



Global Media Policy Working Group

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation in the Online Conference Papers of the
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Online Networks in the Scoring Society: the Changing Online Networking Practices Under the Impacts of the Social Credit System in China

Authors

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Abstract

Since the issuing of 2014-2020 Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (SCS) (*shehui xinyong tixi jianshe guihua gangyao*) by the State Council in 2014, the SCS has been a conspicuous example of “citizen scoring” systems (Dencik et al. 2019) that use algorithmic data analytics to assess, sort, and categorise citizens using a variety of data sets for the purpose of distributing resources, services, rewards and punishments accordingly. This research investigates the implications of the SCS for social media in China through its influence on users’ social media usage and practices.

A mixed-method of self-completion e-questionnaire and in-depth semi-structured interviews was used to probe into Chinese social media users’ perspectives and likely behavioural changes due to the SCS. 417 valid questionnaire responses were obtained from 20 December 2018 to 26 January 2019 using snowball sampling method that starts with the researcher’s contacts on WeChat, QQ and Weibo; and 47 interviews were conducted between February to April 2020 with interviewees obtained using a combination of generic purposive sampling method and snowball sampling. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and censorship on Chinese survey tools, the anonymity and voluntary participation of the subjects were strictly protected throughout the whole research.

This study finds that the SCS is likely to induce a large group of users to adapt their social media behaviours according to the requirement of the SCS regardless of their personal preferences, habits, intentions and values for the pragmatic goal of nursing their SCS scores. Users may incline to self-censor and self-discipline the content they post, “refine” online networks by deleting, estranging, alerting and filtering contacts, and modify their online shopping habit. Based on the theoretical/conceptual framework of online participation, sociality, and the political economy of social media, this thesis argues that the SCS is likely to have a negative impact on the participatory feature, social networking affordance, liberating and democratic potentials of social media and the enactment form of digital citizenship. Subjects’ likely changes of behaviours due to the SCS may also disrupt the digital business of Chinese social media platforms and cause tensions for the public-private partnership in data analytics. This thesis also presents a critical elaboration of the SCS, built on which, as well as the theoretical framework of governmentality, gamification and self-quantification, it analyses that users’ likely behaviour changes correspond to governmentality that gamification design in the SCS can induce users to internalise the benefits and necessity of the system and actively enact themselves. Exemplifying with the SCS, this thesis demonstrates possible implications of citizen scoring and

provides pointers for future studies on data analytics and citizen scoring systems in China and other countries.

Submission ID

403

Ibermedia as a collaborative space: a stakeholder analysis

Authors

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Abstract

Different countries, institutions and stakeholders have aimed to create an Ibero-American space for policy development (Arenal, 2005). The construction of a shared cultural space, among others through audiovisual policies, has been part of this ambition. The creation of an Ibero-American audiovisual market has been a long-lasting project that uses supranational mechanisms to integrate the cinematographies in the region (Dominguez, 2008; Getino, 2007). Ibermedia is such a mechanism, if not the most important instrument.

Ibermedia was created in 1997 as a development program. Its objective is to strengthen the Ibero-American audiovisual market by funding audiovisual projects. The later is mainly co-productions. Ibermedia has an intergovernmental structure. Today, the organization has 23 Member States: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Ibermedia is thus not a stand-alone initiative. It has an institutional link with the General Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) and with the Conference of Ibero-American Cinematographic Activities (CAACI).

While an intergovernmentalist organization, Ibermedia was created as a result of a bottom-up project and has from the outset aspired to include stakeholders such as producers, movie directors, and scholars in policy-making. However, the formal role of stakeholders and their power to shape policies is not clear. While previous research mainly focused on the finances of Ibermedia (González, 2020; Mognillansky, 2019), the observation of a limited budget and related weaknesses only tell one part of the Ibermedia story. Hardly any attention has been devoted to the actual processes and inclusion of stakeholders therein that drive the decision-making structures of an, essentially, supranational body. Such a research angle would be relevant as the lack of transparency of Ibero-American collaboration is one of the prominent points of critique on the organization (Falicov, 2007; Villazana, 2009), in spite of the organization's rhetorical dedication to collaboration and stakeholder engagement. Based on the stakeholder theory developed by Freeman (1984; Freeman, Harrison, Hicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010), we adopted an analytical perspective (Friedman & Miles, 2006) to understand how Ibermedia relates to its stakeholders. We scrutinize the stakeholders' salience according to their urgency, legitimacy, and power (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). In so doing, we manage to provide an overview of the internal

functioning of Ibermedia, revealing the level of interaction with the stakeholders and the disparity of influencing power among them.

Hence, the core research question of this article is whether and how Ibermedia maintains its original bottom-up cooperation character in strategic decisions-taking. Is there any meaningful stakeholder saliency, are some more equal than others, or is Ibermedia a prototype of the traditional supranational, Member State-led, organization? Our findings are based on a literature review, qualitative document analysis, and semi-structured expert interviews.

Submission ID

982

A Comparative Study of the China-US Trade Dispute News between China Daily and The Wall Street Journal in Light of Discourse Analysis

Authors

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Abstract

The 22-month China-US Trade Dispute not only arises people's attention from China and the United States, but also becomes the focus of news media and an extensive-discussed topic in academia. Although China-US Trade Dispute happened in economic field, public perception and international opinion environment are greatly affected by media news. Therefore, how the media constructs China-US Trade Dispute and the differences in reports should be fully explored. Taking *China Daily* and *The Wall Street Journal* related reports as the research object, the selected time period is from March 23, 2018 to January 18, 2020, a total of 443 news texts are obtained, combining text analysis and critical discourse analysis as the main research methods. The corpus analysis software AntConc and MAXQDA are used to calculate word frequency statistics and corpus annotations on news texts. Based on analysis and comparison of 443 news texts from *China Daily* and *The Wall Street Journal*, it is found that there are significant differences in discourse model, including: the subject of the report, the collocation of words and semantics, and the preference of the source of evidence, etc. The former one tends to choose positive words and assumes a posture of peaceful dialogue, while the latter one gives priority to "I", referring to US, then gradually caring to the changes in China and global economy. Behind these obvious differences are media choices, plus national dichotomy and ideologies hidden behind. Therefore, for China, the key strategies to dissolve dichotomy should be to return to history, and find a post-structural approach to reform national image.

Submission ID

1037

Global transformations and European Union. The impact of Covid-19 infodemic on citizens' involvement

Authors

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Abstract

Since twenty years, scholars (such as Bauman 2004; Beck 2012; Beck and Grande 2004; Castells 1997, 2001, 2018; Delanty and C. Rumford 2005; Habermas 1996, 2004; Giddens 2007) focused on the dynamics of globalization and cosmopolitization underline that European Union integration is a relevant expression of the changing and interconnected world. They also highlight that an organized Europe is a work in progress and that it is important to stimulate people feelings of belonging because, by itself, the institutional architecture is inadequate for involving the citizen's of the member states. The referendum on European treaties and the one on the Brexit are significant examples which underscore the importance on information and communication to sustain or to reject supranational project. In this scenario, the disinformation and misinformation are a kind of specific a relevant question to consider. The Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, highlights the disinformation as a risk for European Union integration. Of Course, false or deceptive rumours and news have always existed, but in recent years they tend to impact on public debate and democratic participation alarmingly for the connection with: the professionalization of communication strategies by political-institutional actors for consensus purposes (Ducci 2017; Canel and Luoma-aho 2019; D'Ambrosi 2019; Parito 2019; Lovari 2020) and the characteristics of social media platforms and online and digital media consumption habits (Sunstein 2017; Van Dijck, Poell and de Waal 2018). So, The Covid-19 crisis and the linked infodemic are extraordinary cases to test the European Union capability to manage the disinformation disorder, especially towards young people. Indeed, some scholars highlight, the Brexit referendum and the process to leave EU unfold a generational cleavage (Norris, Inglehart 2019). In this picture, the paper aims to analyse the impact of the communicative strategies and actions promoted by European institutions regarding disinformation about Covid-19 on trust and sense of belonging in young people of the South European Union. In particular, the impact on Italian and Spanish university students will be considered. The research presents an exploratory and quantitative study that uses a second-generation multivariate analysis method. The aims is to explore if the measures adopted by European institutions impact on trust in EU integration and increase the sense of belonging in the supranational project.

Submission ID

1111

Making film with China: co-production and the politics of soft power

Authors

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of co-production films in promoting soft power. It specifically investigates films made under the China-UK and China-India Film Co-production Treaty to analyse three issues: what are the approaches to and critical thinking behind the practice of soft power? How do international film practitioners collaborate under the conditions of the Treaty? What are the outcomes and implications of co-productions in soft power promotion for nations with distinctive political, economic and cultural systems? Through the critical evaluation of film policies, interviews and case studies, this timely research indicates the changing relations between China and the other main players in relation to shifts in the global film industries in the post-pandemic era.

Film co-productions under the China-International Co-production Treaty remain under-researched. Existing research on co-productions has mainly focused on either China-US film co-productions without the condition of treaty, or China Pan-Asian partners. This paper adopts a triangulating qualitative method that includes three methodological components: policy analysis, semi-structured interviews and case studies. Each method addresses different questions of the research: 1) I conducted policy analysis to outline conceptual thinking about soft power and detail the differing approaches to the practice of soft power with a focus on film co-productions. The data collection includes three types of public documents both in Chinese and English: official government policies and regulations; academic works and national reports; and non-academic and informal documents from trade journals and inter-industry reports. 2) I used semi-structured interviews to find out what the impetus is for both Chinese and foreign filmmakers to work together and how practitioners viewed their roles in film co-productions. Based on the scholarly literature review, specialised reviews, and related reports concerning the aforementioned treaty, I interviewed 35 film professionals including senior managers from China Film Co-production Corporation British Film Institute; international film producers from China Lion Entertainment Production SMG Pictures, and BBC Earth Films. 3) I chose six existing films made between China-India and China-UK under the Treaty as case studies to investigate the outcomes and implications of these films in projecting soft power. The combination of policy analysis, interviews, and case studies and the juxtaposition of industry and scholarly voices provides a timely, original, information-rich and stimulating research on China-international co-production in the context of the escalating antagonism between China and the US, UK and India.

Submission ID

1294

Digital rights advocacy as cross-locational discursive struggle

Authors

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Abstract

Recent literature on 'digital constitutionalism' suggests a rights-based approach to the challenges of the global digital communication environment (Padovani & Santaniello 2018; Redeker et al. 2018). Empirical research has identified a shared nucleus of rights in various Internet Bill of Rights documents produced by different actors such as governments, private sector, and civil society (e.g. Pettrachin 2018) and focused on discourse coalitions behind such initiatives. Even though addressing current communication issues in a rights-based framework can build on a common language of human rights, various uses of digital rights also embed power struggles (Karppinen & Puukko 2020). For example, discourses on discrimination often prioritize technology over historical forms of oppression (Gangadharan & Niklas 2019). Thus, research on digital rights and data justice (Dencik et al. 2016) could benefit from additional empirical studies that focus on different actors' perspectives.

The goal of this paper is to analyze how civil society actors approach glocal communication governance in their advocacy work. The overall research questions are: How do civil society actors define digital rights, and what kind of advocacy strategies do they pursue to achieve them? The paper addresses these questions through a discourse theoretical approach (Carpentier & De Cleen 2007), focusing on language and practices as sites of discursive struggles. The research data consists of semi-structured interviews with representatives of 12 civil society organizations that work in different local contexts but also participate in international fora such as the UN Internet Governance Forum. The paper discusses the preliminary findings in relation to the issue of location, and identifies discursive struggles at the level of norms and advocacy practices vis-à-vis other actors. Thus, the paper offers new empirical insights in digital rights advocacy as a cross-locational phenomenon, and contributes to the research on civil society's role in communication governance. Moreover, it also seeks to contribute to the practical work with digital rights by identifying openings in discursive struggles, relevant to the IAMCR sub-theme 'activism and the new global social justice movements'.

Submission ID

1793

Why do nation states campaign for media freedom?

Authors

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Abstract

In 2019, the United Kingdom government announced that media freedom would become its number one foreign policy issue. Then Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt appointed Amal Clooney as the UK's Special Envoy on Media Freedom and launched the Global Campaign for Media Freedom (GCMF). This multi-pronged campaign now includes a Media Freedom Coalition with 43 member states who lobby to protect journalists; a High-Level Panel of Legal Experts; country-specific National Action Plans; and a UNESCO-administered Global Media Defence Fund.

Media freedom is not an easy choice for a foreign policy campaign. First, because there is an inherent tension between political elites and the journalists whose job it is to critique them. Second, because there are significant diplomatic challenges involved: many of the UK's closest allies and trade partners attack or suppress the media in their nations. Taking a stand on press freedom may create significant strain on these relationships.

So why would a nation state choose to launch a major campaign focused on media freedom? And what can we learn from this case study about the nature of media freedom as a foreign policy focus issue? This paper explores these questions, drawing on rare and extensive access to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). It is based on 45 elite interviews with elected officials, civil servants and civil society groups directly involved in the Global Media Freedom Campaign. This includes the UK's former Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt, and former Special Envoy for Media Freedom, Amal Clooney. These stakeholders were asked about the motivations for launching a state campaign focussed on media freedom.

Their responses are analysed through the lens of Foreign Policy Decision Making (Hill 2016), which draws attention to the different levels of influence on foreign policy, and emphasises the role of both agency and structure in the decision-making process. The interviews illuminate the confluence of personal and political factors that led the UK to focus on media freedom. This included: Jeremy Hunt's personal backgrounds and political ambitions. And the unique situation that the UK found itself, trying to establish a new foreign policy priorities in a post-Brexit world.

In this context, 'media freedom' operates as a symbolic good that serves multiple, distinct agendas. For Hunt, it was a high-profile issue that generated publicity as he fought for the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2019. For the United Kingdom, media freedom is a rallying call, and focal point, for positioning the UK as a leading proponent of the liberal, rule-based order, which many perceive as being under attack.

The data contributes to our understanding of the nexus between media freedom and foreign policy. And it generates insight on the factors that may incentivise nation states to play the role of a 'norm entrepreneur' (Davies and True 2017) on press freedom issues.

Submission ID

1801

Stretching Digital Colonialism from the North to the South; A Case Study of the Transnational Movement of the Tech Giants into Kenya

Authors

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Abstract

Over the past few years, U.S.-based global tech companies, such as Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google, as well as China-based Alibaba also are heavily investing in the African continent hence reorganizing today's global communication networks. These global tech companies are deeply entrenching themselves into the African tech ecosystem, scouting for their next market with the objective of "connecting the unconnected". They are investing in Internet infrastructure in the continent to leverage the vast, budding, youthful population, growing economies, and high rates of Internet access and adoption. However, their entry into the continent bears a resemblance to what has been termed as digital colonialism. By data mining and extraction as well as controlling digital infrastructures, the tech giants are replicating colonial power structures through the centralized ownership and control. Consequently, there is an increased harvesting of personal data by the tech giants for profit maximization as new form of exploitative capitalistic strategy where data is the most valuable asset. Although considered problematic, digital colonialism and its implications, remains largely understudied and understood in the global south context. Current scholarship insinuates western conceptions on larger issues at stake such as privacy, security and safety. Yet, most African countries, unlike Europe and North America, continues to face unique challenges with weak or non-existence privacy and data protection laws and policies. Using a case study research design, this paper provides an analysis of the type and magnitude of digital colonialism unfolding in the Kenyan context in the last decade. The paper interrogates tech giants' strategies to connect the unconnected and raises questions on matters privacy, security and safety. The analysis is based on existing data from secondary sources, government reports and academic literature. This paper finds adverse impacts of digital colonialism that outweigh the positive and calls for policy interventions aligning themselves globally alongside the technology revolution.

Submission ID

1956

App Societies: Asian Mobile Perspectives on Global Media Policy

Authors

Dr. Gerard Goggin - Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information, Nanyang Technological U

Abstract

As suggested by the keynote panel of the Global Media Policy Working Group at IAMCR 2020, and enunciated in the group's forthcoming volume *Communication Governance at the Crossroad*, the futures for media, society and policy are highly contested and unclear. An influential strand of contemporary scholarship, debate, and policymaking focusses on digital platforms, rightly so, looking at the ways in which these represent a new paradigm for governance. This body of critical and alternative work is increasingly incorporating a fuller range of international perspectives on platform and associated digital technologies, cultures, uses, values, and imaginaries, to which this paper contributes.

In dialogue with accounts of the platform society, economy, and capitalism (Mansell & Steinmuller, 2019; van Dijck, 2018, Steinberg, 2019, I propose the term 'app society'. I am certainly not suggesting that the app — or mobile media and communication --- are decisive or central ways to define social life and relations. Rather, my argument is that we need to undertake apps much more seriously and systematically — in terms of their political and cultural economies, social entailments, cultural entailments, as well as affordances (which has been given some attention in recent research). Crucially also, we need to come to grips with and critique the values and imaginaries associated with apps, in the full range of international settings (Goggin, 2021).

Against this background, in this paper, I explore developments in apps in the Asian region, especially in the last 5 years, with the appearance of 'superapps', across India, East Asia (Japan, Korean, China), and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia). Critical consideration of apps helps us formulate a deeper, more nuanced account of digital media technology, beyond digital platform concepts. Asian mobile software, mobile web, and mobile commerce systems were pioneers in ecosystems and digital transactions in the 1990s (Steinberg, 2019), and the diverse region now hosts a wide range of apps and associated digital cultures and social practices that are helping reshape our ideas of media (Athique & Baulch, 2019)

My particular case study is FinTech apps, especially those based in Southeast Asia, as they are marketed to and serve users in this region, diasporic communities, as well as Asia and beyond. The market and public expectations of such FinTech apps were dramatized in the aborted Hong Kong IPO of Jack Ma's Ant Financial in November 2020. While various factors played into the debacle, like other jurisdictions Chinese policymakers have sought to reset the balance between financial regulation and communication and technology frameworks. This is one aspect of a broader struggle over digital media governance, its rules, institutions, and interplay among national, regional, and global instances and

constituencies, which app societies are bringing to the surface. In this paper, I explore these issues via case studies of key super apps Grab (Malaysia, Singapore) and Gojek (Indonesia).

Submission ID

2269

The Promulgation of Netflix Law in South Korea

Authors

Ms. Hyun Jung Stephany Noh - The University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

South Korea's media industry is undergoing rapid transformation as Netflix started service in 2016. This paper looks into the ways in which the local Korean stakeholders have been responding to Netflix's expansion. Similar to FaceBook or YouTube, Netflix is a foreign service provider that had few regulatory measures under South Korean law compared to local online video content providers. Key local stakeholders, particularly distributors, have critiqued this absence of regulatory statute for foreign service providers. They subsequently pushed for regulatory and policy changes that would regulate Netflix under the same standards as local online video content providers. By conducting discourse analysis of industry trade papers, I investigate the contentious battles among Netflix, internet service providers, and online video content providers. There have been two major changes in enforcing Netflix's operation in Korea. Referred to as the "Netflix Law," from July 2019, this law required foreign service providers, operating under telecommunications regulations, to also be regulated under broadcast law. Another policy issue that became prominent through Netflix's operation in Korea was global content providers' free-riding of "network fees" payment to local internet service providers. While Korean online video content providers paid network fees for using broadband data traffic, global content providers offered to establish cache servers instead of network fee payment. The Korean government passed a law effective from December 2020, that global content providers are also obliged to pay network fees that surpass 1% of Korea's total internet traffic. By examining key local stakeholders' points of conflict with Netflix at the local level arising from Netflix's global status, this project will provide insights into the efforts of domestic actors to shape the regulatory environment in their favor. This study will enhance the understanding of the evolving regulatory structure of global content providers in South Korea fueled by Netflix.

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2282