visibility and in their participation in news production. Although the field of journalism has undergone a process of feminization over the past few decades, this shift has largely taken place “from below”, with women journalists disproportionately affected by precarious employment conditions compared to their male counterparts (Damian-Gaillard et al., 2021). Beyond these structural inequalities, newsrooms often continue to operate along essentialist lines, assigning women to so-called “soft news” topics (related to the private sphere, culture, lifestyle, wellness, etc.), while men are more frequently allocated “hard news” beats (public affairs, politics, international relations, economics, etc.). This gendered division of journalistic labor reinforces traditional gender stereotypes (ibid.). Thus, although the presence of women—as both journalists and experts—has increased, they remain significantly underrepresented and are granted substantially less speaking time than their male counterparts, particularly in audiovisual media (Arcom, 2023). This situation is further exacerbated by the persistence of sexual harassment within newsrooms (ibid.). As a result, media content often reproduces essentialist representations of gender, shaping public perceptions of gender relations and contributing to the normalization of inequality. The media coverage of femicide offers a particularly illustrative example of this phenomenon (Sapio, 2019, 2022). When it comes to gender minorities, representational inequalities are even more pronounced. Transgender and non-binary individuals, in particular, remain largely marginalized and invisible in media content¹ (Arcom, 2023).

These inequalities are also deeply entrenched in the artistic sphere, where institutional frameworks have historically curtailed women’s access to essential resources such as training, production opportunities, and mechanisms of legitimization necessary for recognition as “great artists” (Nochlin, 2021). While the visibility of women artists has improved in recent years, persistent gender disparities continue to characterize the field. For instance, in the visual arts, women’s works are systematically exhibited less frequently than those of their male counterparts (Corrigan, 2013). Likewise, in other cultural sectors—including music (Van Vleet, 2021; Vincent and Coles, 2024), dance (Elsesser, 2019), and film (Lauzen, 2024; Lee, 2024)—women remain disproportionately relegated to subordinate positions relative to men.

In response to these structural inequalities, a range of counter-hegemonic initiatives has emerged. Networks of women filmmakers, such as Collectif 50/50, alongside women-only festivals, have been created to amplify the visibility of women’s creative work and to cultivate professional solidarity. Parallel efforts, spearheaded by and for members of the LGBTQ+ community—exemplified by events like the Fringe! Queer Film & Arts Fest—aim to increase the visibility of queer artistic productions, promote the professional inclusion of their creators, and foster the development of supportive communal spaces.

¹ See, in this regard, Voirol (2005).

Some of these dynamics have extended into the digital realm through initiatives such as the collective *Cinéastes Non-Alignées*, thereby broadening forms of solidarity and mobilization beyond traditional institutional frameworks.

The inscription of feminist mobilizations within digital spaces must be understood within a broader context marked, since the emergence of Web 2.0, by considerable optimism about the transformative potential of digital technologies in both democratic and economic spheres. The low barriers to entry were widely perceived as facilitating greater access to public discourse and fostering more equitable participation in collective debates (Castells, 2012). This technological context thus held promise for the emancipation of historically marginalized groups, particularly women, in their struggle against patriarchal structures (Plant, 1998). Nevertheless, the digital realm remains an ambivalent space, simultaneously enabling contestation and the perpetuation of hegemonic social relations. The advent of digital technologies has indeed provided subaltern publics with new platforms for expression, empowering them to expose structural inequalities embedded in social relations, especially in terms of gender, race, and class. It is within this framework that movements such as #MeToo, #BalanceTonPorc, and #BlackLivesMatter have arisen. Thanks to its decentralized organization (Cardon, 2019), digital technology has empowered ordinary users to become producers of content—whether through alternative media such as podcasts, emblematic of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006), or via distribution platforms like YouTube. In this way, digital technology has revealed significant emancipatory potential, particularly for women, by providing new avenues for expression and voice (Jouët, 2003). Likewise, members of the LGBTQ+ community have leveraged digital technologies to challenge heteronormative norms, create queer spaces of expression, and forge networks of community solidarity (Gray, 2009).

The 2010s marked the emergence and consolidation of digital feminisms, distinguished by innovative forms of media representation and new modes of activism facilitated by digital technologies (Breda, 2022). This phenomenon is frequently described as a form of “neo-feminism”, emphasizing the strategic appropriation of digital tools to enhance the visibility of feminist demands and to invigorate activist practices (ibid.). Women and gender minorities have thus harnessed digital platforms as instruments of resistance, contesting the social norms imposed by heteropatriarchal structures and exposing intersecting systems of oppression, including sexism, racism, and ableism. Furthermore, the digital sphere functions as a crucial space where marginalized groups, shaped by existing social hierarchies, can cultivate communities of solidarity grounded in mutual support and collective care (Larochelle and Bourdeloie, forthcoming).

Beyond everyday activist practices, women artists have also harnessed the potential of digital technologies to bypass the structural barriers that have long defined the art world—an arena historically shaped by white, Western, and masculine norms (Nochlin, 2021; Chadwick, 2020). In this context, platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have emerged as strategic spaces for the display and circulation of artworks, enabling marginalized artists to gain visibility outside traditional institutional frameworks, which often remain exclusionary. Digital tools are also mobilized for archival and commemorative purposes, notably to restore the presence of women in art history—a presence frequently overlooked or erased. Projects like @artgirlrising, for example, seek to foreground the contributions of women and non-binary artists, thereby advancing their recognition in an art world still deeply shaped by patriarchal and androcentric structures.

Within the framework of contemporary *mediacultures* (Maigret & Macé, 2005), the shift from traditional television broadcasting to video-on-demand (VoD) platforms has profoundly transformed the modes of production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual content. What is particularly noteworthy is that the early stages of audiovisual platformization coincided with a heightened visibility of subversive gender representations, often resonating with contemporary feminist claims. These productions challenged gender and sexual stereotypes while denouncing sexist and sexual violence (Breda, 2025). Netflix—the U.S.-based platform that holds a dominant position in the global audiovisual landscape—serves as a prominent example of this phenomenon. In its early years, the

platform distinguished itself through programming that emphasized diversity, aligned with a communication strategy rooted in liberal values designed to appeal to socially engaged audiences (Wiart, 2022). It is within this context that series such as *13 Reasons Why*² and *Sex Education*³ emerged, carrying counter-hegemonic discourses⁴.

It is essential to underscore that digital technologies are far from neutral instruments; they are shaped by the social, cultural, and political biases embedded in their design. Although women have played a crucial role in the historical development of technological systems (Abbate, 2012; Collet, 2019), the digital sector in Western societies remains predominantly male-dominated (Collet, 2019). This structural imbalance contributes to the reproduction of hegemonic social relations, as digital infrastructures often reflect the values, assumptions, and worldviews of their designers. Consequently, these technologies tend to reproduce and reinforce existing inequalities related to gender, sexuality, race, and class (Cohn, 2019). For example, Instagram's algorithm disproportionately amplifies content that aligns with dominant beauty norms, while marginalizing images of bodies that deviate from these standards (Ekström, 2021). This algorithmic bias not only strengthens hegemonic aesthetic ideals but also contributes to the invisibilization of non-conforming bodies, thereby perpetuating the myth of beauty (Wolf, 1991) as it circulates in Western patriarchal and postcolonial societies. In a similar vein, artificial intelligence (AI) systems—now deeply integrated into everyday life—are embedded within dominant epistemological and economic frameworks. These tools participate in the reproduction of social hierarchies through both image generation and knowledge production, often reinforcing gender stereotypes and other forms of structural discrimination (UNESCO, 2024).

The influence of algorithmic bias also extends to the online dissemination of artistic works. While platforms such as YouTube and Instagram ostensibly offer open access for anyone to share original content, this accessibility does not equate to guaranteed visibility (Cardon, 2019). In practice, these digital environments prioritize content likely to generate immediate engagement—through likes, comments, and shares—thus pressuring artists to tailor their creations to the implicit expectations of platform algorithms (Striphas, 2015). In this pursuit of visibility, many artists adopt dominant visual and narrative codes, often shaped by global trends, leading to a homogenization of the artistic content circulated online (Bishop, 2012). Digital platforms thus emerge as ambivalent spaces for artists marginalized within traditional art circuits. On the one hand, they offer expanded opportunities for visibility that are often harder to obtain within conventional institutions. On the other hand, this visibility frequently comes at the cost of a certain standardization of artistic production, driven by the algorithmic logic that govern digital platforms.

Beyond biased algorithmic logic, it is crucial to recognize the digital environment as an ambivalent space—one in which feminist discourses coexist with misogynistic and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Far from being uniformly progressive, the digital realm also serves as a platform for reactionary movements that seek to uphold existing social hierarchies. Among these digital formations, the "manosphere" stands out as a network of websites, forums, and podcasts where masculinist groups and audiences hostile to feminist ideals gather. These communities circulate antagonistic representations of women and LGBTQ+ individuals, advocating for the reassertion of traditional patriarchal structures (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Mésangeau & Morin, 2021).

It is important to emphasize, however, that antifeminism is not exclusive to digital environments. On the contrary, it constitutes a reactionary rhetoric (Descarries, 2019) that is inherently transnational

² For example, this series highlights the failures of state institutions by exposing their complicity—whether passive or active—in systems of oppression such as sexism, racism, and classism.

³ This series foregrounds a plurality of sexual experiences, contributing to the denaturalization of heterocentric sexuality and offering a positive and normalized representation of queer sexualities, thereby decentering the dominant heteronormative and cisnormative gaze.

⁴ However, it is important to note that this dynamic now appears to be losing momentum in favor of an increasingly standardized content offering. Indeed, the intensification of competition between platforms and the concentration of subscriptions around a few dominant services have led major industry players to prioritize more consensual content aligned with mainstream logic.

(Larochelle, 2024), as old as feminism itself, and one that testifies to the disruptive power of feminist struggles (Lamoureux & Dupuis-Déri, 2019).

Finally, digital technologies contribute to the intensification of (self-)surveillance. In authoritarian political contexts, these technologies are often deployed to exert increased control over women and gender minorities, thereby reinforcing mechanisms of oppression characteristic of totalitarian regimes. A notable example is Iran, where authorities have, in recent years, heightened digital surveillance to enforce strict laws regulating the wearing of the hijab (Parent, 2025). Moreover, digital technologies reinforce gender inequalities by amplifying self-surveillance practices, notably through self-tracking devices inspired by the Quantified Self movement, such as body-monitoring applications and connected devices (Dagiral et al., 2019). Anders Albrechtslund (2008) terms this dynamic “participatory surveillance”, a form of horizontal and socially internalized control whereby individuals monitor themselves and voluntarily share personal data. Although often framed as playful or emancipatory, this logic fundamentally rests on the internalization of hegemonic norms regarding bodily and behavioral performance (Lupton, 2016), leading users to conform to dominant standards. The body—specifically, the female body—historically shaped by the patriarchal gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and subjected to particularly strict disciplinary norms (Piran, 2016), thus becomes a prime target of digital injunctions to conformity.

From an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective, this conference aims to bring together researchers from diverse fields, such as sociology, information and communication sciences, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, anthropology, history, computational sciences, political science, and others, to explore critical reflections on gender in the arts and media in the digital age. Research adopting an intersectional approach that considers the interaction between multiple systems of marginalization (e.g., gender, sexuality, social class, race, ableism, ageism, etc.) is especially encouraged. Presentations will be organized around the following thematic axes:

Axis 1. Production

This axis critically explores the gendered social dynamics embedded in media and artistic production processes, alongside the opportunities and constraints introduced by emerging digital formats that blur the traditional distinctions between producers and consumers (e.g., podcasts, YouTube channels). It focuses particularly on how marginalized actors leverage these formats to produce their own content. The inquiry addresses enduring gendered power relations within cultural institutions (e.g., museums), artistic domains (including film and theater production), *mediacultures* (e.g., television series), and media organizations (e.g., newsrooms), as well as the resistance strategies employed by creators to navigate and challenge these structures. Additionally, this axis investigates the impact of digital-specific characteristics—such as platformization and algorithmic biases—on creative practices, and examines how producers either adapt to or contest these digital constraints.

Axis 2. Representations and discourses

This axis focuses on the analysis of gendered representations and discourses within the arts and media in the digital era. While incorporating research on traditional artistic forms and so-called classical media, it also examines the transformations brought about by the development of cultural industries and digital technologies. This broad field includes domains such as news media, the arts, fashion, and popular culture. Particular attention is given to how gendered discourses and representations are constructed within contemporary digital platforms, including audiovisual streaming services, artificial intelligence (AI) software, and video games.

Axis 3. Reception and usage

This research axis explores how gendered representations and discourses are perceived, interpreted, and appropriated by audiences broadly defined, including users of digital platforms (such as followers and subscribers), traditional media audiences, and online communities. It aims to analyze, on one hand,

the potential effects of these representations on individuals—particularly regarding self-image, self-relations, and relations to the Other, understood here through the lens of alterity—and, on the other hand, the tactics and strategies of resistance, subversion, or circumvention employed by these audiences to challenge, reinterpret, or deconstruct dominant gender norms.

Axis 4. Design of technological devices and the co-construction of gender norms

This research axis examines technological devices as spaces where gender norms are simultaneously established, reinforced, and potentially contested. It focuses on how design choices—including technical architecture, user interface, available functionalities, visual aesthetics, accessibility, underlying power dynamics, implicit biases, and the degree of technological transparency—contribute to the creation and normalization of gender relations. The analysis encompasses a variety of digital media, such as mobile health and wellness applications, social media platforms and networks, as well as websites. The core objective is to interrogate the processes of co-construction between technological devices and gender norms, taking into account the reciprocal interactions between human and non-human actors in the design and use of these technologies (Boullier, 2018).

Axis 5. Gender performances and artistic transformations in the digital age

This axis explores how gender identities are embodied, reinterpreted, or challenged through performative practices, particularly within digital spaces. It focuses on analyzing subversive forms of performance—such as drag—and their dissemination, reception, and reconfiguration online. Additionally, this axis examines the transformations of artistic forms themselves in the digital era. The emergence of stage performances incorporating immersive or substitute technologies (for example, concerts featuring holograms of musicians) opens new perspectives on the temporality, materiality, and corporeality of artistic acts. These developments raise critical questions regarding the influence of technological devices on the very nature of performance, as well as on the modes of engagement, interpretation, and appropriation by audiences.

Axis 6. Epistemology, methods, and ethics

This axis proposes to approach gender not only as an object of analysis but also as an epistemological framework, an investigative methodology, and a tool for ethical reflection. It seeks to consider gender as a critical lens capable of interrogating the modes of knowledge production, the power relations embedded within them, as well as the situated positionalities of researchers in their scientific practices. This framework challenges the assumptions of scientific positivism and highlights the social, political, and cultural dimensions shaping processes of knowledge creation (Sedgwick, 1990; Harding, 1992; Haraway, 1988). Methodologically, a gendered approach entails specific choices regarding research settings, problematization, and analytical techniques, while incorporating an intersectional reading of systems of domination—such as those related to gender, race, class, sexuality, or ableism. As a reflexive tool, gender also prompts critical consideration of the ethical stakes in research, including the potential impacts of findings on marginalized groups and the dynamics of co-constructing knowledge with research participants (Despontin Lefèvre, 2023). This axis thus aims to foster critical reflection on feminist, queer, and decolonial epistemologies that question dominant scientific norms and reconfigure the relations between knowledge, power, and social justice.

Axis 7. Dialogues between research and professional practices in arts and media

This final axis aims to foster exchanges between academic researchers and professionals working in the arts and media sectors, particularly in the digital era. It seeks to create a space for dialogue around the contemporary transformations of artistic, cultural, and media work by encouraging the convergence of perspectives between scholars and practitioners. Submissions such as panel discussions, joint interviews, or hybrid formats are especially welcome, as they highlight experiential insights, critical reflections, and knowledge derived from professional practice. Topics for these exchanges may

include, but are not limited to, changes in working conditions, creative processes, visibility challenges, and tensions between commercial pressures and artistic or activist commitments, all within the context of increasing digitization of practices.

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Communication proposals must not exceed **500 words** (excluding bibliography) and should be submitted in English or French by **October 1, 2025**, to the following email address:

isa-rc14@isa-sociology.org

Notifications of acceptance will be sent by email on November 1, 2025.

Format:

The file should be submitted in .doc or .odt format and named as follows:

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The document must include the following information: full names, email addresses, affiliations/institutions, presentation title, and abstract of the presentation.

Conference dates: March 12 and 13, 2026

Conference venue: Maison de la Recherche (4, rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris), Athéna room