

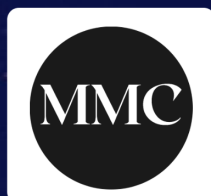
Astra Press Office

Stella Polare

December 2023 Edition



In collaboration with



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Culture's Space – Astra "Stella polare"

It is indeed with great pleasure that we present the December edition of Astra Bocconi's monthly magazine, a format aimed at offering the opportunity to delve into our analysis of various themes: from culture to sports, from politics to hobbies, and, of course, aspects of student life. Writers from Astra's Press Office will be joined by authors from other student associations and independent journalists, who will provide insightful remarks regarding the topics they specialize in.

Enjoy your reading!

Federico Mellace



Women’s Rights In Society – Conference With Diare Rosenfeld

On Tuesday, Nov. 28, the conference “Women’s Rights in Society”, a BDiverse event in collaboration with Astra, was held at Bocconi. The three pan- elists — Harvard Law School professor Diane Rosenfeld, a world-renowned scholar, Prof. Graziella Romeo, a Bocconi professor and Fatima Haidari, an Afghan-born BIG student — were involved in a discussion around the issue of gender-based violence and discrimination, moderated by Prof. Enrico Basile.

The following is a summary of the core concepts from the participants’ re- sponses to Prof. Basile discussion questions, edited for condensation.

What is Gender-Based Violence? Which Forms Exist?

Graziella Romeo: It is very important to identify violence against women as proper violence, and a form of discrimination. We must realize that women are targeted because they are women.

Moreover, such violence is not merely physical. Many women experience this daily: women may be subjected to e.g. economic violence. And broadly speaking, women are still largely excluded from political life, which has further consequences on the structure of our communities.

How important is it to distinguish the various forms of violence?

Diane Rosenfeld: We must reframe how we think about violence. The framework should be one of patriarchal violence, used to preserve a patriarchal social order. Gender-based violence is often treated as less important, but it definitely is not!

Women are often not entitled to use the language of violence, contrary to men — this happens from our very first years of life, when kids play at the playground.

In your opinion, coming from a different country, do you see new forms of violence — not just indirect violence?

Fatima Haidari: When I came to Italy from Afghanistan, the sight women driving cars, trains, metros etc. made me feel so proud! This does not exist in my native country: the mere sight of boys and girls sitting together in class was also surprising to me.

However, another notable fact about gender dynamics in Italy to me was seeing how, as we just noted, women are nevertheless sidelined when it comes to policymaking. Why do men give themselves the right to do such a thing to women? What is the reason? That women are women?

What kind of remedies can we provide?

Diane Rosenfeld: Focusing on victims is what actually hurts us. It hurts because it erases the cause of the violence. Helping victims is important, though it does not address the root cause of the issue.

To explain what a solution to the issue of a lopsided social order could be, I will provide an easy example: bonobos. Bonobos are special because, contrary to e.g. chimpanzees, they do not assert themselves through sexual coercion. If a bonobo female is attacked by a male, she will call for help, other females will come and together they will fend off the aggressor. As a matter of fact, bonobos enjoy reproductive autonomy!

What I call the “Bonobo principles” are 1. No one has the right to harm my sister. 2. Everyone is my sister.

Graziella Romeo: A way to end this situation is to understand that the personal is political. What we do in private relationship is also what we reflect in society, and when violence is not

accepted in private, this will also not occur in public! Society needs to move away from the belief that this is acceptable.

When we refrain from using violence in our private lives, we tend to refuse it in public, too, and vice versa. If powerful politicians also stop accepting the use of violence in their private lives, this will also be reflected in their public lives, and will benefit all of us. Violent men have violent political attitudes, i.e., those of a totalitarian regime.

What kind of support do you think is the most appreciated by a victim?

Helping the victim is important, but it does not provide a solution. When I was a child, around the age of 5–7, I was always told to behave whenever I fought with my brother. I was continuously asked to cook tea or wash his clothes; he was never asked any of that.

We need a change of mindset. Women should not accept the role of being a victim, nor should allow themselves to remain at the mercy of societal expectations. If men want to join us in this effort, they are warmly welcome, but it is our duty to do something first. We must solve this problem by ourselves before relying on others’ help.





A Glance at “La Prima alla Scala”: Don Carlo

The premiere at La Scala is the event that more than any other, puts the spotlight on Milan and on a theatre with a distinguished past and an equally prestigious present.

Behind this artistic and worldly event, dynamics unfold that go beyond the simple musical aspect. In fact, the foyers of the first Milanese theatre on the night of December 7th become veritable catwalks where one can admire the elegance of the city’s bourgeoisie, as well as international figures. The importance of the event attracts personalities from the national and international scene.

The strong social contrast between inside and outside the theatre, and the large number of politicians in the audience, has historically made December 7th a day full of protest demonstrations in the city of Milan. On some occasions, the demonstrations have been particularly heated, such as in 1968 when the audience of the premiere was targeted by protesters with thrown eggs and vegetables.

From an artistic point of view, for an opera singer, performing on the evening of the premiere at La Scala is the crowning glory of their career. Despite its excellent acoustics, La Scala is a large theatre that requires highly advanced technical-vocal skills, combined with the great and due demands of the La Scala audience, which is often very difficult to satisfy.

This year, the season opens with Giuseppe Verdi’s “Don Carlo” (in the 4-act version, adapted by Verdi himself for La Scala in 1884). “Don Carlo” was conceived for the French theatre, following the grand Opéra model, which, unlike the 19th-century Italian melodrama, requires a major historically significant subject and the exploration of delicate and controversial contrasts between characters. This creates more intricate and dynamic plots than the conventional plots of Italian opera. In this masterpiece, psychological depth is the cornerstone of the dramatic narrative. Through

a complex harmonic structure and the use of recurring themes, the orchestra aids and accompanies the listener in exploring the inner dramas experienced and fought by the characters. The young prince Don Carlo sees his heart broken and betrayed by his father, King Filippo II, who marries his promised and beloved Elisabe (“*io la vidi e il suo sorriso*”). Elisabetta, torn between love for Carlo and respect for her royal duty towards the Empire and the King, distances herself from love. King Filippo II, in his power, is crushed by loneliness and the fear of betrayal (“*Ella giammai m’amò*”). In constant search of a loyal soul to confide in, he finds it in the Marquis of Posa, Rodrigo, who sacrifices his life to save Carlo’s, in loyalty to a friendship that does not falter even in the face of death (“*Per me è giunto il dì supremo*”).

The drama of “Don Carlo” never leaves room for light, and whenever it tries to emerge, it is abruptly banished into darkness, represented by the dark and brooding orchestral sound, reaching its peak in the scene between Filippo II and the Grand Inquisitor: two deep basses duetting accompanied by the extremely low notes of the contrabassoon, which, due to the effect of the reed, creates such a vibration that makes the listeners feel that the earth is vibrating.

The narrative focal point is not the arias, where characters express themselves individually, but rather the duets, providing the opportunity to further delve into the evolution of relationships. The profound complexity of the characters reflects a challenging interpretative task for the soloists. It is essential to possess a solid interpretative maturity to tackle roles of this kind, ensuring the characteristic traits of each character.

Being a grand Opéra, staging “Don Carlo” is never simple due to the complexity of scenes that often require the use of extras or technical difficulties, such as the conductor having to direct not only the orchestra and singers but also

a band playing from behind the scenes. Additionally, the importance of the chorus, a non-secondary character, whose performance is crucial in the success of important and delicate scenes such as the auto-da-fé that closes the second act.

For these reasons, a large theatre with great staging possibilities like La Scala has the opportunity to express the full potential of this Verdi masterpiece.

The passion for opera led to the founding of the Bocconi Students Opera Society at the beginning of last year. The association aims to guide students in understanding the world of opera, ballet, and concerts. With BSOS, there is the opportunity to access exclusive tickets at affordable prices to ensure that everyone can enjoy the performances.

We invite you to join our numerous events and stay connected with us on our social channels (Instagram, LinkedIn).

Interview with Sixtine Lejay – President of Opera Society

I had the opportunity to interview Sixtine Lejay, the president of Bocconi Students Opera Society (BSOS). We have conversed about the role of opera in Bocconi exploiting the imminent event at La Scala.

You are currently involved in many collaborations with other Bocconi associations given the critical period for the Milanese opera environment, how students interact with this world from your point of view?

BSOS wants to be the bridge between students and the world of singing, opera, ballet through collaboration with external entities which provide us discounted tickets in order to make these cultural experiences more accessible. As a result, even those not initially inclined towards opera can afford the opportunity, fostering a broader appreciation for the art form.

As you have mentioned, you are deeply related to thematic associations and foundations which promote these genres of events; how BSOS has developed this network?

While BSOS is relatively new, we’ve been forging valuable collaborations. Generally speaking, La Scala has been particularly receptive to our mission, generously offering discounted tickets in alignment with our association’s goals. However, La Scala isn’t the only one; for example, Auditorium (Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano) propose us very competitive prices even though is not well known through new generations.

Tell us more about the association and its goal.

BSOS maintains applications always open; we give everyone the possibility to join us. We are mainly composed of international students, creating a dynamic and stimulating environment.

Talking about the association’s aims, we can identify two primary goals: the first is to provide the opportunity to experience opera to anyone; while the second is to create a community which is better informed about what they are watching by offering them resources (through social media and the new newsletter reserved for BSOS member) to deepen and to learn more about it.





Javier Milei: Argentina’s Saviour Or A New Latin-American Tyranny

It has been 2 weeks since the shocking victory of Argentinian Economist Javier Milei in the second round of the national presidential elections, beating current Minister of Economy, Sergio Massa, with a majority of around 56%, setting an unexpected gap of almost 3 million votes.

Milei, current national deputy of Argentina and leader of the Libertarian and Neoliberal movement of the South American country, has become well known due to his far-right ideas and conservative thoughts regarding economic and social matters. For example, his propositions to abolish the Argentinian

Central Bank and start the dollarization of the country.

As described by many of his supporters, this polemic politician and economist, follower of the 20th century Austrian school, has been in the spotlight of global media due to his unique personality and distinctive lifestyle as former sex instructor, cosplayer, and football player. This, in addition to his countless and widespread controversies involving several well-known Argentinian journalists, earned him nicknames such as El Loco (The crazy one) or El Rey de la Selva (The King of the Jungle).

Since his first appearances in Argentinian TV programs back in 2017, Milei has not gone unnoticed given the polemic caused by his social and economic proposals. For instance, the abolition of abortion laws (relatively recent in Argentina), pushing forward drug legalization and the right of ownership of guns (without further requirements), which have led to the increasing opposition of the politician, even among right-wing members formerly related to ex-president Mauricio Macri’s government. In fact, parliamentary support is expected to be one of Milei’s main challenges when planning to implement the forementioned projects.

Nevertheless, most scrutiny and academic criticism has focused on his economic plan for the next 4 years, especially by well-known policy makers and economic organizations. They have suggested

that extreme measures such as the dollarization or the abolition of the Central Bank, aimed to solve current currency and inflationary problems in Argentina, could lead to an even deeper recession leaving the Argentinian economy more vulnerable and fragile to external market shocks.

Javier Milei will assume the role of president of Argentina on December 10th, already generating both great expectation and concerns for the whole region, given the influence of Argentina in the recovery of the Latin-American economy after the Covid-19 pandemic. Contrasting forecasts have been drafted regarding Milei’s government performance, but one thing that is clear is that things are not going to stay the same in the land of the Asado and Fútbol world champions.



Presidential Election Second Round Results

	Count	Pct.
Javier Milei Freedom Advances (LLA)	14,476,462	55.69
Sergio Massa Unity for the Homeland (UP)	11,516,142	44.31
Blank and invalid votes	870,642	–

With 99.28% of voting tables counted (103,772 of 104,520). Percentages are based on a total of 25,992,604 valid votes cast for candidates.

A Conflict Miles Away, at the Heart of EU Agenda

The Israel-Hamas War accentuates societal and political polarisation, leaving Jews and Muslims around the world in fear due to the increasing level of hostilities. Leading to political disagreements within the EU, European countries are also struggling with the risk of humanitarian and democratic backsliding as European societies have been divided over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anti-Semitic and anti-Islam incidents are at alarming levels since the outbreak of the war. Jewish and Muslim people in Europe are severely affected by the conflict which fueled hate crimes against these communities.

Since the beginning of the attacks on October 7, European governments have been reporting anti-Semitic and Islamophobic acts. The Interior Minister of France Gérald Darmanin said on Tuesday, November 14, that over 1500 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded from the beginning of the war as well as violence threats received by mosques. Hostile movements

were recorded not only in France but all around Europe, such as vandalism against synagogues in Germany, several attacks on mosques and surging threats of violence against Muslims and Jews were reported.

Following the rise of such events, The European Commission published a statement condemning anti-Semitic and anti-Islam hostilities across Europe on November 5th, 2023. The Commission stated: "We have to push back against this rise in antisemitism, as well as the rise in anti-Muslim hatred that we have been witnessing over the past weeks – which has no place in Europe." Over the statement, the Commission highlighted that European societies are built on principles of equality, human rights and inclusiveness, and stressed its commitment to protect all communities from violence and discrimination regardless of their religion, ethnicity or identity.



With the increasing political and social divisions in Europe, The EU's stance has been criticised to be ineffective by some experts when it could assist the process of peaceful negotiations and facilitate de-escalation. After nearly two months of conflict, the European Union now seems to be ready to accelerate a permanent solution as the EU Foreign Policy Chief, Josep Borrell, made his remarks on helping Israel and Palestine agree on a two-state solution, at the meeting in Barcelona on November 27, where the EU and Arab countries gathered to discuss the issue of Israel and Palestine.^{5 6} The European Union is now working on playing a key role in the settlement of peace negotiations. This political determination will certainly moderate the hostilities and make room for humanitarian support for both parties by the European societies rather than

internal divisions and violations against Jewish and Muslim communities.

The author's opinion

The European Union is one of the pivotal players of the diplomatic environment. It is very important for such an organisation to maintain its principles of equality, no discrimination, and inclusivity within the European society model as well as promoting internationally adopted humanitarian values all around the world. With the rise of far-right leaders around the continent, the stance of EU as an entity matters more than ever now, considering all the dimensions analysed in the article. Its position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be set clearly in accordance with international law matters deeply in terms of mediating the dispute and will certainly empower the European principles among its societies.





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Scrolling Through The War: Normalization of War Content on Social Media

In the past two years, there has been an increased flow of war content on social media. This has sparked debates, especially in Western media outlets, about the normalization of war through its display on various social media, but then again, has war not become normal for so many people in the world? On the other hand, why do people seek exposure to war and conflicts on TikTok, and what potential drawbacks could arise from that? It could be argued that what we now see online has been maturing to a fetish of violence, perpetrated by its general portrayal in fiction media. Or maybe this is the rise of intolerance towards social injustice and war? This exposure and spread of information can lead, and has led, to many breakthroughs.

Let us then take a closer look at those mechanisms close-ups.

Reliability of sources

The most obvious one is the reliability of sources. Since none of the information is mediated, it's hard to prove the legitimacy of the content. Especially during times of war, information flows so fast that it's hard to efficiently fact-check it. Many conspiracy and troll accounts leverage emotion-provoking and sensationalized fake news. They spread propaganda or visual disinformation tools like modified images, deepfakes,

or AI-generated images. While there is an appeal in sharing one's life, it's also hard to trust their credibility in some cases. Many creators have very strong radical views, and the polarizing and provoking content they provide might influence certain audiences in the wrong direction.

Post-intellectualism or simply accessibility and amplification?

Social media, especially TikTok, has been substituting general search engines as news sources, especially among younger audiences. According to the Reuters annual Digital News Report 2023, an increase of up to 40% among all TikTok users aged 18-24 has been noted, with around 20% of them using TikTok for news reports. The report mentions their "even weaker connection with websites and apps, preferring to access news via side-door routes such as social media, search, and mobile aggregators." It's not surprising, given its simple interface with an easily digestible, short, and straight-to-the-point approach, which is very appealing. What sparks the interest of the majority is the personal lives of others. "Slice of life" videos are hugely popular on TikTok or YouTube. People want to know what you eat in a day, what you wear, what you study, where you work, how you go to the gym, and war falls into such content. Dub

bed "WarTok" by many users, it follows videos from battlefields by soldiers, journalists, and civilians. This fascination with lives so distinct from our own creates engagement and interest in war.

So should we just let videos of decapitated civilians and live video bombings access our daily spaces usually filled with our friends' vacation posts and useless life hacks? To what extent are they actually a driver for action and to what do they not add value to any side of the debate? For those in war zones, TikTok elevates anxiety about sharing their voices. Anyone can become famous, and any video can become viral in a matter of minutes. You don't need to discuss what you've written with your editor or producer; you don't need to stay neutral - you have the freedom of expression. In the past decade or even less, social media has become more social than media. The translation of internet realities into actual daily life is very intense and literal. This makes the images of death and destruction more materialized than not. The distance is shorter, and we feel more obliged to be concerned with conflicts. It sparks high social engagement, allowing anyone to help those in need. Jourdan, a creator on TikTok (@xojourdanlouise), created a mask and used money from the Effect Creator Program for humanitarian help to Gaza citizens. This mechanism could be seen as the tradeoff between the spread of documentation of violent realities online and global civil activity. Yet some argue that social media is no platform for war zones. The purpose of those apps is aesthetic and fun lifestyle content and the clash with vivid imagery of dead bodies leads to selective news avoidance. Amongst avoiders, almost four in ten (39%) said they had avoided news on the war in Ukraine, followed by national politics (38%), and issues around social justice (31%).

In the case of the war in Ukraine for instance, we find reports of the Meta group changing their policy and allowing for calls of violence

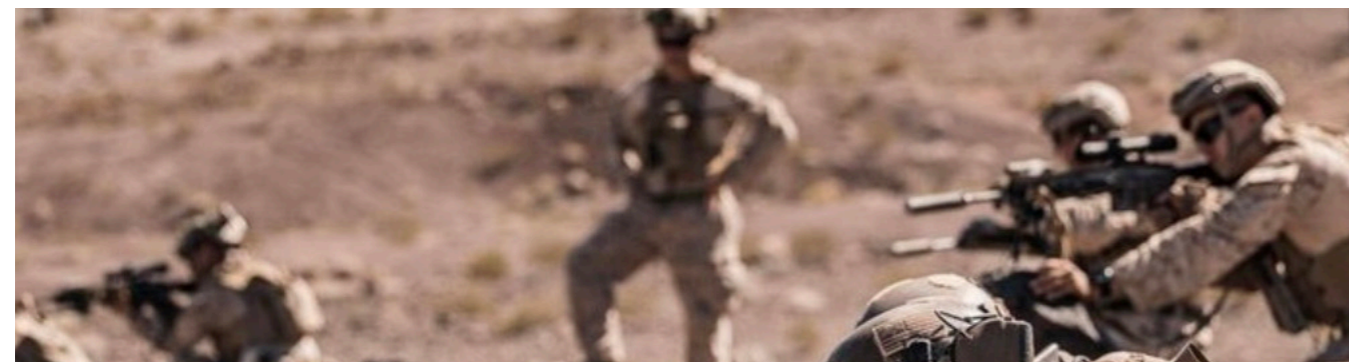
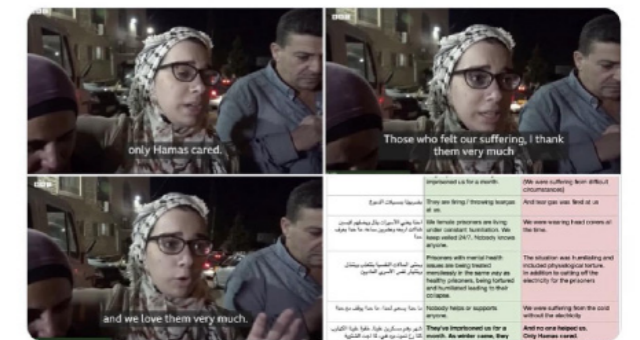
against Russian soldiers coming from Eastern Europe. The content has been chosen for us, like in most cases. It is therefore not enough to look at people's comments on Instagram or Twitter to understand the invasion - one must gain a bare minimum of expertise in Eastern European matters through more or less scientific research, something not everyone has time to do.

The background historical and social knowledge, which unfortunately many people lack, takes away from the potential benefits. In Reuters' research, a significant portion of younger and less educated people shared their struggle with understanding current news. The shallow understanding on behalf of the recipients corresponds to the discouragement of intellectualism, which is not democratizing or eye-opening in any sense. This blindness is weaponized. Footages from attack points, the bombs, and the people themselves are anonymous until you put them in a polarized and politicized context, of which the orchestrator will not be humanitarianism or justice per se, but rather the elites under whose guard the media is. One of the recent occurrences is the BBC mistranslating an interview of a released Palestinian prisoner, according to Respond Crisis Translators.



A released Palestinian prisoner says in Arabic that Israel held them in the cold w/o electricity, "sprayed us w/ pepper spray" & "left us to die."

She never mentioned Hamas or a word like it. Yet @BBC translated to: "No one helped us. Only Hamas cared...We love them very much."





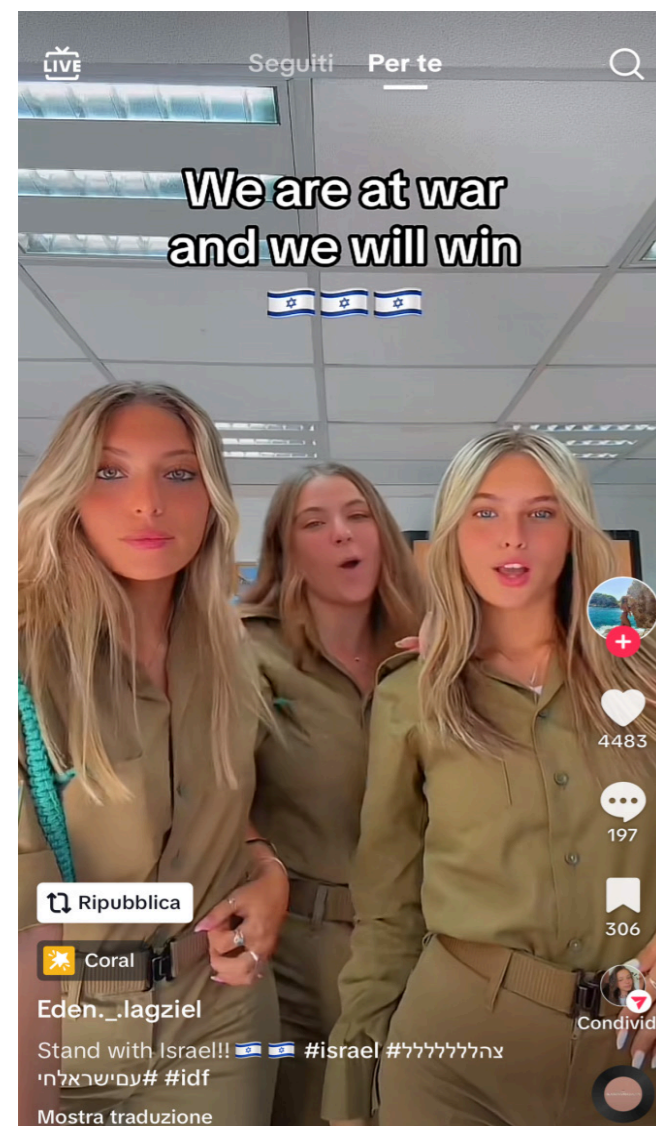
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Ethics, bias, and TikTok algorithms

Jamie Cohen, an assistant professor of media studies at City University, told The Washington Post, “These TikTokers are skeptical of mainstream media news agendas. They’re very aware of news agendas that are driven by capitalism, politics, and access, and [they] have less of an interest in participating in that.” Proportion says each is their main way of getting news online with social media preference (30%) now stretching its lead over direct access to news websites and apps (22%). The clear stance of creators on the issue is desired



by the younger audiences. The constant non-partisan approach and neutral tone are unfavored, who feel that it’s necessary for journalists to express their opinion on the issue. The audience wants an emotional take; they feel that the person who has a platform is standing with their values. It relieves the stigma that war and foreign affairs are the prerogatives of only politicians, academics, or CEOs; they’re available for everyone, including you.

A major point against the display of war, that also applies to big media, is respect for the religion of the deceased and his family. In Islam, the body of a deceased person is considered an image of how they left this earth, thus there is much emphasis on how a person has passed away. Despite the fact that many of those whose corpses have been projected online are now considered war heroes, their bodies being left to rest in peace is one of the pillar values of the religion and is not used by media outlets or individual creators to gain popularity. Seeing so much disrespect towards deceased beliefs is inappropriate and disrespectful. While the faces of the war are important to prove the tragedies, at least what the world audience can do is have respect for the dead’s family’s wishes. This is a delicate matter that must be regarded with great importance.

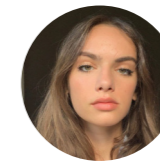
Ideology, fortunately or unfortunately, plays a major role. Social media algorithms leverage that. With future videos solely selected based on watch history and content engagement, it’s undeniable that further polarization and bias are expected. While the introduction to the conflict can be broad, your likes and comments trigger an algorithm, feeding you very fragmented information that aligns with your political views. There has been a rise in skepticism of the personalized content feed with a decline in the proportion of social media users under 35 who believe that automatically selected news based on previous consumption is a good way to resolve news (decline from 49% to 30%). Many of them

feel that they have been missing out on important information (48% of women, 46% of men) and pushing for social media companies to review user policies and facilitate more reliable, diverse, and less toxic information.

War reporting plays a crucial role, serving as a

reminder of ongoing conflicts. It garners interest when shared, but for many oversaturated with violence, the interest dwindles, only to resurface cyclically. This periodic reappearance keeps war issues remembered and supported, although it also contributes to the fetishization and twisted normalization of such content





The Disruption of AI In the Business Landscape

How will students manage to use it as a tool throughout their future career?

Undoubtedly, the invention of Internet technologies and its integration within workplaces has profoundly reshaped the business job landscape by accelerating and automating a wide range of functions that were traditionally executed by human personnel. Likewise, other disruptive events revolutionized the economic environment such as the global pandemic, which has fostered a substantial surge in the adoption of remote work and the prevalence of home-based employment, or the rise of e-commerce that brought to disruption of retail. In all three scenarios, these transformative changes have yielded enhanced efficiency and superior outcomes in the business industry. However, concomitantly, they have provoked a considerable downsizing of the workforce, as roles susceptible to automation have seen a notable reduction in demand, and consequently rendered it essential for individuals to prioritize continuous reskilling.

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence in the business environment is anticipated to streamline processes, enhance automation, and concurrently support human decision-making.

AI currently serves as a valuable tool for me, and I am confident it will prove to be an asset throughout my career. I foresee a thoughtful utilization and an envisioned strategic use of AI primarily centered around data, forecasts, and situational analysis, as well as the facilitation of brainstorming.

Indeed, AI excels in analyzing extensive datasets and financial planning, and extracting insightful information, significantly expediting these processes. Moreover, its utility in brainstorming is manifested through its ability to provide comprehensive pros and cons for ideas, conduct swift internet searches, and offer diverse perspectives and points of view on a given situation.



The incorporation of AI and machine learning into business functions, notably within the domain of management consulting, has been in progress for an extended period, and I anticipate its significance to further escalate in the coming years. Major industry players are proactively seeking a competitive edge by incorporating AI into their strategic frameworks, exemplified by the global leader in consulting, McKinsey, which founded back in 2009 the division *Quantum Black* and it's continuously acquiring startups specialized in AI and ML¹. Anticipating a substantial surge in the market for Business-to-Consumer (B2C) AI solutions, I foresee an increase in software powered by AI designed to assist companies in fostering innovation, resolving internal challenges, and facilitating the achievement of sustained and accelerated performance and growth. Although this scenario is poised to result in a reduction in the workforce, the indispensability of the human intellect remains paramount,

especially in ensuring the judicious and ethical application of AI in alignment with overarching considerations pertaining to its implementation and in the final process of decision-making.

The ongoing evolution of AI underscores the imperative for the future me to adapt and acquire skills that complement and align with technological advancements, embracing AI as a tool for strengthening my analysis and decision-making constitutes a strategic approach that can significantly contribute to career advancement in the contemporary, digitally driven business landscape, either in the consulting and the financial fields, which are my interests.

In summary, adopting a forward-thinking mindset, a proactive stance towards integrating AI into my career, leveraging my analytical capabilities, and maintaining mindfulness of broader implications would equip me to thrive in the ever-evolving professional landscape.





A Chat With “Società della Taula”

I have had the opportunity to interview Francesco De Luca, the current president of Società della Taula in order to delve into their environment.

Società della Taula, according to Francesco, can be better defined as a “goliardic fraternity” rather than a simple association. Their core idea is to educate their members since they believe that today’s university students, as the future leadership class, are the ones who need to provide ideas to the country and offer both cultural and political insights to take everyone from point A to point B. Consequently, they are engaged in various internal and external activities, often in collaboration with professional or external student associations, to educate our members and, in some cases, organize events open to the student community to contribute to it.

Cycle of Events: *A few weeks ago, you launched a cycle of events. Let’s talk about it a bit.*

Yes, the event in question was indeed the first of a series called “Beyond the Exams.” In this inaugural edition, the guest was Alessio Mazzalupi, founder of Cents, a startup that he co-founded. This platform allows rounding up any transaction to the next euro, donating the difference to support specific causes. The core of these events is not entrepreneurship in the strict sense but rather bringing virtuous examples of students who have gone beyond their academic duties to address identified issues to the student community. According to Francesco, it’s an “*experience of the leadership class.*” For Alessio, the question shifted from “how can I donate to the homeless even if I don’t have cash on me” to designing a system to make it happen and making it available to the community.

Lotto Event: *Last year, you were quite active, and one event, in particular, was well-received by the Bocconi community.*

This was a charity soccer match in support of our fellow student, Leonardo Lotto, who was involved in a serious accident during his semester abroad in Australia last year. This event is especially dear to Francesco because it brought the Bocconi community closer together, even though the incident occurred just days before exams.

Two significant aspects came together in this event. Firstly, the sense of belonging among individuals at this university, with the idea that anyone associated with this institution deserves support when needed. Additionally, there was the element of collaboration among different student body groups, which is essential for achieving this goal within the university. We successfully collaborated with the three representation groups, even right after elections. Francesco adds that helping someone and getting people to collaborate for this cause is incredibly significant for us. We received support from the various representation groups and the university itself, which allowed us to use university facilities like the sports centre. A community that comes together behind such issues, despite differing opinions, is a healthy and vibrant community.

The Taula Book: *In March of last year, you also presented your book. What is it about?*

The title is “gaudeamus igitur,” which is actually the first verse of the international student anthem. Those who have experience with student associations in France, Spain, or Germany will find this phrase in their statutes.

The book, for us, tells the story of the “goliardia” and how it relates to the history of the Taula from 1947 to the present day. We are a goliardic fraternity that adheres to a well-defined tradition that has been around for centuries, with a set of languages and ways of doing things that we aim to pass on.

These have evolved within a significantly different context, but we still uphold them within the Taula (such as goliardia and the concept of brotherhood).

Regarding the necessary generational changes, how does an association with such a strong tradition handle them?

Francesco explains that generational change is rapid because the operational function is entirely left to those who attend the university. To preserve tradition, we have linked episodes of goliardia history to values that form the backbone of the fraternity. These values remain fixed regardless of time and circumstances. For example, the theme of student freedom is essential to us, creating spaces of freedom for students to become accustomed to risk-taking, daring to experiment (and learning from mistakes), and taking on responsibility. Student activism, both within and outside the university, is central, as reflected in the event series titled “Going Beyond Studying.”

Goliardia: *We’ve mentioned it before, but what does it mean?*

It’s a commitment to expanding one’s boundaries, while still safeguarding personal spaces

of freedom and branching into areas like culture and civic engagement that may risk being treated as secondary.

Alumni: *Last question, apart from goliardia, another core theme for you is brotherhood. How does your network of alumni factor into this?*

The Taula is a fraternity; its members, past and present, are bound not just as friends but as brothers. This creates a deeper relationship because friendship is a bond between two people, while brotherhood is an internal value that concerns the entire group. In practice, this is realized through mentorship. New members, a select few each year, are guided by older members who help them grow and develop as individuals, almost as if they were part of a family. Alumni are therefore essential to our educational mission. The alumni network also provides cultural insights through the writing of articles, the organization of events, and lectures they conduct, which help maintain intergenerational relationships among Taula members. Finally, the network allows us to take more risks because you always have the assurance that older members will support and watch over you, ensuring a positive outcome for current members.





Are We Going To Measure Happiness?

Since the dawn of society, we have been theorizing and experimenting with possible and different ways to achieve happiness, an idea that, undergoing various transformations over philosophy and religions, has come to the present day and must confront the current political, social, and economic model.

This is the era of great technological development, interconnectedness, and especially the global spread of the capitalist model and the development of the so-called “consumer society.” Certainly, at the level of life expectancy at birth, ongoing wars and famines, we are living during the best period in human history. But the main unit of measurement of success still seems to be wealth, and by reflex, the main unit of measurement of the health of a state is GDP. Although this measure is often criticized, and numerous debates have been opened by international organizations such as WWF, OECD and the UN, and by political bodies such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, are we really close to the creation of a new yardstick for measuring the success of a nations?

In 2012, the World Happiness Report, created in 2011 at the directive of the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 65/309 “Happiness: Towards a Holistic Definition of Development”) was published for the first time with the goal of assessing happiness around the world using an objective scale.

Data is collected from people in more than 150 countries through surveys of samples considered representative of the population. Each variable measured reveals a population-weighted average score on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, which is tracked over time and compared with other countries. These variables currently include:

- Real GDP per capita
- social support

- healthy life expectancy
- freedom to make life choices
- generosity
- perception of corruption

Each country is also compared to a hypothetical nation called Dystopia. Dystopia represents the lowest national averages for each key variable and is used, along with residual error, as a regression parameter. The six metrics are used to explain the estimated extent to which each of these factors contributes to increased life satisfaction relative to the hypothetical dystopian nation, but they do not themselves influence the total score reported for each country.

However, this measurement system has attracted numerous criticisms, which mainly tend to point out the difference between ratings and subjective experiences of well-being. Multiple inconsistencies have been noted in the results of various happiness measurement surveys, for example, a 2014 Pew survey of 43 countries (which excluded most of Europe) had Mexico, Israel, and Venezuela ranked first, second and third. One of the major limitations of this study, however, lies in the fact that the variables of interest used by the World Happiness Report are better suited to measuring happiness at the national level rather than at the individual level. This is certainly useful for statistical-level surveys, but it is cumbersome and misleading when used to understand the mechanisms that govern our individual happiness.

In this regard, one of the most important studies, which has become a point of reference for many psychologists and sociologists over the years, is surely the Harvard Study of Adult Development, one of the longest-running studies on the subject in question, which seems to have unlocked the secret of happiness.

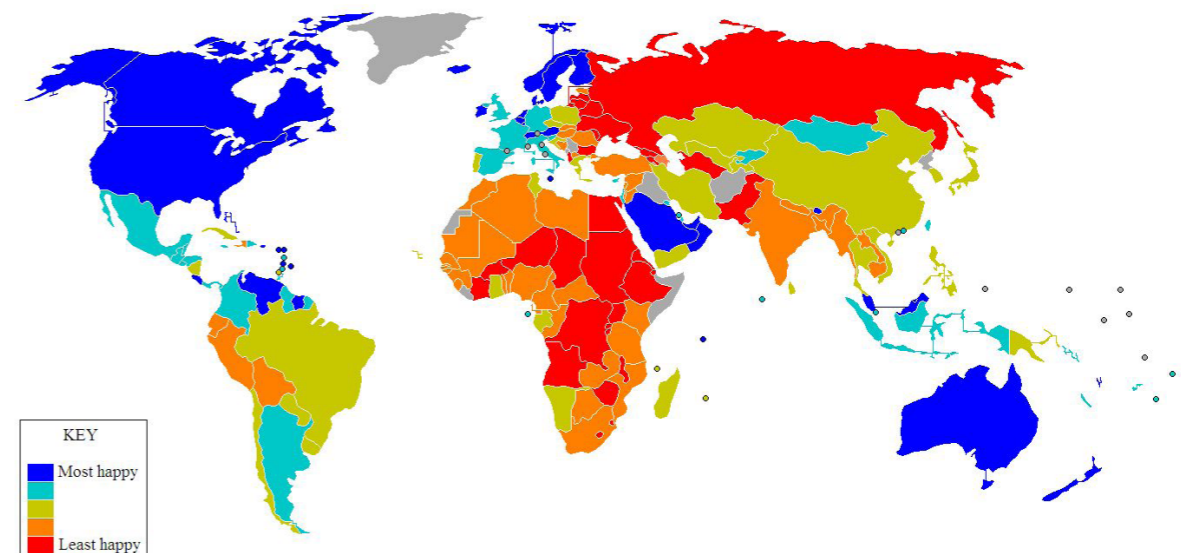
Beginning in 1938, 724 individuals from a variety of economic and social backgrounds were followed from their adolescence:

from Boston’s slummiest neighborhoods to Ivy League members to President John F. Kennedy. Over the course of these 85 years (the study is still ongoing and 19 people from the original sample are still alive), the Harvard research team has collected various types of personal and health information about the study subjects. Every two years, they were asked a series of questions, extended to family members as well, about their state of mental and emotional equilibrium, accompanied by the collection of health information and in many cases personal interviews. Information was collected on their mental and physical health, work career, retirement experience, and quality of marital and family relationships. The original objective of the study was to identify the elements that can help predict healthy aging, but the results of this experiment have opened the door to numerous other studies by psychologists and sociologists on the causes and determinants of individuals’ happiness over time. It is indeed evident from the experiment that it is interpersonal relationships, more than money or fame, that make people happy throughout life proving to be far more important than other variables such as social class, IQ, or even genetic makeup. These ties protect people from life’s difficulties, counteract mental and physical decline, and are the best predictors of long and happy lives.

This finding proved true for the entire sample, both Harvard students and participants from Boston’s disadvantaged neighborhoods. Over the decades, following in the wake of the Harvard study and the annual reports of the United Nations organization, numerous other entities have become interested in the subject of happiness, one example being the U.K. National Happiness Index, created to assess the level of happiness of U.K. residents, which incorporates several new factors, including work, health and relationships, into the assessment of happiness.

A new branch of psychology has thus emerged that focuses on exploring what makes people happy and satisfied: positive psychology. Christopher Peterson, professor of psychology and organizational studies at the University of Michigan and among the 100 most cited psychologists of the past 30 years, defines positive psychology as “...the scientific study of what makes life more worth living”.

In my opinion, one of the main challenges our generation will have to respond to will be to rethink our global social and economic model combining environmental sustainability and individual happiness with a population that’s growing at an ever-increasing rate, leading to a dangerous social fragmentation.



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