

Finding Closure: Epistemic Rent and the Exploitation of Interpretation

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Abstract: This paper examines how digital platforms reorganise the circulation of meaning. It argues that platform infrastructures systematically privilege interpretations that minimise cognitive effort and maximise transmissibility, thus transforming epistemic closure into a site of rent extraction and differential value appropriation. By introducing the concepts of interpretive friction and epistemic rent, the paper shows how platforms function as rentier capitalists: they privatise the gains of accelerated meaning-making while socialising the costs of contextualisation, verification, and sustained ambiguity. The paper points out how the resulting closure economy represents a structural deskilling of interpretive labour under platform capitalism.

Keywords: closure economy, epistemic rent, interpretive labour, interpretive friction, circulation.

Consider the screenshot of a headline on X, the clipped video on TikTok, the reposted quote on Instagram, the forwarded message on Telegram. What those instances point to is that public knowledge increasingly circulates as fragments detached from the contexts that would ordinarily stabilise their meaning (Davis and Jurgenson 2014): a recent Pew Research Center study (2026) finds that 76% of adults aged 18-29 get news from social media, with 70% encountering political content incidentally on short-form visual platforms; screenshot-style content is more likely to be shared than direct links to source articles (Guess, Nagler and Tucker 2019); and finally platform infrastructures tend to privilege easily consumable, rapidly intelligible units over denser, contextualised texts (Bucher 2018).

In this respect, this paper poses a central research question: How do platform infrastructures reorganise interpretive activities, and what are the economic implications of this reorganisation for rent appropriation? While journalism has consistently relied on condensation and framing to produce and circulate knowledge (Entman 1993; Lippmann 1922), platform mediation intensifies and reorganises this tendency to a qualitatively salient degree. I claim that knowledge is increasingly routed through infrastructures optimised for speed, engagement, and scalability, so that those forms of interpretation of reality that minimise cognitive effort and maximise transmissibility acquire a structural advantage in circulation and platform monetisation.

As Rosa (2013) maintains, late modern capitalist societies are increasingly driven by a triple tendency towards acceleration: a circular logic of technological acceleration

(e.g. faster transport, communication, and production); the acceleration of social change (e.g. shorter half-lives of practices and institutions); and the acceleration of the pace of life, which is inscribed into platform architectures. Algorithmic feeds, autoplay, and infinite scroll are all materialisations of capital's demand to compress (labour) time and eliminate any deceleration—including the time needed for contextualised, rich and nuanced interpretation.

I conceptualise this regime as a closure economy, which is defined as the convergence of two logics of closure: *epistemic* closure, i.e. the stabilisation of meaning into coherent explanatory frames that closes the horizons of possible interpretations; and *circulatory* closure, i.e. the formatting of content into modular, self-contained, rapidly transmissible units that operate as a closed loop.

When these two logics align, closure itself becomes economically profitable for epistemic rentiers such as platforms. That is because platform capitalism reorganises the circulation conditions under which interpretive labour occurs, enabling the differential appropriation of surplus value through accelerated epistemic throughput, while externalising the labour required for contextualisation, verification, and sustained ambiguity.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, it conceptualises interpretive labour and introduces the notion of interpretive friction as a structural condition of mediated communication; it elaborates epistemic rent as a mechanism of rent extraction; and it provides empirical grounding for these theoretical claims. Second, it develops the concept of closure in its epistemic and circulatory dimensions, showing how their alignment under platform capitalism represents a form of real subsumption of interpretation. It concludes by outlining a politics of epistemic circulation that contests the infrastructural conditions through which meanings are stabilised and circulated.

1. Interpretive Labour, Circulatory Friction and the Appropriation of Epistemic Rent

While contemporary scholarship has frequently described the transformation of mediated public knowledge as an epistemic crisis marked by misinformation, polarisation, and declining trust in institutions (Benkler, Faris and Roberts 2018; Pennycook and Rand 2019), thus pointing to cognitive and ideological dynamics, I intend to look at the infrastructural conditions that shape how knowledge claims circulate and acquire economic relevance. In this sense, this section shifts the attention from the content of belief to the conditions of interpretation—and from there to the extraction of rent from interpretive activity.

The conditions of possibility for interpretation rely on the cognitive and contextual work required by users/audiences to stabilise meaning in mediated environments. This includes the cognitive activity of recognising genre conventions, reconstructing missing context, evaluating credibility cues, comparing fragments, tolerating ambiguity, and assigning provisional closure. Such interpretive labour is not a natural or automatic process. It is rather a socially learned, historically variable capacity that requires energy, time, and attention, which makes it a primary terrain of struggle for control over the so-

called general intellect (Lazzarato 1996; Hardt and Negri 2004; Virno 2004; Berardi 2009).

Interpretive labour foregrounds the qualitative process by which meaning itself is produced and stabilised through reconstructing context, resolving ambiguity, evaluating credibility, and integrating fragments into coherent frames. Platforms increasingly optimise the conditions under which this activity is performed by shaping its costs, distribution, and forms. The concept of interpretive labour thus captures a specific dimension of value realisation concerned with the form and cost of meaning-making, which has been undertheorised in both media studies and political economy.

This conceptualisation builds on, but also departs from, the existing lineage from Smythe (1977) to Terranova (2000). On the one hand, Smythe's audience commodity captures the quantity of attention as a measurable output of media consumption (Smythe 1977); on the other, Terranova's free labour captures the productive dimension of cultural work.

The contribution of the concept of interpretive labour is to foreground the process by which meaning itself is produced and stabilised as a terrain of rent extraction and struggle.

Marx (1976) defined labour power as the capacity to work, which is sold by workers to capitalists in exchange for a wage. In the context of platform capitalism, while (most) users are not formally employed, they perform unpaid activities incorporated into both platform accumulation and circulation processes, including interpretive labour. This is not wage-labour in the traditional sense, but it is a purposeful expenditure of human capacity that contributes to capital accumulation and rent extraction (Fuchs 2014). Interpretive labour is thus a specific modality of what Tiziana Terranova (2000) called "free labour": the unpaid activity of making cultural and informational resources productive.

In a context of platform capitalism, this distinction becomes analytically significant. Platforms extract rent by mediating access to users, data, and infrastructural capacities (Andrejevic 2011; Fuchs 2014; Srnicek 2017; Zuboff 2019), which is frequently conceptualised as a form of rent, whereby platforms control the conditions of access to circulation and monetise user activity indirectly (Langley and Leyshon 2017; Birch 2020).

However, most analyses of platform rent focus on access or data as the scarce assets. I argue that the interpretive form of content is an equally important asset over which platforms exercise control, enabling them to secure differential rents from the accelerated circulation of meaning.

1.1. Epistemic Rent: Attention, Data and Epistemic Extraction

Based on the discussion so far, it is useful to distinguish epistemic rent from adjacent conceptualisations in the critical political economy of platforms. Epistemic rent concerns the infrastructural privileging of specific forms of interpretation that minimise interpretive costs and maximise transmissibility. Platforms do not obtain epistemic rent

because they either produce or interpret meaning. They enjoy differential rent (Marx 1981) over the infrastructures through which meaning circulates, which is based on their ability to rank, recommend, amplify, sequence or suppress.

Several distinctions are worth emphasising. First, attention rent refers to the portion of surplus value extracted from capturing and retaining user time within platform environments. This is the familiar logic of the attention economy: time on site, scroll depth, click-through rates, and the endless circulation of contributions that Dean (2009) identifies as characteristic of communicative capitalism. Attention rent depends on the quantity of user activity—how much time users spend on platforms. Second, data rent (Zuboff 2019) refers to the portion of surplus value extracted from the collection and commodification of user data, understood as raw material for surveillance capitalism. Data rent depends on the quantity and predictive worth of behavioural traces—how much data can be collected and how accurately it can be used to predict future behaviour.

Epistemic rent, by contrast, is extracted from the mode of interpretation that circulates most efficiently. Thus, when communication is formatted in ways that minimise interpretive labour, platforms can secure differential rents from the circulation efficiencies associated with specific qualitative features of interpretive frames—their coherence, modularity, emotional resonance, and transmissibility.

Distinguishing epistemic rent from other platform-linked rents may help to explain why platforms may have a direct interest in shaping not only what users see but how they interpret it through interface design, algorithmic ranking, and the affordances of sharing and commenting.

At the same time, attention, data, and epistemic rents are not mutually exclusive. Most frequently, they coexist and reinforce each other because a low-friction piece of content (say, a short video with an emotionally charged caption) captures attention efficiently, generates data through engagement metrics, and achieves rapid interpretive closure. Epistemic rent represents the analytical category that allows us to capture this third dimension: the extraction of the portion of surplus value from the efficiency of meaning-making itself.

The value that platforms appropriate through epistemic rent is not value created by interpretive labour in the production of a new commodity. Rather, it is a portion of surplus value produced in other sectors of the economy (commodity production, service industries, etc.) that is differentially captured by platforms through their privileged control over the conditions of interpretive circulation. Thus, platforms reorganise circulation conditions in ways that accelerate engagement turnover, increase advertising efficiency, intensify data extraction, and last but not least, diminish interpretive friction.

1.2. Interpretive Friction as a Condition and Barrier to Circulation

When meaning requires extensive contextual reconstruction, i.e. interpretive labour—for instance, when an X post demands that the reader know its source, its temporal

and spatial setting, its relation to other fragments—it slows transmission and resists standardisation. Conversely, when interpretive labour tends to be minimised—for instance when a fragment can be immediately understood and easily reshared—the knowledge produced circulates more efficiently and becomes more valuable within platform infrastructures. To make sense of this context, I introduce the notion of interpretive friction.

By interpretive friction, I refer to the structural conditions that make interpretive labour socially necessary and therefore define its use-value. Interpretive friction describes the degree to which meaning depends on contextual reconstruction and cognitive effort, as opposed to being immediately extractable from a given fragment. Such friction emerges from factors such as genre ambiguity, missing context, semiotic density, and informational complexity. While friction also depends on individual cognitive circumstances, it is also a relational property of mediated communication shaped by socio-technical arrangements such as platform capitalism.

In this context, friction tends to appear as inefficiency, as a barrier to throughput. Conversely, platform capitalism, which is optimised for engagement and scalability, systematically privileges low-friction forms of interpretation that can be rapidly processed, measured, and circulated. Pariser's (2011) analysis of the "filter bubble", in which algorithmic personalisation narrows the range of information users encounter, has already pointed out this dynamic of algorithmic curation. However, while Pariser emphasises personalisation, the present paper extends this insight by showing how algorithmic curation privileges interpretive forms characterised by low friction and rapid epistemic stabilisation.

In doing so, platforms reconfigure interpretive labour as a logistical problem: not simply a matter of understanding but of throughput (Cowen 2014; Neilson and Rossiter 2012). The language of logistics is apt here: platforms treat meaning as a commodity to be moved, stored, and delivered, with friction as the enemy of velocity.

The identification of this logic finds an important antecedent in Marx's (1978) analysis of circulation in *Capital*, Volume II. For Marx, the circulation of capital is not merely a neutral exchange of commodities but a series of metamorphoses ($M-C-M'$) that must occur smoothly and rapidly for capital to realise value generated at the moment of production.

These are metamorphoses that cannot be taken for granted. Any interruption or delay in circulation—whether due to geographic distance, transport bottlenecks, or informational asymmetries—appears as a barrier to valorisation. Consequently, capital has an inherent tendency to "annihilate space by time" (Marx 1973, 539) and to overcome every obstacle that impedes the turnover time of capital. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes that capital "drives beyond every spatial barrier" and strives to "create the material conditions of production and circulation [...] to conquer the whole earth for its market" (Marx 1973, 539-540).

While Marx was concerned with the circulation of physical products, the same imperative may apply to the circulation of meaning under platform capitalism. Interpretive

friction operates as a barrier to the rapid turnover of knowledge claims as commodities. Platforms tend to internalise this capital logic: they continuously develop new affordances (autoplay, infinite scroll, algorithmic amplification) to compress or eliminate the time required for contextual reconstruction. Accordingly, low-friction content tends to circulate faster, reduce the turnover time of epistemic practices, and thereby increase the potential for epistemic rent. In short, the drive to lift any barrier to circulation represents the digital expression of capital's oldest impulse.

Consider a breaking news event—say, a political assassination. A high-friction piece of content, such as a long-form investigative article contextualising the event within decades of history and contradictory evidence, requires significant interpretive labour and circulates slowly. A low-friction counterpart—a 15-second video clip captioned “HE WAS TARGETED” with an angry emoji—stabilises meaning almost immediately as outrage, circulates rapidly, and generates high engagement.

1.3. Real and Open Subsumption of Interpretation

The management of interpretive friction and the reorganisation of interpretation under platform architectures illuminate what Marx (1976) termed the real subsumption of labour under capital. In Marx's account, the shift to real subsumption marks the moment when capital moves beyond merely taking hold of an existing labour process (what he calls formal subsumption) and begins actively and fundamentally transforming it—reorganising the very methods, pace, and social character of work to maximise surplus extraction. Where industrial capitalism achieved real subsumption through the factory system, the division of labour, and the deskilling of craft production into repetitive tasks, platform capitalism achieves it through the infrastructural reorganisation of communication itself.

The real subsumption of interpretation does not imply that interpretive labour becomes productive labour in the strict classical sense. Rather, it indicates that interpretation as a social activity is increasingly reorganised according to capitalist imperatives of efficiency, quantification, acceleration, and scalability.

The subsumption of interpretation reorganises interpretive practices according to the imperatives of capital accumulation, while epistemic rent indicates the specific mechanism through which platforms differentially appropriate surplus value from this reorganised circulatory environment. Recent Marxian analyses of digital platforms have similarly emphasised the need to understand contemporary forms of subsumption beyond narrowly industrial paradigms, focusing instead on how platform capitalism reorganises social activity through infrastructural mediation, labour market dependence (Colombini 2023; Murray 2004) and data colonialism (Couldry and Mejias 2019).

However, to understand the specificity of the subsumption of interpretive labour under contemporary digital capitalism, a more dynamic reading is needed. Rather than treating subsumption as an endpoint, a final state in which labour is fully and finally incorporated into capital's logic, we need to reframe subsumption as “open subsumptive relations” (Briziarelli 2024). Through this perspective, instead of being a one-way

process of incorporation, subsumption should be better understood as an ongoing field of struggle in which labour is never fully captured, and capital's control is always partial, incomplete, and subject to antagonism. The "openness" side of subsumption refers both to the ever-expanding frontiers of capital's colonisation of new spheres of life (including interpretation itself) and to the generative, unpredictable counter-movements that emerge from within those spheres.

Thus, when it comes to real subsumption of interpretation, I describe an unfinished condition and an open, contested process. That is because, on the one hand, platform architectures reorganise interpretive labour. On the other hand, despite all that, users' interpretive labour can diverge, and users can resist, hack, or refuse the terms of their subsumption. In other words, the moment of production and the moment of reception do not always match (Hall 1980). Thus, users may produce counter-narratives, add critical context in comment threads, engage in collective fact-checking, or simply log off. The real subsumption of interpretation is therefore not total but tendential—a structural bias rather than an iron law.

While subsumption may be relatively open, this process of subsumption exerts pressure by operating at a level of abstraction that Moishe Postone's (1993) work helps us to grasp. Alongside his account of concrete domination, Postone sheds light on abstract domination: a form of social power exercised by impersonal, quasi-objective structures that people constitute through their own activities. In this respect, Postone's analysis shows that abstract labour, abstract time and value become the impersonal mediators of social life.

In this respect, the concrete, qualitative, context-rich labour of interpretation is systematically abstracted into a measure of transmissibility and engagement. A user's specific act of understanding—reading a long article, comparing sources, tolerating ambiguity—is reduced to a quantifiable metric: a like, a share, a comment. In doing so, the layered texture of interpretation is subsumed under abstract forms such as the engagement score. As platforms train algorithms to maximise this abstract metric, they effectively privilege interpretations that are most easily reducible precisely to low-friction, highly modular closures.

In this sense, epistemic rent constitutes the economic correlative of this abstract domination: platforms need not command interpreters directly; instead, they structure the environment so that the pursuit of engagement and economic worth systematically privileges low-friction outputs.

What its openness and abstraction point to is that the real subsumption of interpretation is not merely a technological or economic process but also a social and political one: it tends to reshape the very capacities through which people make sense of their world, and it does so through a logic that is both impersonal and contested. The result may be the tendency towards deskilling—a structural bias in favour of low-friction meaning-making that operates behind the backs of users, even as they themselves are the ones who perform the labour of closure.

1.4. Tendencies toward Low-Friction Circulation

The theoretical argument advanced above is consistent with a growing body of empirical research on digital platforms and content circulation documenting how digital infrastructures reorganise cultural production, circulation, and visibility through platform-specific logics of governance and monetisation (Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck 2022). This brief section surveys several relevant and more specific tendencies towards low-friction epistemes.

For instance, Vosoughi, Roy and Aral (2018) analysed the diffusion of verified true and false news stories on Twitter between 2006 and 2017 and documented how false stories spread “farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information” (1147). Importantly, they attribute this pattern to the false news’ capacity to evoke emotions such as surprise and outrage, thereby encouraging users to share it more readily.

More broadly, a growing body of research suggests that commercial platforms systematically privilege content capable of generating rapid engagement. Brady et al. (2017) found that each additional moral-emotional word—particularly those expressing outrage—increases the diffusion of political messages on social media by approximately 20 per cent. Likewise, Boczkowski and Papacharissi (2018) document how emotionally charged, simplified, and highly shareable forms of political communication, including Trump’s memes and other low-context formats, acquire systematic circulatory advantages within commercial platform environments.

These dynamics reflect a broader infrastructural logic in which engagement, rather than informational quality or deliberative value, becomes the primary criterion governing visibility. Consistent with this interpretation, Ferenc Huszár et al. (2022) point out how Twitter’s algorithm amplified content from conservative outlets more than from liberal ones, while arguing that the underlying mechanism was not ideological preference per se but optimisation for user engagement.

Evidence of a closure economy also appears in the increasing circulation of decontextualised forms of communication. For instance, Inwood and Zappavigna (2026) show that screenshot-based content is more likely to be shared than direct links to source material, partly because screenshots present information as immediately intelligible and self-contained, reducing the need for contextual verification. Similarly, Guess, Nagler and Tucker (2019) found that most news exposure on social media occurs incidentally through algorithmically curated feeds rather than through active information seeking. In fact, users rarely clicked through to the original sources.

These tendencies suggest that platforms tend to systematically privilege content that minimises interpretive labour and maximises transmissibility. Part of my argument rests precisely on the fact that such a privileging is not merely an epistemic bias, but an economic strategy: by optimising for transmissibility, platforms intensify the realisation of advertising value and secure differential rents from the circulatory environment.

2. Closure: Epistemic and Circulatory Logics

In this section, I intend to provide the analytical link between interpretive labour and epistemic rent by shedding light on the convergence between the stabilisation of meaning and its optimisation for circulation within platform infrastructures. I use the term closure to describe this convergence of conditions for low-friction interpretive labour and high modularity conducive to rapid circulation.

Closure operates in two analytically distinct but increasingly interdependent senses: as an *epistemic* logic and as a *circulatory* logic. These two senses should be distinguished carefully, as the slippage between them can create confusion. Epistemically, closure refers to the tendency and process of stabilisation of meaning into a coherent explanatory frame, which operates by reducing ambiguity and assigning agency, causality, and significance. To be sure, closure in this sense is not inherently problematic; it is a necessary condition of understanding (Hall 1980). For instance, journalistic practices have long relied on forms of epistemic closure to render complex events intelligible—for example, through framing, narrative condensation, and the privileging of coherent storylines (e.g. Entman 1993; Galtung and Ruge 1965; Tuchman 1978). Epistemic closure thus describes a general feature of mediated communication: the instrumental tendency to resolve indeterminacy by narrowing the range of possible interpretations so that two interlocutors, or a media consumer and a media producer, can coproduce meaning.

As a circulatory logic, closure refers to the tendency to format meanings into units that can be efficiently transmitted across networks. This closure is not about understanding but rather about logistical optimisation implemented through modular, rapidly intelligible, and decontextualised forms of content (Jenkins 2006; Van Dijck, Poell and de Waal 2018). Circulatory closure describes the formatting of content in ways that approach the status of a closed loop—self-contained units of meaning that circulate without requiring external reference, elaboration, or contextual reconstruction.

Importantly, what characterises contemporary platform environments is the systematic alignment of these two logics. While epistemic closure has long existed in media practices, it did not historically coincide so directly with circulatory efficiency. The infrastructural design of platforms—e.g. algorithmic ranking systems, engagement metrics, feed architectures, and interface conventions—actively privileges this convergence.

To make it concrete, let us consider a typical TikTok video. This clip appears in a vertically scrolling feed, typically presented without comprehensive context, typically time-truncated, and embedded within an interface that is optimised for rapid response (such as likes, shares, comments). To interpret the clip in a high-friction manner would require a user to reconstruct its context: for instance, identifying its source, verifying its completeness, situating it within a broader sequence of events, and tolerating interpretive ambiguity while doing so. However, the design of the platform discourages this labour by offering features such as autoplay, infinite scroll, the minimisation of

metadata, and the privileging of immediate engagement. They all serve to incentivise rapid, low-effort interpretation.

Platforms do not impose a single interpretation; rather, they privilege interpretive forms that achieve rapid stabilisation under conditions of minimal interpretive friction. As a result, the interpretations most likely to circulate are not necessarily the most accurate or contextually grounded, but those most easily routable within platform infrastructures. Content that condenses ambiguity into emotionally explicit stances such as outrage, confirmation, and moral judgment acquires circulatory advantage because it can be rapidly interpreted, shared, and amplified.

Overall, closure describes a socio-technical process produced through both platform architectures and user activity. That is because users stabilise meaning through captioning, commenting, sharing, and contextual framing, thereby reducing interpretive friction for subsequent viewers and increasing circulatory efficiency. Platforms appropriate the benefits of this accelerated circulation while externalising the labour of contextualisation, verification, and critical interpretation onto users and other actors outside the platform itself. In this sense, epistemic rent follows the classical logic of rentiership: privatising gains while socialising interpretive costs.

2.1. The Closure Economy

Having distinguished the epistemic and circulatory dimensions of closure, I now turn to their critical intersection: the closure economy, an economic regime in which platforms appropriate differential rents through infrastructural control over the efficient stabilisation and circulation of meaning.

The closure economy emerges when platform infrastructures systematically align epistemic stabilisation with circulatory optimisation. Under these conditions, interpretive forms that minimise ambiguity and reduce contextual demands acquire structural advantages within platform circulation because what matters is not the substantive content of a claim, but its compatibility with accelerated engagement and routable transmission.

First, algorithmic amplification systematically favours content that generates rapid engagement responses such as outrage, affirmation, or moral judgment, especially where such responses require minimal contextual reconstruction; by contrast, interpretive forms demanding sustained attention or ambiguity tolerance are disadvantaged. Second, the closure economy is characterised by a temporal compression that accelerates the turnover of epistemic circulation, thus systematically eroding temporal intervals (Crary 2013). This is enacted through features such as autoplay, infinite scroll, and algorithmic feeds.

Finally, while the circulation of decontextualised fragments tends to increase transmissibility, it shifts the burden of contextual reconstruction onto users, thus externalising interpretive costs while maximising circulatory efficiency.

The outcome of this is that the closure economy tends to deepen what Georg Lukács (1971) called reification: the transformation of social relations into things. In the

closure economy, the interpretive frames that circulate most efficiently appear as natural, as “just the way things are”, rather than as products of collective labour, algorithmic infrastructure, and platform governance. The contingent and contested nature of meaning-making is obscured, and the specific interpretive labour required to produce these frames is rendered invisible.

Conclusion: Developing a Politics of Epistemic Circulation

As Tarleton Gillespie (2010) insists, one of the key elements that platforms tend to externalise is politics. We must push back against that tendency by reappropriating interpretative work and challenging the extraction of epistemic rent as a terrain of confrontation. The alignment of epistemic and circulatory logics forms the basis of an economy of closure—an economic regime that systematically privileges low-friction interpretations and externalises the costs of contextualisation. The broader outcome of such a dynamic is the restructuring of the very conditions of knowledge production in ways that benefit capital at the expense of the collective critical capacity needed both to enable democratic processes and to sustain the struggle against capital.

My reasoning here resonates powerfully with Shoshana Zuboff’s (2019) notion of an “epistemic coup”: the unilateral accumulation of knowledge about human behaviour, marked by major asymmetries in knowledge between platform owners and users, chaos in the information sphere, and the systematic privileging of platforms’ claims to truth and relevance over other forms of knowledge production. The closure economy described in this paper can provide important insights into the mechanism through which this coup seems to be executed: by systematically rewarding low-friction interpretations and externalising the labour of contextualisation, platforms do not merely redistribute knowledge—they restructure the very conditions under which anything can be known.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the argument concerns dominant accumulation tendencies under commercial platform capitalism, not all digital infrastructures equally. The closure economy describes a structural bias, which can be resisted and counteracted. For instance, Wikipedia and Mastodon cultivate interpretive friction through collective editorial processes, source verification, and sustained deliberation.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to the debates on the subsumptive dynamics tied to platformed and capitalist conditions of communication and social life as a whole. In fact, beyond its analytical contribution, the concept of a closure economy raises broader political and normative questions. If platforms systematically privilege low-friction interpretations, what happens to forms of knowledge that require sustained attention, contextual reconstruction, or interpretive ambiguity? A politics of epistemic circulation must therefore confront the unequal distribution of interpretive conditions as well as the chance to take advantage of potential bottlenecks.

From this perspective, the challenge is to rethink the infrastructural organisation of meaning-making under platform capitalism. The closure economy is a structural feature of platform capitalism’s drive to subsume every dimension of social life—including

interpretation itself—under the logic of accumulation. Thus, what would it mean to design platforms that preserve or even cultivate interpretive friction? Such a redesign would need to take place at different levels: individual, technical, and institutional. While speculative, possible strategies include mandatory source linking, pre-share waiting periods, and interface features such as “find source” buttons. These would not replace low-friction options but would provide alternative pathways for higher-friction engagement.

I am aware that such measures would not eliminate the contradictions of platform capitalism but could begin to reappropriate the means of meaning-making from epistemic rentiers. They would also face significant resistance from platform owners, for whom low-friction is a source of profit. The politics of epistemic circulation is therefore a politics of class conflict: between those who benefit from the deskilling of interpretation and those who suffer its consequences.

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