

## DIGITAL GEOGRAPHIES OF MUNDANE VIOLENCE: OUTLINE OF AN EMERGING RESEARCH FIELD AND THE EXAMPLE OF (CYBER-)BULLYING IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

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**Summary:** The objective of this article is to outline the emerging field of the “digital geographies of mundane violence”, which is characterised by a critical and reflective engagement with the spatialities and dynamic and non-linear temporalities of mediated violence unfolding in entangled online and offline spaces. Going beyond a conventional review of existing literature, we apply BARAD'S (2007: 25) “diffractive methodology” to “read through” findings of studies on violence with non-essentialist concepts of entangled online and offline space and spatiality. Given the variety of technologies, forms of violence, and spaces in which violence unfolds, we develop our argument by focusing on a specific type of gender-based violence: (cyber-)bullying of young people identifying with “abundant identities” (PERSSON et al. 2020: 67) that neither conform to hegemonic heterosexuality and binary gender categories nor are confined to LGBTQI categories. We discuss the ambivalent role of digital technologies in the negotiation and diffraction of difference by young people facing exclusionary identity politics and violent processes of heteronormalisation and heterosexualisation. We present an illustrative research design from our own work, which combines retrospective insights into biographies, family and social relations and media use with a participant-led, mobile, partly in-situ exploration of everyday entangled mediated experiences, practices and negotiations of inclusion, exclusion and violence. Therewith we outline how the contextualities, dynamics, fluidities, non-linearities and variegated historicities behind mediated violence in entangled online and offline spaces can be empirically unpacked. We show how digital technologies are an intrinsic and entangled part of social, cultural, and political negotiations, discourses, and processes, and contribute significantly to the normalisation and everyday (re-)production of diverse forms of violence.

**Zusammenfassung:** Dieser Artikel skizziert das Forschungsfeld der „digitalen Geographien alltäglicher Gewalt“, welches sich durch eine kritische und reflektierte Auseinandersetzung mit den Räumlichkeiten und dynamischen sowie nicht-linearen Temporalitäten mediatisierter Gewalt in verschränkten Online- und Offline-Räumen auszeichnet. Über eine klassische Literatur-Review hinausgehend, wenden wir die „diffractive methodology“ von BARAD (2007: 25) an, um die Ergebnisse von Gewaltstudien mit nicht-essentialistischen Konzepten von verschränktem Online- und Offline-Raum und -Räumlichkeit im Sinne BARADS (2007) kritisch zu „durchlesen“. Angesichts der Vielfalt an Technologien, Gewaltformen und Räumen, in denen sich Gewalt entfaltet, entwickeln wir unsere Argumentation entlang eines ausgewählten Beispiels geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt: (Cyber-)Mobbing von jungen Menschen, die sich mit „abundant identities“ (PERSSON et al. 2020: 67) identifizieren, die weder hegemonialer Heterosexualität und binären Geschlechterkategorien entsprechen noch auf LGBTQI-Kategorien beschränkt sind. Wir erörtern die ambivalente Rolle digitaler Technologien bei der Aushandlung und Diffraction von Differenz durch junge Menschen, die mit exkludierenden Identitätspolitik und gewaltsamen Prozessen der Heteronormalisierung und Heterosexualisierung konfrontiert sind. Wir stellen ein Forschungsdesign aus unserer eigenen Arbeit vor, das retrospektive Einblicke in Biographien, familiäre und soziale Beziehungen und Mediennutzung mit einer teilnehmendengesteuerten, mobilen, teilweise in-situ Erforschung alltäglicher, verschränkter mediatisierter Erfahrungen, Praktiken und Verhandlungen von Inklusion, Exklusion und Gewalt verbindet. Anhand dessen illustrieren wir, wie die Kontextualitäten, Dynamiken, Fluiditäten, Nicht-Linearitäten und multiplen Historizitäten hinter mediatisierter Gewalt in verschränkten Online- und Offline-Räumen empirisch erschlossen werden können. So veranschaulichen wir, wie digitale Technologien untrennbar mit sozialen, kulturellen und politischen Aushandlungen, Diskursen und Prozessen verschränkt sind und wesentlich zur Normalisierung und alltäglichen (Re-)Produktion verschiedener Formen von Gewalt beitragen.

**Keywords:** Digital geographies, geographies of violence, young people's geographies, geographies of difference, gender-queer geographies, code/space, hybrid spaces, datafied space, cON/FFlating spaces, spatialities, entanglements, diffracted difference, hyper-diversity, abundant identities, LGBTQIA+, gender identities, sexual identities, mediated violence, gender-based violence, cyberbullying, traditional bullying



## 1 Exploring the spatialities of mediated violence

Given the current rapid digital and social transitions, there is “no more important time or issue for geographers to study than the spatial politics of violence” (MOUNTZ 2018: 765–766). As SPRINGER & LE BILLON (2016: 1) posit, violence is a “confounding concept [...] that] frequently defies explanation and lacks an agreed upon definition”. It takes multiple forms (cf. e.g., TYNER & INWOOD 2014, SPRINGER & LE BILLON 2016, WATTS 2017): while violence is sometimes brutally overt, it is often hidden, deeply embedded in everyday heteronormative, racist, patriarchal, misogynist norms, values, rights, representations and politics (cf. e.g., HUBBARD 2000, BLEDSOE 2021, BONDS 2020, BROWNE 2021), making it “normalized” (WATTS 2017: 2) and “mundane” (LEGGETT 2021, SCHENK et al. 2022). Meanwhile, through their subtle inscription in bodies, perceptions, practices, materialities, and related spatialisations, digital technologies are an intrinsic and entangled part of social, cultural, and political negotiations, discourses and processes (FELGENHAUER & GÄBLER 2018, ELWOOD 2020). Digital – and particularly digital feminist – geographers have long pointed out the potentially “oppressive and violent effects” (KWAN 2007: 22) of digital technologies. More recently, a growing body of research from digital geographies, media and communication studies, as well as studies of violence, have dealt more profoundly with digital technologies’ roles in the (re-)production and normalisation of diverse forms of violence in everyday life. They have focused on different types of violence – for example, domestic violence (CUOMO & DOLCI 2022), embodied, sexualised and gendered violence (HENRY et al. 2020, DATTA & THOMAS 2022, MAHLKNECHT & BORK-HÜFFER 2022), and racialised violence (MOTT & COCKAYNE 2021) as well as hate speech and right-wing violence (WIERTZ & SCHOPPER 2022, MILITZ 2022).

The objective of this article is to outline this emerging field of engagement that we denote as the “digital geographies of mundane violence”. As we will show, this evolving research field is characterised by a critical and reflective engagement with the spatialities, dynamic and non-linear temporalities of mediated violence unfolding in entangled online and offline spaces. Going beyond a conventional review of existing literature, we apply BARAD’s (2007: 25) “diffractive methodology” to “read through” findings of studies on violence with non-essential-

ist concepts of entangled online and offline space and spatiality. Based on LESZCZYNSKI (2015: 729), we understand spatiality as the “nexus of material socio-spatio-technical relations” that are “always-already mediated – i.e. as the ontogenetic effects of the contingent, necessarily incomplete comings-together of technical presences, persons, and space/place”. The objective of a diffractive methodology, according to BARAD (2007: 89), is to think together such inseparable coming together, i.e. the “entanglements” of space and time, nature and culture, matter and practices, technologies and discourses, ontologies and epistemologies, which are always “intra-acting within and as part of ‘entanglements’, they are never separable into individual parts”. We find its application has a great potential “to bring greater conceptual clarity to violence by thinking through its intersections with space”, which according to SPRINGER & LE BILLON (2016: 1) should be a central contribution of geography to the analysis of violence. As it stands, this article is therefore primarily a discussion piece, bringing into conversation and debating important existing strands of research from geography, media and communication studies, as well as the studies of violence linked to this field. We also present the example of a research project and its methodological approach to unpacking the spatialities of mediated violence as it unfolds in entangled spaces.

Given the variety of technologies, forms of violence, and spaces in which violence does unfold, we develop our argument by focusing on a specific type of gender-based violence (cf. BOWS & FILEBORNE 2020): (cyber-)bullying of young people identifying with “abundant identities” (PERSSON et al. 2020: 67) that do not conform to hegemonic heterosexuality and binary gender categories. Other than for the blurred concept of violence, among (cyber-)bullying research stemming, inter alia, from school research, psychology and sociology, a widely accepted notion of bullying has been proposed that it is delineated by the intention to harm the target(s) of bullying, a repetition of hurtful practices towards the target(s) and a power asymmetry between target(s) and perpetrator(s) (OLWEUS 1996, WOODS & WOLKE 2004, WILLARD 2007, STASSEN BERGER 2007, TEUSCHEL & HEUSCHEN 2013, SCHULTZE-KRUMBHOLZ et al. 2012, BETTS 2016). The prevalence of gender-based violence, and in particular, violence against people who do not identify with heteronormative social norms, has been underlined in a variety of quantitative empirical studies, while more recently an increase in cyberbullying

has been found (e.g., FRA 2013, WHO 2013, HART & PAINSI 2015, MANTILLA 2015, SCHÖNPFUG et al. 2015, OECD 2015, CALLANDER et al. 2019, SIEGEL et al. 2022). BOWS & FILEBORNE (2020: 300) even describe rampant violence against both non-binary individuals and women as a “global pandemic”. To take an example from Austria, HART & PAINSI (2015: 3) speak of a tenfold increased risk of experiencing violence for individuals who identify as non-binary compared to heteronormative young people. Underlining the intersectionalities involved (see for a longer discussion here section 2), in another example, CALLANDER et al. (2019), highlight that the highly diverse LGBTQ+ community in Australia is affected by acts and forms of violence in different ways, with transgender women of colour particularly likely to experience violence.

We develop our argument from a perspective that goes beyond essentialist conceptions of binary and heteronormative identities, binary online/off-line space, utopian/dystopian roles of technologies, and linear conceptions of time. Setting the stage for a discussion of the spatialities of mediated violence that is at the core of this article, we continue in section 2 by providing the reader with a conceptual discussion of how the negotiation and diffraction of difference by young people with abundant identities unfold beyond the construction of binary subjects and identity categories, while being strongly contested by identity politics and violent processes of heteronormalisation and heterosexualisation. We then delve deeper into the literature on the effects of digital technologies on inclusion and exclusion, demonstrating the importance of moving beyond simplistic representations of dystopian versus utopian roles of digital technologies in young people’s lives (section 3). In the core of this article, section 4, we apply BARAD’S (2007) diffractive methodology to “read through” and “think through” the findings of studies on mediated violence, especially (cyber-)bullying, with conceptualisations of space and spatiality. Following this, we introduce an example of a methodological approach and research design – that of the *beYOND* research project, which investigates the intersectionalities and non-linear historicities of (cyber-)bullying of young people through a participant-led, partly longitudinal, qualitative multi-method approach across Austria, Germany and Spain (section 5), before we conclude by further delineating the contribution and advocating for more research in the field of the digital geographies of mundane violence (section 6).

## **2 Young people’s diffraction of difference and abundant identities vis-à-vis violent processes of heteronormalisation and heterosexualisation**

Genderqueer studies and the geographies of difference have extensively debated the expansion, blurring and intersectionality of socially constructed identity categories (cf. e.g., VALENTINE 2008, 2014, AITKEN 2010, SMITH et al. 2010, MARTIN 2012, VALENTINE & WAITE 2012, NOWICKA & VERTOVEC 2014, BORK-HÜFFER & YEOH 2017, KRAFTL et al. 2019). In recent decades, (post-)feminist, genderqueer, poststructuralist and postcolonial perspectives have emerged, arguing for a politics of difference that opens up identity constructs (VALENTINE 2014, JOHNSTON 2016). It has been argued that the diversification of socio-political realms (e.g., education, employment, family and household configurations, PERSSON et al. 2020) has paralleled and promoted negotiations of “increasingly pluralized” (GRAY 2016: 226) identities (cf. also COVER 2019). GRAY (2016: 1) refers to plural identities as “non-normative sexual identities” claimed by people including “lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and those identifying as transgender or transsexual, as well as those identifying as queer [...] and intersex – hereafter LGBTQI”. Yet, this distinction of non-normativity from normativity somewhat reproduces a binary understanding of identities. PERSSON et al. (2020: 58) also posit that the diversity of gender and sexual identities goes far beyond established LGBTQI categories, observing “a growing abundance of new and exceedingly detailed sexual and gender identity labels – such as pansexual, asexual, genderqueer, non-binary, omnisexual, plurisexual, demisexual, sapiosexual, transcurious, fluid, non-conforming – which are crafted and circulated among young people”. Genderqueer geographies, more recently, have sought to trouble the categorisation of queer-gendered subjectivities, as this process often entails privileging some of these groups over others (JOHNSTON 2016). MITCHELL & HUNNICUTT (2019: 521) have also pointed out that gender and sexual-identity formation is non-linear, and that it must be regarded as “a continual and multidimensional process that changes throughout a person’s life without an endpoint”. Furthermore, PERSSON et al. (2020: 67) underline that “cultural worlds and modes of expression” related to identities are changing and suggest that today’s young people’s angle towards sexuality and gender “can perhaps be read as being less about departures from hegemonic heterosexuality, than about the production of abundant identities

that set themselves apart from older mononormative templates". In that sense, "abundant identities" as suggested by PERSSON et al. (2020: 67), which are no longer tied to hegemonic heterosexuality and binary gender categories but also not confined to LGBTQI categories, might be a more appropriate label to refer to the actually existing "hyper-diversity" (KRAFTL et al. 2019: 1189) of identities among children and young people.

Conceptualisations of difference that have (at least from certain perspectives) countered socially constructed containers of identity are helpful too in theorising hyper-diversity. They have been significantly informed by the work of, inter alia, DELEUZE, LYOTARD, BHABHA, BURBULES and BARAD. As DELEUZE (1968: 262-263) notes, differences "are enacted. They change over time. They take shape differently in varied contexts. They always surpass our attempts to classify or define them". LYOTARD (1988: 13) postulates that difference always includes something "beyond" our understanding that cannot be explained or put into words. BHABHA (1994) frames difference as abundant and fluid multiplicity in a sense of individual uniqueness that is impossible to describe. BURBULES (1997: 110) posits that "there are differences beyond translation, or in which translation implies not only a subsuming of X into the language of Y, but a fundamental rethinking of both X and Y. This kind of dialectic does not move toward resolution, but toward sustained tension [...] Difference here is [...] a direct challenge to [...] binaries and either/or tradeoffs". By entangling quantum theory with feminist, postcolonial and posthuman approaches, BARAD (2014: 176) puts forth the concept of "diffracted difference":

"Difference is not some universal concept for all places and times, but is itself a multiplicity within/of itself. Difference itself is diffracted. Diffraction is a matter of differences at every scale, or rather in the making and remaking of scale (spacetime-matterings). Each bit of matter, each moment of time, each position in space is a multiplicity, a superposition/entanglement of (seemingly) disparate parts. Not a blending of separate parts or a blurring of boundaries, but in the thick web of its specificities, what is at issue is its unique material historicities and how they come to matter." (BARAD 2014: 176)

BARAD thus seeks to counter essentialist and binary notions of identities and difference "at every layer of the onion (not merely on the micro-scale as opposed to the macro-scale, as if there were a line in the sand between micro and macro rather than an ongoing reconfiguring of spacetime-matterings across

and within spaces and times)" (BARAD 2014: 174). "Diffracted difference" breaks up and queers any attempt to categorise and label identities, also beyond gender and sexual identities.

Regardless of such academic debates that call for thinking beyond and deconstructing or "diffracting" identity, social and political discourses that categorise subjects into identity containers persist and remain powerful, with various negative consequences for those who deviate from constructed majorities and normative containers. Identity, "thus understood, supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between I and not-I, he and she; between depth and surface, or vertical and horizontal identity; between us here and them over there" (MINNHA 1988 as cited in BARAD 2014: 170). Societal norms, such as the constructs of heteronormativity and heterosexuality, continue to have a strong influence in shaping expectations towards individuals (DEGELE 2008, DEGELE et al. 2011, HUBBARD 2008, POHLKAMP 2014, PERSSON et al. 2020). BUTLER (1993) has prominently argued that gender becomes ingrained as part of performative and iteratively (re-)produced (body-)practices. This iterative process permeates and (re-)produces the social, and creates gendered and binary subjects. Those who conform are granted privileges and powers. Those whose identities do not conform are rigorously rejected, harassed, oppressed and discriminated against (BUTLER 1997, 2004, 2011 [1990], HUBBARD 2000, 2008, PERSSON et al. 2020, MAHLKNECHT & BORK-HÜFFER 2022). The narratives of (non-)belonging contained therein turn socio-political constructions of identity into deeply spatialised experiences (DASGUPTA & DASGUPTA 2018: 31).

So far, the new century has been characterised by narratives of injustice, insecurity, instability, and loss of a supposed sense of community and local traditions, which have fuelled socio-political discourses and identity politics and the related exclusion of various groups and individuals who do not conform to traditional binary identities (AMIN 2012, JOHNSTON 2018). Studies in different contexts have highlighted that social trends towards the undoing of gender and the pluralisation of identities cannot be generalised, and have shown how entrenched traditional orders of gender and sexuality and related biopolitics of reproduction persist. For example, OSWIN (2014) showed how, despite changes in the rhetoric around homosexuality in Singapore, teleological narratives and imaginaries of progress and desired social reproduction lead to the cultivation of the heterosexual family norm and its governance through various regulations. TANG & QUAH (2018) further show how this



negatively affects queer, divorced and lesbian mothers' situatedness in the city-state. The recent repeal of the colonial-era laws criminalising homosexuality in Singapore has been partial, with same-sex marriage remaining illegal in line with persistent conservative social gender and family norms. As another example, in our own study, which looked into negotiations of difference and (cyber-)bullying among young people in the more traditional and peripheral Austrian state of Tyrol, we found that persistent traditional notions of heteronormativity were a major factor in legitimising bullying and violence against those young people who did not conform to them. What is more, even those young people who tried to defend their bullied peers did not manage to bridge those norms (MAHLKNECHT & BORK-HÜFFER 2022).

Socio-political constructions of identities are rarely aligned with one category alone, as indicated by the burgeoning research on intersectionality, pioneered by black feminist scholarship (CRENSHAW 1989) and taken up intensively in geographical debates around diversity and difference. The concept is used "to theorise the relationship between different social categories: gender, race, sexuality, and so forth." (VALENTINE 2007: 10). Their doing and undoing is "mutually constitutive [...] organised at the complex intersection of multiple categories of membership and meaning" (WILKINS 2012: 173). As HOPKINS (2019: 937) notes, intersectionality is "not only about multiple identities but [...] about relationality, social context, power relations, complexity, social justice and inequalities". It is an analytical lens that seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the various axes along which identities are negotiated and constructed – "not only in individual lives, but also in social practices and institutional arrangements" (MARQUARDT & SCHREIBER 2015: 46, cf. also MARQUARDT & SCHREIBER 2014). Identities are negotiated not only based on what sets individuals apart, but also according to "similarity or connections across difference despite the apparent boundaries" (MAYBLIN et al. 2015: 9), a notion which has been referred to as "sameness" (see also DELEUZE 1968, ASKINS 2016, MARTIN 2012, VALENTINE & WAITE 2012). Identities become performed by individuals in mundane identity work, a process in which people use "signifiers to claim and give meaning to their selves" (WILKINS 2012: 175) and negotiate their identities and sameness, as well as open or close difference. As MARTIN (2012: 175) notes, in this process, "identifying with different groups is an important part of being human, a sense of belonging".

In relation to the engagement of childhood studies and children's geographies with intersectionalities, HORTON & KRAFTL (2018: 927, 928) have criticised a neglect of "children's vivid, visceral, powerfully affecting, haunting narratives of everyday materialities" and of "social-material processes that are characteristically massy, indivisible, unseen, fluid and noxious". They call for perspectives that bring non-/more-than-human approaches and theories of matter and social-materialities into conversation with debates about intersectionality, multiculturalism, and conviviality. The authors propose "extra-sectional analyses" as a way forward to "retain intersectionality's critical and political purchase, whilst simultaneously folding social-material complexities and vitalities into its theorisation" (HORTON & KRAFTL 2018: 928). However, we note that while non- or more-than-human theory and extrasectional analyses make important additions to intersectional analyses, the core problem foregrounded by HORTON & KRAFTL (2018), i.e. that social scientists working with concepts of matter are insufficiently addressing social and power relations and the resulting inequalities up to violent exclusions, starkly persists.

By applying the concept of "abundant identities" – which also takes into account the non-linearities in intersectional identity formation and identity work – and that of "diffracted difference", we queer and diffract concepts of binary gender and sexual identities (including the LGBTQI categories), as well as other intersectional categories such as class, ethnicity and race. Human difference is abundant, specific and diffracted in the sense of BARAD (2014) – to the extent that it may even be beyond language and explanation according to BURBULES (1997). However, the politics of identities and space, the aligned performative and iteratively (re-)produced (body-)practices and identity work that characterise our "throwntogetherness" (MASSEY 2005, LEURS 2014), strongly (re-)produce categorisations of otherwise abundant subjectivities (cf. e.g., HINTERMANN et al. 2020). Finally, not only despite but also as part of social and digital transitions, exclusion and violence remain interwoven through and (re-)produced by "everyday lives, institutions, and structures" (SPRINGER & LE BILLON 2016: 2), among others by subjecting individuals to "violent processes of heterosexualisation" (BROWNE 2021: 366) and heteronormalisation. Further attention must be paid to the enfolded material entanglements within the social and political relationalities as well as to the role of technologies, to which we attend next.

### 3 Digital technologies' complex roles in young people's lives

Over the past three decades, a rapidly growing number of works from children's and young people's geographies as well as media and communication studies has examined the effect of digitalisation on children's and young people's lives and spaces (e.g., JONES et al. 2003, STOKES 2010, BOND 2014, PLOWMAN 2016, TRUONG 2018, THULIN et al. 2020). The vast amount of this work builds upon childhood studies that have for several decades sought to investigate children's and young people's voices and agencies and their active appropriation, negotiation and making of space. Such studies have looked into how information and communication technologies have been employed by children and young people to capture and (co-)create spaces of their own (see also BOYD 2014, WILSON 2016, NASH & GORMAN-MURRAY 2019) and how they have become a "deeply ingrained" (VANDEN ABEELE 2016: 86) element of their exploration and construction of identities (BATES et al. 2020, BOND 2014, LING 2012, LIJADI & VAN SCHALKWYK 2017, YAN 2018). With the rise of the smartphone in particular, but also that of wearables such as smartwatches, and the accompanying mobility of digital media, the role of "mobile media" has been very much emphasised (WATKINS et al. 2012). VANDEN ABEELE (2016: 85), for example, even argued that a distinct "mobile youth culture (MYC)" has emerged.

Complementing the dominant focus on "mobile media", digital geographers have emphasised the importance of "spatial media" – that is, the spatialisation of content, location awareness and related techno-cultural productions (LESZCZYNSKI 2015). Such geographical engagements have countered claims that the emergence of networked technologies will lead to any kind of de-territorialisation of young people's practices (as suggested, for example, by ALMEIDA et al. 2015: 1450). Furthermore – complementing the dominant focus on children's and young people's agencies, practices and reflective engagements with the world – more-than-representational, more-than-social (KRAFTL 2013), more-than-human, infrastructural, and new-materialism perspectives (HORTON et al. 2015, HORTON & KRAFTL 2018, KRAFTL 2020) have been mobilised to think through children's and young people's entanglements with technologies, data, materialities, and the social. In his book *After Childhood: Re-thinking environment, materiality and media in children's lives*, KRAFTL (2020), for example, delineated how traces of childhood have become ingrained in online selling sites or social-media platforms.

Another strand of literature has focused on political-economic infrastructures and affective capitalism that children and young people are situated in (cf. BHANDARI & BIMO 2022). More recently, however, SCHURR et al. (2023: 215, 227) have criticised the focus on large-scale infrastructures, suggesting that researchers must not neglect the interweaving of small-scale "intimate technologies" in everyday lives. Important aspects of this approach for children's and young people's studies are that it simultaneously considers the intertwining of the obvious material mobile devices such as smartphones or smartwatches in intimate everyday life with much less-explored technologies such as (increasingly networked) domestic appliances or care technologies, as well as that it considers the seamless and imperceptible entanglement of private, intimate spheres with public ones through networked technologies (SCHURR et al. 2023). Due to data extraction and their networked nature (cf. SCHEFFER 2020), seemingly small technologies used at home become intricately woven into much larger data assemblages elsewhere, thus presenting themselves as small and intimate while still being integral components of "large infrastructures and technologies".

We will now turn to the role of digital technologies in the negotiation of identities and difference as debated by the above-named perspectives. Regarding studies that have centred on children's and young people's agency in using technologies for their own purposes, it has been emphasised how especially mobile-media devices make mediated identity negotiations omnipresent. With mobile-media devices, children and young people hold "in their hand the ability to continually project self-expression, self-edit, reshuffle, revise, and reorganise aspects of the self" (BATES et al. 2020: 55). With the "networked self" model, PAPACHARISSI (2010) argued that the self is performed on digital platforms through the staging, management and negotiation of self-representation through social connections. In this way, mobile intimate technologies have significantly propagated self-representation in the form of multi-dimensional, intertextual practices, whereby visual self-representation has become the striking feature of contemporary mobile-media culture (BHANDARI & BIMO 2022).

Thereby, HEARN (2010, 2017 as cited in BHANDARI & BIMO 2022) has noted the need to consider how self-representation and selfhood are entangled with affective capitalist and consumerist projects that are part of wider political-economic infrastructures. A related strand of literature has looked at the power and impact of algorithms and affective capitalism on

the making of identities (cf. BHANDARI & BIMO 2022). Still, BHANDARI & BIMO (2022) argue that this literature loses sight of the agency of users in self-making. Based on a study of US college students' use of TikTok, which differs from other social-media platforms in its use of a personalised algorithm that constantly confronts users with their own personas, they propose the model of the "algorithmized self" which takes into account users' "reflexive engagement with previous self-representations rather than with one's social connections" (BHANDARI & BIMO 2022: 9). Based on their findings, BHANDARI & BIMO (2022: 10) accentuate that digital media should thus not be researched "as discrete entities, but rather as moving nodes in a more extensive ecosystem" (BHANDARI & BIMO 2022: 10), considering the dynamics and fluidities in the construction of identities. Indeed, each technology and platform offers different properties, which need to be studied together with their consequences (MADIANOU & MILLER 2012, PEIL 2021) rather than considering them as "standalone features of supposedly value-free technological artefacts" (MASIERO 2023: 3).

Existing research has shown that for young people with abundant identities, particularly those who do not conform to heteronormativity, the entanglement of everyday lives with digital technologies has ambivalent consequences. Online platforms can be safe spaces for exploring multiple contextual identities with sophisticated means of controlling the intended audience (BANSEL 2018, FOX & RALSTON 2016, BATES et al. 2020). They can offer relational and intimate affective resources and provide a platform for sharing care and support, which was found to be particularly important for marginalised groups (MCLEAN et al. 2023). Young people actively use them in the context of their identity negotiations, bringing certain aspects to the fore while deliberately hiding others purposefully in certain circumstances/contextes (RAITHOFER et al. 2022). In this vein, HANCKEL et al. (2019) show how LGBTQI+ young people use "the functions of platforms strategically to create supportive spaces, and extend their own queer life-making projects".

However, it has been noted that at the same time digital platforms carry the risk of "collapsing contexts" (BOYD 2002: 36) when only "seemingly disparate audiences co-exist" (MARWICK & BOYD 2014: 1056). Digital platforms then produce a strong (sense of) peer surveillance, where seemingly no space allows withdrawal or feels safe and protected. Furthermore, studies have found increasing pressure put on young users to align their online and offline

practices and identities (METCALFE & LLEWELLYN 2020). DAVIS & WEINSTEIN (2017) have argued that mainstream platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, encourage users to maintain online social networks that closely correspond with their offline social ties, and, in doing so, work against self-experimentation and the capturing of safe spaces. This can add "to the production of binary and stereotypical genders, which young people struggle (or do not wish) to move outside of" (METCALFE & LLEWELLYN 2020: 104). The ubiquitous commodified representations of idealised material heteronormative and dominantly white bodies online "escalate the demands of hegemonic femininity" (BAER 2016: 24) and masculinity intersecting with further structural differences of inequality and white supremacy (MCLEAN et al. 2019). Even more, shadow banning, i.e. the blocking of users through content moderators of social-media platforms, often without informing them, was found by RAUCHBERG (2022) to affect trans, queer and disabled people, particularly in countries outside of North America. In a study with young TikTok users in Australia, MCLEAN et al. (2023) show how the participants were concerned about shadow banning, homophobic and racist hate speech, but also show how some of them intervened, and exercised agency by reporting problematic posts.

An important emphasis in geographic studies has also been to show how (young) people actively employ practices of "thriving otherwise" (ELWOOD 2020) and try to work towards "politics of difference" (AMIN 2012) that break with established practices of heterosexualisation, heteronormalisation and (violent) exclusion. Given the complexities and ambivalences of digital technologies in inclusion and exclusion, as BAER (2016) and MCLEAN et al. (2019) point out with regard to digital feminist activism, the digital offers scope for diverse agendas and an inclusive politics of difference, but also bears the risk of reproducing idealised heteronormative bodies and divisive politics of identities. Queer approaches have made suggestions of how the normalising power of code and software can challenge "both social and digital code(s) – or the norm – to show how they constrain normativity but also how forms of intimate life can transgress, disrupt, and distribute what is normal" (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017: 1643). In analysing practices of care and repair, MCLEAN et al. (2023) showed how young TikTok users in Australia used the platform during COVID-19 for responsible practices of care and repair, supporting and responding to each other in navigating the platform and in finding solutions to user problems.

As can be summed up, the relationality of digital technologies in young people's lives is tightly entangled, fluid and negotiated with complex, contradictory and non-linear consequences for inclusion and exclusion (cf. BORK-HÜFFER 2022). After all, individuals with abundant identities face particular risks when navigating social-media platforms and making complex everyday decisions about self-representation (BATES et al. 2020, see also LIVINGSTONE & SMITH 2014). The aforementioned recent efforts to foreground inclusive politics of difference are of great importance in highlighting alternative pathways and countering the increasing entanglement of technologies in violent practices. However, it is also important to increase awareness of how violence becomes subtly folded into entangled human and posthuman agency, as "being able to understand what we become with technology in specific situations, i.e. how our programmes of action are shaped, not by us or by the technology, but by the human-technology nexus, is essential for becoming agents capable of reflecting and acting in our daily lives and society" (DANHOLT 2021: 175). In line with this, in the next section we turn to mediated violence and try to further an understanding of its spatial nature.

#### 4 The spatialities of mediated violence in young people's lives

In order to deepen an understanding of the spatialities of mediated violence, in this section, we diffractively read through (see section 1) findings of studies of violence, particularly (cyber-)bullying among young people, with concepts of space and spatiality. From an ever-growing and vibrant scholarship engaging with entangled online and offline space, we bring into conversation selected concepts of space as proposed by communication-studies scholars, digital geographers, sociologists and cultural-studies scholars taking either a networked-mobile-media and mobilities, agential-realism, posthuman, more-than-human and/or quantified-self perspective. Whereas these conceptions are all united by a relational and non-essentialist understanding of space, they each highlight different dimensions and affordances of socio-material-technical entanglements (cf. also LESZCZYNSKI 2019, BAUDER 2021). We find that mobilising them promotes an open and comprehensive approach to the complexities and multiplicities (MASSEY 2005) of entangled space in which mediated violence unfolds.

The connections between physical, offline or material space and cyber, virtual, online or digital space have been debated widely. In geography, this conversation started in the late 1980s (KINSLEY 2014), leading to a broad consensus on the inseparable, entangled relationship of material and digital space (KITCHIN 1998, IMKEN 1999, MASSEY 2005, BORK-HÜFFER & YEOH 2017, ASH et al. 2018, 2019, BAUDER 2021). One focus, particularly in media and communication studies, has been on the role of mobilities across space enabled by networked mobile technologies, introduced and recently confirmed by DE SOUZA E SILVA's concept of "hybrid spaces" (2006, cf. also DE SOUZA E SILVA 2023). Debates on mobile media have been paralleled by discussions on "locative media" (FRITH 2015) or "networked spatial media (hardware/software objects and information artifacts)" and their effects on "technology-society-space relations" (LESZCZYNSKI 2015, cf. also GAZZARD 2011, ASH et al. 2018, 2019). Whereas DE SOUZA E SILVA (2006, 2023) foregrounds active, reflected and creative appropriation and communication practices of human users of networked technologies, in digital geography there has been an emphasis on conceptualising the active role of technologies, of code, algorithms, software and of posthuman agency in the co-constitution of social life, with the theorisation of "code/space" by KITCHIN & DODGE (2011, cf. also KITCHIN 2017). Poststructuralist and feminist perspectives have taken up the concept of code/space and connected it to theorisations of the simultaneous co-constitution of social and digital code and space (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017). Further influences on the debate of entangled spatialities have originated from more-than-human and quantified-self perspectives. With the concept of "datafied space", SUMARTOJO et al. (2016) have shed light on the digital assemblages deriving from the affective coming together of bodies, technologies, and material spaces (cf. also LUPTON 2020). More recently, we have refined a previous conception of the cON/FFlating spaces concept (situated, multiple and specific conflating online and offline spaces; BORK-HÜFFER & YEOH 2017): By bringing it into conversation with the concepts of code/space and datafied space and interweaving these approaches with BARAD'S (2007, 2014) agential-realism approach to reflect upon the entanglements of humans, technologies and the environment, of human, more-than-human and post-human agency, of bodies, code and materialities, of affects and emotion as well as of space and time, we suggest that the important impulses by the above-named strands should be thought together rather than regarded as contradictory (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b).



In the following, we use these selected concepts of space and spatiality to “diffractively think through”, in BARAD’S (2007) sense, findings from studies of mediated violence, particularly (cyber-)bullying. Rather than introducing and comparing the concepts themselves, we will discuss their contributions relevant to an understanding of the spatialities of violence and particularly of gender-based violence. It should be noted that as part of this piece, we will not engage with non-human encounters (cf. e.g., ASH 2013) nor with violence involving animals (cf. e.g., FORSSMAN 2017, VERNE et al. 2021). Although highly relevant too, venturing into non-human and mediated animal violence would go beyond the focus of this article, i.e., mediated violence and (cyber-)bullying as experienced by humans.

DE SOUZA E SILVA (2006) describes the impact of the use of mobile technologies on the social interactions and communication of people. Mobile technologies and the mobilities they afford are argued to be essential to the production of “hybrid spaces”, defined as “mobile spaces, created by the constant movement of users who carry portable devices continuously connected to the Internet and to other users” (DE SOUZA E SILVA 2006: 262). Similarly, VANDEN ABBELE, DE WOLF & LING (2018: 6) refer to “anytime, anyplace connectivity” as the key affordance of contemporary mobile communication, indicating in turn mobile communication technologies, which reshape social space and power structures. DE SOUZA E SILVA (2006) conceptualises mobile technologies as interfaces of hybrid spaces (DE SOUZA E SILVA 2006: 268) and mobility as an “intrinsic part” of “networked, mobile, and social spaces” (DE SOUZA E SILVA 2023: 60), leading to the intersection of physical and digital space. In her recent “hybrid spaces 2.0” conception DE SOUZA E SILVA (2023) considers the role of infrastructures and networked technologies beyond the mobile phone and attends more to power asymmetries and unevenness in mobilities in the context of urban space, when compared to her early hybrid-spaces approach.

The emergence of continuously networked mobile technologies has implications for the spaces, practices and intensities of violence: in comparison to stationary devices such as desktop computers that, for example, remain in the school or workplace, mobile devices such as smartphones entail the “potential to carry harassment around in our pockets everywhere we go” in socio-material space (MOTT & COCKAYNE 2021: 1536), making mediated violence and particularly (cyber-)bullying potentially omnipresent. As opposed to SMS services on older

feature phones that (generally) supported one-to-one conversations, internet-based communication applications, such as mobile messengers, additionally allow for shared group conversations and many-to-many communication, which significantly enhances collective cyberbullying practices (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b). Key advantages of mobile messenger applications experienced by every smartphone user are also key advantages for perpetrators of violence practices: the ease of operation of the application, usually no additional financial costs to general internet service fees, no specific restrictions on the amount or size of messages sent, and the option of transmitting different multi-media formats (e.g., text, photos, videos, emojis) free of charge. As a result, visual content, especially photos, potentially digitally edited and heavily manipulated by image-editing programs, have become dominant forms of humiliating others, e.g., as part of the cyberbullying practice of “photoshopping” (cf. e.g., SCHULTZE-KRUMBHOLZ et al. 2012).

Furthermore, networked mobile technologies increase the number of possible contacts, the speed of interaction, and the degree to which immediate transgression of communication can occur. With regard to sexualised violence online, DEKKER et al. (2016) have argued that all this contributes to a fluidity and crossing of boundaries between consensual sexual practices online, different types of sexualised transgressions, and sexualised violence. Then again, the ease of switching between individual networked platforms and the capability to forward and replicate content both within and across them leaves targets of violent attacks unable to evade the practices and spaces of violence. The increasingly and potentially “always-on” nature of mobile media further enables cyberbullying at any time and location. Thus, targets are almost always accessible and consequently continuously vulnerable. They can hardly shield themselves from the mediated bullying practices or escape the situation (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021a). Due to their networked nature, mobile technologies also afford perpetrators the opportunity to harm victims in public on a large scale by circulating content, for example intimate images or videos, without consent as part of “revenge pornography” (HENRY et al. 2020). Given the networked, relational character of mobile media, in contrast to traditional bullying, cyberbullying can be taken over and continued by co-perpetrators without the initial perpetrators being involved (DOOLEY 2009) on the same platform or across platforms. Overall, the omnipresence, mundanity and banality of mobile media in everyday life combined with the ease of distribution of harmful content

are major factors that support the normalisation of mediated violence as well as reinforce and escalate violence (SLONJE & SMITH 2008, BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021a, b).

Locatability itself, although being now an integral part of many mobile-media applications, and location-based media, are only implicated in specific types of (cyber-)bullying. HENRY et al. (2020) have highlighted the importance of locatability in the context of abusive social and intimate relationships, in terms of tracking people via GPS. Such cyberstalking often involves subjecting the victim to repeated threats, insults, offensive and humiliating messages (cf. WILLARD 2007, HENRY et al. 2020). These are normally delivered through online platforms and make targets feel intimidated and at risk. Furthermore, perpetrators can use traceable and locatable data footprints left by individuals in digital space to increase fears for their safety by implying stalking in socio-material space and spatial proximity to the victim – whether or not such practices are genuine.

However, it must be noted that the concept of “hybrid spaces” does not take into account posthuman agency and the co-constitution of socio-technical assemblages through code, algorithm, and software (cf. KITCHIN & DODGE 2011). Furthermore, an overemphasis on somewhat unlimited connectivities and mobilities understates the immobilities and digital divides involved (cf. e.g., CRESSWELL 2012, KLEINE & POVEDA 2017) as well as the exclusionary nature of racialised, gendered and otherwise divisive code inscribed in social life (cf. COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017). Although, it must be noted that DE SOUZA E SILVA (2023) has addressed these issues – at least roughly – in the “hybrid spaces 2.0” conception. Lastly, it has been noted that the conception of hybrid spaces and of the hybridity of space describes mobilities *between* and *interactions* of digital and material spaces, therewith still connoting a certain separation of these spaces, and focusing on space as a product rather than a process (LESZCZYNSKI 2015, BAUDER 2021, BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b).

KITCHIN & DODGE (2011) have theorised code, software and posthuman agency as the intangible, hidden element that structures the visible and tangible, material and socio-material everyday life (KITCHIN & DODGE 2011). The authors focus on how coded objects, coded infrastructures, coded processes and coded assemblages “mediate, supplement, augment, monitor, regulate, facilitate, and ultimately produce collective life” (KITCHIN & DODGE 2011: 6), and thereby “actively shape people’s daily inter-

actions and transactions, and mediate all manner of practices in entertainment, communication, and mobilities”. Due to posthuman agency, cyberbullying is not limited to other human perpetrators, but can be amplified through algorithms that facilitate the spread of harmful content, even when the (original) human perpetrators are no longer directly involved. Platforms such as TikTok, Twitter and Telegram have been blamed for the lack of adequate moderation of homophobic, misogynistic and racist hate speech and for thereby facilitating its uncontrolled algorithmic (and human) spread (cf. e.g., RAUCHBERG 2022, MCLEAN et al. 2023). For example, given the confrontation with an individual’s own self and self-representation on TikTok through personalised algorithms, victims are exposed to an elevated risk of being affronted by a spiral of humiliation and attacks.

Regarding the relationship between code, space, and sexuality, COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON (2017: 1642) have played on “the double entendre of ‘code’ as a set of social rules and norms, and ‘code’ as the set of algorithmic instructions underlying software systems”. They underlined how the coming together of both readings of code can significantly inscribe norms into software and social life (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017). Building on FOUCAULT (1978) the authors have pointed out how “technologies have a significant role to play in producing space through the biopolitical regulation (and transgression) of the dichotomies that structure places as hetero- and homosexual, public and private, and minority and universal” (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017: 1643). They emphasise how especially “the normative dualisms that produce sexuality as a mode of regulation frame the codings of space emergent in digital and software systems” (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017: 1650) and therewith reproduce heteronormatively gendered space and practices. In doing so, they have also revealed similarities between Butler’s conceptualisation of the performativity of the body and sexuality (see section 2) and the notion of code as proposed by KITCHIN & DODGE (2011). By connecting queer theory with code/space, they elaborate the similarities in the regulating effect of space between “the normative functioning of sexuality as a ‘technology,’” and the role of software and coding (COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON 2017: 1654). Through code, norms and heteronormative, feminine and masculine stereotypes are repeatedly staged, performed and reproduced (cf. BUTLER 2012). As COVER (2016: 106) underlines, the human body is increasingly becoming a project that must be managed and organised under these (hetero-)normative claims of

“regulating ideals”. The continually available opportunities and the pressure to stage and manipulate the material body online often contributes to a reproduction of these norms rather than their transgression. Gendered and sexualised as well as racist violence and cyberbullying are being legitimised when individuals do not align their performances, practices and looks with these norms and ideals (MAHLKNECHT & BORK-HÜFFER 2022).

Nevertheless, as COCKAYNE & RICHARDSON (2017: 1642) note, there is also scope to “transgress, disrupt, and distribute the norm” (see also section 3). Also, BHANDARI & BIMO (2022) as well as McLEAN et al. (2023) have shown that there is scope for counter-practices of care and repair by the “algorithmized self” (see section 3). Taking the example of TikTok, users can engage with caring and supportive communities and related content on the platform, thereby training the personalised algorithm. In a similar vein, despite the growing importance of code, algorithms, machine learning, artificial intelligence and posthuman agency overall, many authors have cautioned not to neglect the relevancy of human agency (cf. BARAD 2007, ROSE 2017, ELWOOD 2020, HINTERMANN et al. 2020, BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021a, b). ELWOOD (2020: 3) argues that “digital objects, praxes and ways of knowing always contain possibilities for unanticipated forms of agency, subjectivity, or sociospatial relations”. However, far beyond only unanticipated forms of agency, as WATTS (2017: 2) postulates, violent practices are “often defined by intentionality”. (Cyber-)bullying practices are also usually characterised by this deliberate intention to harm targets (see section 1). Although, as DANHOLT (2021: 176) points out, bullying can also serve purposes other than intentional harm, for example when the “primary motivation may, with social media in fact, not be to bully, but to befriend numerous other and become popular”.

Further impulses to our focus are found in more-than-human approaches, studies of affect and studies of the quantified self. In striving to better grasp the inseparable entanglement of humans and non-humans in bullying, DANHOLT (2021) brings actor-network theory into conversation. Building on LATOUR’S (1994: 32, as cited in DANHOLT 2021: 174-175) concept of translation as “displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies two elements or agents”, he conceptualises bullying as a “hybrid product” (DANHOLT 2021). The idea of the “hybridity of the human-technology relation” here goes beyond DE SOUZA E SILVA’S (2006, 2023)

idea of intersecting spaces and refers to a “human-technology nexus” and “human-social media hybrid” (DANHOLT 2021: 175-176). Whereas social media, according to DANHOLT (2021: 176), does not determine social and human behaviour, it “transforms my agency and who I am as a person [...] the platform adds to or enhances some ‘qualities’ and decreases others”. DANHOLT (2021: 176) posits that “Latour’s translational and hybrid approach allows for picking apart and composing and constructing action and agency – instead of understanding it as a closed or determined matter given either by nature, sociality or what not”. Yet, we would note, the reverse aspect, the influence of human agency on technologies, is still less taken into actual account here.

Nonetheless, findings of studies of violence underline the emergence of affective violent processes that only emerge through the inseparable entanglements of technologies and humans – corresponding to the idea of the “human-social media hybrid”. For example, enabling the purposeful impersonation, masquerading and faking of identities by perpetrators (cf. e.g., BAUMAN 2015), digital technologies foster the anonymity, invisibility, and impunity of perpetrators (cf. MILITZ 2022). In the absence of the need to confront any kind of social judgment, responsibility and accountability, normative thresholds for engaging in transgressive violent practices are reduced. At the same time, particularly (though not only) textual encounters that lack embodiment and face-to-face contact with human beings, combined with the ease of responding on social media, were found to inhibit empathy and foster aggressive affects, and therewith promote an escalation of violence (BURGESS-PROCTOR et al. 2009, JACKSON & VALENTINE 2014). Overall, these findings support our argument that digital technologies as part of inseparable affective entanglements, or “human-social media hybrids” in DANHOLT’S (2021) sense, facilitate the mundanity of violent aggression.

With the concept of “datafied space”, SUMARTOJO et al. (2016) bring MASSEY’S (2005) relational, multiple and processual understanding of space into conversation with more-than-human, quantified-self perspectives to highlight the convergence of data, bodies and affects as part of human and more-than-human encounters on a micro scale. The authors emphasise the role of affects as “sets of intensities that emerge from a sensing, perceiving body in material and immaterial environments, [...] therefore central to how our surroundings feel as we encounter and move through them” (SUMARTOJO et al. 2016: 35). According to SUMARTOJO et al. (2016: 39), the “concept of datafied

space decentres digital data as discrete and static, and instead locates them as part of a complex, messy tangle of everyday life. This de-centring reveals data as relational and processual. It locates their power in their combination with material, immaterial and affective aspects of everyday experience, rather than privileging digital data above other ways of knowing the world. Thus, one of the main conclusions that we can draw from our ethnographic work is how affect is implicated in the relationship between personal data and power.”

The relational entanglement of the material, immaterial and affective aspects that de-centre data as part of entangled material bodies, practices and technologies becomes most blatant in “photoshopping”. This concerns a specific type of (cyber-)bullying, in fact primarily an active manipulation of images and videos, where the intra-acting material body with its performativity in physical-material space is moved to the centre of mediated bullying, serving as a visual representation online. Bodies are shamed for not conforming to socially constructed ideals of the physical body itself (shape and weight), its performativity (modes of behaviour, speech or expression) or material equipment (especially clothing). The blatant psychological and physical effects of (cyber-)bullying on young people, such as depression, strong negative feelings, anxiety, sleeping and eating disorders, diminishing self-esteem, stomach pains and headaches, sometimes even leading to suicide, after all underline the importance of de-centring the discussion on data, and have been reported as consequences of bullying that often play out on the physical bodies of the bullied (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021a). Still, there are limits to an understanding of intentional (cyber-)bullying practices through the datafied space concept.

Eventually, when trying to understand the spatialities of violence in entangled spaces, it is crucial to consider non-linear temporalities that result from the entanglements of space and time and to take note of variegated perceptions, interpretations and versions of historicities. In order to do so, in our own work (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b), we have connected BARAD’S (2007) conception of the onto-epistemological entanglements of pasts, presents and futures with KITCHIN & DODGE’S (2011) and KITCHIN’S (2017) conception of the ontogenetic nature of code/space. Furthermore, we have integrated MASSEY’S (2005) elaboration of the role of human perception in the emergence of multiple historicities. Prominently, MASSEY (2005: 9) established that space is dynamic, changeable and always “in process”. BARAD (2007:

142), like MASSEY, assumes an “ongoing dynamism of becoming”, but embeds it in an understanding of non-linear spacetime-matterings: “time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively re-configured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future” (BARAD 2007: ix). BARAD pledges for an understanding that considers the tight entanglements of pasts, presents and futures and how they are “reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetime-mattering” (BARAD 2007: 260-261). This inspires a non-linear, non-deterministic but causal understanding of dynamics of entangled space and time.

There are strong intersections with digital geographers’ conceptualisation of the processual, ontogenetic and contradictory nature of the digital, digital space and spatialities. KITCHIN & DODGE (2011:10) argue that software “modulates how space comes into being through a process of transduction (the constant making anew of a domain in reiterative and transformative practices)”. Referring to algorithmic co-production of space, KITCHIN (2017: 18) notes how algorithms “are ontogenetic in nature (always in a state of becoming), teased into being: edited, revised, deleted and restarted, shared with others, passing through multiple iterations stretched out over time and space [...], they are always somewhat uncertain, provisional and messy fragile accomplishments”. In a similar vein to BARAD’S spacetime-matterings, KITCHIN & DODGE (2011: 10) conclude that space as a result is in the constant ontogenetic process of becoming, “an event or a doing – a set of unfolding practices that lack a secure ontology” (KITCHIN & DODGE 2011: 10). Due to posthuman agency and the ontogenetic nature of algorithms, once online, content can be spread across platforms and through servers in multiple locations, can be out of jurisdictional reach and impossible to delete, and thus always remains online. This non-linear transgression of space and time enabled and enacted by technologies continuously brings past harm into presents and futures (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b), potentially leading to a repeated and recurring confrontation of victims with violence, sometimes resulting in a pervasive triggering of fear (cf. KÄRGER & FOBBE 2020).

While we need to take note of the iterative, ontogenetic nature of code, algorithm and software in mediated violence, we must also consider the role of multiple, contradictory and political historicities of violence (MASSEY 2005) that are being inscribed



into code. MASSEY (2005: 129) underlines that there are various diverging interpretations, concepts and versions of history: “multiplicity [...] is essential for historicity”. Similarly ZALĀNS et al. (2022: 927) note that “time is inseparable from space as the embodied experiences of violence in space are tied not only to the physical environment, but also to moments, times and memories that produce this space” (cf. also SPRINGER 2011). Considering multiple historicities in (cyber-)bullying means taking into account the contextualities and multiple affective-emotional experiences, interpretations and versions of it. We have shown how this leads to widely divergent accounts of the relationship between space and time in bullying, for example, with perpetrators accounting for a few past violent attacks while their targets emphasise the never-ending nature of cyberbullying with the re-circulation of images, videos and the associated re-victimisation (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b). In terms of analysing how young people make sense of violence in their everyday lives, JOELSSON & BRUNO (2022: 179) note “[i]t is essential to understand violence contextually; not as isolated events but instead as something that is enmeshed in spatial and temporal processes that individuals make sense of from a situated [...] perspective [...] particularly at the intersections of gender, time and space”. If young people’s lives shift even more into virtual spheres in the future, the virtual reproduction of pasts, past memories (cf. OSBORNE & JONES 2020) and the potential re-victimisation they entail, could potentially become much more present, immersive, and embodied. Combining MASSEY’s, KITCHIN & DODGE’s and BARAD’s theorisations, intra-actions of human and more-than-human actants, technologies and materialities are never neutral but political, and their role in the (re-)production of axes of difference, inequalities and violence is hugely significant.

Concluding our engagement with entangled spatialities and their role in violence and (cyber-)bullying, we see the above elaborated strands of networked mobilities, algorithmic, posthuman and more-than-human perspectives and agential realism less as contradictory than as importantly complementing each other in an understanding of the spatialities of violence. To bring them together, and building upon a series of empirical studies and theoretical discussions (BORK-HÜFFER & YEOH 2017, BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021a, b), we suggest the concept of cON/FFlating spaces as denoting “specific and multiple spaces characterised by the intra-actions of human and more-than-human [...] actants and contexts, their power relations and practices, entangled

affects and emotions, materialities and representations.” (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b: 144, translated). Characterised by inseparable entanglements and intra-actions, they extend across indivisible socio-material-technological spheres. Human and post-human agency in cON/FFlating spaces is not an attribute of humans or technologies but an “ongoing reconfiguration of the world” (BARAD 2007: 141) constituted by their inseparable entanglement. cON/FFlating spaces are enmeshed in power relations, power asymmetries and multiple historicities and are deeply influenced by so-called politics of space and difference (MASSEY 2005, AMIN 2012, KITCHIN et al. 2013, VALENTINE 2008, 2014, GLASZE 2017, cf. BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021b, see section 2).

## 5 Researching negotiations of difference and the spatialities of mediated violence in young people’s lives: The example of the bEYOND multi-method research design

Issues of difference, (intersectional) identities and sexualities are sensitive, even more so in relation to processes of inclusion, exclusion, and violence in entangled online and offline spaces as well as regarding the focus group of young people. These conditions require highly sensitive and ethically reflective approaches that respect and integrate the perspectives, needs and feelings of the specific subjects involved (see BOND 2014, STOKES 2010, ERGLER et al. 2016, HADFIELD-HILL & ZARA 2018, ARUNKUMAR et al. 2019, VANDEBOSCH & GREEN 2019).

Furthermore, although difference and abundant gender and sexual identities have become acknowledged concepts (see section 2), the question of how to empirically and ethically research them remains challenging (VALENTINE 2007, THORNBERG 2011, CHRISTENSEN & JENSEN 2012, SMITH 2019, VANDEBOSCH & GREEN 2019). While it is not within the scope of this article to provide an encompassing overview of related epistemological and methodological debates, in this section we would like to point to some methodological challenges, discuss mobile-media methods as a current field of experimentation, and outline our own multi-method approach. This approach aims to provide comprehensive insights into the complexities and processes of family and social biographies including past and present social-media use, and of the mediated experience, practices and negotiations of difference and related violence, as well as the related variegated historicities of these experiences. In doing so, we seek to shed light on

the dynamics and non-linearities of bullying in entangled online and offline spaces and to overcome a “reductionist model of cause and effect” as well as “universal definitions of violence” since these “are not enough to adjust to the multiplicity of subjective experience” (ACARÓN 2016: 147).

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying lack of access to participants’ lives for researchers, the field of remote research approaches has seen vibrant experimentation both in transferring classic approaches to digital and mobile spaces, and in developing new techniques and methods (LOBE et al. 2020, LUPTON 2021, BÖRNER et al. 2023). In particular, mobile methods using smartphones and other mobile-media technologies (BOASE & HUMPHREYS 2018), hereafter referred to as mobile-media methods, have come to the fore due to the high relevance of these devices in people’s work and personal lives (for a discussion of mobile methods in digital geographies see KAUFMANN & BORK-HÜFFER, 2021). Furthermore, mobile-media methods have proven useful in research with hard-to-reach-groups (SUGIE 2016; BÖRNER et al. 2023) and possess a particular potential to bridge phenomena across entangled online and offline spaces (e.g., HE et al. 2022, HUGENTOBLE 2022). Especially the mobile messenger app WhatsApp, nowadays a “technology of life” (CRUZ & HARINDRANATH 2020), has recently seen a breakthrough as a methodological tool and research space with wide applications ranging from focus groups (e.g., COLOM 2022, NEO et al. 2022), and community interventions (e.g., ALENCAR & CAMARGO 2022), to Mobile Instant Messaging Ethnography (CREESE et al. 2023) and Mobile Instant Messaging Interviews (KAUFMANN & PEIL 2020, KAUFMANN et al. 2021). Due to its intensive usage among young people in many countries, WhatsApp is well suited to research with young people (BÖRNER et al. 2023, SINGER et al. 2023) and LGBTQI youth (MAVHANDU-MUDZUSI et al. 2022, see also MCINROY 2016), allowing researchers to give these hard-to-reach communities a voice (HEYWOOD et al. 2022). Such app-based text methods are particularly suitable for interacting with young people when dealing with sensitive and controversial issues, as ANDERDAL BAKKEN (2022) found in her international study of young people’s illegal online drug-selling activities.

The multimodality of messengers allows researchers to tap into the material spaces people are embedded in, when they post photos or take videos of their surroundings (cf. MAHLKNECHT et al. 2022). Visual data can be used to initiate conversations about the entanglements of matter and meaning in

young people’s lives, thus potentially extending intersectional to extrasectional analyses (cf. HORTON & KRAFTL 2018, section 2). In face of these findings, we believe that mobile-media approaches that use mobile messengers also lend themselves to studying young people’s negotiations of identities and difference and the unfolding of mediated violence in entangled spaces – especially when implemented as part of a multi-method or mixed-methods design.

In the following, we would like to give readers a concrete research design example by drawing from our ongoing project beYOND (Young People Negotiating Difference in cON/FFlating Spaces, grant number FWF: P 34691-G) funded by the FWF (Austrian Science Fund), which we have set up to understand young people’s individual and subjective experiences of negotiating difference and related experiences of inclusion, exclusion and (cyber-)bullying in entangled online and offline spaces. The project runs from 2021 to 2025 and is conducted with young people just before, during and after leaving school in urban and rural areas of peripheral states in Austria (Tyrol), Germany (Schleswig-Holstein) and Spain (Biscay). In the study, we apply a sequential qualitative multi-method, ethically reflected and youth-centred research design (cf. fig. 1), in which the integration of sampling, data collection and analysis throughout all steps of the research aims at contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities and relationalities of young people, technologies and materialities in entangled spaces.

Ethical approval was granted by the “Board for Ethical Issues” at the University of Innsbruck and the Directorate of Education of the federal province of Tyrol (Bildungsdirektion Land Tirol). Participants were 17 or 18 years of age at the time of research step 1 (see Fig. 1); informed consent was collected from them and, for those who were 17, from parents or guardians as well (twice: once for research step 1, and for those who continued, consent was again sought for the longitudinal phase, step 2).

The research design consists of two main empirical phases (see Fig. 1, steps 1-2), the integrated meta-analysis of all data collected (3) and a transdisciplinary phase (4) in which key outcomes for safer and more inclusive school environments are co-produced with young people and stakeholders. In the following, we will shortly explain each step of the multi-method design. Initially, *written narratives* (step 1) collected with young people in schools in three countries both formed the basis for the integrated sampling for the longitudinal phase and gave an overview of the research object’s scope, i.e., pupils’ overall conceptions,

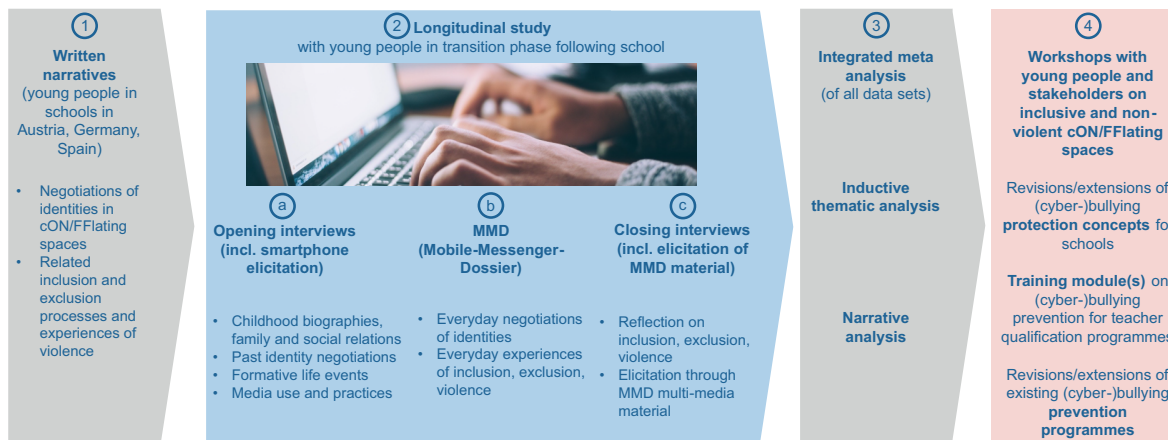


Fig. 1: Research design and empirical steps of the beYOND research project

discussions, negotiations of abundant identities, and related practices and experiences of entangled inclusion and exclusion and violence. Although all retrospective reconstructions have their limitations (DAVIS et al. 2020), written narratives have proven to be an effective qualitative method for exploring identity-formation processes among individuals (LAUGHLAND-BOOÏ et al. 2018: 731), as well as experiences with potentially traumatic events (VANDEBOSCH & GREEN 2019, MARIN & SHKRELI 2019). They are suited to the aspirations of a young-people-centred approach, give participants space for subjective descriptions, and keep “the presentation of the life story in the words of the person telling the story” (ATKINSON 1998: 2, see also PABIAN & ERREYERS 2019). Writing narratives gives participants time to reflect on, structure, build and revise thoughts as well as to select what they feel (un)comfortable sharing. By telling their sensitive stories in written format, they do not have to open up while facing an adult researcher. This sets narratives apart from interviews (SCHULZE 2010) and counters established power structures between researchers and young participants, which is particularly relevant in school-related research (HEINZEL 2010, SCHULZE 2010). This phase of data collection was completed in 2022 and resulted in a total of 478 written narratives by pupils in their final year of schooling in three countries.

The following *longitudinal phase* itself (step 2) comprises three steps: (2a) opening interviews; (2b) the longitudinal data collection in WhatsApp in the form of Mobile Messenger Dossiers; and (2c) closing interviews that look back on the transition phase based on the collected data with the help of elicitation techniques. Pupils who participated in the narrative writing who were interested in continuing to take part in the study were invited to

in-person qualitative *opening interviews* (2a), a subsequent recruiting step that resulted in 20 interviews. As part of the interview, their smartphone practices in entangled online and offline spaces were further researched via eliciting their smartphone’s content and personalised interface (KAUFMANN, 2018), taking advantage of the benefits of participant-induced elicitation (HÄNNINEN, 2020). This approach proved to be effective in bridging methodologically the immaterial sphere with the innately embodied, material offline world and highlighted smartphones as “important site[s] of alternative knowledge production” (LEURS 2017:12) in the interviews. The opening interviews provided background to biographies and individual historicities, the contexts including family and social situation, social-media use and experiences with violence, deepening the insight which were previously gathered through the written narratives. They further allowed participants and researchers to get to know each other on a more personal level, to build trust and to understand each other’s motivations, which seemed an important prerequisite for the longitudinal remote data collection that was to follow.

Fifteen participants then joined the 12-month longitudinal data collection in the form of *Mobile-Messenger-Dossiers* (MMDs, 2b), which at the time of writing is ongoing. Building on Mobile Instant Messaging Interviews (KAUFMANN & PEIL 2020, KAUFMANN et al. 2021) and connecting to recent multimedia- as well as social media-related approaches of digital diaries (VOLPE 2019), the MMDs use a private chat in WhatsApp with each participant individually for continuous data collection over a 12-month period. In this way, it is possible for the researchers to maintain contact with the participants and accompany them during the crucial

phase of transition that often starts once pupils leave educational institutions, which is under-researched. Following a youth-centred, participant-led approach, the participants decide during the mobile-data collection on both the content they deem suitable to share and principally on the time and context of contacting the researchers, thus further decentring the researcher in the data-generation process (SAVADOVA 2023). However, we communicate from the beginning that we will contact them in the event that we do not receive any messages over a longer period of time. Participants are also free to choose from the full array of multimedia options available in WhatsApp – e.g., sending text and voice messages, pictures, videos, screenshots, links, etc. Each time researchers receive new material in the messenger, they can engage in individual conversations with the participants about the current practices and spaces they are embedded in, potentially clarifying meanings, spaces of difference and sameness connected to the material, and the role of materialities, and deepening their understanding of the participants' self-conception and experiences across time and space. Thus, unlike retrospective interviews, MMDs allow researchers to ask promptly for clarification, meaning that emotions and feelings can be captured with proximity in time, ideally in-situ. Furthermore, despite the supposedly superficial character of mobile messaging and the lack of physical access for researchers when researching remotely, a joint ongoing reflection in WhatsApp helps participants and researchers alike to deepen their understanding of the processes in question, as CREESE et al. (2022) point out.

Roughly one year after the opening interview, a *closing interview* will be conducted in person. As participants and researchers will hopefully have spent the time between the initial interview and this in-depth closing interview in digital connection, a discussion of events and changes that occurred during the transition period is likely to continue quite naturally in the in-person setting – forming an entangled space of research. Participants will be asked to elaborate on the transition period, also based on an elicitation of the collected MMD material and potentially any additional material from their smartphones the participants wish to share. In this way, the closing interview connects the previous data-collection phases and gives participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences during this important transition phase in the life of a young person, which benefits not only the research project but potentially the young people themselves in their personal development.

The *data analysis* (step 3) puts special emphasis on integrating all data sets. The material will be analysed with an inductive thematic analysis as well as a narrative analysis. In addition, the team will be open to other avenues of analysis that may become relevant during the ongoing implementation of the project. Subsequent *transdisciplinary workshops* (step 4) together with participants in our study and other key stakeholders aim at the co-creation of practice guidelines and recommendations for inclusive and non-violent entangled online and offline spaces. Based on our findings we hope to contribute to the implementation of gender-sensitive protection concepts as well as training modules and prevention programmes, and therewith to a safer and healthier school environment for people with abundant identities who are, so far, often highly affected by mental health inequalities (McDERMOTT et al. 2023).

By putting emphasis on methods and techniques that are participant-led and give young people diverse ways to express themselves, we further aim to respond to the discussed need for intersectional perspectives in the field of digital geographies of mundane violence (see 2.2): we underline the need to be sensitive to existing discursive constructions of identity containers, while refraining from applying them to structure research and – in so doing – reproducing the very constructions that intersectional research aims to scrutinise. Indeed, the risk of applying a seemingly all-encompassing, but too general, additive approach, is described by BOWLEG (2008: 31) as the “key dilemma” of researching intersectionality empirically (see also MARQUARDT & SCHREIBER 2015, HORTON & KRAFTL 2018, HOPKINS 2019). CHRISTENSEN & JENSEN (2012: 117) see the problem of non-additivity as a “desk problem”, which can be avoided by “taking everyday life as a point of departure [...] where intersecting categories are inextricably linked” (CHRISTENSEN & JENSEN 2012: 120, see also BOWLEG 2008: 323). HOPKINS (2018: 588) therefore recommends a qualitative, exploratory and open approach to intersectionality and identity where participants are able to “share parts of their lives that the researcher may not necessarily have considered significant”. While a qualitative perspective can be viewed as most suited to researching intersectionality (BOWLEG 2008), the use of a qualitative multi-method design promises to capture the complexity of young people's identity most appropriately (HARPER 2011). HARPER (2011) argues further that a longitudinal component allows us to study the dynamics of identity formation in an equally dynamic way over time and across contexts.



Finally, ethical care is needed in both mobile (-media) methods and research with vulnerable groups. As young people's geographers have pointed out, subject-oriented, participative approaches that give young people agency in the research process are highly important (cf. e.g., HADFIELD-HILL & ZARA 2018, SCHREIBER & GHAFOR ZADEH 2022). The demands of such an approach go far beyond the minimum standards of institutional ethical approval. Approaches involving "doing ethics" and "ethics of care", which require researchers to take constant and special care not only in designing, conducting, analysing and interpreting data, but also, especially, in working with subjects and positioning themselves in the research process, provide support here and call for an eye for detail in maintaining participant anonymity, securing data and equipment, and ensuring comfort and voluntary participation at all stages.

With this multi-method longitudinal research design, we hope to have considered appropriately the complexities of both the sensitive research topic and the implementation with young people. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received so far from the young people themselves, as well as from the school principals and teachers, encourages us that we have chosen the right approach to researching this important and under-researched topic. Eventually, ethically reflected qualitative mobile (-media) methods applied as part of multi- and mixed- methods designs, which are on the rise, can contribute to deepening the investigation of the unfolding of inclusion, exclusion and violence and the involved entanglements of technologies, practices and materialities, potentially while they unfold. Still, these approaches have their limits in terms of unpacking the complexities of entangled spaces, particularly regarding the role of code, algorithms and software. Furthermore, although mobile-media methods can tap into the materialities of young people's lives, this potential largely depends on the specific multimedia material participants share.

## 6 Conclusions: Digital geographies of mundane violence as critical and reflective engagement with the dynamic and non-linear unfolding of mediated violence in entangled spaces

In this article, we have outlined an emerging field of research: the "digital geographies of mundane violence". Given the breadth of the digital permeation of all parts of life, society and the en-

vironment, digital geographers have for some time debated what the specific contribution of digital geographies actually is (cf. e.g., ASH et al. 2018, 2019, OSBORNE & JONES 2023). There have been fruitful endeavours by ASH et al. (2018) to delineate the newly emerging digital geographies into those *produced by* the digital, those *of* the digital and the geographies *through* the digital. Trying to grasp its specific contribution, digital geographies have been further delimited as an empirically founded, "critical and reflective engagement with the role of (geo-)data and digital technologies in techno-social phenomena and in place-based research" (BORK-HÜFFER et al. 2021: 11, translated). We believe that this is where research on the digital geographies of mundane violence can make a difference: through a critical and reflective engagement with the dynamic and non-linear spatialities of mediated violence as it unfolds in multiple and specific entangled spaces as well as with the practices and processes that counter-act the emergence and escalation of violence.

Going beyond a conventional review of existing literature, in this article, we "diffractively read through", in BARAD'S (2007) sense, findings from studies on violence with non-essentialist concepts of entangled online and offline space and spatiality. Given the growing number of studies on mediated violence as well as on concepts of space, any such endeavour has its limitations. Nonetheless, based on the selected scholarship we engaged with, we argue that the emergence of mobile media and networked communication, inscription of binary gendered, sexualised and racialised social norms into code, and the affects emerging from the entanglements of bodies and technologies as well as the non-linearities in spacetime matters involved, significantly support the normalisation of mediated violence and of (cyber-)bullying. We included in our discussion studies on negotiations of identities and difference as well as on the role of digital technologies in everyday inclusion and exclusion and their escalation to (cyber-)bullying of young people in entangled spaces. Taking the example of young people with abundant sexual and gender identities and their experiences of (cyber-)bullying, we proposed a research design that applies a methodology bridging spatial, gender and utopian/dystopian binaries to analyse the unfolding of mediated violence in entangled spaces. It combines retrospective research into biographies, family and social relations as well as media use with a mobile, partly in-situ research of the everyday entangled negotiations of identities, practices and experiences of inclusion, exclusion

and violence, thereby unpacking the contextualities, dynamics, fluidities, non-linearities and variegated historicities behind mediated violence in entangled spaces.

Scrutinising more concretely the role of contextual and specific entangled online and offline spatialities in the emergence and unfolding of mediated violence, which takes multiple forms beyond (cyber-) bullying, is an important field in which geographic thought and theorising is needed. Future research should investigate the processes and dynamics between everyday digital technologies, their entangled relationalities and materialities, and the relations between code, embodiment and affects and diverse forms of violence including their potential “normalisation” in everyday life. While doing so, geographers need to “remain sensitive to these complex and contradictory relationships with digital technologies if they are to be used to disrupt processes of marginalisation, exclusion and uncertainty” (BONNER-THOMPSON & MCDOWELL 2021: 113).

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