Streaming for Sustenance:

A Study of Streamers in Sweden and The Digital Platform Labor Order

Ossian Nordgren

Artwork Courtsy of Hanna Järgenstedt

Stockholms
universitet

Streaming for Sustenance

A Study of Streamers in Sweden and The Digital Platform Labor Order

Ossian Nordgren

Abstract

This thesis studies online video game live streamers. The study aims to explore the interrelationship of play and labor within streaming. Through this exploration, the study also enquires about the emerging platform economy. Streamers share their gameplay with viewers, interact through the accompanying live chat and subside mainly on donations from their audience. Streaming turns the leisure activity of gaming into a part-time or full-time subsistence pursuit. Twitch.tv, like other social media platforms, exists within the platform economy, inhabiting novel positions both in contexts of the global economy and in relations to laborers and consumers. Achieving the studies' aim is done via methods of ethnographic interviewing, digital participant observation, and endeavoring into streaming. In fulfilling the thesis purpose, contemporary anthropological theories of play, labor, and the platform economy are utilized by the author in analyzing the ethnographic material. The main results of the study showcase the economic realities of streamers in Sweden. The conditions streamers exist within are characterized by spatiotemporal dislocation of labor, the commodification of play, mental struggles, and the platform economy's embedded precarity. The work contributes to the sub-fields of digital anthropology, new media studies, digital play & labor, and studies of the platform economy. Studying streamers aids the production of emic knowledge within these crucial disciplines of understanding.

Keywords

Contents

Introduction: Broadcasting for Bread

The clock in the bottom right of the frame is about to reach the 24-hour mark; my computer monitor is blasting white light in my otherwise pitch-black bedroom. *Chat* is blowing up, *donations* are pouring in, and *subscriptions* are at an all-time high. "*We have reached our goal*" the floating head expels, "*I wouldn't have been able to do this without you, but now it's time for me to get some sleep.*" Me and the other thousand or so viewers have just witnessed an outstanding performance of entertainment, stamina, and skill. Jacob has been *livestreaming* for a full day and night straight, not an uncommon occurrence when a *streamer* is celebrating, hitting a milestone, or partaking in a charity event or the like. Jacob fulfills the stereotypical gamer profile, mid-twenties, white, male, energetic, at moments harsh and highly competitive; with this said, we viewers have collectively experienced a gentle and vulnerable side of Jacob during the broadcast. The peaks and valleys of the last 24 hours have been pronounced; mood swings, glory, failure, frustration, and rage, signify the emotions expressed by Jacob and, in extension, felt by us, his loyal fanbase or *community*. After a moment of thanks sent to us from Jacob, he wishes us all a good night; the *chat* responds *en masse* with words of praise and goodnight wishes in English and Swedish, messages are also floating between viewers wishing each other farewell. Finally, the stream goes offline with a concluding wave from Jacob, and all that is left is a graphic stating *"the stream has ended"* flanked by a sky-blue cartoonlike background. After noting down what I just witnessed in my field diary, I turn off my PC, Xbox, and monitor, collapse my protruded desk, brush my teeth, and go to bed with a smile.

In the last year, I have returned to the main pastime of my early teenage years, that being playing copious amounts of video games or *gaming*. My gaming bloomed during the era of social distancing in the spring of 2020. Partly due to the excellent fit within this epoch of field study, but primarily due to my fascination and curiosity towards the digital world, I decided to study streamers in Sweden.

Anthropological Relevance of The Study

Streaming, its practitioners, and contexts reveal themselves as essential within several contemporary anthropological and broader debates. The study of streaming itself leaves more to be desired within the anthropological literature, though there are examples (see Källberg 2018). This study aims to supplement this gap. Broder that just the exploration of places like Twitch.tv the study adds to the research on the digital platform economy and online play & labor, all subsections of novel anthropological debates (see Standing 2011, Nardi 2010, Calvo 2019, Morton 2017, Malaby 2007 & 2009, Narotzky 2018).

As the workforce of the global north slowly changes and moves in a new direction, anthropological study of streamers allows for insight into the inner workings of said movement. Gaming as a pastime and a means of income has grown alongside the widespread adaptation of the technologies it relies upon (Newzoo, 2021, 19). For gen Z (people born between 1995 – 2012), gaming is viewed on equal footing as other arenas of entertainment and sports, shedding light on the centrality of emic understanding of the phenomena. Not just to stimulate academic debate and thought but to allow the future of society to understand the reality of their ambitions and activities (Imagen, 2020, 5 – 17).

The growing sector of the platform economy set the stage for this study. This rapidly shifting sector is crucial to grasp anthropologically; constant attempts at understanding the shifting relations between employer and employee, platform and laborer, new media producer and consumer, must be made. These relationships and phenomena are ample for study utilizing the streamer as subject, streaming as context, and Twitch as field site.

Purpose and Question Statement

Streamers find themselves in a peculiar spot both in their internal worlds and in broader socio-economical contexts. Many streamers have grown up playing video games. Gaming thus having a formative role in their social and inner lives. Thomas Malaby (2007 & 2009) has written on how play and work cannot be analytically, or emiclly separated, stating that parts of each often inhabit the other, play-like and work-like aspects within work and play. I have found that this perceived dichotomy of play and labor is present mainly in conjunction and not in opposition within streaming. Playing video games is at moments laborsome, as Nardi (2010) notes, and

laboring as a streamer is at times playful (Nardi, 2010, 101). This essay's purpose is to provide knowledge on this interaction in conversation with the anthropological literature of play, labor, and platform economy. To explore play and labor within streaming, as well as its place within the platform economy, this thesis will investigate two questions,

- How Do Streamers Navigate the Interrelationship of Play and Labor?
- How Can Streaming in Sweden Shed Light on The Emerging Platform Economy?

Streaming as a profession entails the ability to play (or game) for a living but is also necessitates forms of labor relations; to platforms, the viewers, and oneself. In recent years, a novel sector of the labor market has emerged, that of gig or platform labor (Morton 2017, 217 – 20). Streamers inhabit this sector as (in)dependent[1] online content creators. A streamer's day to day differs significantly from that of an Uber driver or Airbnb hostess, but similarities can easily be observed. Labor in the contemporary is becoming increasingly dislocated, as Narotzky (2018) states, complicating the aspects of time and space (Narotzky 2018, 35 – 6). Through this dislocated labor lens, the platform economy will be analyzed to provide etic context for the understanding of streaming's labor relation to the platform economy.

Complementing the thesis labor scope, Jane Guyer's (2016) conception of the platform economy, its wide-ranging reach, effects, and realities will be utilized to further understanding and analyses.

Background to Twitch.tv and Streaming

In 2011 Twitch.tv was founded as a gaming-oriented video live-streaming platform by the people behind the more general interest broadcasting site Justin.tv. Twitch has since remained the most popular and widest reaching streaming platform. On the platform, people stream daily and for extended amounts of time. Most common is the occurrence of video game streaming. Streamers broadcast from their home, either via a PC or gaming console, what they are playing. This gameplay is regularly accompanied by a webcam and audio commentary by and of said streamer. Along with the video feed is a live chatroom where viewers can interact with the streamer and each other. Donations facilitate additional ways of on-air interaction between streamer and viewer. Paid subscriptions and donations materialize in direct payments or platform-based currency or tokens (*Bits*) (Bingham 2017, 71 – 3).

---

[1] The parenthesis placed here is to illuminate the complex existence of streamers in their dependent and independent relation to Twitch and the platform economy in general

Twitch.tv works similarly to other video platforms. Every visitor is presented with a few live channel recommendations on the front page. To the left of these recommendations, a list titled "following" is displayed, containing the streamers you follow ordered by if they are presently live and the number of current viewers. Viewer-count is followed by the iconic red "live" button, and below the streamer's name, the game they are playing is posted. There is a miniature of the user's profile picture in the top right corner of the website, bordered by a chat icon, an inbox icon, a box stating "*get bits*" and a king's crown. These all lead to different functions deeper into the platform regarding the user's channel and account (See Figure 1. Appendix).

Suppose you choose to click on one of the streamers from the "following" list. In that case, the earlier layout gets replaced with a rectangular landscape-oriented video frame over which the streamer has complete creative control, as long as they are not breaking Twitch's *terms of service* (Twitch 2021). To the right of said rectangle, *"stream chat"* is written above the rolling window of short messages sent by viewers, moderators, and *bots* (automated robots) (See Figure 2. Appendix).

Scrolling down on the page takes you to the "*about me*" section, here the streamer presents themselves through text, images, links, and memes. The streamer can, within some limits, design and individualize this page freely. The links often lead to other social platforms, online merchandise stores, sponsors pages, and donation services such as *PayPal* or *Swish*. Commonplace is also a list of technical specifications describing the streamers' "*set up*," a panel consisting of everything from brand and model of graphics card to office chair (See Figure 3. Appendix).

Being a streamer means more than just streaming on Twitch. All varying from streamer to streamer, the size of the channel, and ambitions of the broadcaster. Streamers split their time mostly between different types of digital new media content creation and management. Apart from streaming, this means editing videos and images then uploading them to various platforms. The most common platforms are YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, Facebook, and Reddit. As with streaming, this is also a very time-consuming process but essential for a streamer's longevity and growth. This phenomenon somewhat aligns with the concept of *media ecosystems*.

The streamer acts and exists with a network of platforms and services within which specific normative ways of acting, social bonds, and cultural systems are in place (Horst, Herr-Stephenson, and Robinson 2010, 31).

Most of my interlocutors do all this by themselves, essentially running their own one-person media production company. Some have hired editors to help lighten the workload and allow them to put out more content. Common is for streamers to be without talent management, so they take care of all communications with potential sponsors, partners, platforms, and the like.

Live streaming has experienced a significant boom during the pandemic year (March 2020 – March 2021) in both quantitative and qualitative ways. More people are watching streamers on Twitch, more platforms provide live-streaming services, more people are streaming, and bigger and bigger names are coming onto the scene (StreamElements & Rainmaker.gg 2021, 1 – 6). Many a DJ, comedian, musician, lecturer, or other performing workers have taken up streaming during this time. The effects of this may only be felt further down the road, but this signifies an elevated position for streaming within the new media space.

Method and Ethical Considerations

Method

We politely say goodbye, I thank her again for her participation, and we tell each other that we will talk again soon. The interview over *Discord* is over, but my day has just started. After lunch, I spend an hour transcribing and jot down some notes from a stream I observed over breakfast. After a walk with the dog, I return to my den and start editing my next Tiktok. I have high hopes for the clip's reception both from my friends and the Tiktok algorithm. Three hours have now passed, I press the render button in my video editing software. Another walk with the puppy, dinner, and thus can the night shift begin. I turn on my Xbox, set up everything, get myself in order, and commence the stream. This night everything felt easy, almost no technical issues, great banter with the boys, and as always, average *Call of Duty Warzone* gameplay presented by yours truly, to my, on average, three viewers. I wish my stream a goodnight just as the date flips and finally turn in at around 01.00.

The diary entry above encapsulates a day in the field but also a day of a streamer. The streamer workday is long and drawn out. Most streamers do not interview others usually, but they often tend to paperwork and other protracted *must-get-done* tasks during the day and

stream in the evening. I more or less consciously put myself on this schedule, emulating my interlocutors. Pushing the mornings and evenings later and always, in some capacity, working. My streaming has given me insight into the actual practice of a streamer, helping me ask better questions and more truly contextualize the answers I receive.

The field of study was 100% digital; this then requires digital methods of material collection, analysis, and presentation. The methodology of digital anthropology is constantly evolving along with the digital realm. Digital anthropology requires appropriation of more traditional methods and the inclusion of more contemporary ways of doing ethnography. Anna Cristina Pertierra (2018) discusses the development of media anthropology in general and the study of new digital media specifically. The author states that the borders between media/digital anthropology and the fields of cultural media studies, communication, and human-computer interaction have become increasingly blurry (Pertierra 2018, 12). Disciplines outside of anthropology have adopted ethnographic methods, and by way of said disciplines, streaming has been studied (see Bingham 2017, Pertierra 2018, 12, 43 – 76).

Pertierra (2018) also brings up the methodological statement that is *netnography* a method meant for the soul study of online phenomena. *Netnography,* though stemming from anthropological traditions, is predominantly aimed at communication and marketing research. The *netnographic* way of digital inquiry provokes thought on approaching a purely digital field but leaves more to be desired with its grasp on holisms and reflexivity; instead, I have opted for a digital anthropological method approach (Pertierra 2018, 128. Kozinets 2015).

The two main methods utilized during my mini fieldwork were ethnographic semi-structured interviews and digital participant observation. Conversations and interviews were held digitally, mainly through the preferred communication platform of my interlocutors, *Discord*. The first two interviews were held with webcams turned on; I later decided to do audio-only interviews. The reasoning being that both the interviewee and I no longer had to focus on the video feed of ourselves and each other. In addition to the fact that audio-only is the primary way my interlocutors use *Discord*. Kozinets (2015) argues that tele-interviews over digital platforms like skype emulates in-person interviewing well by allowing both parties to see each other (Kozinets 2015, 270). I agree that non-verbal communication is vital in anthropological research. Still, as shown with the case above, I prefer verbal-exclusive interviewing that gives comfort and is emiclly favored over forced video chatting.

Predecessors of mine, studying streaming, have mentioned some difficulty in finding willing interlocutors (see Källberg 2018 & Bingham 2017). This motivated me to cast a wide net. I contacted about 130 streamers in Sweden over email and social media. I found these

people through top lists charting the most popular Swedish-speaking streamers, similar lists of Swedish YouTube channels, and two Facebook groups for Swedish Streamers. Out of the 130 streamers contacted, I received answers from 25, and interviews were held with 13.

Age was spread between 19 and 30 years old. 75% of interlocutors identify as male and 25% as female. The gender stat almost follows the general distribution amongst streamers on Twitch.tv globally (Streamscheme 2019). Reliable statistics on the general distribution in Sweden between the sexes when it comes to gaming, in general, seem to be scares and non-holistic. Depending on what we define as a *gamer* or videogames the data differs. A general notion can be drawn that men or boys tend to play more video games, but a shift is happening where the spread is shrinking (SCB, 2019).

The size of channels varied from around 1000 to over 500 hundred thousand followers. The economic realities of the streamers also differed significantly. Some made almost no money streaming and instead subsisted on another job, student loans, or a partner or parent(s). Others have incomes in the hundreds of thousands of kronor monthly.

I motivate the choice of limiting the study to streamers in Sweden based on assumptions that interlocutors would have more shared experiences and backgrounds, similar relations to the economic systems around them, and possible greater ease to relate to me as a person and researcher. These assumptions somewhat came to fruition during my time in field. For example, most interlocutors came from an ethnic Swedish middle-class background, growing up in the 1990s and 2000s. This resulted in similar tales of childhood memories, relation to gaming and technology. A grander fieldwork with more time would allow for a grasp of streaming from a global, transnational perspective. I believe that the assumptions made, and restrictions put in place were necessary within the confines of the project.

I attribute some of the success of my fieldwork to my background as a gamer. Having prior knowledge of the gaming subculture, its memes, history, and contexts helped immensely. Conversations with interlocutors could be on a higher level of abstraction and complexity since base-level understanding did not need to be provided. I, as a person, also inhabit similar intersectional markers as most of my interlocutors, age, gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, nationality, and so forth. This undoubtedly assisted my material collection and relation to interlocutors.

One marker I feared would impact the study was perceived status within streaming. I noticed myself being more attentive when interviewing my first prominent full-time streamer. When listening back to the interview, this did not express itself noticeably. Since then, I was

acutely aware of this and made conscious attempts to approach each interlocutor with the same open mind.

Participant observation took place in and during interlocutor's streams. Participation, in this case, refers to engaging with the streamer and viewers through the chat. I actively interacted in streams of my interlocutors daily. Observation is self-explanatory, viewing and noting what occurs on the live video feed, chat, and other platforms.

During ¾ of my time in the field, I streamed for a combined 100 hours live. I also partook in related activities to streaming. This mostly meant editing videos and images taken from my stream and then uploading them to Tiktok, YouTube, and Instagram. Pertierra (2018) discusses the making of media by anthropologists. These examples are of media used in presentation or communication of ethnography; my streaming instead inhabits a place within the ethnography itself (Pertierra 2018, 109 – 18). When studying media creators, media creation by the anthropologist is crucial for emic understanding—partaking in the field, as is. Others have joined their digital field in this capacity, such as in virtual online gaming worlds (see Boellstorff 2008, Nardi 2010).

Ethical Considerations

"*Is this going to be anonymous?*", this question rocked me a little bit because no one else had asked anything like that. During my time in the field, the question of anonymity came up in a few instances. Not in the way presented above, but instead, I received constant questions from interlocutors on the relevance of anonymity. They are, in fact, public people who share to hundreds or thousands of viewers intimate parts of their life. Occasionally the importance of anonymity has presented itself in the field, for example, when discussing problematic family relations, personal finances, or the streamers relation to Twitch—reminding me why anonymity is so important.

Presentation of The Research Field & Theoretical Tools

Research Field

Streaming

The study of streaming and streamers leaves more to be desired, especially within the anthropological canon. Most text published stem from communication, computer-human interaction, and similar disciplines (see Hamilton, Garretson, and Kerne 2014, Gandolfi 2016, Ford et al. 2017, Robinson 2019). Källberg (2018) did fieldwork through participant observation on several twitch streams and interviewed streamers. Among other things, the author discusses the types of transactions taking place on Twitch. Aided by the theories of reciprocity and the gift, Källberg (2018) explores what streamers and viewers interchange when donations and subscriptions are received, given, and bought (Källberg 2018, 6 – 7, 9).

Bingham (2017) did, among other things, close readings of streamers channel pages, discussing through this reading what is for sale on twitch—reading and compiling what streamers advertised to their viewers on their channel pages, all to supplement his mapping out of the professionalization of streamers (Bingham 2017, 57 – 60). A central theme to Bingham's (2017) thesis is the *commodification of play* the relation of leisure and labor. For example, the author discusses through emic examples how streamers "*turn the act of playing into labor*" (Bingham 2017, 3), make a career out of streaming, and theorizes about how streaming relates to *the neoliberal subject* (Bingham 2017, 243 – 8). Bingham (2017) connects the "self-imposed" grueling work ethic of streamers to the concept of neoliberalism's entrepreneurial fetishization (Bingham 2017, 137, 173). The author contrasts the Marxist idea of alienation of labor in Fordist factory capitalism with the streamer's contemporary experiences of pressures in precarious neoliberal existence and individuality (Bingham 2017, 248 – 9).

The sociologist TL Taylor (2018) published probably the most comprehensive study of Twitch.tv, and streaming. The monograph is based on several years of research and multiple

methodologies. Taylor's (2018) main theoretical discussion revolves around *private play* turning into *public entertainment* (Taylor 2018, 6, 66 – 136). The discussion is built upon a deep dive into streamers, their day-to-day and ambitions through interviews, analysis of Twitch's corporate structure, and other lesser avenues (Taylor 2018, 14 – 9).

Taylor (2018) places Twitch in its historical context. The author analyzed the platform in relation to other forms of visual media entertainment and the state of contemporary capitalism (Taylor 2018, 14 – 9, 257). Taylor (2018) utilizes the terminology of "*networked broadcasting*" illuminating the digital aspects of streaming on Twitch but also the collaborative features between the streamer, viewer, platform, and game (Taylor 2018, 23 – 65). Other central aspects of the work surround the *affective economy* of streaming, where emotions of, for example, passion are commodified and result in donations and subscriptions to the streamer (Taylor 2018, 95 – 7). Taylor (2018) finishes the book's epilogue with some reservations and worry stemming from the then-recent acquiring of Twitch by Amazon, fearing it will no longer be the place of transformability it began as (Taylor 2018, 252 – 6).

The three works presented above together provide this study with an academic foundation. All in some capacity relating to the tearing down of the play/work dichotomy, providing more comprehensive understandings of work, labor, and economy of online new media content creation and illuminating the capacity for online world and meaning-making in participatory media. I draw great inspiration from said authors, but my thesis distinguishes itself on a few fronts. The interlocutors and material collected are exclusive to this project. The sharp focus on labor interactions within the platform economy in relation to the playfulness of gaming establishes novel ground for further understanding of the phenomena.

Digital & Virtual Anthropology

Bonnie A. Nardi (2010) has authored a book enquiring about the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) World of Warcraft (WOW). The book is an early and formative example of virtual anthropology. Nardi (2010) steps into the virtual realm of WOW and explores it through its mechanisms. Except for the inspirational methodological aspects of the book, analytically, this work is exceedingly informative. The book explores play, the digital gaming medium, in-game work, addiction, and gender, among other things (Nardi 2010, 7).

Her exploration of play and work within and around WOW lays a base for discussion and debate on how virtual or digital worlds can be understood in terms of the economic, aesthetic, social and symbolic.

Tom Boellstorff is the author of one of the most known works of digital anthropology. His book *Coming of age in Second Life* (2008) attempts, as the title suggests, to bring anthropology into the contemporary as Mead did in her time (see Mead 1961). The work takes a holistic and digitally emic approach to research and presentation, going into depth explaining, exploring, and analyzing the massive virtual world that is (was) Second Life (Boellstorff 2008, 205 – 37).

Boellstorff (2008) also writes on the complexity of doing work or labor within a game. What differentiates Second Life from WOW is the creativity aspect. What Nardi (2010) shows is in-game work that mimics factory or similar labor; it's mundane and repetitive, and at the end of the day, only brings in meager "real life" earnings for the laborers (Nardi 2010, 98 – 9, 106 – 7). Boellstorff (2008) coins the term *Creationist Capitalism* when exploring labor in Second Life. Players create digital assets, like textures or in-game items, to then sell to the highest bidder. The in-game currency or *Liden dollar* can then be exchanged for US dollars (Boellstorff 2008, 212). Thus, Second Life workers appear more like artists or graphic designers, where status and connections play a role in capitalizing upon one's labor.

Both these inquiries into digital in-game labor provide a basis for better knowledge production on the phenomena. Streaming fits somewhat in-between the two; a successful streamer needs status and creativity as much as she needs work ethic and hours along the digital assembly line.

Theoretical Tools

Labor

Defining what terminology is best suited when discussing the act of streaming has been a central part of my own and other's explorations of the phenomenon (see Bingham 2017 and Källberg 2018).

Susanna Narotzky (2018) explores the concept of labor in historical, anthropological, economic, and contemporary contexts. The author provides ample references to prominent

thinkers such as Marx and anthropological and feminist critiques of the industrial origins of the term (Narotzky 2018, 2, 33). The author lands on a conclusion that anthropology should not entirely abandon the concept. Narotzky (2018) argues that labor, even though not generally applicable and full of discrepancies, helps highlight the "*connection of people and places in a process that overpowers their will to make a life worth living and abducts them into the aim of the expansion of money value"* (Narotzky 2018, 41)—continuing with defining the term for anthropologists as *human energy expenditure* in relation to capital, including non-commodified and unwaged labor (Narotzky 2018, 30 – 1).

She also emphasizes the *dislocating* aspect of contemporary labor. This notion includes both spatial and temporal disruption and reorganization, referring to precariousness growing and spreading globally (Narotzky 2018, 35 – 40). The temporal aspect of the definition strikes me as suitable for analyzing streamer's everyday life, as with the grueling work schedule streamers inhabit.

Streaming also presents other aspects aligning with the precarity model; Narotzky (2018) quotes Guy Standing's (2011) work. That being the loss of job security, benefits, holidays, and the like (Narotzky 2018, 39). Narotzky's (2018) discussion provides the study with stable footing in its aim of exploring the grander networks within which streaming resides.

Play

Games and play have always been a central part of human socialization and experience. Through play, we learn as children to mimic the adult world and prepare ourselves for our lives ahead. Thomas M. Malaby (2007 & 2009) has written extensively on the phenomenon. The author argues for the relevance of studying play. He declares the history of the study within anthropology and then discusses the research of digital games in the contemporary.

Malaby (2009) critiques what he calls a neglect of the study of play within anthropology in the 20th century but also concedes that contributors like Geertz provided some helpful guidance in defining the term (Malaby 2009, 207). Nonetheless, Malaby (2009) argues that the play/work distinction often propagated by anthropologists on stilts of dichotomies such as staked-filled vs. stake-less or productive vs. nonproductive activities, no longer holds (Malaby 2007, 100).

Instead, he advocates for an emic context-based study of games, referencing studies finding that some peoples do not even distinguish between work and play (Malaby 2007, 109). Malaby (2009) wants the study to move away from both materialist Marxian and representationalist Geertzian views of play within the discipline, to leave production and cultural representation behind and look instead forward at the *disposition of play* (Malaby 2009, 213).

He likens the study of play to that of ritual, stating that as with ritual, play should not be understood by its ability to produce observable transcendent experiences but instead needs to be understood as "*the cultural form of games in specific cultural-historical moments."* (Malaby 2009, 208 – 9). Malaby continues by reaffirming his view of play in terms of disposition by writing,

> "*Just as ritual provides a context for the experience of a transcendent order, so games provide a context for the display of a ready and capable disposition, one that acts amid the disorder of the game and, by extension, the disordered world itself."*

> (Malaby 2009, 213).

This view of play allows the study to relate play within streaming to the broader historical moment of the platform economy and include analyses of the streamer's emic disposition.

Platform Economy

In 2016 Jane Guyer published a collection of papers, *Legacies, Logics, Logistics, Essays in the Anthropology of the Platform Economy*. The content of the book has been gathered throughout her academic career and republished in this edition. Guyer (2016) argues for a broad conceptualization of the Platform Economy (Guyer 2016, 15 – 6). Partly for its ability to illustrate complexity and "reality" and partly as a substitution for concepts of *the free market* and *neoliberalism* (Guyer 2016, 112). Her view is that these are terms unsuitable for providing a stage for the totality of "*the economic world as it is"* (Guyer 2016, 127 – 8).

Guyer's (2016) empirical use of the term demonstrates how aspects of an economy that traditionally has been understood in market terms (for example, crude oil in Nigeria) can be recontextualized within the Platform framework and understood in more emic and holistic ways (Guyer 2016, 142).

Guyer presents the term *Apportunity*, a combination of application and opportunity. The author aims at filling a discursive and terminological need within the study of the platform

economy. The opportunistic aura of entrepreneurship taking form in specific times and contexts gets expressed through this term (Guyer 2016, 117 – 9). Twitch, then seen through this broad lens of the platform economy, can be understood as an *apportunity* within the online media space, social media ecosystem, and digital entrepreneurship endeavors of both streamers and the company at large.

The book's title and its three L, s present analytical tools in understanding Twitch and other platforms (Guyer 2016, 134). Twitch's *legacy* as in its historical context, as a visual medium, social network, and digital experience. Twitch's *logics* as in formal rules and internal functionalities. And, the sites *logistics*, pointing out the *"situations of confusion, incompatibility, and temporal logjam"* within the embedded realities of "*the people on the ground,*" that is to say, streamers. For example, the feelings expressed to me by interlocutors of unease towards Twitch as a pseudo-employer and platform and the difficulties experienced because of streamings' massive time consumption. This broad lens of the platform economy provides greater scope in placing streaming within the emerging platform economy (Guyer 2016, 48 – 51, 188).

Outside of anthropology, the literature published surrounding a more common conception of the platform economy, where emphasis is placed on the companies themselves and their logics, also provides insight into the phenomenon (See Sundarajan 2016, Ravenelle 2019, Graham & Woodcock 2020, Hyman 2018, Prassl 2016, Standing 2011

Empirics and Analysis

Part-time, Full-time, All-the-Time

Karl proudly spouts that he has only taken about 60 non-consecutive days off during the last six years of full-time streaming. He pridefully claims that out of all streamers based in Sweden, he is the one with the most hours live. Pride in work put in and the grind of streaming has come up on several occasions in my empirical material. When asked about the cause of this, answers varied. Most were aware of the strains this can put on a streamer, though some seemed not to understand why this could be problematic or potentially harmful in the long run. Karl is very

aware of the toll this has taken on him. He frequently speaks of burnout and worries of not being able to continue in his darkest moments.

This bleak view of the streaming day to day is not representative of the main sentiment of Karl and other streamers. Karl and his colleagues praise the occupation for the freedom it provides them, *"to be able to do what you love (gaming) for work, is fantastic"* Karl says. A streamer can choose when to go live, what games to play on stream, and in theory, can take any day off if they feel like it.

In almost the same breath as Karl shares the freedoms he enjoys in his entrepreneurial occupation; he notes the constant pressure to broadcast and produce. Missing just one day can be detrimental to his income. An absent day on Twitch, he explains, does not just mean loss of revenue for that day (in subscriptions and donations) but often initiates a prolonged decline that is difficult to reverse.

Even though Karl has maintained himself as a full-time streamer for a substantial amount of time, he is not in the upper echelon in terms of size. The time spent streaming divided by monthly earnings paints a gloomy picture. Karl remarks that If he had stayed and worked the same hours in his old job, his income would have more than doubled.

Streaming and platform labor are harsh in their production of winners and losers. Attempts to figure out why some succeed and others don't often result in more confusion than clarity. Time and work-life balance becomes an issue of class. Johan enjoys the freedoms that Karl praises without most of the insecurities Karl deals with. Johan occupies the very top section of the list of biggest streamers in Sweden. This success affords him the luxury of taking time off, going on holidays, and investing in his future.

Contrary to Karl, Johan's income is counted in the hundreds of thousands of kronor per month. Johan also benefits from diversification; his gains are almost equally split between YouTube and Twitch. Already having a substantial following on YouTube when he started streaming full-time assisted Johan immensely. Twitch is infamous for being a difficult site for newcomers to get exposure.

He works hard to maintain a level of separation between private and public, play and labor, work and free time. Johan is very outspoken to me and his viewers about the importance of taking time off and valuing your wellbeing. Partly by constantly reminding his fans of this, he can sustain a more reasonable workweek, regular holidays, and the ability to "*call in sick*" when needed. As a result of his economic prowess, Johan has been able to delegate many of the tasks associated with streaming outside of the actual streaming itself. He employs video editors as well as a social media manager. These people relive massive amounts of work from

the shoulders of Johan, granting him a 40ish hour work week instead of the 60+ hours often reported by other interlocutors.

Time spent streaming needs some context. For many gamers spending multiple hours gaming daily has become entirely normalized and routine. William, who predominantly streams the massively popular First-Person Shooter battle royal game *Call of Duty*, *Warzone,* has spent hundreds of hours playing the game in the last year. Before *Warzone*, William was an avid *Counter Strike* (CS) player, a game he played with that same intensity for over ten years. He has always been a gamer–in the truest emic sense of the term.

Ever since social distancing, Williams DJ gigs have dried up, which resulted in him moving back in with his parents and commencing his streaming career. William regularly goes live in the early morning and, except for some short breaks, does not go offline until the wee hours of the night. I pointed this out to him, and he noted that he would be playing anyway, broadcasting or not, so "*why not stream?*". This was a common statement in my conversations with streamers that they have always played this many hours. A fact making the number of hours live not stand out to them in the same way it might to a non-initiated

---

The temporal strains streamers experience are common aspects of the platform economy. In Narotzky's (2018) discussion of the dislocating dimensions of contemporary labor, feelings of volatile temporality are reoccurring (Narotzky 2018, 35 – 6). Interlocutors experience a clash between feelings of freedom regarding their time and the temporal entrapment they experience. Being "able" to choose when to stream is replaced by the *logistics* of the platform, as Guyer (2016) would put it.

Time spent laboring seems to be infinite. Part-time turns into full-time because of the streamer striving for and achieving their ambitions. Full-time transforms into *all-the-time;* thus, the ugly temporal face of the platform economy proudly presents itself in front of the streamer.

There is a change happening in our conception of labor where temporary work and temporally dislocated experiences are increasingly common in the literature on the platform economy (see Standing 2011). The play of gaming, not necessarily constrained by long hours resulting in diminishing returns as illustrated by William's playful disposition above, gets polluted when put in relation to capital. Streamers mitigate this pressure by picking up other jobs or by delegating the workload. This temporal interrelationship and confusion of play and labor signify what Guyer (2016) means when theorizing around the "*temporal logjams"* within the platform economy (Guyer 2016, 51, Malaby 2009, 216).

Trolls, Precarity, and Toxicity

In July of 2020, the worldwide streaming community was struck at its core when the news of Byron "Reckful" Bernstein's suicide was made public on Twitter. A day of mourning and disbelief filled the live feeds of Twitch.tv. Many streamers found out of his passing while streaming, reacting to his untimely death *on air*. Reckful is often cited as the first big streamer, being one of the first to be included in the platform's partnership program and maintaining the status of full-time streamer for the better part of a decade (Wikipedia Contributors 2021, Reckful). Sparking out of Byron's suicide came a debate over the mental health of streamers and gamers.

My interlocutors praise gaming and streaming for their ability to provide sociality and community to sometimes ostracized people, connecting gamers from all over the world. There are also aspects of solitude within streaming; often, hours are spent lonesome, hibernated with eyes locked on a monitor, tirelessly working away with the hopes of not only "making it" but simply staying afloat. Both Karl and Johan have struggled mentally. At moments, the cause of struggle is streaming itself, the economic insecurity it entails, or the abuse they receive being online personalities. In other instances, streaming has worsened external struggles by inflicting pressure to work and be public.

Anton is an aspiring full-time streamer, having streamed for a little over a year at the time of our conversation, achieving impressive quantitative and qualitative gains over the relatively short period. His story provides a counterpoint in this discussion on mental health. Anton is no stranger to struggles of the mind; however, he tells me of the comfort he has found throughout his life in gaming.

Anton's stream is themed and characterized in two main ways; the first is that all esthetics and music are based on the world of pirates, and the second is that Anton's stream is an outspoken inclusionary space for LGBTQIA+ people. Anton himself is openly transgender, does public speaking about LGBTQIA+, and aspires to educate people on the subject. Anton's stream and its surrounding elements, such as his Discord server, are safe places for anyone, especially LGBTQIA+ people.

Watching *the captain's* stream, one immediately notices the warm, welcoming vibe and the lateral support this collective enjoys. Anton has made his channel a place where he and others can come and vent and deal with their struggles in a safe and secure space. This, like

with the case of Johan, also allows Anton to keep his struggles in check. His supporters and regular viewers seem to genuinely care about his wellbeing over their desires to be entertained, an achievement few and far between within streaming.

After a breakup, Phillip decided to pack his things, leave his hometown, and move in with his friend in Gothenburg. He had some savings put away to live off, and thus he began his career as a full-time streamer. Five years later and Phillip is ready to pivot into another occupational chapter. Now looking for a traditional job to supplement his streaming income and lose some of the stress streaming produces. In our conversation, we discuss how his streaming has impacted him. Phillip identifies a few contributing factors, three of these being, him wanting to help his viewers too much, abuse from trolls, and the loss of relationships.

Phillip wanted to be a counselor for lonely people seeking comfort and company from streamers on Twitch; he quickly noticed he was not equipped for the task. His attempts ended up eating away at him to the point that he had to stop for his own sake, *"My viewer's wellbeing could no longer come at the expense of my own"* Phillip notes.

Abuse from malevolent viewers, or *trolls,* is a general experience for streamers. Anton explains the mostly transphobic hate comments he regularly receives as *"little kids wanting to provoke a reaction."* Dealing with hate is discussed as a skill by all my interlocutors, "*you learn to deal with it"* and "*after a while, it doesn't face you anymore."* The image of the *troll* is a poignant one invoking the lore of a creature lurking under a bridge waiting for an opportunity to strike, or as in most cases, just to provoke. The digital troll entices the antagonist by spouting slur-ridden hateful messages instead of posting riddles to goats.

Taylor (2018) writes on the pressures LGBTQIA+, women, and people of color experience on Twitch, noting that the mere presence of their marginalized bodies in this visual and accessible medium puts them at the front end of online abuse (Taylor 2018, 252). Anton's resilience towards *trolls* and maintaining of an inclusionary safe space aligns with the second point of Taylor's (2018) that the presence of Anton and others help create new media spaces more aligned with the "real" world, showcasing people on-screen similar to those in the audience (Taylor 2018, 259 – 60).

The relation between streamer and viewer is often one where the streamer inhabits a power position over the viewer. In moments, this relationship can be shifted, for example, when a long-time viewer no longer appears in *chat*. The loss of a para-social relationship can hit a streamer hard, not knowing why the viewer disappears. This can produce self-doubt, making the streamer question if they did something wrong. My interlocutors talk about learning to deal

with the mental difficulties along the way, but the example of Reckful and Philip shows how even after years of learning, the toil can simply be too much.

Guy Standing's (2011) main argument found in the title of his seminal work *Precariat, The New Dangerous Class* alludes to a replacement of the Marxian proletariat with a more contemporary lower class. My interlocutors don't neatly fit the picture since they have the capital required to start streaming in the first place, often come from middle-class backgrounds, and are commonly included in the majority society. However, a point in the analogy to the proletariat that strikes me as poignant is solidarity.

During observations of and in conversations with interlocutors, the relations between streamers have often come up. Lateral support amongst streamers of similar size appears to be quite commonplace, for example, in the two Facebook groups I enquired for interlocutors. There often smaller streamers share tips and tricks and promote their channels. Through these groups, I got the first chatters in my stream and followers to my channel; the encouragement I revived was heartwarming. Most were streaming part-time but seemed at ease with their relatively small followings. The often-repeated sentiment *"only do it for fun"* resonated more with these streamers than with the full-time "successful" streamers I spoke with.

The imagined solidarity between streamers in Sweden also had a darker side. William and Anton told me harrowing stories of other streamers attacking them in formation, sending their viewers over to harass. Other tales were of behind-the-scenes shit-talking and general *toxicity* often grounded in jealousy, according to Anton. It appears that some people see streaming as a zero-sum game, "*others success, in their eyes, means less progress for them,*" William noted. Platform labor produces complex relations between its actors. Solidarity and organizing can be difficult when similarity and shared interests can be harder to spot than opposition and competition.

The playful joys of gaming and streaming, online world-making, and striving for one's goals get complicated by the realities of platform labor. Abuse, mental struggles, solidary or non-solidarity at moments eclipse the benefits promised and delivered in streaming. These experiences allude to Narotzky's (2018) idea of labor as something that *"overpowers their will to make a life worth living and abducts them into the aim of the expansion of money value"* (Narotzky 2018, 41). Philip now seeks to *"make a life worth living"* outside of his broadcast partly due to Taylor's (2018) *affective economy*; the commodification of Philip's emotions makes streaming no longer sustainable (Taylor 2018, 95 – 7).

The embedded relations of streamers to viewers, to other streamers, to games, and even to themselves produce opportunities for growth and healing as well as stagnation and even

suicide. Examples of hardship and triumph combined allow for understandings of streaming outside of traditional play/work dichotomies, helping us perceive the play of streaming and labor of gaming as Malaby (2009) argues in its context and for its own sake (Malaby, 2009, 2008 – 9). Streaming read through this lens also aids in achieving that goal of understanding and portraying the *"economic world as it is,"* following Guyer's (2016) argument of a broad understanding of the emerging platform economy.

Subs, Bits, and Donos

Her friend tells her to get into the Jeep with a stressful tone of voice; Olivia presses the corresponding key and gets in; it's her first time playing the game. When you enter a vehicle in this game, the driver can have pre-decided a compilation of songs to be played from the car's radio. When the notes of the pop song hit Olivia's headset, she gets noticeably irritated and tells her friend to turn it off immediately. Olivia explains that she is worried that the music playing is copyrighted and that it puts her stream at risk of being taken down, "*I already have one strike; I don't need another,*" she expels.

The morning after Olivia and I meet over Discord for the first time, I ask her about the episode above. Ever since Twitch received significant backlash from the music industry, the platform has taken steps towards removing copyrighted music from being unlawfully broadcasted (Twitch.tv 2020). One of these steps is a so-called DMCA takedown, a system following a three strikes and you're out model. "*A lot of people don't play any music at all anymore,*" Olivia explains.

A general sentiment expressed by interlocutors is that of fear or anxiety concerning their partnership with Twitch. Examples of streamers being banned with or without provided motivation haunt my interlocutors, especially those with larger followings, those with more to lose. Karl was forced to delete all his saved broadcasts from his profile because of copyright claims. A five-plus-year archive of all the work he has put in on Twitch vanished in seconds to save his future ability for income on the platform.

Johan expressed another worry, that of his channel(s) dying. "*I've been doing this for so long that I've seen channels come and go; few survive.*" People losing interest, a major scandal, or any other reason can produce a dead channel. A channel with millions of followers but almost none are active, and views, subs, and donations are closer to zero than peaks of the past define

a dead channel. Since Johan has been streaming for most of his adult life, only having one "real" job as an electronics salesmen prior, he wonders how this will change over time, *"No one has been doing this for their full working life, there is no one to look up to or receive advise from"* Johan notes. "*If you work in the insurance business, you have hundreds of years of experience and history behind you to back you up and almost guarantee security in your future retirement; with streaming, you don't have this luxury,"* he continues.

Philip and I spoke briefly on the partnership program of Twitch. He says he wished he never signed it, saying that other platforms provide more beneficial contracts. Twitch is no longer the sole actor on the streaming platform market; Facebook and YouTube are betting big on the industry; thus, to stay competitive, one thing Twitch could do to assist its creators is by allowing them to unionize.

A common theme in the literature on platform, gig, or sharing economies is hostility towards union organizing (see Standing 2011, Prassl 2018). The tech megalodon Amazon bought Twitch.tv in 2014, a company infamous for its disdain for labor unions (Kim 2014). Calls within streaming have been made for organizing, yet none have appeared (D'Anastasio 2020).

All the examples above explore the relation between streamers and Twitch. Bringing back the second of Guyer's (2016) L, s *logics* can be helpful in analyzing these relations. The formal rules of Twitch; DMCA, and TOS, for example, govern the economic life of streamers (Twitch 2020 & 2021). The platform laborer is placed within the confines of her surrounding *logics*. Traditional employment in the market economy also presents restrictions and limitations on its laborers. Though partly taking the form of rigid spatial and temporal limits, for example, the 9 to 5 locally fixed factory shift. The restrictions set around streamers take more abstract shapes, time and place are dislocated and rules are diffuse, all markers of the platform economy.

Twitch reaps massive benefits from the people streaming on their site but takes almost no risk. The platform laborer is situated in a position of inherent precarity and insecurity. Organizing streamers with demands of benefits and transparency would ease the stress my interlocutors' experience. There are growing pains within any emerging phenomena, but this essay sheds light on the need for the streamer to have an independent voice for their current and future realities.

Rent-Seeking, Selling out, and Laughing

One night while *en route* to a friend's house, I tune in to Philip's stream on the subway. I remember that he prefers third-party donations over subscriptions. I decide to *Swish* the equivalent amount of a subscription. Once my side of the transaction has gone through, and after a short delay, a festive animation and soundbite plays on top of the main video feed and overwrites everything else. The graphic displays my name, and a text-to-speech generator reads my attached message aloud. At first, Philip looks confused over who donated as I did not use my real name, but he quickly figures out it was me, calls me crazy, and gives his gratitude.

Only after the commotion engaged by my contribution has died down, I notice the progress bar located in the bottom left, "*rent, 1950/10 000kr*". My donation had just been registered, and thus the bar moved along just a little. I observed many of my interlocutors and others blatantly stating that the donations sent, and *bits* given directly contributed to their ability to keep a roof over their heads. A precise signification of the direct dependence streamers has on their fans in combination with exemplifying the economic realities of sustaining as a streamer. Bellow this reality and its relation to the platform economy, play, and labor will be explored.

Being an (in)dependent content creator on a digital platform like Twitch presents many challenges and forks in the road. Karl says his brand is partly built on the rejection of some norms, which would probably improve his economic security if adopted. He classifies himself as a *variety streamer*, a streamer known for streaming many games from a plurality of genres. A variety streamer is often recognized and liked for their entertaining and unbound personalities. His attitude has shifted somewhat, now planning to become more of a "*sellout.*" Shifting his focus to become more brand-friendly, accepting sponsorship and collaboration deals.

Historical hesitance from Karl stems partly from the restricting circumstances associated with commercial partnerships for streamers. Karl explains, for example, that one famous energy drink brand only allows their sponsored streamers to drink their drink on stream; if anything else is being consumed, it must be in a branded cup or bottle. Karl is afraid of slipping up and thus unwillingly committing a breach of contract and being sued. Recently this is a risk he is willing to take to achieve a more secure economic existence and take more time off.

Play for streamers actualizes all the stakes Malaby (2007) discusses games can involve. Material, social, and cultural capital are all at stake in the play of streamers (Malaby 2007, 100). The factors vary, especially between variety streamers and e-sports or one-game specialist streamers, streamers known for their ability in one specific game. William, for example, stake material, social and cultural capital when playing. He risks losing clout, subscribers, and status if he performance poorly in-game, on stream. What happens in play then invariably affects the rest of William's life, making the separation of play and the rest impossible. Malaby (2007) also argues that the same sword can take down the distinction of "virtual" and "real". What happens in the "virtual" affects the "real" and vice versa (Malaby 2007, 98). Making playing in the digital prompt for the same analysis as playing in the tactile.

Viewing play or *gaming* through the example of William illuminates Malaby's (2009) point of the *game* displaying a *ready and capable disposition* in a disordered world (Malaby, 2009, 213). Losing out on his primary livelihood, DJing, and moving back in with his parents might signify a loss of capability. Still, William shows through the game, he is competent and prepared for the challenges set before him. Staking everything and still prevailing.

Johan is generally regarded as a "funny streamer." His primary focus is to make his viewers laugh. He heavily utilizes his friends in this pursuit; you almost feel like you´re in the group while watching. The ensemble collectively projects a giggly aura, making light of nearly everything, aspiring to what Johan calls "accessibility."

Before his success online, Johan gamed profusely growing up. He shares nostalgic stories from his childhood of the enjoyment he and his friends gained from playing video games. Successfully Johan has maintained this playful disposition to gaming in his professional career, but things have, of course, changed. He mentions the increase in factors he now ponds over, "*before it was just ´Am I having fun?´, it's the same question now, just that there are ten different reasons to why I ask that.*"

A significant point of Malaby's (2007) is that a useful conception of the play term needs to be complex. Partly this complexity is a reaction to the exceptionalism of play as separate from the rest of society, nonproductive and fun. The author suggests replacing the terms of fun and the like with words like compelling and engaging, removing conceptions of "inherent characteristics" of play and instead advocates for focusing on temporal and local context (Malaby 2007, 99). Johan remains playful in his disposition, but play has become more than just fun; it's compelling and engaging for both him and the viewer.

Streaming presents itself as an excellent stage for questioning traditional conceptions of play. The interrelationship of play and labor signifies what Malaby (2007) suggests of the relationship between games and other gamelike processes. A recurring theme among interlocutors was that of Twitch or streaming itself being gamelike. Malaby (2007) defines games as disordered, open-ended, and unpredictable, all by design (Malaby 2007, 109). The algorithms of YouTube video recommendations, the perceived randomness of getting exposure on Twitch, and many other parameters suggest streaming as gamelike.

The objectives are clear, but the outcomes are unpredictable. This view of streaming as play also hits Guyer's (2016) point home on how the platform economy replaces the market economy (Guyer 2016, 112). The market, of course, is a too game but what separates the two is the mediating factors of the platform; there is nothing like a free market when the functions of supply and demand are not publicly known and are centrally controlled.

In Narotzky's (2018) rethinking of the labor concept, the question of alienation and non-commodified labor appears. How then does the labor of streamers get alienated? Where is the surplus-value extraction? Streamers earn most of their income through gifts from viewers, subscriptions and donations. Most of my interlocutors prefer donations through third-party services like *PayPal* and *Swish* instead of the Twitch integrated options. Twitch does not interfere with third-party transactions, allowing the streamer a bigger cut and better oversight over their income. Alienation is then somewhat materialized in the cut Twitch takes from on-site transactions and the revenue they receive from playing ads before and during streams; streamers receive a small cut of this as well.

I would argue that the main factor that alienates the streamer is instead non-commodified or partly commodified labor. Streamer's clout and fame bring reoccurring users and get the viewers to spend on the site. One could assess that the streamer's collective likeness is greater than Twitch's as a brand, making the company entirely reliant on the performers that inhabit the site. The non-commodified labor materializes itself in streaming as partly that which Taylor (2018) calls *affective economy* where emotions produce entertainment and thus value. I argue, along with Bingham (2018), that play itself needs to be included in this category. Twitch runs on play; the playful disposition of the streamers on the platform is the commodity. Without the inherent will and lust for gaming, most parts of Twitch would not prosper as they now do.

Conclusion: Streaming for Sustenance

The interrelationship of play and labor within streaming and the phenomenon's ability to shed light on the emergent platform economy are the main questions guiding this thesis. The empirical declaration and analysis above aides us in answering the questions posited. The temporal logjams experienced by streamers when converting their playful pastime of gaming into labor. The mental pressures resulting from abuse and precarity. As well as the economic relation between streamer, platform, viewer, and capital combined shed light on the realities of subsiding as a streamer within the emerging platform labor order.

Streamers are first and foremost gamers; a substantial majority of my interlocutors have been gaming before they could read or write. The relation for streamers of play and labor is often not expressed on the surface, but once one looks deeper, it becomes clear that the playfulness of gaming has entered in and intermingled with the labor-ness of streaming, and vice versa. *Gaming time*, *all-the-time*, or any other conceptual understanding of how gamers spend their time helps us understand why both the streamer and viewers anticipate massive amounts of hours live.

Entrepreneurial competitive platform structures show how streamers in competition with one another can at times become hostile. The lack of economic security embedded in the platform economy, with the absence of benefits and a lack of negotiatory power via a union, sheds light on the realities and context of platform labor relations. Guyer's (2016) broad conception of what the platform economy entails in combination with the public view of the platform economy as relating to the platforms themselves can both be widened by understanding streamers.

Narotzky's (2018) reconceptualizing of the labor term in contemporary and digital contexts is supplemented by the inclusion of the dislocating elements of streaming. Malaby's (2007 & 2009) argument for a study of play where disposition and context are put in front is exceptionally fitting in attempting to ebb out the interrelation of play and labor in streaming.

Further research of streaming and the platform economy is required to assess the impact and realities of both fully. Inquiries of other platforms than Twitch.tv, mainly Facebook, and YouTube are necessary now that they are also significant players. Studying other streaming factions, such as music, crafting, *just chatting*, or different sub-genres where gaming is excluded, would provide a more holistic view of the media format.

The covid-19 pandemic has kicked all these aspects into high gear in society; now, we need to start on the work of fully grasping their impact. Anthropology plays a significant role in this exploration. The anthropological perspective, with its holistic and emic lens, needs to reappropriate its methods and ways of looking at fields to move along with technical innovation and societal change. Digital anthropology has great potential in bringing anthropology not only along for the ride of contemporary digitalization but also provides the discipline an opportunity for broader recognition and communication of the ideals we as anthropologists hold so dearly.
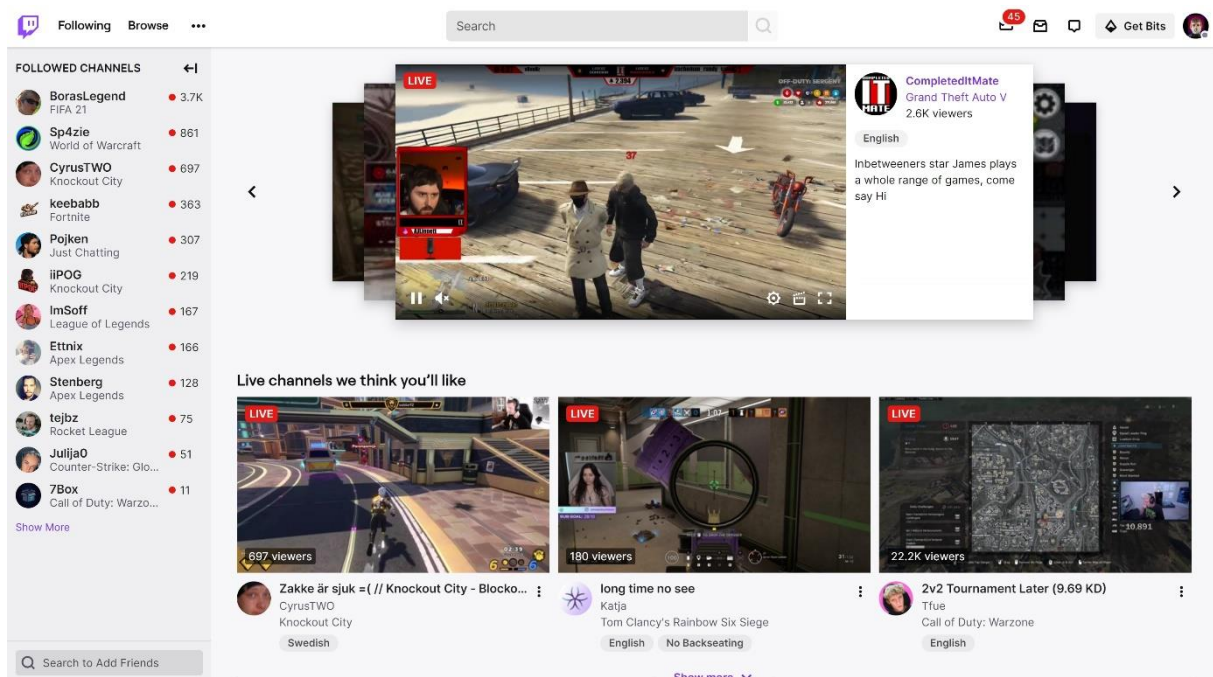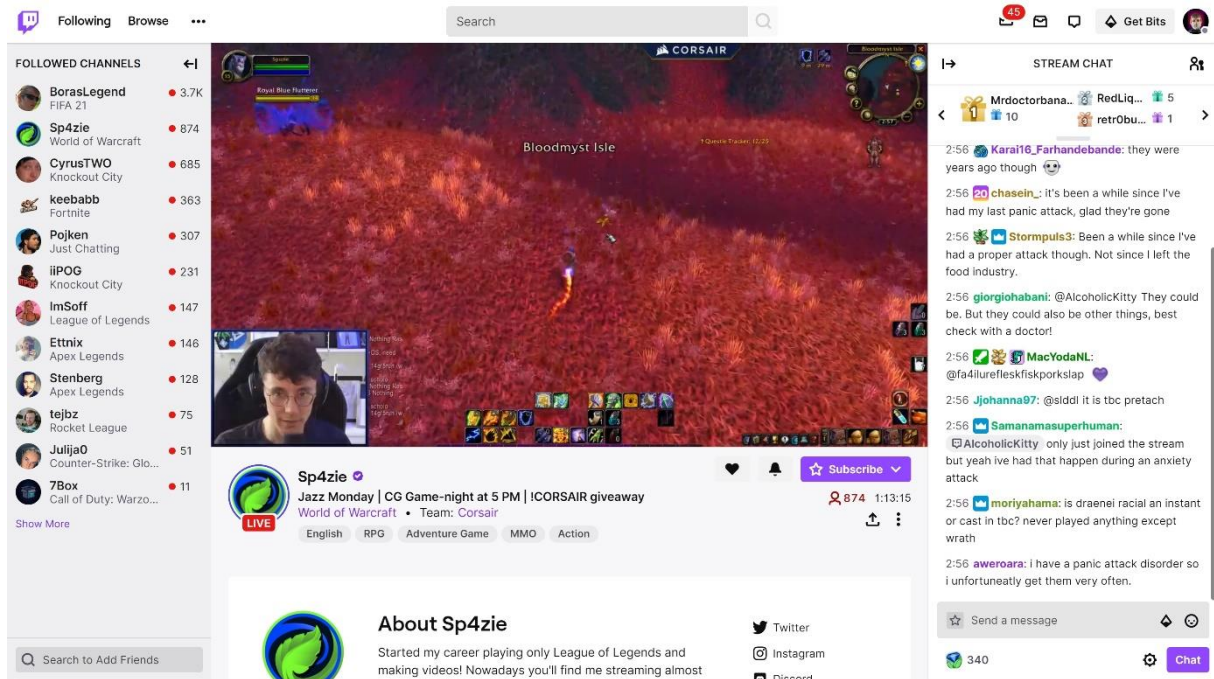
Appendix

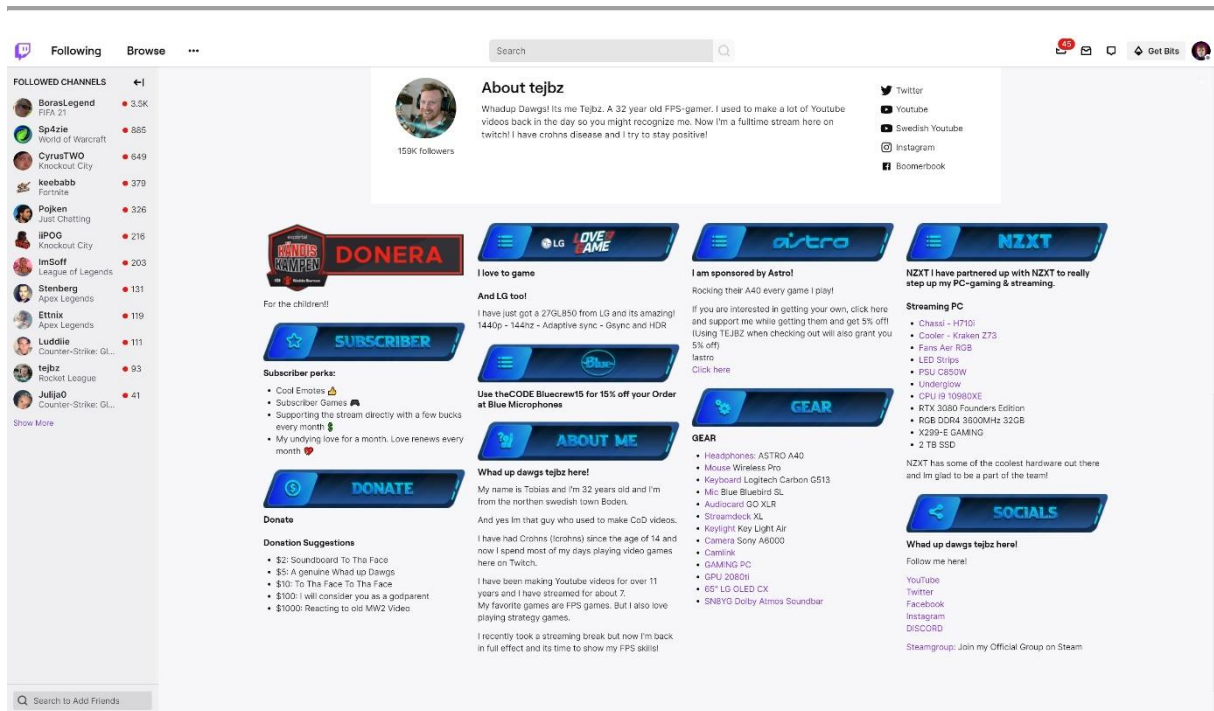*Figure 1. Twitch.tv Homepage*

Figure 2. Sp4zie's Stream

Figure 3. Tejbz's "about me" page

References

Agostinho, C. Richards, J. and Danylchenko. A. 2020. *Gen Z on gaming.* Imagine Insight. https://www.imageninsights.com/genzon (Collected: 2021-04-09). In possession of the author.

Bingham, Christopher. 2017. *An ethnography of Twitch Streamers: Negotiating Professionalism in new Media Content Creation.* University of Oklahoma.

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of age in Second Life, an Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human.* Princeton University Press. Princeton.

Calvão, Filipe. 2019. *Crypto-miners: Digital labor and the power of blockchain technology.* Economic Anthropology 2019; 6, 123–134.

Cristina Pertierra, Anna. 2018. *Media anthropology of the digital age.* Polity Press.

D'Anastasio, Cecilia. 2020. *Is It Game Streaming's Turn for a Labor Revolution?.* Wired. Published, 08.07.2020. https://www.wired.com/story/mixer-livestreaming-labor-rights/ (Collected, 06-05-2021)

Duff Morton, Gregory. 2017. *Neoliberal eclipse, Donald Trump, corporate monopolism, and the changing face of work.* Dialect Anthropology. 2018. Volume 42, p. 207–225.

Ford, Colin & Gardner, Dan & Horgan, Leah & Liu, Calvin & Tsaasan, A & Nardi, Bonnie & Rickman, Jordan. 2017. *Chat Speed OP PogChamp: Practices of Coherence in Massive Twitch Chat.* University of California, Irvine. Conference, the 2017 CHI Conference Extended Abstracts.

Gandolfi, Enrico. 2016. *To watch or to play, it is in the game: The game culture on Twitch.tv among performers, plays and audiences.* Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds.

Hamilton, William & Garretson, Oliver & Kerne, Andruid. 2014. *Streaming on twitch, Fostering participatory communities of play within live mixed media.* Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - Proceedings.

Horst, H. A., Herr-Stephenson, R. and Robinson, L. (2010). *Media ecologies. In M. Ito, Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out, Kids Living and Learning with New Media.* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

Hyman, Louis. 2018. *Temp. How American Work, American Business, and the American Dream Became Temporary.* Penguin Random House LLC.

Iqbal, Mansoor. 2021. *Twitch Revenue and Usages Statistics 2021.* Business of Apps.

Källberg, Emanuel. 2018. *'Play to live', An anthropological study of live streaming: sources of income and the forming of communities on Twitch.tv.* Bachelors' thesis.

DIVA, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2, 1214080. Uppsala, Uppsala University.

Kim, Eguene. 2014. *"Amazon buys Twitch for $970 million In Cash"*. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-buys-twitch-2014-8?r=US&IR=T. (Collected: 06-05-2021).

Kozinets, Robert. 2015 (2010). *Netnography Redefined: 2nd Edition.* SAGE Publications Ltd. London.

Malaby, Thomas, M. 2007. *A new approach to games*. Games and Culture Volume 2 Number 2. Sage Publications.

Malaby, Thomas, M. 2009. *Anthropology and Play: The Contours of Playful Experience.* New Literary History , Winter, 2009, Vol. 40, No. 1, Play (Winter, 2009), pp. 205-218. The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mead, Margret. 1961. *Coming of age in Samoa: a psychological study of primitive youth for Western civilization.* New York, Morrow.

Narotzky, Susanna. 2018. *Rethinking the concept of labour*. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Newzoo. 2020. "Global Games Market Report 2020". Newzoo. San Francisco. www.newzoo.com/insights/trend-reports/newzoo-global-games-market-report-2020lightversion/ (Collected: 2021-05-03). In possession of the author.

Prassl, Jeremias. 2018. *Humans as a Service. The premise and perils of work in the gig economy.* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Ravenelle, Alexandrea, J. 2019. *Hustle and Gig. Struggling and surviving in the sharing economy.* University of California Press.

Robinson, Naomi. 2019. *Performances and publics while watching and live-streaming video games on Twitch.tv.* The University of Melbourne.

Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat. The new dangerous Class*. London, Bloomsbury Academic.

Statistiska Centralbyrån. 2021. "Barns fritid och kulturella besök efter indikator, redovisningsgrupp och kön. År 2014-2015 - 2018-2019". SCB.

StreamElements & Rainmaker.gg. 2021. "State of the Stream March 2021". https://blog.streamelements.com/state-of-the-stream-for-march-2021-5672cd17b3ae. (Collected: 03-05-2021)

Streamscheme. 2021. "Twitch growth in 2021". https://www.streamscheme.com/twitch-statistics/. (Collected: 03-06-2021)

Sundararajan Arun. 2016. *The sharing economy. The end of employment and the rise of crowd-based capitalism*. Cambridge, MIT Press.

Twitch. 2020. "Music-Related Copyright Claims and Twitch". https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2020/11/11/music-related-copyright-claims-and-twitch/. (Collected: 03-05-2021)

Twitch. 2021. "Terms of Service". https://www.twitch.tv/p/en/legal/terms-of-service/. (Collected: 03.05.2021)

Wikipedia contributors. "Reckful." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 23 Apr. 2021. Web. 19 May. 2021