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Tiziano Bonini and Emiliano Treré, **Algorithms of Resistance: The Everyday Fight Against Platform Power**, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2024, 256 pp., $30.00 (paperback).

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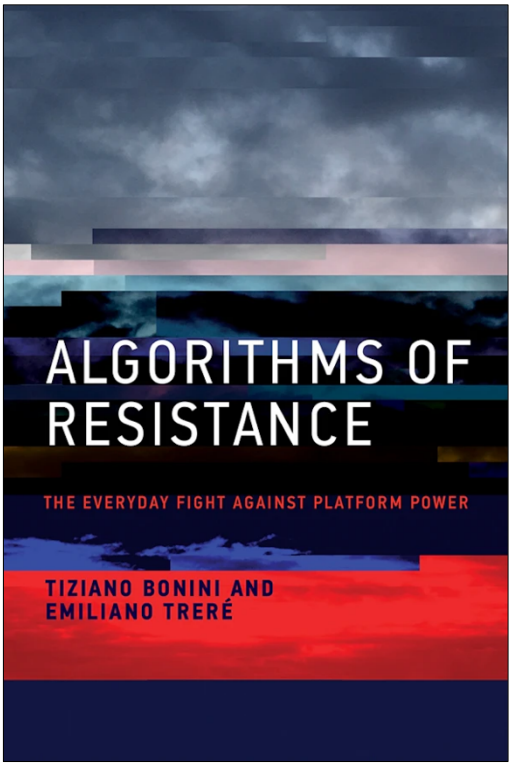

In ***Algorithms of Resistance: The Everyday Fight Against Platform Power***, Tiziano Bonini and Emiliano Treré offer a timely recalibration of discourse around digital platforms. Challenging dominant narratives that depict algorithmic systems as monolithic and opaque, the authors highlight user agency, emphasizing how individuals devise tactics to navigate, subvert, and reappropriate platform infrastructures. Drawing on foundational work by James C. Scott (1985, 1990) on everyday resistance, the authors develop a rich theoretical scaffolding that speaks across disciplines. At its core, the book critiques binary models that position user agency and algorithmic control as mutually exclusive.

Rather than advancing a technologically determinist view where algorithms act on passive users, Bonini and Treré present a more dynamic relationship: While algorithms shape user behavior, users also shape, subvert, and adapt to algorithmic systems—often improvisationally and within asymmetrical conditions. They conceptualize this interplay through *algorithmic agency*, defined as the reflexive capacity to influence algorithmic outcomes (p. 20). This agency is embedded in sociotechnical contexts, bounded by platform affordances, and shaped by power relations. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's (1984) distinction between *tactics* and *strategies*, the authors introduce a typology: *tactical algorithmic agency*—the improvised efforts of users with limited resources—and *strategic algorithmic agency*, enacted from positions of institutional or economic power, such as political campaigns or corporate marketing teams (pp. 30–31).

To deepen their framework, the authors introduce the notion of *moral economies* into their analysis, capturing the normative logics that govern interactions between platforms and users. Platforms are anchored in neoliberal values such as meritocracy and individualism, while users may mobilize alternative frameworks centered on solidarity, mutual aid, or collective well-being. These moral economies frequently clash, giving rise to practices that are condemned by platforms but justified by users as survival strategies. Bonini and Treré argue that algorithmic agency moves along a continuum: from overt resistance to practices that may not challenge platform power directly (p. 20). From this framework, they derive four ideal types of algorithmic agency, based on two dimensions: whether the agency is *strategic* or *tactical*, and whether it is *aligned* or *misaligned* with the platform's moral economy. These four types of

algorithmic agency serve as the basis for the book's case studies on labor, cultural production, and political activism.

In chapter 3, "Gaming the Boss," the authors explore how delivery couriers navigate algorithmic management systems (like "Frank" on Deliveroo), using both individual and collective tactics to evade surveillance, improve working conditions, and share knowledge. Particularly compelling is their ethnographic documentation of private online groups (e.g., on WhatsApp or Telegram) that serve as infrastructures of learning (learning environments), resistance ("hidden transcripts" of resistance), and solidarity (mutual aid and solidarity-building spaces). The authors suggest that couriers are positioned along a continuum, at the ends of which are two distinct ideal types of moral economy: the neoliberal logic of free competition among self-entrepreneurs and the ideology of meritocracy and a cooperative logic, which places mutual aid at the center and justifies illegal actions if they help to improve collective working conditions (p. 101).

Chapter 4 ("Gaming Culture") focuses on the manifestation of algorithmic agency and resistance in cultural industries. The authors frame cultural work as an increasingly precarious activity based on visibility labor and argue that visibility is more central than ever in the valuation of cultural work (p. 112). They argue that on the one hand, online platforms possess technical infrastructure that can calculate, datafy, and commodify visibility; on the other hand, wherever visibility is at stake, one can find individual and collective practices that attempt to artificially manipulate and reappropriate it. Visibility is thus the battleground where platforms and cultural workers confront each other (pp. 112–113). Within this context, the authors explore how independent content creators—especially influencers—navigate the algorithmic pressures of visibility on platforms like Instagram. Mutual support groups for liking and commenting on each other's posts (also known as engagement pods) emerge as grassroots responses to platform logic. Participating in these pods does not depend on a preexistent sense of solidarity between influencers. If anything, the authors argue that the opposite is the case: it is only participation in the daily activities of the pods that can generate new bonds of solidarity, however volatile and depoliticized they might be (pp. 129–130).

In chapter 5 ("Gaming Politics"), the book distinguishes between *institutional* algorithmic politics (e.g., state-driven data governance) and *contentious* algorithmic politics (e.g., activist campaigns that hijack or reappropriate algorithms). Here, Bonini and Treré introduce the idea of *algorithmic activism*, ranging from hashtag campaigns to more strategic uses of platform affordances. They also address the ambivalence and *agnosticism* of algorithmic visibility: it can empower marginalized voices but also increase exposure to surveillance, harassment, or co-optation. The authors outline a taxonomy of three types of political engagement with algorithms (amplification, evasion, and hijacking) that emerge out the struggle to be visible. From these, the *algorithmic amplification* of visibility and popularity represents a clear issue as it stifles and poisons the possibility of genuine debate and the authentic process of participation required for democratic societies to function (p. 143). However, *algorithmic evasion* includes examples of various social actors fighting against the codes and regulations of digital platforms to have their voices heard and their messages spread (p. 147). Lastly, *algorithmic hijacking* refers to both top-down, institutional strategies that silence online dissent as well as the tactics used by activists to reclaim online spaces for their own narratives. Here, the authors emphasize that algorithmic hijacking is not merely related to hashtags but extends into other devices and practices (p. 153).

One of the book's greatest strengths lies in its conceptual clarity. The framework of algorithmic agency (tactical and strategic) combined with moral economies, offers a robust lens through which to interpret the contested space between users and platforms. Rather than fall into dichotomies such as compliance versus resistance, the authors highlight the recursive interplay between human intention and machine logic. They also challenge the assumption that resistance must be conscious, ideological, or organized. Instead, *Algorithms of Resistance* captures a range of tactics—improvised, morally ambiguous, often born of necessity.

Another strength is the book's methodological approach. Its multilingual digital ethnography spans Italy, Mexico, China, and beyond, introducing much-needed geographical and linguistic diversity into a literature often dominated by Anglo-American contexts. The commitment to ethical fieldwork (e.g., anonymizing chat groups, codeveloping data protocols with participants) further enhances the credibility of their research.

Despite these strengths, the book occasionally underplays the structural asymmetries underpinning the platform economy. While everyday resistance is undoubtedly significant, it often unfolds within tightly constrained spaces where surveillance, extractivism, and inequality remain entrenched. While Bonini and Treré avoid romanticizing agency, a more sustained engagement with feminist STS (science and technology studies) or theories of racial capitalism could have broadened the book's critical scope—an omission the authors have since addressed in a recent interview (Bonini & Treré, 2025).

The discussion of moral economies, while generative, raises further questions. For instance, how do users' moral economies evolve in response to increased algorithmic literacy? Under what conditions do they challenge or internalize platform values? These questions could be addressed in future research building on this book.

In conclusion, *Algorithms of Resistance* makes a vital contribution to platform studies by recentering the human actor in digital environments too often seen as governed solely by algorithms. While it aligns with critiques offered by Zuboff's (2019) *Surveillance Capitalism* and van Dijck and colleagues' (2018) *The Platform Society*, Bonini and Treré shift the focus toward bottom-up practices of adaptation, negotiation, and resistance. They avoid framing users as either helpless data subjects or heroic disruptors, instead offering a more realistic portrayal of how people "do things with algorithms" (p. 49)—bending, gaming, appropriating, or simply coping with them.

For scholars of communication, digital media, labor, and activism, this book is essential reading. It not only advances a more granular understanding of algorithmic power but also gestures toward a research agenda attuned to the creativity, contradictions, and contested moralities of life under platform capitalism. In an era increasingly mediated by algorithmic infrastructures, *Algorithms of Resistance* is a timely and indispensable resource.

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