LSE Media and Communications PhD Symposium 2014

Power in Media and Communications: Change or Continuity?

5 June, 2014 | 09:00–19:30
Graham Wallas Room | 5th floor Old Building

Schedule

9:00	Opening remarks	Bart Cammaerts
9:15	Keynote speech	Nick Couldry

9:45	Internet Cultures	
	Chair:	Svenja Ottovordemgentschenfelde

9:45	Paula Kiel – *"Exploring the digital afterlife"*
10:00	Emma Dahlin – *"Doing and being television audience: Ontology in online practice"*
10:15	Amalia Cardenas – "New trust brokers: Theorizing the changing nature of trust on the Internet"
10:30	Heather Ford – *"Power and the representation of knowledge in the age of peer production: The case of Wikipedia"*
10:45	30 minutes of Q&A

11:15	Coffee break

11:30	Media Freedom and Regulation	
	Chair:	Nora Kroeger

11:30	Puay-Hoe Chuah – *"Change or continuity in political communication control? A comparison of 4 Sinic societies"*
11:45	David Hyungwhan Kim – *"Public television after regulatory convergence: The South Korean PSB case"*
12:00	David Reader – *"Deciding who decides: Is Ofcom best-placed to rule on UK Media ownership?"*
12:15	Stephen Dunne – *"A power shift? The effectiveness of legislatively underpinned, independent press regulation"*
12:30	30 minutes of Q&A

13:00	Lunch break

14:00	**Ideology, Community, and Representation**
	Chair: Meagan Zurn

14:00	Elinor Carmi –*"Noise (bio)politics"*
14:15	Fabien Cante – *"Place-making power? Conceptualizing radio as infrastructure of locality"*
14:30	Cesar Jimenez-Martinez – *"Fractured Brazil: The struggle for the image of a nation in the age of new visibility"*
14:45	Angelos Kissas – *"The role media in the exercise of political power"*
15:00	30 minutes of Q&A

15:30	Coffee break

15:45	**Journalism, Participation, and Production**
	Chair: Brooks DeCillia

15:45	Holly Steel – *"Curated witnessing: Obscured visions and uncertain alliances in news coverage of Syria's civil war"*
16:00	Glenda Cooper – *"Hurricanes and hashtags: How the media and NGOs treat citizens' voices online in humanitarian emergencies"*
16:15	Matilda Andersson – *"From transmission to participation: A case study of democratic debate at the BBC African services"*
16:30	16:45 Antje Glück – *"A journalistic deployment of emotionality,: A cross national comparison*
16:45	30 minutes of Q&A

17:15	**Reception** in Old Building 3.21
19:30	

All presentations take place in the Graham Wallas Room (5th floor Old Building) at LSE.

Abstracts

Paula Kiel, LSE
"Exploring the digital afterlife"

Communication technologies have always been regarded as beholding the possibility of communicating with the dead. Throughout history, theories of media and communications have dealt with the symbolic ways in which death is manifested, reproduced and made present by communication technologies, enabling different forms of communication with death and the dead. Contemporary communication technologies seem to actually enable communication with the dead, thus bringing up new questions regarding this relationship between communication technologies and death. New websites allow you not only to manage your digital assets after you die, but even to send Facebook, Twitter and email messages to your loved ones from the afterlife. These extreme possibilities point to questions regarding not only the relationship between communication technologies and death but also on the general context of this moment in time in which these are the communication technologies that are being developed. In this project I would first like to address the ways in which new communication technologies shape our relationship to death – our understanding of it, its social role and even its basic definition. Secondly, I would like to offer a contextualized general overview of the time in history in which these communication technologies are presented and the specific affordances that are brought into play through them. As the relationship between death and communication technologies has been at the core of media and communication studies, I believe that looking into the new affordances and practices related to death brought by new communication technologies, could add to our general understanding of contemporary communication technologies and society.

Emma Dahlin, Stockholm University
"Doing and being television audiences: Ontology in online practices"

While media audience literature has emphasized that audiences are complex social formations of interacting groups and individuals - it is not clear on an ontological level what and where audiences are, nor what such interactions consist of. The aim is to explore how practices online are enacted to do and be audiences. By exploring audience activity, this study explores what 'audiences' might be. Following the turn to ontology in Science and Technology Studies, the study focuses on the conceptualization of audiences in media research, and particularly on the understanding of practices of audiences in the production of ontology online. How do online audiences enact audience?

Examples from an ethnography illustrate how audiences are enacted in multiple ways. A philosophical approach is taken, illustrating by snapshot stories from the empirical material. Practices are the object of study, with new explanations to audiences' practices sought. The study will contribute to an increased understanding of what constitutes an audience. Theorizing online 'reality-in-practice', the study contributes to recent debates in the field of media audience studies. The study also provides, to studies of online practices, with a detailed account of audience practices of a particular forum.

Amalia Cardenas, LSE
"New trust brokers: Theorizing the changing nature of trust on the Internet"

Trust has always been important social oil for individuals and societies. It is one of the fundamental ways in which people establish relationships and one of the critical factors that helps relationships continue and develop. While offline theories of trust are useful for accounting for issue of trust in the early phases of development of the Internet, new issues are emerging with the growing use of data to quantify trustworthiness by the new brokers of trust. The objective of this paper is to establish the state of the existing theoretical literature on trust, offline

and online, and offer ideas about concepts that can be mobilized to theorize new issues that are recently developing in online trust. In the process, I identify three phases of the evolution of trust online and highlight some of the issues at stake and the theoretical concepts for approaching them. For each distinct phase of development on the Internet, I identify the components of trust and provide insight into how trust forms. I also provide the corresponding complexities that each phase presents, and end with a discussion of new challenges emerging as a result of the growth of big data, and the increasing use of algorithms to sort, calculate and make decisions for us.

Heather Ford, University of Oxford
"Power and the representation of knowledge in the age of peer production: The case of Wikipedia"

Wikipedia is generally seen as David to big media's Goliath. When they named 'you' person of the year, Time Magazine wrote that Wikipedia (and other 'Web 2.0 platforms') are 'about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing' (Time, 2006). This may be too simplistic a view of how power operates in the new media ecosystem. Far from 'the many' standing united against an old order, there is in practice a plurality of perspectives about whether and how ideas, events, people and places should be represented on Wikipedia. Boundaries between what is considered encyclopaedic vs. unencyclopaedic, published vs. unpublished sources, paid vs. unpaid editing are categories that are constantly being fought over, with changes in the categorisation of knowledge constantly defining new work practices (and vice versa).

My research examines case studies of controversy within Wikipedia that highlight the ways in which what constitutes acceptable knowledge is being continually contested. The aim is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of how power operates within the highly mediated socio-technical space represented by Wikipedia and whether this signals a movement away from historical understandings of power and representation, or whether these categorisation practices merely represent a continuity of historical struggles over what constitutes legitimate, publishable knowledge.

Puay-Hoe Chua, Royal Holloway (University of London)
"Change or continuity in political communication control? A comparison study of 4 Sinic societies with different levels of media freedom"

The Arab Spring, revolutions of different colours and occupy movements in cities all over the world have all attributed the internet as a key factor in fuelling these calls for change. The internet is supposed to be a game-changer in the distribution of power. However, in China and Singapore, two countries with high internet penetration but low level of media freedom; it appears to be business as usual. How has these two states retained their tight control over the communication landscape? Why do the people in these societies tolerate the lack of media freedom? Or are they ignorant of the control despite changes to the communication landscape afforded by the internet?

Most studies in political communication are conducted in the Western context and from the deliberative democracy perspective with an emphasis on the need for media freedom and an inclusive public sphere that promote and support democracy. Departing from this normative approach, this work-in-progress comparison study of 4 sinic societies (China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan) with different levels of media freedom plans to empirically examine individuals' perceptions of political communication control and its impact on perceptions of political legitimacy.

David Hyungwhan Kim, City University London
"Public television after regulatory convergence: The South Korean PSB case"

This thesis is about the power relationship between government-regulator and public service broadcasting's TV channels in South Korea. It especially focuses on broadcasting-telecommunication sector's regulatory convergence as a turning point of the power relationship. After the establishment of political democracy, South Korean public TV seemed to be gradually emancipated from political power since 1980s. But the establishment of converged regulator, Korean Communications Commissions (KCC; built in 2008), enabled the government and their

neo-liberal economic ideology to overtly interrupt the public TV again. It happened mainly through biased appointment procedure, set for the advantage of the President and his ruling party. Moreover, as KCC is established as a government institution, unlike former broadcasting regulator, it funtioned as merely the supporter of government policy. That is, although KCC is obliged by law to secure various policy principles, it has been inclined to economic and competition principle under neo-liberal government, while marginalising political and socio-cultural policy principles, such as political independence and cultural integration, which were regarded as core subjects in traditional broadcasting policy.

David Reader, University of East Anglia
"'Deciding who decides': Is Ofcom best-placed to rule on UK media ownership?"

In February 2014, the House of Lords Select Committee published its Report on Media Plurality, within which it makes a number of proposals relating to media ownership reform in the United Kingdom. Among the most notable is the proposal to grant decision-making powers to the media regulator, Ofcom, in merger assessments raising potential media plurality concerns. This decision-making role is currently performed by the Secretary of State but a number of recent controversies, most notably in relation to the NewsCorp/BSkyB transaction, have called into question the ability of politicians to undertake this role in an unbiased manner.

This paper seeks to scrutinise the ability of Ofcom to carry out this decision-making role impartially. It puts forward the proposition that, in spite of the notable benefits afforded by its expertise and group decision-making, Ofcom's exposure to the risk of regulatory capture is equal to that of the Secretary of State. As such, rather than seeking to replace the role of politicians in media public interest mergers, efforts should be made to safeguard ministers from the undue pressures that are ripe within the media industry.

Stephen Dunne, Dublin City University
"A power shift? The effectiveness of legislatively underpinned, independent press regulation"

Power within established systems of press regulation has largely resided with the media, with some rare dalliances with public control. The credibility of such press accountability mechanisms has suffered in recent years, not least in the wake of the hearings and the report of Lord Justice Leveson. In his report, Justice Leveson proposed an incentivisedsystem of voluntary, independent self-regulation underpinned by legislation. The recommendations have been criticised and ignored by the majority of the British press establishment. In Ireland, however, indigenous and British-owned publications have long since accepted a similar regulatory framework. The Office of the Press Ombudsman and the Press Council of Ireland is an incentivised, voluntary and independent accountability mechanism recognised in Irish law. My research is examining if the Irish case is providing an effective, credible and consistent system of media accountability for the press industry and for the public in Ireland. It will assess whether regulatory power has truly been redistributed or if Irish press regulation simply masquerades as a manifestation of already established self-regulatory systems. The research is also examining if Irish press regulation encourages greater self-regulatory awareness and if it could be replicated elsewhere.

Elinor Carmi, Goldsmiths College (University of London)
"Noise (bio)politics"

This presentation will go through the archaeology of noise and the way it was configured by Bell Laboratories. I will examine noise through Michel Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics (2007, 2008). These concepts have been primarily addressed by areas of interest such as biology, race and security because they are primarily concerned with power over biological lives. However, I intend to take this paradigm into different directions which have received little attention so far, especially by media scholars. Media technologies have become increasingly central to people's lives for the past few centuries. Therefore, I suggest

that the process of categorising information in these devices, while focusing on noise, has been a biopolitical tool that epitomises power relations in each era.

I will focus on two events that show the way Bell System formed their inventions and approach towards noise. The two events are: first, the New York City Noise Abatement Committee (NAC) in 1929 that wanted to measure various sources of noise in the city, and develop means to control and eliminate it. Second, the 1940s training programmes of Bell System's female telephone operators developed for 'good telephone usage'.

Fabien Cante, LSE
"Place-making power? Conceptualising radio as infrastructure of locality"

Asking how media "make place" provides some interesting perspectives on media power. Looking at forms of localised radio particularly in African contexts, I argue that radio's generative or productive power can be found not simply in the symbolic/discursive universe most commonly associated with media, but also in a literal "taking place" of the medium: its material presence in space, and a more or less habitual connection of sites and senses that it allows.

Focusing on the material and phenomenological dimensions of radio allows us to interrogate the infrastructural power of media: their ability to sustain and support, more or less directly, multiple processes of daily life (in this case, the process of "place" or locality). The notion of infrastructure points to the kind of power which arises out of embeddedness and stability. It suggests that media power is not always purely representational or reflexive. More crucially, it pluralises the goals and objects of media practices, moving away from a strict focus on content and voice (even if these remain centrally important), and involving producers and users together in the process of crafting media's embeddedness.

Angelos Kissas, LSE

"The role of media in the exercise of political power"

The question of media power, which actually appertains to a question of the role of media to the exercise of power, constitutes the leverage of media and communication research; there is always a question of or an insinuation to power in studies of media institutions, representations and/or audiences. As Roger Silverstone has put it: ''It is all about power, of course. In the end.'' (1999, p.143). This question, however, have been explored so far through three conceptually and methodologically different approaches to media and power and their interrelation: the media effects paradigm, in which power implied to be socially distributed linear influence of media, the ideological influence paradigm, in which power is understood as reproduction of relations of domination through their concealment in symbolic systems of media and the mediatisation paradigm, in which power is conceived as the constitution of societal process in accordance to a media logic.

Each one of these paradigms, however, by trying to address and resolve problems of the others leaves some gaps which need to be bridged. Rather than proceeding with a radically new paradigm I suggest we resynthesize some of the ideas already addressed in the existing ones. Taking as a field of work politics and political communication I am trying to explore the role of media in the constitution a) of political reality (e.g. agenda-setting, framing) not in an abstract, stimulus-response, but in a socially interested manner – as carrying with it already established asymmetries, b) of political subjectivity (e.g. personalisation, trivialisation, dramatization) as a form of self-subjection not to a media logic but to media political practices sedimented in specific institutional settings (e.g. political parties) and c) of relations of domination not only by concealing or normalising but also by unveiling already existing social asymmetries so as to be potentially substituted by new ones.

Holly Steel, University of York
"Curated witnessing: Obscured visions and uncertain alliances in news coverage of Syria's civil war"

Drawing on an analysis of curated content on news websites and interviews with journalists, this paper will examine the co-production of news texts regarding Syria's civil war and consider the implications these processes have for concepts of 'media witnessing'. With the increased availability of networked digital devices, those within the zone of conflict are able to create and distribute their own experiences, making modern conflicts more visible to global publics than ever before. As a result of this, news organisations have developed processes of social media curation as part of their coverage of events, integrating content from the ground into their coverage. These processes are particularly salient in the case of Syria's civil war, where access is restricted and social media is relied upon to cover events, potentially giving those caught up within the conflict more power to shape the news narrative. This paper will explore the selection of content in such coverage, asking whose voices are present and what scenes we are invited to witness. It will argue that whilst such processes can add coherence to fragmented scenes from the conflict, the selection only allows for a narrow form of media witnessing which privileges particular sights and sounds.

Glenda Cooper, City University London
"Hurricanes and hashtags: How the media and NGOs treat citizens' voices online in humanitarian emergencies"

Twitter, Instagram, SMS messages have entered into the defining images and texts of humanitarian disasters theoretically allowing survivors to play a role in the framing such crises. Yet research suggests both mainstream media and NGOs – whose symbiotic relationships traditionally framed such stories – have cloned and absorbed such content, restricting the voices that are heard. Issues around privacy and copyright are yet to be resolved in the mainstream media, while NGOs have turned to Western bloggers rather than beneficiaries to mediate their message.

This paper draws on around 50 semi-structured interviews with those a) whose content was used by UK mainstream media, b) journalists from the main broadcast and print outlets in the UK, and c) members of each of the 13 UK Disaster Emergency Committee aid agencies who responded to recent crises including the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake. It aims to answer the following questions: How are voices of citizens in crises being mediated and mediatised? What issues does the use of this content raise around contextual integrity of privacy? Does NGOs' engagement online allow the voices of the marginalised to emerge?

Matilda Andersson, Open University
"From transmission to participation: A case study of democratic debate at the BBC African Services"

An increasing number of broadcasters are trying to engage their audience through social media in order to increase their reach, alter their demographic profile and involve audience members to make their programmes more relevant. These audience interactions can be referred to as participatory journalism. Participatory journalism according to some can foster stronger democracy through engaging citizens in democratic debate (Deuze 2008; Gillmor 2004; Goode 2009). In this paper rather than taking the democratic function of participatory journalism for granted, I ask what implications participatory journalism actually has on democratic debate.

The purpose of this research was to understand the development and practices of participatory journalism in international broadcasting, and the implications these have for democratic debate amongst local, national and regional communities in Africa and African diasporas. The research was conducted through participant observation at the BBC African services in London where the researcher followed the production of participatory news through three case studies of a) an election, b) the launch of a new debate programme and c) through discussions about football.

Antje Glück, University of Leeds
"Journalistic deployment of emotionality:
A cross-national comparison"

Can journalists influence the framing of serious news issues via the usage of emotionalizing elements in their coverage? And does the idea of an 'emotional public sphere', introduced by scholars like Barry Richards, also translate to an emotionalization of news? This trend is observable internationally, but little research about it has been done so far.

This paper (and my Ph.D.) aims to explore this question by examining television news in two different highly competitive news markets – the United Kingdom and India. The research consists of a qualitative content analysis which investigates the representation or absence of emotions in word, image, symbol, and subsequently the '(un)emotional' discourse generated by it in television news journalism in both countries. In a second step, I aim to relate the findings to professional practices of news production and the epistemology of journalists in broadcasting organizations, to question their ideas and assumptions about an 'emotionalizing' news coverage and its relation to the principles of objectivity. This touches also notions of objectivity and subjectivity, as well as the widely differing emotion philosophies on both continents.

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