

COVID-19 from the Margins

March 30, 2021

- Good afternoon, good morning, good evening, everyone and welcome to the COVID from the Margins event, kindly hosted today by the Berkman Klein Center for Internet Society at Harvard University. Needless to say we are extremely excited to be here with you today, celebrating what is a big accomplishment a book, that has the ambition to be much more than simply a book in the library. So it is an editorial project but really what he wants to do and what this session wants to achieve today is to actively inviting everyone, all attendees, all of us hit, and variably hit and concerned understandably by the COVID pandemic to make room for another way of thinking and understanding and narrating the COVID pandemic. One that takes as a frame of reference the margins of society. So those of us that are typically out of privilege that are suffering the worst consequences of this crisis, which is, or started at least as a health crisis but very quickly became a social, economic, cultural and very personal crisis for us all. So my name is Stefania Milan and I'm an Associate Professor on New Media and Digital Culture at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. And what I would like to do, well, I'm one of the three editors of the book, you're about to meet the others and to meet three amongst the 75 awesome authors that we marshaled for this master adventure. And I'm one of the community builders that facilitated, if you want this conversation on COVID from the Margins. As you can imagine what we try to do here it's actually something that cannot be achieved by one person alone nor by a group of 75 people no matter how awesome. In fact what we are just starting is a conversation precisely by as I said, making room for wearing different lenses, different colored lenses, to see reality from the point of view of those suffering from inequality, poverty, injustice, and discrimination. So what I'm gonna do before passing the baton passing the word on to my co-editors and then to our authors that I'm gonna introduce in a minute, is to tell you something about the origins or if you want the long journey of COVID from the Margins. So this book project, which is by the way, also blog or I would say primarily a blog. So it was 2017, and you remember maybe those beautiful days in which we would have live meetings, live conversations, hugging people and sharing drinks in the sun. It was Cartagena in Columbia and Emiliano Trere, from Cardiff University whom you're gonna meet in the minute and myself were invited to organize an event in the outskirts of the International Association of Media and Communication Research. So an academic organization that gathers scholars of media and communication that travels around the world or used to travel around the world to organize big gatherings of like-minded people and then event in Columbia. And we were invited to do something on "big data" it was a very, very broad invitation. And what we decided to do was to create a very cozy space, a workshop, this workshop then quickly took up a life of its own and it was entitled big data from the South. And the South for us was a placeholder, it was a metaphor, was a proxy for not only the geographical South, as in the global South but also for a number of pockets of inequality and discrimination, the resistant [Inaudible] unfortunately also on the so-called developed society. And that's how, and where that venture of big data from the South started. It's an academic experimentation if you want, which I have always been very mindful of trying to also adopt different language and try to keep accessibility of our discourse

on the horizon, which is why we organize events, academic special issues, journals, stuff like that. But also we are still very beautiful, very lively blog which is deliberately multilingual. And multilingualism for us it's very important because we think it's also good not only to make room for other ways of seeing the world and describing the world which is what languages are, different culture, different mindsets, but also because we wanted to reproduce to some extent the level of uneasiness that's people at the margins feel and experience on a daily basis when, for example, we hold our conversation exclusively in English. That was big data from the South, it kept ongoing on the background until the pandemic hit. And then when the pandemic hit, we quickly realized that the way the pandemic was narrated was from a very, very insular point of view. I mean, first it was China and it was Italy, and the three editors of the book by the way, are Italians living abroad. So we noticed how, of course, you're concerned for your own community but there's much more that did not show up, there was much more, that was actively silenced. In part, because there were no data just to give you a sense when it comes to Africa at the beginning of the pandemic only two countries out of the 57 in the African continent had the ability to test for COVID. Therefore, of course, if there was no data you have no problem, if you have no problem, you have no empathy, if you have no empathy, you have, for example, no aid, no vaccine that reach, I mean, now Africa, right? So we decided to create a sub blog called "COVID from the Margins", COVID-19 sorry, from the Margins. And the blog got life on its own became very attended, we started publishing in many different idioms, even idioms that we don't speak like Chinese, for example, we're looking for like helpers, all over the place to help us to edit the material. And at some point we decided that there was so much richness there, so much to stories and voices from the margins that we wanted to give it also a sort of memory for. And that's how the book was born, It's proudly open access, free to download, you can even order your free printed copy while supplies last, and that's what we celebrate today. As I said, it's just the beginning of a conversation it's by no means the end, we did cover wealth of different communities at the margins also empowering them to write a story, but I mean, this is just the beginning of a conversation and no book project and no [Inaudible] can actually cover it all. So we hope that you eventually decide to join us in this collective endeavor. And now without further ado, I would like to introduce who is with me today, unfortunately, we cannot have 75 authors, here with us, we are doing a lot of presentations and we always invite different people, and today with us, we have, and I invite them to turn on their camera so they can wave at you. We have Emiliano Trere, one of the editors of the book from Cardiff University. We have a second, the other editor of the book, Silvia Masiero, the University of Oslo. And then we have three of the authors, we have Diego Cerna Aragon, who's gonna take you to Peru, Irene Poetranto, that is gonna take you to some part of Asia. And finally, we have Shyam Krishna, that is gonna take us to India. We try to maximize some of diversity although there's of course a lot more that we can talk about. Without further ado, I invite Emiliano to the floor.

- Thank you, thank you very much Stefania and it's really a pleasure to be here and thank you so much for providing the space for us to to present this book to the Berkman Klein Center, I cannot imagine a better place to present this, so many themes that resonate with what is being done at the center. So part of what we did with the book was also envisioning some concepts, some conceptual tools that could somehow frame and that have been at the same time

inspired by the contribution of the book at the same time. So I'm gonna talk briefly about two of them. And the first of them is, as you will see here, well, the concept of the margins. So when we started to think about these sort of spinoff of our blog, the concept of the margin seemed like a really great feat. So we use the margin as I'm sorry, we use the margin as a kind of a shortcut to speak of complex dynamics of power inequality because processes have a symmetrical access to material and symbolic resources shape differentiated in unequal access to the public sphere. I'm using here, the word of somebody, a friend, actually and a scholar, Columbia scholar, Clemencia Rodriguez, that inspired us in this case to apply the concept of the margins to think about data and to think about datafication and the ways through which datafication impacts communities on the ground. So we see the margins as a complex site of struggle, where these challenges, the challenges of datafication unfold in different ways from the mainstream. What particular data constellation, ecologies, territories original and unexpected territories might emerge and might thrive. The margins are able to convey for us, and this is something that resonate, as I said before, with the contribution from the book, with this idea of periphery, this idea of stories that come from the periphery, and it's able to capture the significance, the resourcefulness and the unexpectedness, which is for us pivotal of these data related practices. And now if you have the, like me, if you're lucky enough to have also the printed copy that's Stefania was showing, you will know that in the book the margins have become the margin at the singular. But these was by no means something that we did at the conceptual level, this is just something that happened. So if you're lucky enough to have it, you have a kind of limited edition, kind of paper copy of that but we want to use the margins because we want to maintain the plurality of it. So we think in margins, in plural terms, just like we think in plural terms, when we use Souths in our network, in our research initiative and in our publication. Plural, different South, not bounded to a kind of geographical conception of the global North, or the global South, but as also a proxy for resistance. So we find, and we can find multiple Souths also in the North. In this way, also the margins retain these pluralities, this multiplicity. And the second concept that we mobilize is that of data poverty. We find that many of the contribution to our book and to our blog that exceed the one that we were able to capture, to frame within the book, more than evoking ideas of data colonialism, or that relying on that which is it's a great concept for understanding some processes but for understanding the ones in the book, many times words as inequality and poverty were more used, and data poverty has to do with the very same existence of people on the map of concerns. Because these oversight occurs because the policymakers increasingly rely on calculated publics in order to make their decision and to allocate resources, in this case healthcares and vaccines, as we're seeing now with the vaccine rollout. So being datafied during COVID-19 might be, for many disempowered marginalized groups actually, an essential requirement of survival and care. So for us data and poverty, and for the contributors of the book, it's a powerful concept because it requires situating any analysis of the impact of datafication in relation to specific contextual contingent harms that it might impose on people and communities on the ground. So it has that specific powerful contextualization, context-specific nature, which we find that it's really something that is needed in critical data studies. And it's really something that we hope to have achieved with our blog and with the "COVID-19 from the Margins" book. So after these two powerful lenses to understand COVID-19 and the datafied society I will pass the baton to the

other co-editor, Silvia in order to finish this and to proceed with this presentation. Thank you very much.

- Thanks very much Emiliano and I also proceed to introduce the community to a third theme in our book which is that of the datafication of antipoverty programs. And I'm delighted to have today with us, Irene, Shyam and Diego, whose contributions in different ways relate to this third theme and especially Diego is gonna tell us about datafied social protection in the Peru. Before I complete the theoretical overview of our book, of the things that structure, our book, I'd like to just complete our picture by giving you some data and also this gives me the occasion to tell you after my short intro to data and process we are gonna have a quick break for questions from you in the audience, to which we are really looking forward. And so about our book Stefania and Emiliano have already given a strong theoretical introduction to what the book did. I'm gonna throw some numbers in so we have a total of 47 contributions from a total of 75 authors, quite impressive, per se, we would say and we realized that the process of building these collection in five different languages as Stefania said, not all languages that us three editors actually speak that was quite an editorial here. And all I'm gonna do is just to put such numbers in the context of indeed producing this book. So producing this book as a decolonial process, very much by design. So we thought that in a project that seeks to narrate the untold, the silenced stories of this pandemic, such approach it had to be open access and accessible to all and such a project had to be multilingual as Stefania, has powerfully illustrated. And so is the book that emerged from indeed, our blog and so is indeed the ongoing project of the COVID-19 from the Margin's blog. So very quickly on said process, so it all started from a call for blog posts on our blog in May, 2020, very much seeking narration of the silent stories of the pandemic. I must say, as the blog was conceived we weren't really sure what we would have found in terms of such narrations globally. What came out of this? And I'm delighted to have three of our, again, authors illustrating a part of such stories today, is a collection in five overarching themes that we found very much as threads across the contributions in the book, themes be in that starting, very much from the notion of counting in the pandemic and who is counted and who is not in the first pandemic of the datafied society. We did have a second theme dealing with new inequalities and vulnerabilities. For example, those that Shyam is gonna deal with today regarding gig workers in India. A third theme relating to datafied social policies that Diego is gonna expand on and two more themes, one relating to technological reconfigurations and policy changes in the pandemic, and a final theme relating to solidarity networks that emerged in the pandemic situation. So as a final thread, adding into data poverty and data at the margins that Emiliano introduced, very much the final theme here, is what changed in terms of policy, so in terms of social policies. A concept that we found really useful here is that of datafication of social protection programs. So how social protection has changed in a datafied society and how COVID-19 has determined the distribution of subsidies and the algorithmic identification, of the people entitled to such subsidies. Very often, and I know Diego is gonna expand on that today in asymmetrical way. So we found, and I close here, my short introduction, very much a notion of informational injustice here. How is subsidy distributed? How is information in possession of governments and entities distributing subsidies combined in order to determine who is entitled and who is not? I finish with this question and this is

where I close my short introduction with many thanks to you, virtual audience, and yeah and that's where we yield for the first short question break before giving the floor to our authors.

- Thank you very much Emiliano and Silvia for providing so much food for thought in such a short time, as you probably know, the audience, Italians are known to speak way too much and way too fast. But in this case I can assure you that it is in fact, really enthusiasm for the topic and this urge that we feel to make room for different ways of understanding and relating the pandemic. Do you have any friends, as you know our amazing Robyn was helping here in the background put also in the chat please submit your questions to the Q&A tool, do you have any question, doubt? Is it all clear? Do you want to actually raise some other concern as it relates to understanding the pandemic from the perspective of the margins? We are all ears. I don't see hands raised, am I correct? Counting to three, if there's none, then we give the word to even more substance talking about how exactly the pandemic happened in this margin specifically that they're gonna look at as a placeholder and a metaphor for in fact and many other margins that are described in the book but also those that we could not include in the book and still need to be told or they've been told elsewhere. So then I don't see anyone coming forward, so I would like to ask Diego to join us and take us to Peru. I mean, this pandemic days any occasion for any trip is in my perspective, really welcomed, no matter how symbolic it is. Diego please.

- Sure, thanks Stefania and thanks Emiliano and Silvia for the opportunity. Let me share my screen. Okay, so I'm gonna go very briefly about the case of Peru. This is more like a commentary based on a previous research that I did with a couple of colleagues on the datafied system of social assistance that exists in Peru. So what happened in Peru in the wake of the pandemic between March and May. So initially there was a quick response by the government and they declared a national emergency and quarantine. But given the nature of the population in matters of labor, a lot of people live in informality and people live with their daily or weekly earnings. And so decreeing national emergency meant that some people didn't have money for go by in their normal life. So these of course was noticed by the government and they tried to address this by giving a subsidy. But this subsidy was not even personal, they used the household targeting system or SISFOH in Spanish to give the subsidy to what they define as the vulnerable population. And of course the debate in media was mainly concerned with what it means to be vulnerable, right, in Peru. And they mainly concentrate on the economic definition of what means being vulnerable. but the thing is that there was a deeper problem with using this type of system. And the thing is that the system was designed for social worker program and specifically for a logic of making public spending more efficient. So there was an automatic logic for people requesting, for being included in this social worker programs. It's not like everyone has the data updated regularly, so of course, there was a great problem with the quality of data that was available in this database. And of course, as you may imagine by the moment of the emergency that there was poor data and that it was not updated. So the consequence of this was that the money did not reach the people that was in need, right? So there among multiple consequences, there was a mass exodus of people leaving the cities because they didn't have the money enough to sustain themselves. And there were subsequent modifications to the subsidies but they were never really actually universal. That was some of

the demands of some activism and other parties. So as you may see there were mobilizations across the country, people leaving the cities, people saying, we have to leave the cities because we don't we don't have any money, we have been inside our houses for a number of weeks and we have depleted our savings and now we don't have any more money to live with. So a couple of lessons that I think we can learn from this terrible experience. The first one is why are the consequence of addressing a public health crisis as COVID was, a social crisis as COVID was, using technologies devices for poverty-alleviating programs that have this logic of we are trying to make public spending the more efficient possible, is that these targeting technologies are deciding not to give money to everyone but they are deciding to restrain the spending. Yes, exactly the opposite of what you want to do in this kind of emergency. And they want to filter people out of the benefits that the government gives to people. And they also rely on precarious practices of information collection and they're made in countries with a precarious State. So by definition, I think these technologies render people invisible, they are not designed for this kind of emergency that they were used for instead of like giving universal subsidies as some people suggested. And the second lesson that I want to touch upon is about being visible in the South. So many times in data studies we hear concerns about privacy and surveillance and those are of course justified they're really important topics. But in the South, we also have this concern about data poverty that Stefania and Emiliano touched upon previously, and they also wrote an article on it, that is that we have this concern about our data not being good enough for assisting people in need. And that sometimes actually being visible to the State is a privilege for some people. And that also other people don't have the provision, they suffer the consequences for it. And that's it for me. Thank you very much. I will pass the baton to the next presenter.

- Thank you, Diego. I believe I'm supposed to go next so I will share my screen now. So hi everyone, my name is Irene Poetranto, I'm a senior researcher with the citizen lab at the University of Toronto. Thank you to Stefania, Silvia and Emiliano for inviting me to be here today and also to contribute to the book, of course. And thank you to the Berkman Center for hosting this event. I will share a few highlights and lessons from writing this chapter, looking at the COVID-19 impact and, COVID-19's impact on marginalized communities in four countries, Singapore, South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines. So in the article, my coauthor, Justin Lau and I we discuss the effects of different government's COVID-19 measures, in particular, we looked at its impact on migrant workers in Singapore, the LGBTIQ community in South Korea, in Seoul, specifically, and on rural and indigenous peoples in Indonesia and the Philippines. And we chose these four countries because we thought it'd be a nice contrast, showing the stark differences between two countries that are known to be developed in Asia which are Singapore and South Korea versus countries that are perhaps known to be less developed such as Indonesia and the Philippines. And so by contrasting these two sets of countries we thought that it would be interesting to shed light on the impact of different measures that governments have pursued to curb COVID-19. So I'll just share a few highlights here. So in terms of our findings from Singapore and South Korea, so as you may know Singapore and South Korea are, they're tech savvy countries, they are highly connected to the Internet, have very high Internet and smartphone penetration. And so it's of no surprise that they use a lot of visual tools when it comes to combating COVID-19 in their countries. So in Singapore and South Korea we saw both

governments deploying things such as apps, so digital contact tracing apps, Singapore even used Boston Dynamics' robot dogs to patrol parks to ensure that people are physical distancing. And South Korea became famous for using a variety of tools to facilitate contact tracing from using CCTV surveillance footage to using cell phone location data even to people's credit card purchases. And Singapore has also issued wearable devices for seniors for example, to help facilitate contact tracing. However, from our research, we found that a lot of these solutions, right? All of these fancy tools that both governments rolled out to help combat COVID-19 really they were not inclusive. In Singapore, so at around the beginning of March they reported zero deaths and I think only around 200 COVID-19 cases, but then, soon after around early May, they reported 23,000 COVID cases, 90% of which were linked to migrant workers who were living in crowded dormitories. So migrant workers have been really crucial to Singapore's economy and because they don't make a lot of money, at least not in comparison to what the typical white collar Singaporean workers make, they often live like 20 people in an apartment sharing, only one bathroom which of course makes proper health and sanitation procedures impossible and physical distancing, also impossible. And furthermore migrant workers don't typically own the latest smartphones for the contact tracing apps to work and migrant workers have just generally been largely ignored by the Singaporean government. And so it was no surprise that they were treated as an afterthought in the government's COVID-19 strategies and of course it resulted in this huge spike of cases in early May. In South Korea in contrast, and so there was a huge cluster of COVID-19 outbreak that occurred in a district and an entertainment district called Itaewon in Seoul, South Korea. And that district, that area of the city is also popular with the LGBTIQ community. And as I mentioned before, South Korea has very sophisticated contact tracing strategies, but they're also, at least at the beginning of the pandemic excessively disclosed people's information, personal information when they're reporting an outbreak. And as a result, you have people who already fear the stigma emanating from catching COVID-19 or being suspected of having COVID-19 but also the stigma associated with being a part of the LGBTIQ community in a generally conservative country such as South Korea. And so what ended up happening was when news of this Itaewon cluster of COVID-19 cases broke out, we saw an increase in online attacks and offline harassment as well against LGBTIQ persons and these people ended up being blamed for the pandemic as well. And eventually the South Korean government learned to scale back the amount of personal information that are disclosed to the public when it comes to reporting cases but that was a tough lesson to learn and severely impacted those in the LGBTIQ community in Seoul. In contrast, we looked also at Indonesia and the Philippines and what we are seeing there is that the impact of COVID-19 is really even more pronounced when it comes to marginalized communities, remote communities because they already have inadequate health services, they don't have running water and all the basic necessities to live that are fundamental to our human rights. Mine sites in particular mining sites, they became a vector for the spread of COVID-19 with the risk of infecting local communities and indigenous peoples with very small population and so they're already vulnerable to extinction, and when you add COVID-19 on top of that, it becomes really dangerous for these really rural communities. So I'll give two examples. So in Indonesia, we looked at the U.S. owned Grasberg mine. So the Grasberg mine is owned by the American company, Freeport, it is the largest copper and gold mine in the world, and they really waited a long time before they suspend mining operations. When the COVID-19

outbreak began. As a result there was a cluster of about 150 cases in mid-May and if you can imagine the Papua region is about double the size of great Britain with 4 million people and yet they only have five hospitals designated to treat COVID patients and only two isolation rooms that meet the WHO's standards. And so people, those who are living in local communities were really concerned that Freeport wasn't suspending operations in the Grasberg mine because obviously it's a really profitable mine in the midst of a global pandemic. And then finally, we looked at an area an island called Homonhon Island in the Philippines where there is a mining site to mine chromite ore and even though the local authorities there had imposed COVID-19 lockdown, the government still allowed a China bound ship to dock there in order to pick up some shipment of chromite ore. And this is a concern because Homonhon Island has no health facility, no sea ambulance and no functioning community hospital. And so if the community was infected by COVID-19 it would decimate the local populations. And what we are seeing in both cases in Indonesia and the Philippines is that, even though the local communities really tried to protect themselves from outside transmission of COVID-19 so they impose a lockdown, government still allowed all these operations to take place overriding the local community's wishes, overriding even national lockdowns that were in place all in the name of allowing mining operations to take place. And in fact, they even disperse a protest against these mining operations using COVID-19 lockdown as an excuse, you know, the irony there. And so just to conclude, I think we all are aware here that the fight for COVID-19 must be conducted in a transparent and rights respecting manner and in ways that are inclusive of local communities because even though we are all impacted by COVID-19 today we are not impacted by COVID-19 equally. So I will end there and I'll pass it onto the next presenter, thank you.

- Yeah, hi, thank you Irene for passing it on to me. Hope you can hear me now. Okay, so I'll just share my screen. Okay, so yeah, I'm Shyam Krishna, and I'm a doctoral candidate at Royal Holloway University of London. And I'll be talking about the experience of food delivery workers during the pandemic in India. This comes from my qualitative research interviews and observations done in the coastal city of Chennai in South India. This was done just on the start of the pandemic. In fact, I engaged with food delivery workers who depend on apps like Zomato, Swaggy and Uber Eats for people, not aware in India these are the Deliveroo-like apps that are available in India. And I also undertook an auto ethnography working as a part-time for delivery worker. I signed up to two of these apps to directly experience the algorithmic and data elements, which were possibly difficult to observe in any other way. In the last few days of my work as a food delivery worker I had the opportunity to see how the pandemic response was shaping up and use that as a starting point to have a follow-up conversation with some of my interview contacts and to understand how platform tactics were shaped and the treatment of workers, kind of materialized materialized as the pandemic bore on. These issues that I detailed here have been highlighted broadly by the workers themselves, in multiple cities and during protests. What you see in the photo is a protest in Chennai. Okay, research has already shown that for gig workers as platform workers are called, broadly food delivery workers and cab drivers that are based on app based ordering of services by customers are called gig workers. In this case food delivery workers, we know that research says things have not been good even before 2020 and 2020 just brought on more of a problem for them. The pre-pandemic gig worker already had to contend with physical risks, such as navigating heavy traffic

on a road or facing unfair income levels on their daily work atmosphere. But as soon as the pandemic set in what we saw was that the platforms actively shifted the additional health risk of sanitation and social distancing that we all expect as part of the pandemic daily living to the workers. So this became not only a issue of health for them but also became an issue of financial liability because when the platforms assured the so-called contactless deliveries, it is the workers at the front facing entity off the platform who have to make sure that that assurance is brought to forth. This assurance of safety was given to the customer, so they can continue to buy from these platforms the safety, but comes at a price where the worker had to put in additional time and effort just to be able to make sure that the customer is happy, just as they were before the pandemic. For instance the platform promises what is called safe packaging, it is the worker that needs to make sure that the restaurant complies with that safe packaging even though it is made as a promise by the platform. And this comes with it unpaid labor and even actual physical packing of these packages by the workers. In one case, I did the packing, as you can see in the photo. on top of this, masks and gloves, as it became a normal during the pandemic, landed as a responsibility for the worker, the platforms did not necessarily continue to support it as we would expect. The workers during all this also had to undergo what is essentially biopolitical and algorithmic surveillance. Everything from their body temperature was displayed on the app, they were asked to undergo a process oriented check of whether they were considered safe in how they handle their food, even though their own safety was not assured in any other way during that process and with the pandemic conditions supposed to go on for probably at least a couple of years more, this unpaid labor and the deepening of the surveillance that we see is set to become the new normal, so challenging this at this point becomes quite important. And the platforms as we see already have a very tenuous relationship with the workers, they already cast as not employees and they are considered self-employed partners but I consider the platform in the pandemic also to have what is essentially a Jekyll and Hyde problem. They seek to occupy both the role of being a disruptive market innovator, where they are fast-moving software entrepreneurial ventures, they want to respond to the market's needs but they also seek to emulate the benevolent charity by seeking donations to support their non-employee workers. So it's just a very interesting space that they want to occupy. For instance, the major players in Chennai in food delivery responded quickly to the market need by introducing grocery delivery for the customers. Again, this meant that the workers themselves had to queue up longer or pack larger consignments for the customers but without any assurance of an equal and fare increase in wage for their extra effort. And equally the platform also tried to play a little more benevolent role at least as a PR notion where they sought by aggressive marketing donations from the customers themselves, for the worker because the workers by their own statements weren't getting paid enough even though ironically the not getting paid was because of the platforms. The platforms continue to position the workers as heroes and saviors because they provide essential services of groceries during the pandemic. But when the donations landed it was the platforms which decide on which workers get funded. So that was still some sort of control and power relationship that was maintained there. The workers themselves felt that these tactics only ensure the commercial future of the platform and not the individual workers themselves. So clearly this is a place very ripe for regulation while there are social safety nets that are in discussion none of them actually break into this idea that the platforms can occupy a

space where they say we are going to provide labor but we are not employers, right? So they kind of abdicate the responsibility to majorly the workers who do unpaid labor and innocent labor to keep the customers happy but they still aren't able to claim the rightful level of wage that they are supposed to get. And this is getting worse during the pandemic because what was once only restricted to informal employer-employee relationship that you would find in a place like India now is becoming digitized and aggregated as the pandemic moves on. So routine surveillance and kind of the reporting of the health checks of the riders, the workers will be datafied and then become part of the algorithmic profile for the future. So that is kind of the normal that the pandemic is pushing through for these workers. That's basically what I have and you can find more in my recent paper if you're interested, happy to talk to through.

- Sorry, Shyam, am I correct that you're done, right?

- Yeah.

- Sorry, there was unfortunately here, a drop in the connection so I missed actually your last sentence. So thank you so much to all the presenters, in particular the authors that agreed kindly to join us today, because if you edit a book, it's a book of stories and it's always much better to have the people who experienced research, the stories that are likely to have a say. I would like now to invite all of the speakers who joined us today to come forward and unmute themselves and especially put the camera on, thank you so much. And it's time for Q&A, we have 10 minutes to sort it out and make the world a better place. So here's your chance to ask questions to these wonderful people. I see there's one by Catherine. Do you want Catherine to speak? Probably you can actually not do that, sorry, I'm confused about, I've been to many meetings today. It's already evening here in Europe. So Catherine congratulates us on the wonderful effort, thank you very much, it's much appreciated. And she reminds us that Clemencia Rodriguez offers the idea of citizen media network. I remember for those who might've missed it, Clemencia Rodriguez was quoted by Emiliano there's one of the inspiring voices on our choice essentially, to go for the margins as a frame of reference, as a flexible, very spacious if you want frame of reference. But Clemencia reminds us Catherine as an expression. So she contributes the idea of citizen media as an expression of counter media. So resistance, right? So she asked to our speakers did you find examples of data creativity, or data resistance alongside data poverty in the cases you shared? Now before giving the word to anyone, any of the three speakers want to say something, I would say that there is an entire session in the book that explores that. In fact, it's a biggest part for the book, precisely because there's a lot of untold sad stories of the margins that need to be brought to surface but there's also an amazing creativity and solidarity and resistance that the margin's also in the fringes of society and that allows actually all these people to thrive and survive no matter what happens. So anyone wants to contribute an example for Catherine?

- I can actually.

- [Stefania] Please Silvia.

- It's just so far into section five of our book that Stefania mentioned, relates directly to the example of solidarity, and resistance in the pandemic. I think we can talk on many, so for example, we have a case from Argentina in the section five that details solidarity networks built through instant messaging in order to fill the institutional voids. So in order to capture those, for example to those households in poverty that are not reached by the social protection scheme that Diego talked about with reference to Peru, so that's one case. And we also can't forget that the pandemic unfolded at the same time as part of the Black Lives Matter Movement of course, in June, 2020. And we do have several examples also in the blog of resistance enactment that throw the social media, during the Black Lives Matter Movement that overlap directly with the oppressions witnessed during COVID-19. So I think what I wanted to say is that the book is a collection of stories of invisibility but also collection of stories of resistance and I think the section that Stefania mentioned, the section five is a big indicator that is the biggest and it's a big indicator of hope. So that's my sort of reaction to Catherine's comments.

- Thank you, Silvia, I'm looking whether anyone else wants to add something. Okay, looking at the book to remind, in fact of all of the many stories that we have here, Emiliano.

- Yeah, just to say, I mean, you have said it, and thanks Catherine for your words, coming from you it's really satisfying. And there are like two dynamics that Stefania and Silvia have already kind of highlighted. And it's always, I think resistance is and in every kind of dynamic that we have seen our authors document, so many ways of resisting these, it's kind of from the margins, but at the same time, the creation of solidarity. So points to the alternative uses of technology and data for other kinds of aims, for other kinds of needs, for other kind of words that they want and we want to inhabit. So I think that these points really resonate with Clemencia's citizen media research. The way research in Columbia can connect to other parts of the world is just amazing. And then the way it can resonate with many contexts. So in a way it's a book about multiple contexts, but it's also a book about diversity but also connections through all these diverse contexts. So contextualization doesn't need to be a fragmentation, it can be some kind of rich plurality of pluriversal reality as we call it using Arturo Escobar's lens. So yeah, I think that the reference to Clemencia is also really appropriate to talk about resistance and alternative forms of solidarity, creativity and different appropriation of data. Yeah, thank you.

- Thank you very much. And I would like actually to add a little only literally to the issue of resistance and thinking also what can academia do, to contribute not only to voice and give space and make room for thinking and broadcasting resistance as we have done in this book but also try to implement it ourselves. and try to resist and contribute to ongoing efforts from the space of privilege or variably privileged space that we occupy in academia. And I do so actually with that great example which is probably the most creative the most unexpected in the book, which comes from a group of astronomers, people studying stars in Brazil. And it's a contribution co-authored by, I'm counting on the fly, but I think like seven or eight different people, not all of them in academia and they tell the story of how there was a group of astronomers in an area of Brazil in the village of in Brazil, where that was supposed to, they were there prior to the pandemic to study the stars or whatever astronomers do in their

studies, scholars we don't actually get that but we are certainly very fascinated and very respectful of their work. And then the pandemic hit and they realized that what they were doing was in fact so partial and so marginal in a way in the grand scheme of things that they actually redirected, changed, Some of the destination of the funds that were made available to them to work with local communities in particular local indigenous communities, to as they say, to use astronomy as a tool to face COVID-19 and just isolation in the indigenous village of in Brazil. So there's probably a lot of it we can do but we hope that these examples are of great inspiration, not only for all of us doing humanities and social sciences, but also for those that maybe are in different disciplines but nonetheless can contribute from the position of privilege that often academia occupies without of course, forgetting there also many academics that are not privileged, but in general, people who have the luxury of studying, the social reality are in a way or another relatively privileged. So I see that we're actually getting to 7:00 p.m. here in Amsterdam and 1:00 p.m. in Boston. So I don't know if there's any other question or any other input that comes from Irene, Shyam, Diego.

- Just to kind of add on kind of the academic responses also looking, as you mentioned in the example of astronomy, I think broadly media and communications are critical data studies or in my case management information systems, right? So we are looking too much into one set of users sometimes so much like the astronomy issue, there are quite a lot of data agencies that kind of are thrown up in a situation like by a pandemic that we are not aware of or rather we don't think in the research process. One thing that came up on how solidarity is built up is the people who are packing the managers or the the workers and the ails of grocery shops are now responding to how gig workers who deliver those at every level. And that's not being captured in some of the many of the conversations that we have. So the pandemic is actually brought that solidarity on, so it'll be interesting to see how this kind of changes.

- And on this very enlightening comment, but especially, reason to hope and keep dreaming of a better world, even in pandemic times I guess we bring this session to a close, once again I would really like to thank our speakers, the authors and the editors, but especially our host for today the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University for having us. We encourage you to download the book, distribute, share it, that's what this book is for, and please consider contributing to the ongoing conversation on the blog from whatever corner you want to write and in whatever idiom you want to express yourself. Thank you so much for being with us, and I wish you wherever you are, a good afternoon, good morning, or good evening. Bye.

- Thank you, bye.

- Thank you very much, bye-bye.

- Thank you everyone, bye.