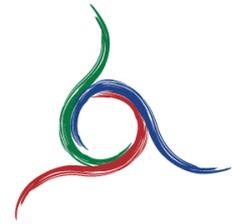


IAMCR 2018



Political Economy Section

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation at the annual conference of the
International Association for Media and Communication Research¹

IAMCR

**Eugene, Oregon, USA
20-24 June 2018**

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Version: 18/03/18

¹ These are the abstracts of the papers accepted by IAMCR section or working group named above for presentation at the 2018 annual conference. This publication will be updated prior to the conference to include the papers that will actually be presented at the conference.

Id: 17350

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation]
Panel description

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This panel critiques technologies that are supposed to liberate citizens and offer choices to consumers in Japan and the two Koreas. We consider technologies that are both low-tech (such as smuggling popular culture goods by using balloons from South Korea and China to North Korea) and high-tech (such as esports in South Korea and high-tech electronic gadgets in Japan). Political economists have long challenged a mainstream belief of technologies being liberating economic and political tools. They believe that states and corporations use technologies to exert power on citizens and consumers. As such, technology is an ideology of control, not freedom. The uneven geopolitical and economic developments of the three East Asian countries thus provide a site to problematize the relationship between technologies, citizenship, and culture. Japan is considered to be a hi-tech, middle-class society that is a global leader in innovation; South Korea is considered to be catching up with Japan, if not the U.S., in technological innovation. In contrast, North Korea is seen as a laggard in technological adaptation due to the closed state. The relationship between the three countries is further complicated by the growing China's economic power and political influence on North Korea, as well as nuclear tension between the U.S., Japan, and South Korea.

All the papers show how power relating to technologies of control and freedom plays out in both micro and macro sites in Northeast Asia. Choi argues that the labour of esports tv creators consolidate the power of online platforms. Chung also examines global popularity of Korean esports but focuses on how technology and state policies develop the esports industry ecosystem which differentiates itself from the western trajectory. Hwang discusses how Japanese media explains the rise of the gaming industry in Asia and the relative decline of their own by examining the self-containing "Japan is number one" mentality. Kim looks at financial management technology in South Korea and shows that the so-called "participatory culture" and financial capitalism are co-constitutive at the intersection of digital culture and financial capitalism. Lastly, Zhang and Lee argue that current literature on pirated media goods does not capture the complexity of the smugglers' political, economic, and cultural beings because of the physicality of the goods.

Moderator: Dal Yong Jin (Simon Fraser University; yongjin23@gmail.com)

Id: 17371

Title: It's Only a Game, Let's Leave Politics Out of It: Mega-Sporting Events, Broadcasting Rights, and Network News Bias

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The question guiding our project is whether corporations' broadcasting rights to mega-sporting events influenced the degree of critical coverage of the events reported by their respective networks' news divisions. In other words, are news outlets more likely to downplay the negative aspects of their own sporting event while emphasizing the negative features of their competitor's event? We answer these questions through a content analysis of NBC, ABC, and CBS evening news coverage of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, both held in Brazil, examining the quantity and content of reports highlighting the controversial features of these two major events. Our data suggests that broadcasting rights may influence the quantity and quality of critical coverage; however, this relationship does not apply uniformly across networks. The findings have important implications for the capacity of comprehensive and critical coverage provided by some network news divisions while not undermining the financial interests of their corporate owners

Id: 17376

Title: Is capitalist media founded through selling audience commodity' The case of the U.S. audiovisual industry, 1947-1997

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The audience commodity sold to advertisers is indispensable in television business. Is it also indispensable for the entire media industry when television actually performs an exhibitivite, rather than production-based function for audiovisual products? As the modern capitalist media became increasingly the vertically-integrated conglomerate, such as Comcast in the US, the contribution of audience commodity to the reproduction of modern media system would be examined entirely and empirically. Further, this article extends this macro scheme to investigate how significant the advertising revenue had been for media development, which is the ground of audience commodity thesis.

Based on industrial statistics between 1947 and 1997, this article illustrates the dynamics of revenue composition in audiovisual industry. Due to the consideration that theater was succeeded by “free” television largely for exhibition of audiovisual products in the 1950s while Hollywood transferred its production capacity almost immediately into television business, it is possible to investigate the influence of television network’s “free” model, selling audience commodity to advertisers, on the whole industry then. The historical data demonstrates that the twenty years when the prosperous “free” model had dominated is the darkest period for audiovisual industry that gross output and employment shrank obviously. This plight is understood as that the value of each audiovisual product cannot be realized fully through selling audience commodity when compared to earlier run-zone-clearance system and following windowing structure. This article argues that the realization problem would be caused by the public good features of audiovisual product if it was used to catch audience’s attention solely. That’s why big companies had been struggling for pay TV system in the two decades that it could privatize the public good to charge audience directly and differently. Since the privatization method recovered in the early 1970s, we witnessed the dramatic U-turn of audiovisual industry’s development and the intense integration between Hollywood majors and television broadcasters.

Instead of arguing that modern media system brings indifferent and poor content to audience, which is founded on classic assumption of monopoly capitalism, this article argues that the privatization process not only overcomes the realization problem but also facilitates product variety and post-Fordism production in this industry. Accordingly, the sale of audience commodity is referred to unproductive filed that advanced media capital has upgraded into productive filed, in which the production of various audiovisual products for sale contributes better to capital accumulation.

Id: 17380

Title: Going Public and Going Global: Chinese Internet Companies and Global Finance Networks

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper examines the globalization of Chinese internet industry in its increasingly-tightening dynamics with global finance networks and institutions. Since the early 2000's, waves of Chinese internet companies have gone public on foreign stock exchange. What this means, is that internet companies in China are increasingly relying on and competing in the global capital market to finance their growth and rampant expansion, generating some of the world's largest initial public offerings (IPO) and stock valuations. Meanwhile, through overseas stock listings and issuance, Chinese internet companies and market have also become a much vied for destination for transnational capital to seek higher returns on investment.

This paper analyzes the role of finance institutions and networks in the globalization of nine leading Chinese internet companies* from three vantage points. Firstly, these companies' use of US investment banks and advance business services as underwriters for IPOs and the close relationship forged with these transnational financial institutions through the underwriting processes. Secondly, the carefully designed ownership structures deployed by these companies, including offshore holdings and Variable Interest Entities (VIE) structure, as well as legal disputes and controversies surround the VIE structure. Thirdly, the ascending power of financial institutions in both the ownership and management of these nine internet companies. In sum, this paper presents a meso-level analysis, looking systematically at the role global finance networks and institutions played in the globalization and capitalization of the Chinese internet.

Through analyzing how Chinese internet companies are organized, interwoven and enmeshed with global financial networks and actors, this paper contributes to the existing literatures on the political economies of Chinese media and communication as well as Chinese media and globalization. By showcasing the capitalist logic and shifting power relations at play in the political economy of the emerging Chinese internet, this study demonstrates specific ways in which media and communication in China are bolted to the world. Commercial forces, motives and the thirst for capital have long been propelling the development of the Chinese internet, and this paper provided empirical evidences to this and further probes into the deepening of commodification and capitalization in leading Chinese internet companies as they financialized and globalized, which in turn will have a long-standing impact on the trajectory of internet development in China and its users.

* These nine companies are: Alibaba, Baidu, Cheetah Mobile, NetEase, Renren, Sina, Sohu, Tencent, Weibo. All of them are publicly traded companies and they represent the leading players in

various sectors, such as social media platforms, mobile communication, portal websites, internet content providers, search and e-commerce.

Id: 17390

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation] Playground and Workplace' The case of esports web TV creators in South Korea

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: ESports is a new concept of sports in South Korea due to advanced software and high-speed internet infrastructure development in 1990s. While players in MMRPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) develop their gaming culture, millions of audience watch the real-life tournaments at the stadium or on cable television. This paper is interested in the recent development of online video streaming platforms (such as YouTube, AfreecaTV, NaverTV, KakaoTV) as well as esports participants (such as the amateur or professional game players, fans, and internet broadcasting jockey known as BJ). The Internet not only connects players to players, players to fans, and fans to fans, but also business entities to customers. This calls into the debate of the nature of labour of Web/App/TV creators: are they producers, cameramen, script writers, researchers, commentators, presenters as well as fans, users, and consumers?

The research questions thus asked are: Who are the creators of eSports web TV? How do they recognise their work? What is the characteristic of their labour? How is their labour different from or similar to traditional labour at TV station? Do the creators believe that they have autonomy in their work environment? This paper will also discuss how the online video platforms enable and proliferate an eSports market, as well as the relationship between the platforms and eSports creators.

To explore the notion of work, I will review the concepts of “audience commodity”, “free labor”, and “digital labor” (Smythe 1977, Terranova 2000, Jhally and Livant 2006, Johnson 2007, Andrejevic 2013, Fuchs 2014, Hughes 2014) in order to explore how the esports market engages young creators and what the creators can take from the dominated online platforms. I will also discuss the future of esports and online video platforms based on Mosco’s (2017) concept of the Next Internet.

In-depth interviews were conducted with esports web TV creators in South Korea as well as workers in the online platform. I argue against Jenkins’ notion of “prosumers” because it is necessary to explore why young esports creators moved to online platforms, how the platforms generate profit from creators, and the consequence of the rise of power of global online video streaming platforms.

Id: 17392

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation]
Esports History, Ecosystem and Professional Player in East Asia

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper researches industry dynamics of esports and its impact on professional players in East Asia. With the purpose of examining the growing sophistication of East Asian popular cultural exchange in competitive gaming, this paper explores a global industry development model that can lead to an organic development of esports economy and culture in East Asia. The paper compares three geographic locations of South Korea, China and Hong Kong and studies the industry factors that shape different paths of development of esports industries in the region. The paper uses concepts proposed by T.L. Taylor and Henry Jenkins to discuss the way that competitive gaming reflects Asia's connection to participatory culture in the networked society. The paper looks into the political economy of structuration in East Asia's convergence culture as esports evolves to become the world's largest esports market by continent through new technological development enabled by algorithm data surveillance and online streaming. The paper first reviews the global history of competitive gaming and explores the way that South Korea connects to (and differs from) competitive gaming in western societies. It studies the historical root of global esports culture in South Korea. It then studies how esports expands to Korea's nearby countries in East Asia and the United States. The paper looks into the expansion of industry value chain in East Asia at the levels of content, athlete, education, media and regulation. The analysis concentrates on the way that industry agents at these levels compete to form dominant esports teams in the region. The paper lastly discusses model of governance from the perspective of professional gamers in esports management. This section will include analysis of life-stories of esports players as selected esports professionals in China and South Korea were interviewed from June 2016 to December 2017.

Id: 17393

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation]
Representation of Gaming Technology Home and Abroad: A Case Study of the Pokemon's Country, Japan

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper aims at investigating Japanese self-contained attitudes regarding technology and innovation that have been formulated and reproduced in post-war Japanese society. I use “media framing” to analyze Japanese media discourse about the changes of innovative technologies in the gaming industries and the troubles faced by the giants such as Sony and Nintendo etc. The discourse comes from both highbrow to lowbrow media, from editorial of major newspapers to popular trendy magazines to specialized magazines on technology and gadget. I pay particular attention to the Japanese popular perception of consumer electronics and digital game technology.

Once ruled the leader in consumer electronics and playing gadget industries, Japanese electronics giants seem to be in deep trouble, losing billions of dollars, cutting their workers who were once treated as lifelong family members. Existing analysis of the industry losing traction shows domestic and international media have different viewpoints: Domestic media frequently pointed out tougher global competition, Japan’s failure in the Chinese market due to the political confrontation over historical issues and territorial dispute and sometimes some other reasons like piracy or counterfeiting in the global market. In contrast, international media tend to emphasize domestic factors such as the declining ability of creating innovations.

Nonetheless, Japanese brands are strong in domestic market and Japanese still prefer portable music players and smartphones of domestic brands, with the exception of iPhone.

Moreover, technical experts and engineers in the industry share the “Japan is number one” myth, which may have prevented them from learning from and communicating with other parts of the world. This so-called techno-nationalism may have led the nation to a path to “Galapagos syndrome” where technological developments and products are evolved in isolation.

Id: 17394

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation]
From web to offline to mobile: An ecosystem of participatory "wealth-tech" culture in South Korea

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Wealth-tech is a popular term in South Korea that refers to techniques of personal finance and money-management, including investments in stocks, funds, real estate, and financial products. After the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 South Korea witnessed privatization of the public sector, flexibilization of labor, and deregulation of financial markets. Wealth-tech has entered the everyday lexicon in tandem with such processes of economic restructuring. Contrary to the mass media (e.g., business news channels, financial newspapers, and wealth-tech guide books), online community offered a space where everyday individuals shared interests in wealth-tech with like-minded people. Over the last fifteen years, several wealth-tech online communities grew as voluntary associations based on the spirit of freedom and community. They also fostered a spirit of resistance against the financial industry and market professionals. Contrary to global financial gurus commanding multi-platform media empires, many “lay-experts” and “lay-gurus” have been born out of such wealth-tech online communities, carrying out both information-gifting and an investment literacy business. Regular users (i.e., amateur investors, those who wanted to make money through financial investments) have moved across various online communities, followed advice of lay-experts, organized offline study groups, and created small groups on mobile social media.

Based on fifteen months of ethnographic research, this paper aims to map out what I call the ecosystem of participatory wealth-tech culture—consisting of various media platforms (web-based online communities, mobile social media, and face-to-face meetings), practices, socio-technical intermediaries, and actors. Starting from a largest, oldest wealth-tech online community, I traced the ways in which different practices, voluntary small groups, lay-gurus, and business arrangements were created out of the community. By qualitatively describing such network of vernacular financial knowledge, I show that so-called “participatory culture” and financial capitalism are co-constitutive. In contrary to the conventional leftist critique that financialization destroys communities by monetary calculation and quantification, practices of community building are at the center of financial practices. Therefore, my inquiry into participatory wealth-tech culture illuminates how community building can operate as a strong mechanism by which everyday individuals are inserted into the circuit of financial capital. Challenging the dichotomy between “exploitation” versus “virtuous” community formation, this paper demonstrates how markets and commons are co-constitutive at the intersection of digital culture and financial capitalism.

Id: 17395

Title: [Panel] Technologies of control and freedom in Japan and the two Koreas [Presentation]
Materiality and corporeality of smuggling Korean Wave into North Korea

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper highlights the physicality of pirated media goods and the bodies of the smugglers by considering distribution technologies that bring black market media from China and South Korea to North Korea. A focus on physicality highlights that human movement is still a key cultural, political economic force to (literally) cross (national) boundaries in a digital age.

Literature on piracy in politically closed countries---predominately China---focuses on (1) whether a western model of intellectual property applies to countries with controlled information flow; and relatedly (2) whether pirated goods are a result of unresponsive market. Current literature tends not to pay attention to the physical aspect of pirated goods because they appear to be abstractions of the law and the market. It pays little attention to the concrete objects that store and transport the digital files.

We make the case by employing (1) ethnographic observation in Pyongyang during a state-approved trip; (2) interviews with residents in Yanji and Changchun (two Chinese towns close to North Korea) and Seoul; as well as (3) western journalistic discourses on the North Korean black market.

We argue that current literature on copyrights violation and informal economy does not capture the case of smuggling goods into North Korea because physicality and corporeality are central at bringing Korean Wave media across the border. Simply put, the goods are physically smuggled into the country and concealed by the body. As such, the movement of goods is embedded with the movement of people. The concreteness of the pirated goods made the smugglers more similar to defectors escaping from North Korea to China, or refugees crossing boundary. The physical movement of smugglers, defenders, and refugees is life-risking. The possibility of losing life by cross boundary shows why the physical still matters in a digital age.

Id: 17413

Title: Advertising in the age of 'ad tech': the case of magazines

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: While much attention has been given to the crisis of print in the digital age, the concern has been almost exclusively with newspapers, given their traditional responsibilities in democratic societies. Although magazines mostly lack such gravitas, they too are facing ultimate annihilation, both as a commercial media model and as a cultural form, and if they are to sustain themselves, must deal with the challenges of the digital era in their own way. For both forms of print media, the crisis is about the loss of advertising, their economic life-blood, given the fundamental shift under way of advertising expenditure into digital media, and especially to the platforms of Google and Facebook.

This shift is also having great impact upon the advertising industry, as advertising agencies find themselves 'disintermediated', that is, dislodged from their traditional role as brokers between their advertiser clients and the media. The agencies' response has been to open up a new line of business, 'ad tech', a set of commercio-technical practices for the targeting of advertisements, drawing on the internet's capacity to generate commercially valuable data as provided by its users. Meanwhile, although we can still see the array of print magazines in the convenience stores covering news and commentary; celebrity gossip; popular culture diversions; sport and outdoor pastimes; health and personal care; domestic activities and design; lifestyle, leisure and consumer interests; and other more specialised fields, much of these kinds of content have migrated to the internet, where they attract audiences for the advertisers that the magazines are losing. The magazine industry's response has been to launch online versions of their titles, and like newspapers with paywalls, to seek subscription revenue that can replace the income once derived from advertising.

This paper will examine the new relationship that is developing between the ad tech business on one hand, and digital magazines on the other. Ad tech has enormous advantages over print in the targeting and delivery of advertisements to online readers, making online magazines a prime case study in how the exploitation of user data has given rise to a new critical paradigm in media studies.

Id: 17426

Title: From Global Giants to Transnational Partners

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This study investigates the political economy and cultural reach of several major media corporations that represent emerging transnational structures and relations. Although much has been written about global media giants such as Disney, Warner, and Comcast with particular emphasis on their Westernizing influence and domination, global consolidation among media from all nations and regions indicates that transnational corporations are displacing nation-based media.

Dalian Wanda, Reliance Media, and Europa Corp provide empirical evidence that demonstrates: 1) the transnational intermingling of formerly nation-centric media; 2) the standardization of entertainment content by transnational media; and 3) the appearance of localized hybrid cultural diversity as part of the transnational industrial production of entertainment programming.

The findings here strongly suggest that rapid consolidation of media across regions and cultures rests on concerted national deregulation and relentless commercialization, transcending any and all essentialized national cultures. Global media giants are not simply US, UK, Western or any other nation-based culture per se, but are manifest components of transnational media relations based on capitalist profit, media commodification, and devotion to consumerism which has no national affinity or commitment. The ongoing transformation of media ownership, production practices, and entertainment programming underscores the transnational capitalist character of the global culture industry and its entertainment content in all nations.

Keywords: Political economy, transnational media, hybrid, entertainment, commodification, consumerism, culture industry

Id: 17429

Title: Social Media for Social Change: Sustainability and Political Economy of Digital Networks

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015) emphasise the need for digital connectivity. Communication is essential for need-based projects. ICT in developing and underdeveloped nations can empower citizens by eliminating digital divide. In India, the use of biometric identification (Aadhaar), as a part of the Digital India campaign, seeks fair distribution of resources among citizens. This also means less wastage of valuable natural resources. However, the widespread use of social media in sustainability programmes narrows the spectrum of ICT to mere social media access. This enables social media companies to monopolise the discourse of citizens' digital empowerment, as noted in recent net neutrality debates.

States, corporations and entrepreneurs use social media to propagate ideas on sustainability. Diverse opinions accumulate into meaningful hash-tag movements like #whomademyclothes (2013) and #2030Now (2017). Even CSR audits use social media to gauge the effectiveness of various programmes. In spite of the contribution of social media to sustainability models, it cannot be overlooked that corporations running these sites are driven by the primary interest of profit.

Digital labour, users' alienation from digital resources, their limited access to social media policies, reduced privacy and the dominance of surveillance are some of the issues that the paper will address as a theoretical background. (Fuchs, 2014) If ethical considerations determine sustainability practices, the apparent absence of ethics in digital capitalism, perhaps, makes way for stark incongruity of principles. Slavoj Zizek's view on the unification of altruism and consumerism in contemporary culture (2012) is an important cue for understanding how social media may use the narratives of sustainability and empowerment to camouflage their hegemonic control. The general exuberance about the role of social media in sustainability perhaps keeps users oblivious of their subordination and exploitation. The problematic structure of online communities on social media vis-à-vis the representation of marginality and subalternity also subverts the participatory myth. (Lovink, 2011)

This paper will present the views of some Indian social entrepreneurs working on sustainability projects. Their comments on the use of social media, specifically for sustainability, will be crucial in understanding the participatory models of their programmes, and how digital networks impact their functions. The paper will thus examine the political economy of social media and its association with sustainability. It will also investigate if sustainability of the digital ecosystem is possible without existing capitalist bindings.

Keywords: sustainability, social media, digital labour, digital capitalism, privacy, surveillance

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Id: 17439

Title: Unpacking excessive gaming: a political economy analysis of Game Nogada

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In South Korea, excessive online gaming (or game addiction, the more popular term for excessive gaming used in Korean mainstream media and academia) has been considered a serious social problem. Despite the attention devoted to the issue, however, current academic debates have been one sided. The dominant academic approach dealing with excessive gaming has taken a psychological perspective, which locates the cause of excessive gaming in the abnormality of the individual gamer's self or in individualized contexts and consequently suggests a limited solution by normalizing deviance. The individualist-reductionism of game addiction studies has left intact the broader socio-economic factors that lead gamers to excessive gaming. This paper challenges the psychological game addiction studies, providing an alternative approach to excessive gaming based on a political economy perspective. In this paper, I consider the game nogada (a term used in Korean game culture to describe the process of continuously engaging in monotonous and repetitive tasks, often accompanied by boredom and tediousness, in order to achieve particular goals or reap in-game rewards) of gamers as a particular form of excessive gaming because game nogada is a gaming experience that is more than necessary or desirable in achieving the normative purpose of playing game: fun. This paper aims to investigate how excessive gaming, particularly the game nogada of Korean World of Warcraft (WoW) gamers, is commodified and tacitly encouraged by Blizzard Entertainment to generate more profit. More specifically, by adopting two sub-concepts of commodification process suggested in "Commodifying what nature?" by Noel Castree (2003), that is, privatization (the assignation of legal title to things as part of commodification) and valuation (the monetization of commodities), this paper analyzes how Blizzard has commodified gamers' time and efforts invested in game nogada. First, by reviewing the Terms of Use of WoW and lawsuits between game companies and gamers regarding the ownership of game items, this paper examines how Blizzard privatizes all in-game outcomes resulting from the gamers' game nogada. Second, the direct or indirect relationships between game nogada of general gamers and monetization strategies that Blizzard uses in order to make profit out of WoW are discussed; the monetization strategies of Blizzard include subscription fee and various micro-transactions such as WoW token, level boosting service, purchasing mounts and pets, and changing avatar's name, appearance, faction, race, and server. Lastly, this paper discusses the implications of the commodification of game nogada, arguing that such commodification process has turned the game nogada of gamers into an unpaid (or exploited) immaterial labor. Such an analysis of the commodification process of game nogada of WoW will provide an alternative view point of excessive gaming, which seeks to find the underlying political economic context of excessive gaming instead of finding the cause of game addiction in the abnormalities of an individual gamer.

Id: 17440

Title: The Creative Economy of Terroir in Central Brazil: food production, consumption and public policy

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This article discusses how the idea of “local” is produced, appropriated, consumed and diffused in Brazil, using the case of its Federal District area biome of “Cerrado”. We take the French notion of terroir to discuss the relation between nature and culture in creating meanings about what and how we eat and how we produce and distribute what we eat. We look at how those meanings impact on forms of work and consumption, lifestyle, health, public policy and social organization. The objective is to investigate how production, work and consumption - considered parts of the same system - of some specific foods constitute supply chains organized both within the so-called traditional economy and permeate the creative economy. The hypothesis is that the dimension of terroir, when incorporated into production chains adds material and symbolic value to a systemic perspective of local development.

The construction of terroir combines environmental and productive-economic features, merging Ideas as sustainability and connecting local practices to wider spaces of circulation and consumption. If well mediated by cultural and productive policies, this articulation can be an element for the appreciation of environmental balance and the revival of traditional methods, adding value to otherwise labor-intensive and low-efficiency dynamics of production.

Food industry creates ties and marks particularities and cultural differences throughout its production chain, usually invisible to urban consumers, encompassing cultivation, harvesting, processing of raw materials, preparation and distribution. Food consumption, has recently turned to increasingly incorporate the assessment of these production condition to determine its inherent qualities, material and symbolic, mediated by seals of quality: organic, humanized, traditional, biological, “caipira”, etc. This cultural and political instance thus, is growingly recognized and demarcated on an institutional and international scale, insofar as food is framed not only as a commodity, but also as part of cultural heritage, for example, by UNESCO.

We depart from the canonical instance made by communication and food studies that historically focus on the means and purposes conveyed by media products on food consumption (advertising, television programs, movies, internet content) to expand this perspective to the analysis of the whole production chains and the political economies underpinning them. We do so by considering public discourses on food as "a universe of controlled meanings" with interacting interests and their

specific stakeholders (namely corporations, legislators, the media, the state and agribusiness among others) dispute the symbolic production of notions and labels defining which practices and products are deemed healthier, frugal, eco-friendly, authentic etc. And pointing to how these circuits of work, access and fruition of such good indicate stark contrasts between lifestyles of consumers and production modes that highlight social, cultural and class differences in contemporary Brazil, creating not only territorial continuities but networking of values, perceptions and beliefs.

Id: 17444

Title: Promoting the pipeline: A case study of carbon capital's political resources and repertoire

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Fossil fuel corporations are using their political power to block a faster transition to a low-carbon economy. We enquire into the range of communicative and political resources available to carbon capital, as evidenced in local contestation over a particular pipeline project – the TransMountain Expansion (TMX). Owned by the Canadian subsidiary of Kinder Morgan, the Texas-based multinational fossil infrastructure corporation, TMX is intended to triple the carrying capacity of a pipeline from the Alberta bitumen sands to the port of metropolitan Vancouver, for export via tanker to Asian markets. The TMX has been controversial for many reasons – the lack of permission from Indigenous communities; its association with the expansion of a relatively ‘dirty’ form of fossil fuel; its potential contribution to climate chaos; the risk of tank farm fires, pipeline leaks, and tanker spills; perceived flaws in the regulatory process leading to its approval. In November 2016, Canada’s federal government nevertheless approved TMX, but resistance continues, in various forms, including First Nations legal challenges, street protests by environmentalists and affected residents, and political opposition by the newly elected left-of-centre provincial government of British Columbia.

This paper telescopes on one slice of this multifaceted and complex conflict: the communicative and political resources and strategies of Kinder Morgan as they play out in Burnaby, a Vancouver suburb highly affected by TMX. KM’s resources can be mapped on several axes:

1) Structural (factors embedded in late capitalism’s energy regimes and State regulatory and legislative processes – to the extent that some scholars consider Canada to be a First World ‘petro-state’ or ‘oil’s deep state’) vs. instrumental (specific local and conjunctural tactics, lobbying);

2) Scale: from local (community streamkeepers, public schools, local businesses) to provincial and national (industry associations, political parties, regulatory agencies) to global.

3) Soft power: from alliances of economic and ideological affinity, to enticement of potential opponents (donations, economic incentives, persuasive campaigns) to Hard power (e.g. economic 'blackmail'; intimidation of critics; private security forces).

Based on a review of scholarly literature on carbon capital and politics, news reportage of the Kinder Morgan controversy, and interviews with selected key players in the local conflict, this paper sketches the repertoire of KM's political resources, in its campaign to win regulatory and political approval, to maximize community support, and to overcome opposition. We also summarize the political resources and tactical repertoire of the anti-pipeline forces in the asymmetrical TMX conflict.

This study yields an heuristic map for generating questions and propositions for future research, for example – Under what circumstances does KM draw upon different elements of its repertoire? When does it resort to intimidation rather than enticement? What is kept secret, rather than showcased? To what extent is winning community support ('social licence') important, compared to other factors (e.g. investor and government approval)? When does KM shift from a local to a national focus? Crucially, what are the points of entry and leverage for opposing the pipeline, and carbon capitalism generally?

Id: 17481

Title: Telecommunications Deregulation and Development: Policy Lessons from Ethiopia

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: A trillion-dollar industry comprising some of the world's most critical infrastructure, telecommunications is arguably the single most important enterprise that anchors the grand architecture of mediated communication today. The current iteration of telecommunications as a profit-driven industry was a direct upshot of the changing tide of Western economic thought in the 1980s that abandoned the Keynesian doctrine. The global drift toward market fundamentalism coupled with the American experiment on telecommunication deregulation has set the stage for the diminishing role of states' proprietorship of telecommunications, a sector that for long has been seen as a 'natural monopoly.'

Based on data generated from interviews and documents, this study explores the Ethiopian state's rationales for state monopoly of telecommunications within a patrimonial-developmental state framework. A rare breed in the era of deregulation, Ethiopia's state-controlled telecommunications sector has been a source of intense debate involving domestic and international stakeholders, most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF has since blacklisted Ethiopia from receiving financing for telecommunications infrastructure development until the latter liberalizes the sector. The IMF contends state monopoly of telecommunications promotes inefficiency, stalls the growth of domestic industries, dries up financing opportunities for the private sector, and discourages foreign direct investment.

In defending its monopolistic approach, the Ethiopian state argues market forces work contrary to the government's direction toward achieving universal access and universal service in telecommunications. Market forces, policymakers contend, have "imperfections" that can be corrected by state intervention so that equitable development—one that doesn't discriminate the distribution of communication infrastructure based on profit maximization grounds—can be realized. Secondly, the Ethiopian state characterizes the telecommunications sector as a 'cash cow' that generates substantial revenue for the state, which, in turn, can be used to finance the expansion of the sector and other infrastructure projects. Thirdly, the Ethiopians state, while resolutely dismissing foreign proprietorship, believes the telecommunications sector in Ethiopia cannot be liberalized because of the absence of a potent local private sector that can invest on the industry.

The study concludes by making a case for public-private partnership in the Ethiopian telecommunications sector. It calls for the re-examination of the monopolistic arrangement—not as a response to profit-driven external deregulation pressure but as an act of nurturing possibilities of multi-stakeholder ICTs ecosystem involving the state, the private sector and end users for a sustainable, inclusive development agenda. Although there is theoretical merit in the Ethiopian

state's approach toward telecommunication for development, it would be a welcome exercise to critically reflect on the current model to curb patrimonial tendencies. The extent to which widespread internet blackout and surveillance occurred in the past few years has only exacerbated skepticism over the state's developmentalism rationale for state monopoly of telecommunications. Failing to address this concern may arrest the ICTs-for-development agenda altogether, resulting in the creation of a slippery slope scenario of loosely adopting the developmental state model where Ethiopia's vanguard ruling party fail to unpack self-serving political longevity from desired development ends.

Id: 17495

Title: Cross-Media ownership in Indian Vernacular Media: An exploration in Diversity and Plurality

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This research presents a data-driven picture of the cross-media ownership concentration in 13 Indian language media using numerical data from Audit Bureau of Circulation of India (ABC) for Newspaper, Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) – for television and Radio Audience Measurement (RAM) for Radio . The paper attempts to lay bare the emerging cross-media monopolies across languages, regions and genres for use in formulating appropriate policy and regulation

Diversity in India is enshrined in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, which recognizes 22 languages within the country. English was retained as one of the two official language. As per Census 2011, the average literacy rate in India stands at 74.04%. It is lower for women and for rural areas – both of which are important bastions for democracy. A quick study reveals that the literacy agnostic electronic media is present only in 12 of the 22 vernacular languages. The two-language education policy ensures that an average Indian, at best, uses any two of the numerous languages to access media.

Though plurality and diversity are two different concepts and much debated, their link to and impact on public interest sees consensus from all. Pluralism is considered not as an objective but as a means to achieve democratic values (Valcke et al. 2009). Asymmetries of power, revaluing of dissent and right to contest—create an interesting basis for discussing the value of media pluralism in contemporary media policy (Karppinen 2012). Plurality can be defined as a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation for the development of their traditional culture or special interests within the confines of a common civilisation. Diversity, on the other hand, simply means variety. The diversity in India in terms of language, food, and even media is well known. This paper examines the extent of ownership plurality in media

The measurement of plurality and diversity in media industry has been one of the basic exercises for the policy makers in Europe. Since the 1990s, EU member states have been assessing pluralism in their internal media markets (European Commission 1992a). The media plurality monitor (MPM), as an auditing tool for the purpose, is a result of this continuous struggle. It highlights areas of current and potential risk and allows the member states to compare and address the situation from responses adopted elsewhere.

Kiran Prasad (2015) observes that media pluralism indicators such as ownership and control, media types and genres, cultural, political and geographic diversity have been recognized in principle, but India does not have a comprehensive media policy on media pluralism. As media infrastructure continues to expand post 2000 in a complex digital landscape, media ownership concentration in the vernacular media will assume significance as regulations may be needed for providing access to under- served communities. The risks to media pluralism in India lie mainly in the increasing media commercialization (TRAI 2013) and no restrictions on cross-media holdings (TRAI, 2014), which this paper attempts to measure.

(501 words)

Id: 17496

Title: Measuring and Mapping of Media Ownership and Concentration in India and calculation of Company Power Index of 12 major media common ownership units (2000- 2012)

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This fundamental research project maps an accurate and numbers driven scenario of marketshares enjoyed by 12 media common ownership units (COUs) across 11 media verticals from the years 2000 to 2012 that will bring out the emerging trends of consolidation of media ownership within the industry. A calculation of company power index (CPI) based on the marketshares will also be undertaken. These numbers will also explain the extent of power each media house wields on account of the number of audience it reaches, and in other words influences. This comes in the wake of the recent interest by industrial conglomerates in investing into media companies that reach a variety of audiences generated by their media properties is a means to reach a consumer base and influence the choices they make.

The numbers generated from this study of the reigning marketshares and the calculation of company power index can be used towards reviewing existing regulation and/or creating new regulation for a desired structure for the Indian media economy. While some activities of some dominant owners may not be preventable but sufficient information about it made easily available will give democratic and market forces a chance to correct it. 2000 has been chosen as the base year because the media industries were liberalised and enabled to receive investments from 2001.

According to media economist, Robert Picard, “media ownership is not really what concerns us, but is a proxy of other concerns. What we are really worried about is interference with democratic processes, manipulation of the flow of news and information, powerful interests controlling public conversation, exclusion of voices from public debate, and the use of market power to mistreat consumers. It is thus the behavior of some of those who own media rather than the ownership form or extent of ownership that really concerns us.” While Edwin Bakker (2007) has argued that press freedom is threatened from two sides- the abuse of government power and also private power and threat of market dynamics which makes media owners dependent on corporations for their advertising revenue. In such a scenario the role of the regulatory authority to insulate the media from either power becomes extremely important.

The audience is reduced to being a mere consumer of the editorial policy followed by a media house, which it sets according to its own agenda since they are 'for profit' entities with numerous market and political interests.

Id: 17498

Title: Benevolent capitalism and digital capitalism: the political economy of Facebook in Africa

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: August 2016 Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder and CEO of Facebook, visited Lagos Nigeria, the first destination in his first trip to sub-Saharan Africa. The visit was about “meeting with developers and entrepreneurs, and learning about the startup ecosystem in Nigeria”. Importantly, he visited Andela, a startup he invested \$24 million, which was founded to “build a network of technology leaders on the African continent and bridge the divide between the U.S and African tech sectors”. This study attempts a critical understanding of Zuckerberg’s visit within broader analyses of digital capitalism, the place of Africa -specifically Nigeria in Facebook’s global market, and how benevolent capitalism works in this process. This enquiry is driven by two modest but critical questions: why did Zuckerberg visit Nigeria? And how does this visit fit into the global nature of digital capitalism?

Although a supplier of raw materials for capitalist innovations and a dumping ground for used/obsolete goods (including technologies), Africa now attracts as a market for digital tools. The growing penetration of mobile phone and internet, that many access the web for the first time on smartphones, and the large untapped market of the unconnected (only 158 Million of the 1.2 billion Africans are on Facebook), have opened up the potential of Africa as a market for technology corporations. Through a theoretical discussion of the political economy of communication, supported with public and market data, this enquiry addresses the two research questions.

Nigeria has the highest mobile phone subscribers in Africa, it is ranked in world top ten mobile subscribers by country, has the highest Internet users in Africa, the highest Facebook users in sub-Saharan Africa, at about 200 million, Nigeria is the largest nation in Africa, as such no other country in Africa offers this potential number for Facebook. Numbers of users are essential to Facebook’s advertising revenue. However, there are only about 17 million Facebook users in Nigeria. Andela, with Zuckerberg’s \$24 million investment, recruits young African developers, train and place them in American technology companies, thereby meeting American demand for software developers.

Since Facebook’s commodification and advertising success is dependent on number of users, the 1.2 billion Africans are important to Facebook’s economy, but half of this market is not connected to the Internet. Facebook then adopts the market driven altruism of benevolent capitalism or philanthrocapitalism, which is investments in ‘public good’ for private capitalist gain. This involves providing a free taste of the Internet through its ‘Free Basics’ App. But nothing is free on the Internet; the plan is to turn the ‘free users’ into data consumers to be sold to advertisers. Facebook’s African ‘Free Basics’ is essential to its global growth considering that Facebook is banned in China

and Free Basics is banned in India, two of the largest markets in the world. The untapped African market offers opportunities for digital capitalists, whose core aim is global domination, albeit benevolent in their pursuit of digital capital.

Id: 17504

Title: Mapping Big Five alliances through network analysis: Exploring new methods for analyzing concentration in the global audiovisual landscape.

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper tracks and analyzes the different alliances of the Big Five Global Media companies (Birkinbine, Gómez and Wasko, 2017) through a network analysis. Although scholars within communication and media studies have predominantly used network analysis to analyze social networks, the method has also been used to illuminate the different strategies and patterns of control used by media companies in the global market (Segovia & Quiros, 2006; Reig; 2010). Similarly, political economists of communication and media have consistently investigated corporate structures and the connections between large firms (see Wasko 1982; 2001; Meehan 2005). In addition, Arsenault and Castells (2008) have used similar methods to provide a macro-level portrait of the networked forms of organization, production, and distribution used by global media companies. However, comparatively fewer scholars working in the critical tradition have explicitly used the techniques of network analysis. In this paper, we present a snapshot of the different strategies, interactions and alliances of the US Big Five transnational media conglomerates -- The Walt Disney Company, 21st Century Fox, Comcast, National Amusements, and Time Warner -- by visualizing them through a network analysis. Specifically, we map the following dimensions: a) ownership; b) joint ventures; c) distribution agreements; d) license agreements; e) rights agreements and e) co-production agreements (Gomez, 2016). We argue that this type of analysis can be useful in debates about global media concentration by providing a supplement to other measures of media concentration (Albarran, 2002; Noam, et. al, 2016).

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Id: 17527

Title: How dependent' An in-depth investigation of news companies' Facebook dependency in terms of traffic, social sharing and revenue

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This exploratory paper analyses monetary and power relations between Facebook and news companies by investigating their web traffic sources, social sharing practices and content distribution on Facebook. The paper also seeks to determine the extent to which news companies' revenue is derived from the platform. This is an ambitious task because news corporations don't publish any social media related revenue. Five New Zealand media companies are used as case studies to examine the issue. Two of the companies are news publishers, two broadcasters and one a digital start-up. The findings of the paper are primarily based on the quantitative analysis of web traffic and social sharing data. In general, academic and industry related reports have concluded that news publishers have become overly reliant on Facebook in terms of news distribution, audience attention and traffic. However, there are contradictory views about the nature and extent of this dependency, and this requires further evaluation.

Social media has become a popular research topic in academia, and the field of research is expanding. Researchers such as Christian Fuchs have extensively analysed social media companies in terms of audience commodification, monetisation and exploitation of digital labour. The Tow Center for Digital Journalism has also examined the power relations between Facebook and news publishers. However, this relationship requires in-depth empirical investigation especially in regard to social sharing and the monetisation of news content on Facebook.

To aid the analysis of relations between Facebook and news companies the concept of platform capitalism is utilised. Platforms make a profit by extraditing large amounts of data from their users and by operating as an intermediary between different user groups, and this business model allows them to control users and set rules for other participants on the platform. With the evidence gathered from the five case studies, the paper will consider the usefulness of the platform capitalism concept in understanding the monetary and power relations between news companies and Facebook.

Id: 17545

Title: Conglomeration, Oligopoly and Cultural Diversity: Critical Interpretation of the Structural Change in the Korean Film Industry

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The Korean film industry has been undergoing significant changes in the early 21st century. After a downward trend of Korean cinema in terms of the market share of domestic films and the export of Korean films in the late 2000s, Korean cinema has experienced a surge in the popularity of domestic films, marked by a significant increase in audience viewership figures. Several blockbuster movies, such as *The Host* (2006), *Masquerade* (2012), *Ode to My Father* (2014), and *The Admiral: Roaring Currents* (2014) recorded noticeable success with more than 10 million viewers each, which is a milestone indicating blockbuster-level success. Arguably, the crisis in Korean cinema hovering over the latter part of the 2000s disappears, at least ostensibly, if not fully.

The contemporary accomplishments of the Korean film industry, however, raise several significant questions, primarily because only a few blockbuster movies give rise to financial successes based on the monopolistic and/or oligopolistic market structure of the film industry. As selected blockbuster movies are being shown in the majority of screens, low budget movies created by independent filmmakers cannot achieve a tangible presence in Korean cinema. In other words, while some blockbuster movies, both Hollywood movies and domestic movies, have been shown at more than 1,000 screens all over the country, low budget movies, including art house films, have difficulties in finding screens, resulting in dismal failures. Likewise, only a handful of film distributors, including CJ E&M and Lotte Entertainment, vertically control the local film industries. In Korean cinema, several mega giants, both domestic and foreign, pursue a corporate sphere, emphasizing the prioritization of capital gains instead of pursuing cultural diversity, through developing screen monopoly and oligopoly.

As the political economy of cultural industries stresses the particular nature of the economic structure and dynamics of the cultural sector, this article investigates the structural change in contemporary Korean cinema through the combination of a critical political economy approach and in-depth interviews with film experts, including film directors, film critics, and film scholars occurred in fall 2017. It discusses the recent growth of the oligopolistic market structure, and it examines the emergence of transnational corporate sphere embedded in the screen oligopoly and the oligopolistic distribution system. It, therefore, addresses the ways in which Hollywood films are gaining more capital than local films through screen oligopoly in the exhibition sector. Finally, it maps out the influence of the screen oligopoly in the local film industries by investigating the impact of screen oligopoly on cultural diversity and identity.

Id: 17549

Title: The sustainability of community media and the State promotion policies. Lessons from Latin America

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Since 2004, for the first time in the history, at least nine Latin American countries have legally recognized the non-profit sector as provider of broadcasting services. Some of them also established mechanisms of promotion to support their sustainability. In this sense, the 2009 Argentine act is one of the most ambitious regulations according to human rights framework. The question is: Which is the relevance of state policies for the sustainability of community media? To answer it, the presentation analyzes the impact of legalization and state promotion policies on the sustainability of community media in Argentina between 2009 and 2017. It argues and offers data on the impact of state policies in the implementation of new radios and television stations, its legalization, equipment and infrastructure improvement, increase of own production, growth of its workers and their salaries, increase and diversification of their audiences, and strengthening their networks.

It conceptualizes media sustainability not only as economic, but also social, institutional and productive.

It is based on a comprehensive empirical research that involves quantitative and qualitative approaches, made during the last two years in the whole country and focused in three regions: collection and revision of documents about national and local policies, media markets, and history of non-profit media in each region; interviews with their workers and activists; surveys and focus groups with its audiences.

The argument is that state policies of legalization and promotion from human rights framework proved to be crucial for the growth and sustainability of non-profit media. Although the sector of community, alternative and popular media in Latin America has emerged against authoritarian or dictatorial states, and remained for decades in illegality, the state action of legalization and promotion from the perspective of the human right to communication, has proven to be fundamental for the growth and sustainability of non-profit media in contexts of high concentration of private ownership of media.

Id: 17569

Title: The social organization of PRIVATE ' PUBLIC modalities: dilemmas in media research

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The Internet has focused attention on two coterminous trajectories within sociology with major implications for political economy: one, the private, is directed at the central value of the individual whose self is absorbed-as-projected through the network; the second, the public, is the communitarian / collective nature of the network itself, described by network effects. One is essentially a matter of private interests taking care of themselves in relation to others and in keeping with social relations as central to human survival and meaning), while the second is a function of multiple communicative interactions. Both categories operate as overlapping modalities: the individual self operates in the social world of networked public communication. The modalities are unstable, requiring more attention if the opportunities inherent within networked communication are to shift toward a system that promotes and sustains collective interests aimed at productive social life, rather than advancing “the self.” Such attention will require interventions in the business-as-usual focus on self-interest, which has been offered as the benefit of networked communication. Such Internet usage is determined by neo-liberal ideology, which Wendy Brown argues is constituted as responsabilization, a condition in which the individual is expected to utilize the tools available with which to survive – alone – with minimal State welfare support. More recently, Melinda Cooper has historicized the way the family has been identified as the primary source of social meaning, thereby privileging the individual within the hegemonic US neo-liberal and neo-conservative movements. This presentation argues that the constructs that drive the Internet and its applications actively generate the selfish private, creating a value system of abnegation in which public policy is increasingly difficult to sustain. How to resolve the struggle of the self against public is a central research dilemma within communication, media and cultural studies.

Id: 17574

Title: How to Think about Cyber Sovereignty: The Case of China

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Betting on the strategic importance of cyberspace and ICTs in the renewed global scramble for command and power, the Chinese state has expressed a clear intention to defend, improve, and assert its strategic interests in cyberspace. Its cyber power strategy is intended to build a regulatory-and-institutional architecture compatible with the country's emerging cyber-power status. The small central leadership group for cyber affairs established in 2014 in conjunction the China Administration of Cyber (CAC) is the top-level control room for overseeing cyber security, on the one hand, and for developing programs and policies to support China's strategic interests at home and abroad, on the other. In the slew of actions the state has undertaken in respect to cyberspace, the notion of cyber sovereignty is the hallmark gesture. It has prompted China watchers and Internet pundits to ask, how does the cyber sovereignty edict facilitate or hinder China's global integration? And to what extent is cyber sovereignty portending the "nationalization of the Internet" (Herold, 2011)?

This paper argues that there is no systematic attempt to account for political economy in sovereignty construction. For the dominant liberal perspective on China's Internet has generated a corpus of scholarship full of dichotomies, which is caused in general terms by the blind spot on the entanglement between the Internet and capitalism, between the state and political economy. To make a more accurate assessment of China's cyber sovereignty edict, this paper makes the case for complicating the popular constructs of the Internet, of the state, and of sovereignty, individually and collectively. For this purpose, throughout the discussion, this paper draws upon critical insights that escaped liberal-and-neoliberal straitjackets and detected the intertwining between the state and political economy. The conceptual discussion is followed by empirical analysis of policies the Chinese state enacts and statements it makes under the banner of cyber sovereignty. With qualitative content analysis and policy study, this paper argues that cyber sovereignty is not a coherent thing but entails an ongoing balancing between the quest for security and the quest for opportunity.

Id: 17600

Title: [Panel] Varieties of Digital Labor [Presentation] Panel Description

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: The term "digital labor" has been applied to a wide range of practices, including paid/unpaid work, online surveillance and the extraction of surplus value, as well as various types of work across a range of industries that involve digital technologies. The purpose of the panel is to explore the dynamics of digital labor to determine the similarities and differences between different types of digital labor processes and practices. As such, the panelists explore a range of activities that are all associated with digital labor in some way. This includes the labor involved in the creation and maintenance of free and open source software; the changing nature of labor in the journalism and video games industries, as well as counter-hegemonic practices aimed at the reappropriation of digital technologies by Ghanaian women and transnational trade with China. Each author will draw from his or her empirical work to inform their analysis, and a variety of perspectives will be represented by the members of the panel, including critical political economy, postcolonial feminism, labor process theory, and theories of social reproduction and the commons.

Participants: Benjamin Birkinbine (University of Nevada, Reno), Janet Kwami (Furman University), Nicole Cohen (University of Toronto - Mississauga), and Ergin Bulut (Koc University)

Id: 17602

Title: [Panel] Varieties of Digital Labor [Presentation] Toward a Typology of Digital Labor

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: The term “digital labor” has been applied to a variety practices that are enabled by digital technologies or take place on digital platforms. The term has been used to describe both the immediate production of digital tools, such as software or algorithms, but it has also been used to highlight the ways that users provide “free” content that can be commercially exploited by digital platforms. Furthermore, within the literature on digital labor, there is a general tendency to overlook other types of labor that falls outside the digital realm. To address some of these shortcomings, this paper is primarily aimed at providing some conceptual clarifications on the different types of labor involved in digital labor processes. Rather than privileging the purely digital aspects, I instead focus on the social relations as well as the affective impulses that undergird digital labor processes. Drawing from empirical work with free software developers as well as literature from critical political economy, labor process theory, and the commons, this paper provides a typology of digital labor.

Id: 17608

Title: The Neglect of Critical Political Economy in Democratic Corporatist Countries: Assessing Dutch Journalism Studies

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In Britain and the United States a significant number of scholars and other observers have pointed to journalism's political economy as a key explanation for what is often referred to as a "crisis" in journalism (e.g. McChesney, 2012). Such structural analyses were to be expected, for in those countries critical political economists have long occupied visible positions in academia. Britain boasts James Curran, the Glasgow University Media Group, and others. In the US Janet Wasko and Robert McChesney, among others, are prominent.

The Netherlands, one of the most progressive countries in the world, nonetheless shares many characteristics with Britain and the US. All three countries are western, capitalist democracies with a privately-owned, advertising-dependent newspaper industry, which has suffered many layoffs. The countries have sophisticated and growing public-relations sectors and depend on the same news agencies for much foreign coverage. The prevailing practice of their professional journalists remains objectivity. Like Britain, the Netherlands still has a strong public broadcaster, limiting the influence of private ownership and the profit motive. Nonetheless, the Dutch public broadcaster substantially depends on advertising revenues and in the 21st century has come under sustained ideological attack, especially from right-wing politicians, forcing it to reorganize and implement severe budget cuts. In short, as in Britain and the US, commercial interests reign over the Dutch news media (Donders and Raats, 2012; Dutch Media Authority, 2015).

This paper argues that critical political economy is the blind spot of Dutch Journalism Studies in the 21st century. It extends the Anglo-American tradition of critical political economy to continental Europe. This is a worthy project because of the real and perceived differences between Liberal and Democratic Corporatist countries (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). With a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of three major journals (Journalism, Journalism Studies, European Journal of Communication) from 2000 to 2016, and a review of the canonical books on Dutch journalism, the paper first establishes that the scholarship on Dutch journalism ignores critical political economy. Subsequently the paper argues for its salience by way of an in-depth evaluation of the existing scholarship's findings, specifically on sourcing and the concept of "media logic." The paper concludes with identifying causes of the neglect of critical political economy in Dutch Journalism Studies, including a culture of conformism common to Democratic Corporatist countries and a social taboo regarding the examination of capitalism.

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Id: 17612

Title: The Challenges to the Apparently Emerging Digital Democracy in India

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: India is the largest democracy in the world. Since Independence from Great Britain in 1947, political democracy has taken deep roots thanks to the visionary leaders of the immediate post-independent India. The Indian General Elections involving more than 815 million voters is seen as the greatest democratic exercise in the world. The Indian media have been playing a great role in stabilizing the democratic ethos of the country. In the recent years India too has been a witness to the digital media – 500 million is the number of internet users in 2017. There has been the general assumption that a society drenched in information in a digital age is inherently a democratic one. It was thought that the internet will be an unprecedented democratizing force, a place where all can be heard and everyone can participate equally. This has been the big hope for Indian democracy too. This paper would like to argue that the hope of an emerging digital democracy in India has been belied due to the following factors, among many others: 1) the digital divide is too great to even speak of a digital democracy in India; the internet in fact reflects and amplifies real-world inequalities; 2) a medium with the capacity to empower people has been turned in to a tool of social control; the internet has reinforced the power structures of the real world – not empowered them; 3) capitalism's colonization of the internet has made the internet an unparalleled apparatus for government and corporate surveillance; a handful of giants – Airtel, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Jio, Reliance, Vodafone, often in collusion with the powers that be, remain the gatekeepers.

Key words: Democracy, Digital Age, Internet, Gatekeeper

Theoretical Framework

Public sphere: Cyberspace is seen as the new public sphere. But it is worthwhile examining how far the cyberspace has enabled a digital democracy in India.

Methodology

It is an observational – analytic – descriptive study. The researcher being an avid observer of the Indian polity and the economics & politics of technology will be able to do an in-depth analysis of the actual situation on the ground and describe it for the readers.

Literature Review

The paper would look into the research already undertaken by Cynthia Alexander and Leslie A. Pal (1998), Barry N. Hague and Brian D. Loader (1999), Kenneth L. Hacker (2000), Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (2012), Bernard Grofman et al. (2014), Astra Taylor (2014), Robert W. McChesney (2014), and Daniel Kreiss (2016), among many others.

Id: 17620

Title: [Panel] Varieties of Digital Labor [Presentation] Frictions of Love at Work: Materializing Labor and Theorizing Production in the Digital Game Industry

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: What does it mean to love your job? Why do we have to do what we love? In the cultures of digital game production, love produces hopeful and aspiring subjects as well as social inequalities and precarity. In this talk, my goal is to demonstrate how love is deployed to resolve antagonisms both within and beyond the workplace. Love as an ambivalent cultural force is strategically mobilized within the workplace. Yet, at the same time, love flows beyond the workplace as an essential material force in the reproduction of labor power. I suggest that labor of love in digital game production has to be understood in frictional terms. Game production is not simply an economic process. Rather, it is closely linked with social reproduction as a political problem. This new emphasis on social reproduction will shift our focus from labor to life and life's materiality. Rethinking game production as a reproductive question will also help demystify the employment form and contractual relationship constitutive of liberalism and even at times of critical cultural labor studies.

Id: 17621

Title: Learning to Labor Safely and in Dignity: Turkish Soap Opera Workers' Response to Precarious and Dangerous Work

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Turkey's colorful television screens travel globally including the Middle East, the Balkans, and even Latin America. The formidable actor behind this circulation is the soap opera industry, whose economic success placed Turkey second after the U.S. in TV series exports. More than 100 countries import Turkish soap operas, putting the trade volume at \$350 million in less than a decade. The goal is to reach \$1 billion until 2023.

Both the industry and the government are proud of this boom, as it brings money and “soft power” to the country. However, this pride is less visible and rather contested across the labor force behind this glamor, primarily because jobs are precarious, exploitation rates are high, and exploitation logic is rigid. One is likely to work six days a week to produce these 120-minute episodes. In the words of an industry professional, “it is like shooting a movie every week” where a typical work day lasts between 14-16 hours.

Undoubtedly, all of this takes a significant toll on the workers' physical and mental health, leading to serious injuries and even death at work, and workers are reacting to these precarious and exploitative labor conditions. They made a few gains, having their working conditions classified as “too dangerous” at the level of the Ministry of Labor. And industry workers, above and below the line, have ultimately formed unions.

Drawing on trade publications, performers' contractual agreements, and findings from an ongoing ethnographic research in Turkey's soap opera industry and its unions, this presentation will address the bodily dimensions of precarious labor and workers' organizing efforts to improve their labor conditions. Particularly, I will shed light on how the two unions of both above and below the line workers are conducting various campaigns and tactics to counter the bodily and legal dimensions of precarious work. I will argue that precarity, a common phenomenon across media industries, needs to be thought beyond the economic frame, pulled down, and linked with materiality upon which workers' struggles to “log out” are structured. In that regard, this presentation makes a contribution to studies of cultural work through the lens of the Global South, a marginalized perspective in the literature.

Id: 17639

Title: Cognitive capitalism, free labor, and financial communication: A critical discourse analysis of social media IPO registration statements

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Over the past few decades, capitalism has undergone a series of significant changes in terms of its structures, strategies, labor relations, and regulations. These changes and their much-disputed effects have been named variously by such terms as the ‘new economy,’ ‘cognitive capitalism,’ ‘emotional capitalism,’ ‘post-Fordism,’ and ‘netarchical capitalism.’ Regardless of the different labels, one fundamental commonality among them is the importance of information and communication technologies in reorganizing not only the existing economic relations, but also our social and cultural relations. Of particular importance recently is the role that social media play in dealing with the crisis of the stationary state, in which the problems of domestic market saturation, over-production, declining profits complicate the pace of capital accumulation.

In view of that, this paper seeks to analyze the intersection between cognitive capitalism, free digital labor, and financial communication through a critical discourse analysis of major social media corporations’ initial public offering (IPO) registration statements issued when their shares were being sold to institutional investors and the public. In so doing, it first tries to integrate the theoretical insights from two branches of critical social theories: cognitive capitalism and cultural political economy. The paper will identify certain converging theoretical themes and analytical foci between the two, especially regarding the crucial importance of financial communication as a central hegemonic apparatus. The central argument is that cognitive capitalism is not merely to observe that various dimensions of our cognitive activity – information, knowledge, and emotion – have become a commodity, but more importantly to pay special attention to the central role that human cognition plays in organizing, enabling, legitimizing, and reproducing the current post-Fordist capital accumulation. Under cognitive capitalism, fixed distinctions that existed for much of the earlier stage of capitalism, such as between production and consumption, between manufacturing and service, between labor and leisure, between work and play, between economy and culture, and between reality and virtuality, are now disappearing.

Considering major social media companies’ IPOs as a key manifestation of cognitive capitalism, the paper then proceeds to offer a critical discourse analysis of social media IPO statements to examine empirically how social media companies appropriate such notions as innovation, connectivity, economic growth, participation, and community to advance their economic and financial interests, and eventually to reveal the complex, multilayered intersections between cognitive capitalism, free labor, and financial communication. Findings would reveal that social media IPO statements treat social media as a savior of the post-Fordist, sluggish capitalist accumulation regime, and as such,

they are extolled not only as an autonomous agent of economic growth but also as a good servant of the public interest.

Id: 17644

Title: The Political Economy of Public Media Policy in the Digital Ecology

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The formation of a new coalition government in New Zealand in the wake of the 2017 election ended three terms of National-led governments and raised the prospect of a significant shift in media policy. National had insisted that in the digital media ecology, the funding of public broadcasting institutions was no longer a priority and that platform-neutral contestable funding of local content would ensure the quality and diversity of content. This approach led to the abolition of the TVNZ public charter, and the closure of the two commercial-free channels (TVNZ 6 and 7) after their funding was discontinued, while both Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and the local content funding agency, NZ On Air, had their funding frozen.

The new government is led by the Labour Party in coalition with NZ First and the Green Party. The manifestos of all three were broadly supportive of increased support for public interest media. With the appointment of Labour's Clare Curran as the new Minister for Broadcasting, Communications and Digital Media, Labour's framework has been given priority. This proposed a NZ\$38m expansion of RNZ's remit to restore a commercial-free television channel, along with a new public media funding commission to make independent recommendations on future funding levels and arrangements for state sector media.

The policy challenges facing the new government in some respects parallel those of the incoming Labour-led government in 1999. Coming back into power after three terms in opposition, Labour's manifesto promised to revitalise public broadcasting following a decade of neoliberal reforms. However, the media ecology Labour faces in 2017 entails new policy complexities. Deregulation, financialisation and convergence have not only intensified commercial pressures on the media, they have engendered important shifts in the ways audiences discover and engage with media content. In turn, this complicates the traditional models of state intervention intended to deliver public service outcomes as well as the normative assumptions underpinning the legitimacy of regulatory intervention and public funding mechanisms.

Adopting a critical institutionalist framework and drawing on the author's on-going engagements with a range of policy and industry actors (including the new minister), this paper will highlight key shifts in media policy trajectory since 1999. In doing so, it will highlight the key differences between the 1999-2008 Labour initiatives and its new manifesto. The paper will then analyse the potential of Labour's public media manifesto to deliver the outcomes it envisages, and the probable challenges it could face from vested institutional interests within the media ecology (in both the public and commercial sectors). It will also consider the potential for intra-party and inter-ministerial priorities to circumscribe the policy options available to the new minister. The discussion will thereby highlight the way political-economic interests in the media ecology manifest in public policy and how power-relations and contests over resources are contextually negotiated.

Id: 17650

Title: Time , Ecology and Commodity Fetishism

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The fetishism of commodities obscures the relationship between commodity exchange, production and labour exploitation. Within capitalism the pleasures of consumerism preclude collective apprehension of social totalities and historical processes. Furthermore, the environmental deprivations of energy extraction and the structural inequalities of socio-ecological exchange reside even further from the lifeworlds of commodity fetishism. One can argue that this situation is worsening. Andreas Malm notes that the globalisation of capitalism has produced the greatest separation between energy, production and consumption in recorded history. Fossil fuels are taken from deposits in one country to combustion in another where commodities are manufactured for sale in third. However, these geo-spatial dimensions of carbon intensive supply chain capitalism are not readily apparent. To put it another way the role of transnational corporations in conjoining fossil fuel extraction with consumer culture has not been sufficiently analysed. This general predicament is also time related. I will argue that the real-time imperatives of a globally mediated consumer culture mitigates against temporal and coeval appreciations of our carbon based planetary-ecological crisis. Its capitalist origins, futurity and highly differentiated cultural impacts elude contemporary depiction. Yet, this is not a permanent or universal condition ; global counter tendencies are at work. The multiple ramifications of accumulating CO 2 emissions and anthropogenic climate change are forcing their way into political consciousness. Local, national and transnational manifestations of the climate justice movement are increasingly evident. Given these circumstances I will outline a time related critique of commodity fetishism which is ecologically informed and politically apposite

Id: 17661

Title: Towards a political economy of surveillance: an argument for nuance

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Several political economy and Marxist theorists have linked surveillance to the reproduction of capitalism, even to the point of declaring that a new form of capitalism – surveillance capitalism – has come into being. This form of capitalism relies heavily on data exploitation to generate super profits and control surplus populations, and communication companies have colluded with governments to ensure ubiquitous surveillance across the globe.

However, these theorists have had little to say about the specificities of surveillance, and how different forms of surveillance are used in the reproduction of inequality and the maintenance of unsustainable futures. This paper will examine this issue in relation to South Africa's state surveillance practices for criminal justice and national security purposes.

In South Africa, a special judge is required to issue interception directions (or warrants) to interception clients such as the police and the civilian and military intelligence services, before the communications of particular targets can be intercepted. The judge's work is overseen by an Inspector General of Intelligence and the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence.

Mass surveillance on the other hand, does not fall under Rica, which means that this form of surveillance is under-regulated. Furthermore, Parliament and the Rica judge have also insisted that Rica does not regulate specific forms of surveillance, which means that if the interception clients have received a warrant, they can use any form of surveillance they see fit, including highly intrusive tactical surveillance tools like IMSI catchers and intrusion software. Yet, increasingly, privacy advocates are arguing for these tools to be more tightly regulated as they are much more intrusive than traditional forms of interception.

However, state surveillance in South Africa is not ubiquitous. In fact, my research has pointed to the government underinvesting in the lawful interception process, while investing significantly in tactical surveillance tools that can be used to track specific people of interest, such as political activists and journalists. Classical mass surveillance of the sort exposed by Edward Snowden in the United States, appears to be of little interest to the South African state, even though it and the domestic surveillance industry are eminently capable of such ubiquitous surveillance.

Drawing on interviews with some of the key players in state surveillance, as well as evidence emerging from several legal cases, I argue that these disparities are not accidental. Rather, they are a deliberate attempt to weaken law enforcement and intelligence work targeting massive and corrupt profit-taking by corporate interests linked to the state, while prioritising those forms of surveillance

that can be used to target opponents of grand corruption. More broadly, those elements of state surveillance that could expose white collar crime are being run down, while those elements that can be used to frame criminality as a working-class illness are being prioritised.

The paper concludes with the observation that while totalising theories of surveillance are valuable, political economists also need to be historically specific and recognise the importance of nuance in their arguments.

Id: 17677

Title: Media-Corporation Clientelism in China: A Case Study of Economic Corruption of CCTV-2

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Drawing upon the economic corruption of Financial and Economic Channel of China Central Television (abbreviated as CCTV-2), the paper explains how market provides the key mechanism by which journalism ethics are eroded. Exploiting CCTV's national monopoly status, their identity as journalists of national television, and the blurry boundary between advertising and editorial department, CCTV-2 and its executives have developed a form of media-corporation clientelism where their clients' products, services and interests were promoted and publicized in exchange for personal benefits. This paper also argues that the media-corporation clientelism can't be fully understood without taking political powers into consideration. The political economy of Chinese society, characterized by state monopoly capitalism and the popularity of guanxi relationship, is particularly vulnerable to the phenomenon of clientelism, among which media-corporation clientelism is a typical one.

Based on a case study of economic corruption of CCTV-2, this paper first describes how media-corporation clientelism was bred in CCTV, China's only national television. Through the theoretical lens of clientelism, this paper then explains that media-corporation clientelism in China shared the similarity with other clientelistic relationship in the world, such as the blurring boundary between the public and private, the asymmetrical allocation of resources, and the illegal, personalized, reciprocal relationship between patrons and clients. However, the paper argues that the discussion of clientelism in both political science and anthropology in western country is insufficient to explain China's clientelistic system. The seemingly media-corporation clientelism in China is not only about media and commercial entities; rather it has to be mediated by political power. Although state is not in the direct transaction between patrons and clients, political power is the key intermediaries of clientelistic exchanges. Therefore, the media-corporation clientelism has to be understood in the framework of 'state-media-capital tripartite relationship'. Furthermore, I also argue that political control renders Chinese media particularly vulnerable to corruptive clientelistic relationship.

Media's monopoly on public discourse and their role as parts of the Party-State grant huge political privilege. The result of such institutional arrangement is a unique system of state and private collaboration: commercial advertisers and private investors contribute to the economic foundation of official organ, or much more exactly, quasi-official organ's economic foundation. CCTV's 'political' monopoly status at the central level guaranteed its dominant market position.

Last but not least, the case of economic corruption of CCTV-2 raises a haunting problem over the supposed contradiction between market and state control. As some scholars in the very early time of China's economic reform imagined, market could lead to sharp conflict between political control and commercial freedom upon media. Recent scholarship argued against this opinion, suggesting that Chinese journalists in both Shenzhen and Shanghai are subject to political power in exchange for economic privileges. My study of CCTV-2, which currently demonstrates the collusion between

media and market hopefully illuminate how commercialization has created the state-mediated clientelism between media and corporation.

Id: 17683

Title: Infrastructure Struggles in India: Between Maoism and the State

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Infrastructure means different things to different people. One person's infrastructure can be another's obstacle or tool used to dominate specific populations. Even in the 21st century, every day infrastructures of transport and mobility remain for the most part an obstacle to its navigations by the visually disabled who are, in this sense, structurally excluded from a society in which infrastructure often is taken for granted by the visually abled. The ubiquity, reliability and invisibility of infrastructures works to the advantage of communities but also to their disadvantage. And therefore infrastructure, seen in terms of learned behaviour by the members who use it, is also contested given that in this example of the Maoists in India, infrastructure is seen as the basis for furthering state hegemony over indigenous communities in East and Central India. Maoists are involved in disrupting dominant infrastructures including electricity grids and communication networks. So if infrastructures are contested one could, following Dourish and Bell (2011: 96), define "infrastructures as crystallisations of institutional relations" that "reflect and embody historical concentrations of power and control, and are instruments through which access is managed". In a country the size of India the provisioning of infrastructure has been a priority for successive post-Independent governments although rather typically it has been accompanied by corruption, bureaucracy, top-down processes that have been rolled out in remote, rural areas such as in Maoist Central and Eastern India, in buffer areas such as North East India and disputed areas such as Kashmir with less urgency than in other parts of urban and rural India. People's access to communication in these regions is limited because the government sees communications as a security issue. When the State invests in communications infrastructures, it is primarily for reasons of national security and only secondarily for use by local communities. Taken in this sense Maoists, via their deliberate targeting of information infrastructure are involved in curbing the potential of the Indian State to further exploit these communities via their access and use of infrastructure that could hasten their alienation from their local cultures, lands and livelihoods. However and arguably, while such interventions against the developmentalist state will be deemed necessary by communities living on the edge, a major consequence of such disruptions could well result in the further marginalisation of these communities. This presentation will explore the political economy of information infrastructure, and the contested nature of its provisionings.

Id: 17696

Title: Arab Television Industries after Netflix, Disruptions and Continuities

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In the Arab world, television is the traditional media that has remained resilient throughout the rise of digital platforms. However, the emergence of online streaming, widespread social media and mobile gaming as well as the mass adoption of smartphones and Smart TVs are presenting disruptions to an industry already plagued by reliance on political funding, transnational audiences and limited competition. The paper proceeds in three sections. First, the business models of free-to-air satellite channels, Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) and Over-the-top (OTT) providers is described and analyzed. These business models are characterized by monopolistic practices and partnerships between the telecom operators and media providers. Second, the paper reveals how television programmers, producers and consumers are reacting to the disrupting emergence of local (U-Turn in Saudi Arabia), regional (ICflix, Shahid, Cinemoz and Iflix) and global (Starz Play, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video) OTT players. Only present since 2015, these players are expanding quickly with estimated revenues to rise from 416 Million USD in 2016 to 1.714 Billion USD in 2022. Third, the paper presents case studies to reveal how these disruptions are reinforcing the commodification of cultural industries in the absence of clear regulatory mandates regarding production and distribution. A close attention is paid to the development of media platforms unrestricted by national or regional regulation. This paper seeks to address a void in the research of global streaming platforms, their strategies and impact on the receiving communities. While these platforms are assisting producers and consumers to eschew the control of traditional media companies, the study identifies emerging forms of structural dependencies and control. Anchored in a critical political economy approach, this paper examines the historical structure and inequalities in the development of Arab television industries in order to address pressing policy questions regarding ownership, regulation and financialization. The research is based on close analysis of company strategies, supported by interview evidence, which seek to identify the multilayered structure of technological, business, creative and regulatory disruptions in Arab television industries.

Id: 17711

Title: Digital Labor in the Newsroom

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: What does the work of journalism look like in a digital age? How is the labor of journalists being transformed as journalism digitizes? This paper presents findings from an empirical study of digital journalists in North America to understanding what it is like to labor in networks of high-speed information production and circulation. Drawing on a critical political economy framework and in-depth interviews with journalists, the paper provides an overview of the structural dynamics shaping digital journalists' working conditions, then examines how these dynamics manifest in daily working conditions, including issues of control, speed, analytics and measurement, intensification, commodification and resistance. The paper argues that media scholars need a better understanding of what the work of journalism looks like when it occurs outside of the boundaries of time, space, deadlines, and traditional formats, in the context of the specific, digital-first business models for advertising, circulation, and consumption being developed to maximize the surveillant precision and extractive potential of digital technologies.

Id: 17726

Title: Impact of Online Newspapers On Print Newspapers And Other Traditional Media in Zambia

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Introduction: The advent of any new medium always raises interest about its impact on the existing media “eco-system”. Whenever a new medium emerges its relations with the traditional media has to be defined in two major areas: displacement effects (specifically cannibalization effect and product substitutability) and content. This has been the case with the new media, and specifically the online newspapers, which are the focus of the present study. Earlier studies (during the first decade of online newspapers – 1990s) focused on the market and readership relations between the (parent) print newspapers and their online versions.

In terms of impact on readership, much displacement effects studies focused on the extent to which the readers reduced the time they spend on the print version of the newspaper. Despite these earlier efforts, scholars are agreed that the questions around both the economic impacts and the audience dynamics and preferences remain largely unresolved and somewhat mystical. The studies were also conducted many years ago (during the formative or start-up years of the world-wide web, as a graphic interface of the Internet) and all of them without exception were conducted in the West.

The present study focuses on the readership and market relations (in Zambia) between traditional newspapers and other traditional media, notably radio and TV and the born-digital or online-only newspapers. It sets out to investigate the (probable) impact of online newspapers on access to, and consumption of news and information from, traditional (print) newspapers and radio and television in Zambia. It sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. How does readership of online newspapers compare with the respondents’ readership of print newspapers and generally exposure to other traditional media?
2. Has there been a drop in readership of print newspapers and consumption of news from other traditional media generally resulting from the respondents’ consumption of news and information from online newspapers.
3. Do the Zambian readers see online newspapers as compliments of, or substitutes for, traditional newspapers and media in general?
4. What can be concluded about the financial impact of the current market relations between online and traditional print newspapers?

Methodology & Methods:

The study combines logical positivist and behaviourist approaches to the search for “facts”. It is a cross-sectional reader survey, based on self-reports of sampled respondents. Data is being collected using a tablet-based questionnaire from 600 respondents, randomly sampled from 30 Smallest Enumeration Areas (SEA) and 600 households from all the eight (8) districts of Lusaka Province. Lusaka Province also houses Lusaka City, the capital of Zambia. Data is being analysed in SPSS. Inferential statistics will be used for tests of relationships between selected variables and for hypotheses testing. The paper is part of a bigger on-going PhD study titled, Online Newspapers and Reader Gratification: Modeling the Effects of Interactive Features, Content and Credibility among Zambian Readers. The whole study is being guided by a combination of the Uses and Gratification, Network Society and Mediatisation Theoretical frameworks.

Id: 17728

Title: The Political Economy of 'Free Media' - On the Post-Socialist Transition of the Press in East Germany

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the transition of the press from a state controlled propaganda apparatus to a free democratic media system in former socialist/communist countries in Eastern Europe; its focus is the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The leading question of the project is in how far the democratic potential that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional and/or political implementation in the post-socialist East German press. Contrary to current research, this project takes a political economy perspective in analyzing the tensions between the normative role news media hold in a democratic society and the imperatives of a newly developing, or rather established expanding Western market economy.

Based on extensive archival work, this paper shows that East Germany became the battle ground for various interests groups, East and West, but with all-overshadowing interests of West German political and economic groups. It analyzes in particular the dealings and strategies of the federal government in close connection to the major publishing houses Springer, Bauer, Gruner+Jahr and Burda. Called the "big four" these companies used three different strategies to explore the GDR market.

First, starting in December 1989, they started to sell high numbers of their own publications early on at a price ratio of 1:1. While publishers had been legally required to sell at the official currency exchange ratio of 1:3, the early undercutting of prices had several reasons, one was to secure future readership, another was the competition with one another.

The second strategy was the joined building of a privately run press distribution system (Pressegrosso), which only followed failed early lobbying efforts and policy work. Dividing the GDR into four zones, the "big four" distributed largely only their own publications, which caused an upheaval amongst small and medium-sized West German publishers who started their own information campaign in turn. Eventually, the practice was stopped but continued, partly because hard facts had been created, partly because the building of a local distribution system required time that was not available once German unification and all-German elections stood at the horizon.

The third strategy to secure future market interests were joint-ventures with East German publishers, a strategy employed also by small and medium-sized West German publishers. By June 1990, over ninety percent of East German newspapers were either in negotiations or had already signed contracts over investment shares of West German capital. These investments were needed because the East German press had outdated printing and editorial technology, a lack in know how and resources. It now handicapped GDR publications on a press market that was defined by fierce competition created not the least because of the massive import of West German publications.

Id: 17733

Title: From Slump Media to Trump Media

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper maps a theoretically-informed narrative history from slump media to Trump media. The global financial crisis of 2008 passed from a meltdown of finance capital to a generalized economic recession to an age of austerity. This was the immediate political/economic context in which the right-wing, nativist discourse of Donald Trump gained traction in the public sphere. News media were a crucial, constitutive but contradictory component of this conjuncture. In a provisional attempt to theorize, what I call Trump media, this paper draws on the critical legacy of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS), and its analysis of news media as sites of hegemonic struggle and ideological interpellation operating within the determinate constraints of a capitalist political economy. The paper posits five moments of news media involvement in the transition from slump to Trump Media: 1) as a causal contributor to the Trump spectacle, both as TV commodity and candidate; 2) as a relay for the ideological confusion and disarray of ruling elites' response to continuing economic uncertainty and social inequality; 3) as both a casualty of austerity resulting from financialization and the Facebook/Google platform duopolies, and as selective beneficiaries of the Trump spectacle – i.e.. for dominant national media – reaping the financial rewards of increased audience interest in the Trump spectacle; 4) as a site of struggle over two competing versions of hegemonic “common sense” (progressive neoliberalism vs. populist nativism) mobilized through the discourse of “fake news” by liberal established media and alt-right outlets such as Breitbart; 5) as a circuit within which challenges to both of these ideological constructions unexpectedly erupt, propelled by resistances such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the #Metoo movement.

Id: 17766

Title: A Political Economy Criticism to Big Data Communication Research

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In Internet age, big data propagates as new technology, which has changed the mode and mechanism of news production, also is driving the emergence of new epistemologies and paradigm shifts of communication research. We can see important changes in research subject, research questions, research perspectives, research methods of communication with methodological challenges and approaches of big data. It is necessary for us to rethink and criticize the big data shift of communication research from the perspective of political economy.

From the political dimension, big data shift of communication research under the spread of new liberalism can only become a tool to study the effect of the communication. De-historized communication research abandons epistemology commitment, leading communication research to be simplistic, experimental and digital. Big data shift of communication research is to maintain the existing system under the premise of natural justice of status quo, seeking to maximize the benefits for themselves according to the latest approved and popular methods, which is actually using big data shift to compete for discourse power, to achieve academic supremacy, create a "Sensor Society".

From economy dimension, the big data shift of communication research is an ideology feeding to the background of commercial globalization. Once again, it has fallen into the commercial logic of capitalism. It has become a profitable tool for academic marketing. With the concept and method of big data too close to marketing business logic, the communication research has become a business and entrepreneurship.

From the perspective of cultural psychology, we can use literature critic Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" theory to explain the big date shift of communication research. Different kinds of anxieties drive communication scholars to step out of the shadow of the previous predecessors, i.e. stronger in Bloom's word. They question the traditional research paradigm, using big data to re-institutionalized of communication, creating their own style of communication research, reconstructing their research approach, to become new stronger.

From a technical dimension, big data technology is not completely neutral and value free, which should be analyzed politically. Big data is megamachines in Mumford's philosophy of technology from the view of media ecology. Big data fetishism in communication research is depriving people 's independent consciousness, leading scholars to rely on technology increasingly. The logic of technology brings only cold results to the communication research, buries the contents and feelings of humanity, which leads to the loss of the true personality of human beings.

Communication study on the big data should retrospect European origin, go back to Marx, insist on public interest, keep profit-free academic character and position, question the premise of natural justice of economic liberalism and structural functionalism in administrative research, abandon the view of media centerism, focus on interaction of media and society, unequal power of power, class

oppression, gender discrimination. We should remind social justice and the goal of equal communication in mind to build a theory that challenges and question the status quo, and to rediscover the humanity and individuality of communication studies.

Id: 17786

Title: [Panel] Varieties of Digital Labor [Presentation] Labor of Love' Deconstructing Ghanaian Market Women's Use of Mobile Phones and Doing Business with China

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper deconstructs Ghanaian market women's use of mobile technologies and transnational trade with China with regards to their appropriation and counter-hegemonic practices in the digital economy. It focuses on ways in which their use of the mobile phone impact their labor as women doing business at the margins of the global economy. Using a postcolonial feminist perspective, this paper elucidates the power dynamics between Ghanaian market women's labor, mobility and the capitalist global structure by drawing on ethnographic data that make the invisible work of these women visible. A postcolonial feminist lens raises important questions about African women's engagement in the global information economy in terms of the opportunities as well as the challenges that are presented as they navigate the asymmetries of globalization.

Id: 17788

Title: [Panel] Varieties of Digital Labor [Presentation] Digital Labor in the Newsroom

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: What does the work of journalism look like in a digital age? How is the labor of journalists being transformed as journalism digitizes? This paper presents findings from an empirical study of digital journalists in North America to understanding what it is like to labor in networks of high-speed information production and circulation. Drawing on a critical political economy framework and in-depth interviews with journalists, the paper provides an overview of the structural dynamics shaping digital journalists' working conditions, then examines how these dynamics manifest in daily working conditions, including issues of control, speed, analytics and measurement, intensification, commodification and resistance. The paper argues that media scholars need a better understanding of what the work of journalism looks like when it occurs outside of the boundaries of time, space, deadlines, and traditional formats, in the context of the specific, digital-first business models for advertising, circulation, and consumption being developed to maximize the surveillant precision and extractive potential of digital technologies.

Id: 17832

Title: Argentine cinema in Spain: co-production, competition and policies

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The paper aims to analyze the presence and performance of Argentine cinema in Spain, it also realizes the conditions in which this presence takes place. This implies referring to the Argentine film industry, the strengthening of historical links with Spain, the factors that favor exports and the creation of a global cinematographic space. It is also necessary to focus on the film policies that involve both countries, given that there is a co-production agreement and both are actively participating in the Ibero-American space for film integration (Programa Ibermedia). However, these initiatives are not exempt from conflicts: for example, it is necessary to provide a critical view of the film integration process and of international co-production as a business model. Who benefits more from these initiatives, both in economic terms and in terms of cultural diversity? How does the globalization of cinema distribute the benefits and the damages that derive from it? It will be argued that all this depends on the specific form (resources, strategies) in which countries internationalize their films.

The methodology consists of sizing the presence (number of premieres) and performance (spectators and box office) of Argentine cinema in Spain from statistical sources produced by the Film Institutes of both countries (INCAA and ICAA, respectively). The hypothesis that guides the investigation raises that the circulation in Spain occurs within the framework of a new global becoming of Argentine cinema.

Id: 17843

Title: Artistic labor and co-creation in online game production

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This article focuses on the artistic labor in co-creation in online game production, arguing its definition needs to be expanded to include in-house labor mobility, especially under a Chinese context. In-house labor mobility foregrounds the importance of different types of labor in the chain of production. Using artistic labor in online game production as a case, the article analyzes how artistic labor is divided into specific subtypes to fill the needs of different projects in a company, while having staff within artistic labor competing and learning-by-doing to get elevated into more stable team or involved in a blockbuster game. Interviews with newly employed artistic staffs, chief artists, startup CEOs from Chinese online game industries show that artistic labor in-house turn out to be the most mobile position inside a company. Inside the team, daily work is very much fragmented and goal-oriented, because it can be transferred with low cost while it can satisfy the needs for great quantities of artistic goods inside a game. Sometimes they compete with each other to have some experimental game developments in the hope that it can attract the attention of upper leaders. Within a company, artistic staff can be deployed at anytime to a suitable project. Once the project is done, less work is needed for artistic maintenance. Also, work of artistic labor need to be overseen by chief artists, chief marketing and chief designers so as to evaluate whether the artistic creativity can be integrated with the company's strategy. Even in light of this, most of the interviewees identify the mobility of artistic labor in-house with a co-creation culture of game industry, and relate this mobility with a hope for a better position to make a good game. Studies of artistic labor as co-creator therefore need to expand to consider production organization in different contexts, the social meaning of being game artists in different cultures.

Id: 17851

Title: The housing bubble in the Spanish Press. A media discourse captured by the logic of elite-to-elite communication processes

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: There has been much discussion on the role of politicians and economists in failing to avert the 2008 financial crisis. However, less attention has been paid to the analysis and information supplied to the general public through the media, before and after the crisis. Taking as a case in point the burst of the housing bubble in Spain, in 2007, this paper analyzes the media views on the bubble –the main trigger of the recent Spanish economic and financial crisis–, as they were made public in the main national and financial newspapers.

To investigate this question, the study compiles and analyzes data on views on the bubble reported in more than 2.000 articles published by five Spanish dailies (the three leading national newspapers –El País, El Mundo and ABC–, and the two leading financial newspapers –Expansión and Cinco Días–). Quantitative and qualitative content analysis will be used as the basic methodology for research. This content analysis will be focused on the divergences between the nature, structure and frames of the opinions and comments on the bubble published by the two different types of newspapers under research –general interest dailies and financial dailies– in two different periods: from 2003 to 2007, when there was a widespread and continuous discussion of whether price bubbles were forming; and from 2007 to 2013, when everyone recognized openly the existence of a housing bubble burst and its central role in causing the Spanish economic and financial crisis.

The general hypothesis of the research is that before the crisis there was not a real discussion on the threat of a housing bubble, its causes and probable consequences, but a quite orchestrated technical and “neganionist” view. No significant differences are expected between general and financial newspapers. Only after the burst of the bubble, the media made an effort to explain the real causes and consequences of the extraordinary rise of house prices in the last decades, and to adapt its messages to different audiences, to their needs and problems. This research argue that in the case of the housing bubble in Spain, especially before the bubble burst, the press discourse –almost without distinction by formats and ideology– was “captured” by the logic of elite-to-elite communication, the dominant logic of news in high politics, economics and finance.

This paper, as a part of a more general project on the media coverage of the housing bubble in Spain (a project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness), contributes to the current discussion and research on the role of media in the process of public discussion and understanding of economic issues and policies, especially around crisis scenarios. More specifically,

from a journalistic perspective, the study suggests a need to pay special attention to the tangled web of interest and power which should be considered when thinking about the role of political sources and experts commenting and analyzing in the media technical and complex issues such as a housing bubble.

Id: 17885

Title: Independent monitors or Hostages of the Establishment' The Media and International election observers in the 2017 general elections in Kenya

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper examines how mainstream print media and international election observer missions fared as impartial election monitors in the 2017 general elections in Kenya. Ideally, election observation missions are intended to deter foul play and ensure free and fair polls, but it seems in practice from several examples in Africa, with the 2017 case in Kenya being the latest, these observer missions have vested political and economic interests that impair their capacity to give an impartial verdict. The media as the fourth estate and public watchdogs have a professional and democratic responsibility to expose anything that goes wrong during the electioneering period including any apparent partial judgment by election observers. But the monitorial and watchdog role of the mainstream media in Kenya in the 2017 elections has been questioned after a seeming deliberate neglect of contentious issues and obsession with trivial issues such as focusing on an ordinary citizen who turned up to vote while eating 'githeri' a local delicacy of beans and maize hence the branding 'githeri media' by Kenyans on social media. After the highly contested and controversial August 8th general elections, International observers in unison came out on the 10th August, even before the vote counting was complete and in the midst of allegations of gross vote rigging by the opposition to issue a statement that praised and hailed the elections as "credible, free, fair and transparent". When the Supreme Court of Kenya declared the August 8th polls "invalid, null and void", eyebrows were raised about the impartiality, motives and credibility of international observer missions and the role of the media in holding the observers to account in such circumstances.

Using a political economy of the media approach, I argue in this paper that there are macro and micro political and economic pressures at the local and international level that held hostage both the media and election observers hence they could not act as genuine independent impartial monitors of the 2017 Kenya elections. I will conduct a textual analysis of how two leading daily newspapers in Kenya, (The Daily Nation and the Standard) covered contentious issues during the election period with a special focus on the activities and verdict of the election observers before and after the elections. The aim will be to assess how well they played their role as independent election monitors and watchdogs in holding the election observers to account.

Id: 17912

Title: Sustaining Critical Media Research in the Struggle to Sustain the Public Research University

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: “... the culture wars on higher education have coincided with the majority’s economic decline for the simple reason that these wars propelled the decline by reducing the importance and economic claims of the American university and its graduates.”—Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University* (2012)

“Every academic is caught between their principles and the rewards that come from abandoning them, between the demands of capitalism and their old role as guardians of higher learning.”—Tegan Daylight, “The Difficulty is the Point,” *Guardian* (2017)

“A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.”—Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (2000, 31)

“... the starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is.”—Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (1971, 323)

This paper makes a case for the value of a cultural and historical materialist approach to examine the trajectory of critical media research in relation to the political-economic challenges facing the “neoliberalized” public research university, and in the process, to reflect on our location in that relationship in as researchers, teachers, students and citizens.

In *Unmaking the Public University* (2011), Christopher Newfield argues that the post-WWII expansion of funding for US public higher education was driven by a vision of a more equitable society, and thereby became an important force in the creation of a significant college-educated middle class. The crucial problem facing the public university is the result of a four-decade cultural and economic war aimed at “reducing the public importance and economic claims of the American university and its graduates,” and thereby to diminish and discredit “public education’s democratizing influence on American society” (6).

In a 2004 essay in *Javnost*, Kaarle Nordenstreng referenced the *Journal of Communication*’s seminal 1983 issue, “Ferment in the Field,” to propose a history of “ferments” in the field of communication and media research. Focusing on the relationship the study of communication to the political left, Nordenstreng contended that “the evolution of the field as a whole is closely related to leftist ideas,” although that history had “taken many turns and included many contradictions” (6).

This paper brings these two analyses together. First, it considers the practical and existential consequences of the neoliberalization of public higher education: ongoing depletion of public funding; replacement of tenure track faculty by casualized labor; exponential growth of administrative staff; dramatic increase in tuition and student debt; mounting pressures to generate corporate and federal grants—in sum, a relentless marketization of higher education. Second, the paper considers the consequences and challenges of these developments for the critical study of media and communication in light of the centrality of “new” communications technologies and means of communication to the rise and triumph of neoliberalized capitalism and the “neoliberal u” (Jyotsna Kapur 2016) it champions. In so doing, the paper reflects on the concrete challenges faced by critical communication scholars “caught between [our] principles and rewards” even as we struggle to become conscious of what we really are.

Id: 17913

Title: A new approach to old problems- the political economy approach to current affairs television programmes in New Zealand.

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Current affairs programmes have played an important part in the modern broadcasting context. From their inception, current affairs television programmes in many western countries were conceived as a central feature of broadcasting “filling in the background to the news and serving as a key location for network identity, and for the discharge of television’s public information responsibility and for shaping debate” (Turner, 2005:1). As important as the current affairs genre has been, there is a sense that it has been redefined by the growing commercial pressures that broadcasting has experienced. New Zealand television was deeply impacted by the turn to neo-liberal politics in the mid-1980s and this ushered in a period of deregulation and commercialism that has continued well into the 2000s. Eileen Meehan (1986) suggested that ratings are the ‘tangible’ proof that the networks’ intangible’ commodity, the audience, exists and thus the ‘commodity audience’ comes to be defined by ratings methodologies. The task for broadcasters, then, is to exercise influence within the market and to acquire programming that attracts the commodity audience. In New Zealand broadcasting, after deregulation, the commodity audience value has been the exclusive indicator of profits and revenue. The focus on commodification, along with accumulation imperatives provides a vital starting point for understanding the changing shape of media industries (Fuchs et al, 2010; Hirst, 2011). In 2017 for example, my research indicates that the move to entertainment-oriented current affairs continues and this paper will question and evaluate how this approach fails to provide media that can promote what the United Nations defines as sustainability and can, therefore, debate the urgent issues of entrenched power, social justice, and democracy. This paper will use quantitative data to demonstrate the rise to commercialism that has continued to grow in this key broadcasting genre and question how this approach must alter to address contemporary societies issues and be relevant for the 21st century.

Id: 18010

Title: Terms of Public Service: Framing Mobile Privacy Discourses

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: As users increasingly rely on mobile apps for a variety of services, from social networking to banking, a host of companies collect their personal data, using it to feed their business models and to discriminate among consumers. However, many users misunderstand the extent to which marketers collect and commoditize their data. Although they express concerns over the pervasiveness of data collection, they feel powerless to stop it (Turow et al., 2015). While the political economic structures underpinning such data collection have been extensively documented, few studies examine press coverage of privacy issues, particularly in the mobile context. Yet, the press plays a key role in constructing privacy debates. Its coverage reveals the extent to which it fulfills its public interest role in clarifying complex privacy policies, exposing privacy violators, and alerting users to potential privacy risks, which the popularity of mobile apps renders both ubiquitous and quotidian. It sheds light on the extent to which the press empowers the public by presenting potential policy solutions. Finally, its reliance on industry sources can serve as a barometer of industry influence over these debates, with significant policy implications given its preference self-regulation of data collection.

Engaging normative theories of the press (e.g. Christians et al., 2009), media elite theory (e.g. Freedman, 2014), and research examining the evolution of privacy coverage (e.g. Forniacciari, 2014), this study examines how the press covers mobile app privacy issues. Through qualitative textual analysis of mobile app privacy coverage in three major newspapers and one tech magazine between 2013 and 2016, this study sheds light on how the press frames mobile app data collection, addresses privacy rights, situates privacy violations, and which policy solutions – market-based, regulatory, or technological – it foregrounds.

Contributing to the debates about the construction of privacy discourses, industry input into these debates, and the role of the press in alerting the public to privacy issues, the results reveal the complexities and problems inherent in mobile privacy coverage. While privacy violations receive attention and the coverage captures growing user resignation in the face of data collection regimes, the call to accept and embrace the exchange of data for app services often bleeds into it. Coupled with significant attention to technical and self-regulatory solutions, this reveals the ongoing marketization of privacy discourses and the potential influence of powerful advertisers and media elites in privacy debates.

Id: 18053

Title: [Panel] Political Economy of Local Culture in China: Class, Nation and Gender
[Presentation] Panel Discription

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: The integration of China's dominant communication systems and cultural institutions into the circuits of neoliberal global communication order has made critical political economy an increasingly compelling framework for analyzing the processes and structures of Chinese cultural production. However, the enduring legacies of China's pre-modern and Mao-era cultural practices, the ever changing dynamics of social power relations along such cleavages as class, gender, locality, and urban-rural divisions, as well as the complex articulations of national, regional, local sites of cultural production and consumption, requires us to move beyond national and transnational levels of analysis to delve deeper into the political economy of vernacular culture. This entails an engagement with sites and modes of analysis that challenge the established dichotomies of "tradition" and "modern", "mainstream" and "alternative", "public" and "private", or "domination" and "resistance". Such analyses, in turn, will contribute to expanding both the theoretical and empirical purviews of the political economy of communication, making it a truly transcultural and translocal intellectual framework that is not only capable of accounting for local complexities and multiple sites and agents of popular struggles, but also appreciative of the variegated "resources of hope" that have too often been overlooked in the grand narratives of capitalist domination and cultural homogenization. Within a methodological framework that aims to connect the global with the local and combine political economy, history and ethnographic research, this panel offers four case studies of local culture in China.

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Id: 18055

Title: [Panel] Political Economy of Local Culture in China: Class, Nation and Gender
[Presentation] The Revitalization of Vernacular Cultural Festival: Resilience, Gender, and Village Politics

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Folk beliefs embody vernacular cultural practices in rural China. This paper illuminates the cultural insight and societal dynamics of the Zhanshanzhai Qiqihui (The “July 7 Fair”), a religious festival with an original in remote villages in the interior Jinyun County of Zhejiang Province since the mid-16th century that received China’s national cultural heritage status in 2011. The ritual involves the worship of a female deity, Chen Jinggu, a personification of a legendary heroine in folk story who was thought to be the protector of children, fertility and motherhood. Unlike China’s traditional patriarchal gender role of women, she is characterized by her independence, valour, and power. Chen Jinggu is now widely regarded by her believers as an almighty goddess.

This research investigates the festival’s history, its evolving political economic dynamics of logistic organization and funding, and villagers’ practices by conducting interviews and participatory observations in the four villages in Junyun county that have historically been the focal point of this festival. The study analyzes the ways in which the festival survived not only the havocs of Mao’s era but also the ever-changing processes of rapid industrialization and urbanization that have deprived the countryside of both its collective economic foundation and young male labour power. It argues that the sustenance and revitalization of the cultural practices lies on the peasants’ long lasting voluntary participation through self-organized activities including fundraising, performances of musical and ritual troupes, and parades in the villages. As resilient agencies, peasants work to mediate the political vibe and village’s relationship with the local state to mobilize necessary supports and recourses. In addition, the festival’s activities display a high degree of flexibility and adoptability. It not only inherits the traditional practices but also creatively absorbs modern forms of performance and expression. It is the creativities and resilience of the peasants that have kept the historical cultural event alive through continuous self-transformation. Most importantly, this study reveals the prominent contribution of women and youths in taking up the ritual troupes in the festival. This offers an alternative to the conventional understanding that man and the elderly normally dominate village affairs in rural China.

Id: 18056

Title: [Panel] Political Economy of Local Culture in China: Class, Nation and Gender
[Presentation] Collective and Amateur Modes of Cultural Production: Theoretical Reflections on Grassroots Communicative Practices in China in the 1950s and 1960s

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Because communication research as a discipline was imported into China in the 1980s, and because of its contemporary focus, its elite institution orientation, as well as its technological bias, researchers of Chinese communication has not paid much attention to an entire category of communicative practices associated with the majority of Chinese population during the Mao era: the media and cultural production activities of Chinese workers and farmers in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as soon as we begin to bring such practices under our research purview, it is clear that existing critical political economy and post-colonial theoretical categories such as “alternative media” and “subaltern culture” do not apply easily. In excavating these practices as subjects of study, this paper attempts to treat them on their own terms – that is, as “mass cultural activities” within the framework of China’s historical experiment with a mode of socialist cultural production. Specifically, after providing a brief overview of recent literature on organization of working class cultural activities in urban China during the Mao era, this paper draws upon field research on the organization of village drama production troupe in Jinyun County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province in Mao-era China to reconstruct an incipient socialist mode of rural cultural production that challenged the separation of material and cultural production and transcended the boundaries between professionalism and amateurism. In doing so, this paper demonstrates the limits of any linear logic concerning the political economy of communication and cultural development, showing how the most “advanced” post-capitalist political economy of cultural production actually existed in mountainous villages in the remote areas of rural China during the Mao-era. These self-organizing village drama troupes not only played a pivotal historical role in mediating tradition and modernity, negotiating state and village relations during the Mao era, but also continued to exert their influence in today’s rural cultural landscape.

Id: 18057

Title: [Panel] Political Economy of Local Culture in China: Class, Nation and Gender
[Presentation] Rural Subjectivity and the Cultural Self-Confidence of Chinese Peasants as a Social Class: Reflections on Village Spring Festival Gala Performances

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: To speak of the “subjectivity” of the rural and the cultural “self-confidence” of Chinese peasants as a social class and as transformative social agents is to posit a profound challenge against orientalist, urban-centric, and modernization theory-based assumptions concerning rural China and its residents. This is exactly what this paper sets out to do in terms of its theoretical agenda, and it does so through a study of the village spring festival gala as an index to an emerging political economy of rural culture in the era of “Internet Plus” and the Communist Party of China (CPC) newly announced national development strategy of “rejuvenating the countryside”.

This paper starts with a provocative insight derived from Lin Chun’s book *China and Global Capitalism*: rather than being taken as a generic pre-capitalist and pre-modern identity waiting to be integrated into capitalism and modernity, China’s peasant class –dwindling but still accounting for nearly half of the Chinese population – are reconstituting themselves as potential agents of post-capitalist social transformation in post-reform China. While such potentials have been amply demonstrated in the political economic and social realms in areas such as resistance against land seizures, these potentials can also be seen in the cultural realm, most visibly in the village spring festival galas that have become popular in many parts of rural China in the past few years.

Originated in Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, village spring festival galas have become a focal point of local cultural production, peasant identity formation, and rural rejuvenation. If CCTV’s inauguration of its Spring Festival Gala in 1983 marked the beginning of a rapidly modernizing and urbanizing Chinese state’s appropriation and reinvention of rural-based cultural traditions at the national stage, village spring festival galas, with their creative combination of traditional cultural forms, popular culture genres, and new media technologies, including their extensive appropriation of both the form and content of CCTV’s Spring Festival Gala, can be seen as rural China’s regaining of a transformative cultural subjectivity in a post-reform national cultural landscape.

Based on extensive fieldwork in Jinyun County, Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, the paper’s four main parts trace the political economy of village spring festival gala, map its enabling state and

village conditions, analyze its form and content, and discuss the prominent role of women and children in the production of these shows. Contextualizing this particular cultural form in relation to the larger processes of changing urban-rural relationship, the new developmental strategies, and national and local governments, this paper aims to illuminate a blind spot on cultural transformations in China. In doing so, it complicates the grand narratives of global modernity that have long posited the “death of the peasantry”. Peasants have not only survived as a social class, but also have become singing, dancing and performing subjects on the village stage; furthermore, they have linked themselves up and even projected themselves onto the cyberspace.

Id: 18064

Title: [Panel] Political Economy of Local Culture in China: Class, Nation and Gender
[Presentation] Land Justice' Class, Nation and Private Property Right

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Land governance in Taiwan has long been driven by neoliberal policies. The recent enactment of the Rural Rejuvenation Act provides the legal basis for government to expropriate private land. This has triggered waves of peasant movements and seen the formation of a class alliance among peasants, urban youths, and intellectuals. Most importantly, it has also stimulated a plethora of media texts and cultural practices advocating for “land justice”. Several movies, documentaries, songs, and art works have been inspired to address this source of discontent. In the meantime, news coverage by alternative media platforms and social media has successfully turned peasant struggles into media events and spectacles. Situating the land grabs and peasant resistances against them in a dual framework of Taiwan’s unresolved “national problem” and its continuing subordination to US hegemony, this study analyzes the political economy of these media and cultural practices, examining their forms, content, as well as their complex political entanglements with Taiwan’s internal class politics on the one hand, and its political and trade relations with mainland China on the other.

The paper argues that the agenda of the “land justice” movement, premised as it is upon the protection of private property rights, is problematic. It implicitly resonates with the underlying neoliberal principle to safeguard private property rights while simultaneously dismissing the idea of land as a common good. The call for justice in the form of “private land” could easily be justice not for peasants, but for landlords. In addition, the blind spot here is that as a US vassal state, Taiwan’s agricultural sector has long been subordinated to US domination. For instance, the World Trade Organization (WTO) adversely affects Taiwan’s rural land governance under the guise of its neoliberal framework. The land justice movements, however, have failed to address the unjustness of the WTO regime.

Within this context, the formation of class alliance between urban intellectuals and private landowners does not constitute an organic counter-hegemony in the Gramscian sense. The intellectuals who participated in the resistance were complicit with the oppositional Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the political battle against the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) government. After the DPP won the presidency in 2016, some intellectuals were invited to join the DPP administration and betrayed their land-losing rural allies. The political saga of the coalition of intellectuals, youths, and peasants further took a strong national dimension during the Sunflower movement in 2014, a subsequent protest opposing the passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement. The anti-China intellectuals and the DPP politicians hijacked the cause of land justice so as not to trade with mainland China. The production and circulation of “land justice” related

media and discursive practices ended up empowering the pro-independence DPP, not peasants. The paper concludes that the struggle for rural justice in Taiwan is ultimately inseparable from the struggle for China's national unification. It is only by unshackling the chains of the US imperialist hegemony that a socialist alternative for land governance will become possible.

Id: 18088

Title: Algorithm Discipline & Multiple Exploitation: Chinese Internet Content Labor in Information Commercialization

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: With the rise of BAT titans (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent) and the expansion of Internet market size, China has become the forefront of online content production mechanisms and organization modes innovation. More than 100 million self-employed workers are producing content on Chinese Internet platforms every day for profit. The KOL (key opinion leader) economy initiated by giant platforms has cultivated an astonishing derivative market. Thousands of Internet content production contractors——KOL incubation companies, accounts trading platforms, follower factories——has brought a booming influencer market which consists of a highly flexible labor control system that has profoundly changed the content production patterns.

Existing research on Internet content production usually see Web 2.0 users as a homogenous whole and pay attention to its democratic progressiveness or free labor exploitation. Information labor researches mainly focus either on classical discussion such as “Multitude” (Hardt & Negri, 2000), “Biopolitics” (Agamben, 1995) and “communism of capital” (Virno, 2004), or on labor exploitation in ICT factories (e.g., Jack Linchuan Qiu, Yi Pan, Yu Hong). Both provide valuable views for Internet content production research, but empirical analysis and case studies are still in lack of discussion.

This work focuses on how main Chinese Internet platforms and their derivative market impose algorithm discipline and multiple exploitation on content producers and how this influences the power structure of public opinion. The researchers will first gather and analyze a body of material (more than 100 texts) about Chinese Internet platforms and content derivative market. The collection includes market survey reports, news releases, speeches, blog posts, etc. This text analysis will provide an outline of Internet content production rhetoric and activities. A series of interviews will be conducted with more than 30 content producers on 7 Chinese Internet platforms, including social media (WeChat & Weibo), RSS(TouTiao), BBS (Baidu Tieba & TianYa), short video or live apps (Gif KuaiShou & Inke Live). Interviews are about producers’ working conditions, income, attitudes, workflow, self-identification, and their dependence and tension with the platforms and contractors. The researchers will also interview some content editors, production operators and algorithm staff from Internet companies in order to better understand the feedback control mechanism between platforms and producers.

All the materials will be qualitatively analyzed and organised in 5 parts. (1) An introduction of Internet content production industry in China (e.g. platform amounts, market size, population of producers) and its mainstream ideology (e.g. flexibility, entrepreneurship, sharing culture, etc.). (2) Labor control mechanism by Internet platforms (e.g. algorithmic discipline, economic stimulus, punishments, copyright constraints). (3) How content contractors commercialize almost all the content production factors (e.g. celebrity, social media accounts, followers) and impose multiple exploitation (e.g. commission fees, full-time employment without welfare, income pyramid among producers, even camera surveillance). (4) Likely outcome of public information commercialization, changes of power structure brought by monetized labor, and how the producers recognized their own situations. (5) Conclusion and reflective discussion. This research argues that labor commercialization in Internet content industry is more invisible and unchecked and practical analysis is an indispensable step in seeking solutions.

Id: 18091

Title: Is the Broadcasting Corporation British? The prospects for news and drama in an online world.

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper assumes that transformation in the television sector, as elsewhere, is driven by changes in technology, in the process of capital accumulation and in the political process. Over nearly one hundred years the UK has developed its own distinctive system of broadcasting shaped by law, regulation and cultural change. The paper identifies the forces driving change in this sector and seeks to place these changes in a broader, international context.

Broadcasting in Britain consists of both public and private providers. The five most popular of these are the BBC, funded by a government-approved licence fee; Independent Television (ITV), privately-owned and advertiser-funded; Channel 4 publicly-owned and advertiser-funded; Sky a privately-owned and subscription-based satellite service and Channel 5, privately-owned and advertiser-funded.

The paper explores the reasons for the survival of these broadcasters, noting the significant share of total audience that they have retained as well as the online 'catch-up' services they launched between 2007 and 2010.

Some comparison is attempted between the lessening presence, influence and profitability of broadcasters in the UK and the US and attention is drawn to the reduction in time spent watching TV in the UK. This is contrasted with concerns in the US about 'cord cutters', those terminating their large cable TV subscription packages. It will be suggested that the process of change is slower in the UK because of the relative popularity of the various national TV channels; though here too radical change is apparent.

By 2018 and variably in different countries many spectrum-reliant broadcasters have enabled access to their programmes online, either freely available or as a subscription offer. These Video on Demand (VOD) or Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) services have grown considerably since their initial launch some ten years ago and they are now arguably transforming the old landscape of TV. In the SVOD sector Netflix has emerged as probably the most successful operator to date, with a strong international presence and with no previous broadcasting history.

This paper will explore the ways in which one UK-based broadcaster, the BBC, operating under its new Royal Charter of 2017, seeks to survive in an international and increasingly online environment, with special reference to developments in the provision of news and drama. Some reference will be made to the economic and cultural significance of such dramas as *Three Girls*, *The Night Manager* and *The Coronation* (all BBC productions) contrasted with two examples of Netflix output: *The Crown* and *The Foreigner*. (422 words)

Id: 18092

Title: Search Engines in China: Advertisers or Information Intermediaries'

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In 2016, a young cancer patient Wei Zexi was misled by the information he found on China's leading search engine Baidu to a clinic that lied about its treatment method's efficacy. The information Wei accessed through Baidu is a sponsored search result, meaning the clinic paid Baidu to rank its link as a top result when Wei searched with the keyword it bid for. Wei's death after posting his story online provoked public outcry against Baidu. His tragedy exemplifies the importance of a critical understanding of search result rankings, as they influence users' perceptions of reality or even their life-and-death decisions.

When discussing search engines' advertising practices, the pressing question is whether search engines should be held responsible for the content users access through them. This study hypothesizes that search engines should take more responsibilities for content in sponsored searches than in organic (unpaid) searches. Traditionally, media entities have been defined as either common carriers or publishers/broadcasters. The former category is considered to have no control over the content they transmit, thus not being held responsible, and the latter has full control over and is responsible for the content (Calabrese and Mihal, 2014, pp.249-250). The online search engines as a new technology cannot fit into either category neatly. While Section 230 in The Communication Decency Act in U.S. and the "safe harbor principle" adopted by China generally treat online intermediaries as carriers to protect them from content liability, this paper proposes to conceptualize search engines as content influencers via an examination of search engines at three levels: the technology, their functions and the consequences of different possible conceptualizations.

The current search engine market and new state legislations in China both confirm my argument for holding search engines responsible for sponsored keyword search results. The marketing material from Baidu, the dominant player in China's search engine market, proves that the business model for search engines is to sell their users to sponsors. As profit seekers, search engine providers work essentially in the same way as traditional media broadcasters, though with higher level of precision and effectiveness. In response to the public outcry after Wei Zexi's death and also in line with the state's agenda to tighten its control over the Internet, the Chinese central government carried out two new regulations in 2016, The Provisions on the Administration of Internet Information Search Services and The Interim Measures for the Administration of Internet Advertising. Both legislations recognize the commercial logic behind the sponsored searches and define sponsored searches as advertising. Together, the two hold Baidu and other information search service providers partially responsible for the sponsored content they promote and regulate their business practices. Considering search results' impacts on their users and the oligarchic market situations in China, such legal measures are reasonable and necessary.

Reference:

Calabrese, A. & Mihal, C. (2014). Liberal Fictions. The Public-Private Dichotomy in Media Policy. In J. Wasko, G. Murdock & H. Sousa (Eds), *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications* (pp.226-263). Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell.

Id: 18102

Title: Cultural Repertoires as a Regime of Inequality: The Institutional and Organisational Diversity of New Zealand Craft Beer Industry

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This study investigates the institutional and organisational diversity of craft beer, a fast-growing segment of New Zealand's cultural economy. The recent explosion of craft brewing has been heralded in popular and scholarly discourse for prioritising sustainability, localism, and authenticity. Lauded for its potential to democratise production and consumption, craft beer invites 'new communities into being' that can challenge beer's existing gendered, classed and racial hierarchies. Yet seemingly 'progressive' institutions like craft beer still contain discriminatory aspects that privilege some groups over others, often in ways that are not immediately obvious. For example, despite near market saturation only 15 of New Zealand's 194 craft breweries are owned by women; even fewer occupy top-brewing roles.

Borrowing Acker's (2006: 443) framework of "inequality regimes," or the 'loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organisations,' this research identifies how structure and agency intersect to retain beer's discursive construction as a masculine activity and social ritual. Industry analysis and interviews with 15 New Zealand 'brewsters' considers how craft beer's specific structural context and everyday practices and discourses create, justify or mask organisational inequalities in the craft brewing community. The primary findings discussed here focus on the role that 'cultural repertoires' play in reproducing barriers to entry in an occupational community overwhelming perceived as progressive, if not feminist (even by brewsters themselves). 'Cultural repertoires' are the combination of technical, social and communication skills honed through training or 'communities of practice' that are performed as a demonstration of one's competency in a particular profession/field. Adapting the cultural repertoires of an occupational community thus signals the successful performance one one's job (Ocejo, 2016). In the NZ context, the cultural repertoires that circulate within the craft beer industry are those that privilege discourses of sustainability, localism, authenticity and community; yet these signifiers are inextricably bound to a national identity historically coded masculine at the hostile exclusion of women (Law, 1997; Philipps, 1984). In other words, despite inroads made by women in NZ's craft beer industry, their reproduction of craft beer's cultural repertoires ultimately reinscribes beer as a site for hegemonic masculine identity.

As research in cultural sociology shows, cultural repertoires are often adapted unconsciously as a means of accessing the necessary networks and resources required to successfully navigate the particular occupational community one wishes to enter. Connecting with the right suppliers and distributors, accessing the best ingredients, collaboration brews and cross promotional opportunities

are essential to 'making it' in an increasingly saturated marketplace. However, access to these opportunities often depend more on one's social and cultural capital than money. This might explain why my interviewees reject the notion that craft beer is a 'boys club' but reproduce cultural repertoires that privilege an industrial operating logic, social network, and 'ways of doing craft beer' that are implicitly coded male. The tensions between the structural realities of craft brewing's cultural repertoires and brewers' experiences signal the stable relationship retained between beer, masculinity and NZ's national identity.

Id: 18284

Title: Economic Surplus of Telecommuting

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The main objective of our paper is to provide two measures of the economic benefits of broadband service. Canada currently uses a national basic speed target of 50 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload, but internet services vary considerably within and across the regions of Canada. Our specific focus for the study is Southwestern Ontario and through our research partnership with the Southwest Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) network, Canada's largest publicly-funded regional broadband initiative to date, we will be able to provide invaluable policy recommendations for local, provincial and federal decision-making. Moreover, our study should shed light on the economic impact of broadband in comparable regions across Canada, and possibly, the USA.

Broadband has changed the way we live, work, communicate and do research. Access to high-speed, reliable internet can significantly increase workers' and firms' productivity and efficiency as well as create great satisfaction to every user. The internet also has changed the way we, as the researchers contribute to innovation and research. In this paper, we aim to provide two benefit measures of broadband: Consumer surplus and telecommuter's surplus in Southwestern Ontario, Canada. Consumer surplus in our context can be viewed as the measure of net satisfaction obtained by broadband users. Two factors impact the value of the consumer surplus. First is the shape of the demand function which depends on the underlying preference function (unobservable) and budget constraint. Second is the price. We estimate a total of six different aggregate demand functions that differ in price elasticity and broadband penetration level. Using the average price of the internet from the SWIFT residential and farm micro user survey data, we calculate consumer surplus for each case.

Next, we estimate annual savings for telecommuters in the region. We call this telecommuter's surplus. Two components make up the surplus. First is the cost of commuting to and from work and second is the opportunity cost of time. This surplus is conservative and strictly private. The social benefit is expected to be larger than the private benefits since the latter does not account for the (positive) externality benefits of telecommuting, such as reduced road congestion, road depreciation, the probability of accidents and so forth. We leave this for a future topic.

Id: 18313

Title: The IMF and media critiques of neoliberalism

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In June 2016 three economists at the International Monetary Fund published an article in the organization's own magazine titled "neoliberalism oversold?". The article generated very different media responses. Aditya Chakraborty, The Guardian's economics leader writer, described it as a "remarkable paper" that illustrated "the start of the long death" of neoliberal ideology within one of its key sponsoring institutions. Conversely, The Financial Times published an editorial that disparaged the authors for engaging in "childish rhetoric" by simply invoking a term that "has become the catch-all criticism of unthinking radicals who lack the skills of empirical argument". The paper suggested that the authors' "attack on neoliberalism...gives succour to oppressive regimes around the world", while casting the IMF in a pathetic light — as an organization that "in seeking to be trendy" looks more like "a middle-aged man wearing a baseball cap backwards".

The article's invocation of a concept typically articulated by left critics of neoliberalism certainly merited attention. However, what was obscured in headlines about the IMF's renunciation of neoliberalism was the strongly qualified nature of the article's argument and, from the perspective of the extensive interdisciplinary literature on neoliberalism, the contestability and partiality of its understanding of the very concept. "There is much to cheer in the neoliberal agenda", the authors insisted. They defined this through two main policy planks: the first "increased competition — achieved through deregulation and the opening up of domestic markets", and second a "smaller role for the state, achieved through privatization and limits on the ability of governments". Far from offering a global critique of this agenda, the article limited its assessment to two policies that have been historically promoted by the IMF but "have not delivered as expected": first, those recommending the removal of restrictions on the movement of capital across countries, and second those prescribing forms of "fiscal consolidation" best known by the shorthand of "austerity". It highlighted not only the potentially adverse consequences of both policies on economic growth, but also their correlation with "increased income inequality" that "might itself undercut growth".

This paper considers the ideological and political significance of the IMF article by critically analyzing the meanings attributed to it in media commentary. It conceptualizes the moment as exemplary of a wider empirical development, where references to neoliberalism have become more common in popular media discourses, and generate often intense political antagonism over who or what is "neoliberal". Drawing on a discourse theoretical approach, I highlight how the IMF article appealed to a problematic and reified conception of neoliberalism, which relies on a simplistic dichotomy of market and state and positions any interrogation of an extreme form of market rule as somehow representing a departure from neoliberal orthodoxy. I then discuss how this political-economic rationality illuminates the significance of neoliberalism as a mediated phenomenon,

which is more emblematic of the logic of “actually existing neoliberalism” than the ideological stereotype constructed in the IMF article.

Id: 18327

Title: Cycle-Based Delivery Services and Sustaining Urban Life

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Often seen queuing outside restaurants or moving fluidly through city streets – cycle-based delivery services have gained popularity within Australian capital cities. Services like Foodora and Deliveroo offer a mobile application that enables hungry users to order food delivered via bicycle to their door. Such mobile media is often framed under the emerging ‘gig economy’ or what Sundararajan (2016) terms “crowd-based capitalism”. This paper frames online delivery services, particularly those with an emphasis on cycling as transport, as a form of urban media (Mattern, 2017). In doing so, this paper highlights the role of ‘platform’ as an intermediary between labour, consumption, as well as between urban mobility and life. This paper frames issues of sustainability through this discussion and asks how urban landscapes might be influenced by mobile media platforms. For those who utilise these applications for – both riders and restaurants – it creates a shift in urban mobility with these applications becoming integral to economic survival in growing urban centres.

Mobile delivery services represent a shift in contemporary urban life. An analysis of these applications offers a better way of understanding how cities are designed, afford certain modes of mobility and immobility, and how digital technologies are capable of altering city spaces at dramatic speeds. This paper represents preliminary investigations into these platforms as a form of urban media and asks how might these platforms impact and inform our understanding of cities. It questions the sustainability of urban life in the face of increasingly data-driven mobile applications and economies. It does so firstly, by examining the historical conditions of urban media platforms, and examining how they intersect with an understanding of the gig economy. Secondly, this paper focuses on cycling-as-mobility and the intersections this has with mobile media such as navigation and tracking. This paper reflects a critical reflection on applications, focusing on their use and implementation within urban environments. Analysis draws from the functionality of these applications and how they are situated against the materiality of Australian urban landscapes. Doing so highlights the tensions between urban environments and a lived urban experience.

Mattern, S. (2017). *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. University of Minnesota Press.

Sundararajan, A. (2016). *The Sharing Economy: The End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-Based Capitalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Id: 18344

Title: From neoliberalism to post truth politics in media debates on carbon developments

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: While for the last decades western and non-western societies have become acquainted with an unchallenged dominance of neo liberal discourses, the last two years have seen the emergence of what has been dubbed as ‘post truth politics’. Post-truth then became the 2016 Word of the Year according to the Oxford and Macquarie Dictionaries.

Defined as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’ (Oxford dictionaries, 2016)

Post-truth politics has thus been recognised as a new trend of the Trump and Brexit era.

To demonstrate that post truth politics and “truthiness” are not just a very “American” and British phenomenon, we have looked at public discourses on mining in Australia as a case study to investigate the triumph and achievements of this form of political culture that goes far beyond the mantra of neoliberal discourses.

In particular, this paper is based on findings of a study I have conducted with anthropologist Terry Woronov that investigated the way in which politicians and the media in Australia have debated the establishment of the one of the biggest and most controversial coal mines in the world, the Adani Carmichael mine in central Queensland. We found that post-truth politics is not merely a replacement of ‘truth’ with ‘lies’, but instead a complex, overlapping set of discursive strategies that work together to produce very particular political effects.

In this context, policy makers constantly fail to justify decisions on carbon developments on the basis of neo liberalist values: post -truth politics defeats neoliberalism.

Id: 18347

Title: Do Giant Internet Platforms Rule the World': A View from Canada

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The concept of "platforms" is slippery. It implies a neutral place that "levels the playing field" and a horizontal plane that functions as a structural antidote to hierarchies of power in the marketplace of ideas. At a time when Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Twitter and Netflix (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent in China) have acquired significant market, political and cultural power, such smuggled in meanings have paved the way for enormous constellations of power without responsibility.

However, as researchers tally up how their black box algorithms, business models, and commercial content moderation practices give the platform giants large but opaque editorial roles midstream in the social flow of news, entertainment and conversations, claims of platform neutrality have become untenable. That they have significant market power--and have abused that power--is an established fact in the EU and is being actively pursued elsewhere. Numerous critics from across the political spectrum have cast them as threats to journalism and the media, people's reputations and emotional well-being, and democracy. With the scent of "blood in the water", calls to treat and regulate internet platforms as publishers/broadcasters are mounting fast.

While these appeals are long overdue, this paper argues that the internet giants' clout is being exaggerated and calls to regulate them as publishers/broadcasters misguided. It shows that Google and Facebook's share of the \$5.6 billion internet advertising industry in Canada soared to nearly three-quarters in 2016. The rise of the "mobile internet" alongside the "desktop internet" has served to consolidate their grip on digital advertising while girding their efforts to resurrect the "walled garden" vision of the internet. Against this picture of omnipotence, however, we must note that Google and Facebook (and Twitter) rely almost entirely on advertising and advertising is a small part of the \$80 billion media economy. It is also declining in real dollar terms, on a per capita basis, and relative to the size of the network media economy. Subscriber fees for "pay-per media" now outstrip advertising spending 5:1. Consequently, rather than being digital goliaths at the apex of the media economy, Google, Facebook, Netflix and Twitter are the sixth, eighth, fifteenth and nineteenth biggest media entities in Canada, respectively. They accounted for just 6% of all revenue combined in 2016. In contrast, Bell, Rogers, Telus, Shaw and Quebecor are wireless and broadband internet access companies which also own all the main commercial broadcasting services, and they accounted for 71% of revenue. Lastly, trying to shoehorn the platforms giants into the "publisher/broadcaster" mould feels forced because they spend little on original media content creation, the core of their business does not involve owning a catalogue of titles, and their claims to "free press" rights are tenuous.

The point is not to turn a mountain into a molehill but to get a better bead on the scope of the internet giants' clout while proposing regulatory remedies that could effectively constrain that power, five of which will stand out: Antitrust Regulation; Regulated Algorithm Audits; Election Rules Apply; Advertising Whitelists; and Profile Portability.

Id: 18355

Title: 'Little' Strategic Laboring of Advertising Creativity under 'Big' Brand Strategies: Subjectivity Reconsidered

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This study examines the extent to which brand strategies influence the strategic choices of advertising creativity from their agencies. Investment in branding has been considered as the valuable contribution to market capitalization. Brands can work as means of production to create 'an ethical surplus' (Arvidsson 2005, 2006). The techniques of brand management, such as advertising, are often implemented to build long-term relations with their customers.

Popular advertising activities expand brand market share and generate positive publicity. However, a great deal of brand managers are skeptical about the effectiveness of advertising creativity to enhance sales. Koslow et al. (2006) claim that the brand clients harness the creative quality of their advertising agencies through three major ways: setting direction, resource allocation, and evaluation. The more top brand managers open to innovative ideas, advertising creatives enjoy more resources and produce more valuable work, and vice versa. In the past, an advertising agency, Bilton (2009) argues, is recognized as a creative specialist. Now, it provides an integrated strategic solution for its client. For example, an account planner is added to explore 'customer insight' and to bridge the gap between the creativity and a client's branding strategy. As a strategic partner to the client, he knows how advertising contributes to accumulate brand equity by creatively communicating brand values.

The study looks into the productive cooperation between creatives and account planners in the creative process of advertising production. Sasser and Koslow (2008) proposes a two-step process of creative thinking: to develop an innovative idea and then to integrate this idea into the problem-solving process for brands. At first, creatives are autonomous to use his experience and knowledge as the raw material for producing advertising creativity, and then they are forced to strategically choose the best idea for solving the marketing problems of their brand clients. In this process, the strategic laboring of advertising practitioners can be defined as a typical "post-Taylorist mode of production" which puts subjectivity to work (Lazzarto 1996).

This study follows five advertising campaigns spread across three advertising agencies. Four key interviewees in one campaign includes one creative director, one copywriter, one art director, and one account planner. A total of twenty semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees are questioned on their thoughts about how to strategically choose advertising creative ideas according to the account planning.

Findings demonstrate how advertising practitioners make all their efforts to develop explicit and implicit strategies in the creative process. As brand guardians, account planners play a key role as decision-makers on "what to say". Creative teams build their big ideas on what account planners want to say.

Keywords: Autonomous Marxism, Immaterial Labor, Creative Labor, Brand Strategy, Advertising creativity

Id: 18357

Title: Regional television markets and the process of conservative innovation: a study based on TV programming in Alagoas-Brazil.

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Based on the perspective presented in the seminal work on the Brazilian television market (BOLAÑO, 2004) in regional markets, I present an overview of local television programming in the state of Alagoas-Brazil. As we have previously identified, there is a weakness in the production of systematic investigations and lack of consolidated works, or even articles published in periodicals of the area, addressing the problematic at the regional level (SANTOS, AZEVEDO, 2016).

The survey is part of the research in development on the Alagoan television market, which seeks to identify the regional particularities of this segment, raising data that help to understand if and how the tendencies and characteristics pointed out in the Brazilian Market (BOLAÑO, 2004) affect the regional markets, based on the critical perspective of the Political Economy of Communication. For the construction of the programming landscape, we start with the classification in categories and genres proposed by Souza (2015), elaborating the hourly grid of each broadcaster. In order to broaden the scope of the analysis and include relevant data to understand the general structure of the case of Alagoas, we chose to include, besides the three mentioned aspects, the following schedule data: time, duration, number of blocks, financing (advertisers / public / investment of capital), work teams, periodicity, production (own / outsourced / shared).

It seeks to verify the extent to which the supply of symbolic goods at the regional level is dependent on an oligopolistic television model at the national level. It is worth mentioning that the particularities of the Northeast region are notorious in the case of Alagoas, whose appropriation of the media is almost exclusively by traditional families of politics in the State (SANTOS, AZEVEDO, 2016; SANTOS et al., 2008).

Another relevant aspect is the one that we define as part of a process of conservative innovation in Brazilian television (AZEVEDO, 2017) and, in particular, in television journalism, with Rede Globo ahead of an unequal model whose premise is the accumulation of formats, languages and techniques developed by competing broadcasters, whose innovation appears as a fundamental element of the market dispute, especially in the multiplicity of supply (BRITTOS, 2010).

This research, on a permanent basis, should lay the foundations for a systematic monitoring of Alagoan television programming and serve to maintain a consistent database for future research, including that already mentioned on the Alagoan television market.

Id: 18380

Title: To Toil and Seek Not for Rest: Immaterial Labor, Data Capture, and Death on Social Media

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Much has been written about the volume of personal data collected by social media platforms (Werbin, 2011; Fuchs, 2012; Bollmer, 2016) and its use by both governments and private industry (Fuchs, 2011, 2012). The collection of data on a medium's audience, and its implication in capitalist production have been discussed for decades (Fuchs, 2012; Meehan, 2002, 2005; Smythe, 1977, 1981). But the sheer volume and particularity of data collected, and the way they are used automatically, instantaneously, and invisibly by algorithmic processes is something new (Bollmer, 2016; Fuchs, 2012; Terranova, 2015). This volume of data remains after the death of a user and continues to be monetized both directly, in the case of a deceased person's digital representation being used to spur further engagement; and indirectly, as the data continue to be accessed by the algorithms that govern the platform(s) the deceased had used.

This paper discusses how the data of the living is collected and stored by social media platforms, how that information continues to be used to profit the platform after a user dies, and the implications of these developments. It is largely focused on Facebook, as the most populous and active of the major social networks (Elliot, 2015; Pew Internet Research, 2017), but suggests qualities that exist in this type of communicative technology and data capture regime. Using Smythe's concept of the "audience commodity" as a guide, this inquiry also engages with modern work that has built on that approach. The paper concludes by considering the concept of "immaterial labor" (Lazzarato, 1997) as another approach to the "work" of social media users, and as a way to imagine the continued labor of users after death.

Id: 18412

Title: Rainbow Over Burundi: Mining for the Future of Data & Energy in East Africa

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In July of 2017, thirty kilometers southeast of Bujumbura, Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza, accompanied by a dozen percussionists, officially christened Rainbow Rare Earths' Gakara Project, signaling the start of production at Burundi's first and only rare earth mineral mine. Rainbow Rare Earths (RRE) is a British mining company operating under the auspices of Pella Resources Limited, a holding company with interests in mines all over Africa. President Nkurunziza gave RRE the mineral rights to the Gakara region by decree in 2011, and in 2015 RRE began building the mine's infrastructure. In January of 2017, RRE listed on the London Stock Exchange, swiftly raising ten million dollars based on estimates of high grade ore, and low capital expenditure. RRE forecasted that the first batch of rare earth concentrate from Gakara would ship by the end of 2017, and on December 5th, that promise was fulfilled, as twenty-five tons of product left Burundi on its way to Mombasa, where it then traveled to separation facilities operated by RRE's exclusive offtake client, Thyssenkrupp, a German industrial conglomerate. This initial shipment confirms the Gakara project as one of only two operational rare earth mines (and RRE as the only seller of rare earth concentrate) outside of China. RRE undertook the Gakara project not only because of the opportunity to siphon business away from China, but because it foresees a future of "huge demand for specialty metals," driven by information and green technologies. But whose future will these metals build, and at what cost? Rare earth metals are situated at a nexus of both energy and media futures, and it is becoming increasingly necessary to understand the geopolitical, cultural, and environmental impacts of their extraction. As demand for data spurs demand for mineral resources, the plights of miners, and the socio-environmental impacts of mining speculation around the globe will become all the more salient in discussions about the sustainability of information societies - and the Gakara project, in its historically rapid quest to weaken China's rare earth monopoly, stands at the vanguard of these efforts. Understanding how RRE situates itself within existing socio-cultural structures and rhythms in Burundi provides a window into how new resource supply chains for data infrastructures are being constructed and maintained. This study will investigate the socio-material implications of using Burundian earth to build data, paying special attention to the reproduction of colonial and postcolonial narratives at work in RRE's venture, and the conflictual futures imagined by indigenous, corporate, and state actors. RRE is actively wrestling with the violence of Burundi's colonial and contemporary histories as it literally carves out its space in the earth, working to build logistical infrastructures to obscure and suppress these tensions. Through interviews, historical research, and policy analysis, I interrogate the conditions of this mine's success, crucially placing these issues within an anti-colonial, non-western, and East-African frame, in hopes of unearthing opportunities for generative and sustainable progress beyond neoliberal extractive rationalities, for equitable and just media and energy futures in Burundi, and Africa more broadly.

Id: 18420

Title: Corporate 'Giving' and the Politics of Societal Transformations in the Silicon Valley

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: As the leading high-technology region in the world and a model of technology-enabled growth, the Silicon Valley is marked by deep inequalities. In the last thirty years, income inequality has grown faster in the Bay Area than in the state or nation as a whole. In several parts of the San Francisco Bay Area, an annual income of over \$100,000 is considered as “low income.” As there are growing protests in the valley against high-income techies, IT corporations have been involved in attempting to redefine corporate philanthropy and responsibility in terms of “giving back” to the Silicon Valley. Drawing from political economy and critical debates on new capitalism, technology, and labor, my paper critically examines the remaking of Silicon Valley as a humane sanctuary in the technocratic imagination, and the accompanying contradictions. Based on textual analysis of policy reports, publicity materials and ethnographic interviews with IT professionals, civil society workers and activists, I critically examine the emphasis on social entrepreneurship and innovation towards societal equity. As high-tech, immigrant workers spearhead social entrepreneurship projects through micro-credit and social incubator ventures, the imagined recipients of these projects are usually marginalized but “safe,” heteronormative individuals who are seen as contributing to a progressive, Bay Area ethos through their ventures. This juxtaposition of the model immigrant with the deserving “other” maintains racialized and class divisions that prevents politicized alliances aimed towards deeper, structural transformations, especially as high-tech, model minority workers are themselves increasingly subject to hateful acts in the Bay Area. Second, the representation of Silicon Valley corporations as saviors and allies of distant, marginalized others in the global South furthers the narrative of the homogenous, prosperous Silicon Valley (the “valley of the riches”) that is actually unmarked by deep inequalities. Finally, the focus on entrepreneurship and innovation creates a discourse of opportunity that negates the shift towards low and stagnating wages, and insecurity in the labor market in the Silicon Valley. This discourse of opportunity masks differences in production and profit generation cycles in the information economy that disproportionately benefit elite IT professionals to the exclusion of other workers.

Id: 18438

Title: Inclusion or Expulsion: Digital Technologies and the New Power Relations in China's "Internet Finance"

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: By the year 2017, Chinese fin-tech companies have taken half of the global market and drawn increasing attention from scholars in various disciplines. Information and technology (IT) companies employ digital media and communication technologies to provide products and services including payment, loans, gift sending, investment, wealth management--almost all the money-related everyday practices by the Chinese people of all social strata. For instance, Tencent, based on WeChat platform to develop its Wallet app through which the more than 800 million WeChat users pay for their online purchase, sending money gift in Red Packet, and do consumer loans through Tencent Bank, the first Internet bank in China. In a similar vein, Alibaba, further to its e-commerce platform TMall launched Yu'eobao which attracted more than 300 million e-consumers to invest their dormant cash in their online payment accounts to Yu'eobao fund, the largest money market fund in China.

Since the year 2012, the Chinese state has taken fin-tech as one of the most effective solutions for the sustainable development of Chinese financial market, and digital media and communication technologies have been considered as the enabler of this emerging industry. The financial sector in China is well known as a government-dominated hierarchy, and the access to financial services has been controlled primarily by the state-run banks. Fin-tech businesses, also called "Internet finance" in China have included new actors such as Internet companies, small and medium enterprises, and small lay investors in the financial regime. The new entrants' technology-mediated interactions with the government engendered new politico-economic relations within and beyond the market, in the cyberspace and in everyday life.

How have the technology-driven financial inclusion reconfigured the power relations between the state, corporations, and the investing public in China? Through the political economic analyses of three specific forms of fin-tech businesses: third-party payment, peer to peer lending, and money market fund, this paper argues that Chinese fin-techs have enabled a broader societal participation to investment practices and empowered Internet corporations alongside the state-controlled financial systems. Thus, such an inclusion is less about the "inclusive finance" endorsed by the World Bank for the under-represented social groups' accesses to banking or financial services. It is more of a technology-facilitated financialization initiated by the state, promoted by IT companies, and popularized among small investors. Rather than leading to the decentralization of financial power, China's fin-tech has formed a higher level of concentration of wealth and financial resources controlled by the Chinese oligopoly Internet corporations such as Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu. Moreover, the collaborations and competitions between the growing fin-tech companies and the state-owned financial sector deserve further observations.

Id: 18458

Title: The Indian 'Battleground' for Over-the-top (OTT) Video Services

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The development digital audio-visual industries, and particularly over-the-top (OTT) video services, has renewed debates about media imperialism/globalisation as frameworks to understand processes of modernisation, participation and development. Some critical political economists of communication (Mosco, Fuchs, Jin) argue that the age of media imperialism has returned with a vengeance, given the power of major US-based companies and the support those companies receive from the U.S. state, whereas so called revisionist political economic accounts emphasise disruptive platforms, small businesses, amateur production and 'new voices'. India plays a central role in these latter accounts, with their emphasis on the contextual parameters of online viewing; however the focus is on audiences' expectations and 'prosumer' activity via YouTube (Cunningham & Craig 2016; Evans, McDonald, Bae, Ray & Santos 2016). While YouTube remains the largest platform for video content supply in India, including the media libraries of some Indian broadcasters, in the last 2 years the number of OTT operations in India has increased significantly to around 30, with broadcaster owned platforms, telecom operators and global players like Netflix and Amazon Primer entering the market with advertisement- and subscription – video on demand services (AVOD, SVOD).

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has expressed concerns with the potentially deleterious outcomes (security, regulatory and economic) associated with OTT communication (messaging and voice) services. For instance it notes that "important challenge derives from cultural sensitivity and diversity. The OTT players mostly located outside the country may not be sensitive to the diverse cultural spread of India.... Communication OTTs can entirely unintentionally cause disturbance and affect the social fabric" (2015:52). However, the TRAI's concerns about OTT video/audio content appear relatively muted. According to the regulator's (TRAI 2015, 17) reading of the OTT 'battleground', Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) will embrace OTT video services in the medium to long term. The positive take on industry development is even more pronounced from industry analysts: the FICCI-KPMG (2016 p. ii) observes that "There is a lot of excitement and activity in the digital space and many business models are being experimented with. As seen before in many industries and parts of the M&E industry as well, India may develop its own unique business models rather than adopt global ones". Such perspectives are in in mark contrast to the development of the cable and satellite (C&S) industry in the 1990s when concerns about cultural and media imperialism were explicitly and repeatedly made in the public sphere. With a principal focus on US-based firms, this paper seeks to chart the development of the OTT market and the interplay of digital infrastructures, corporate strategies and state policy and regulation (Aouragh and Chakravartty, 2016).

Id: 18464

Title: Competing narratives of a Switzerland on the verge of complete privatization of its media system

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: On March 4, 2018 Switzerland is going to decide whether it wants to completely privatize its media system. The Swiss voters are called on to approve or reject a popular initiative that proposes 1) that the government be forbidden from collecting radio/TV license fees from the country's residents, 2) that the government be forbidden from owning, managing, and funding any kind of broadcasting service, and 3) that broadcasting licenses be auctioned off to private corporations.

The initiative is expected to be accepted by 40% to 60% of the voters. If approved, it would dismantle the public broadcasting service (SRG-SSR) that has been a key player in the country's media landscape since 1931.

SRG-SSR employs about 6,000 people. It broadcasts information and entertainment programming through 17 radio stations, seven TV channels, and several websites. It does so in the four national languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh), plus English and others. SRG-SSR enjoys editorial independence and carries out a public mandate aimed at promoting and preserving national cohesion, cultural diversity, and linguistic minorities.

SRG-SSR has an annual budget of about \$1.76 billion. About \$1.3 billion are collected through a license fee that all Swiss households have to pay. Today's fee of 451 Swiss Francs (about \$480) is set to be lowered to 365 Francs (\$390) in 2019. About 6% of the revenue is distributed to dozens of private radio and TV broadcasters that operate regionally.

The model has been an example of internal solidarity: Linguistic minorities contribute to a fraction of the fee's revenue and receive in return hundreds of millions of dollars to run their "own" public radio and TV stations.

The initiative's promoters argue that the license fee is unaffordable, that SRG-SSR monopolizes the market, and that viewers should be free to pay only for content they consume.

If SRG-SSR shuts down and broadcasting licenses are auctioned off to private actors only, the media market is likely to be taken over by conglomerates headquartered abroad, particularly in Germany, France, Italy and the USA. Such a scenario has several implications for the functioning of the Swiss direct and representative democracy (McChesney, 2008).

The initiative is popular even among one of the linguistic minorities - Italian Switzerland - where, paradoxically, it has been championed by a party that gained traction by criticizing the federal government's indifference to the Swiss who live south of the Alps.

This study provides an analysis of the main arguments brought up in public discourse by political parties and grassroots groups supporting and opposing the initiative in the trimester leading to March 4, 2018. Particularly, in light of the outcome of the vote, it focuses on the effectiveness of the

rhetoric of laissez-faire capitalism and of that used to counter it - which both exemplify hegemonic efforts (Bates, 1975) in the struggle to (re)define the Swiss media system.

Bates, T. (1975). Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36(2), 351-366.

McChesney, R. (2008). *The political economy of media: Enduring issues, emerging dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Id: 18481

Title: On the cultural politics of Journalistic Professionalism in China: A political economy approach

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Succeeding to its revolutionary history and traditions of Marxism doctrine, Journalism studies in contemporary China was once robust in class analysis and claimed itself the “proletariat Journalism” in the Socialist era. Along with the rapid transform in its domestic political economic order and media/cultural discourses in the late 1970s as well as a global shift to neoliberalism in the 1980s, the classical definition of Journalism in China was undergoing great threats.

The marketization in China in the mid-1990s, triggering its party-led media ecology’s commercialization accordingly, witnessed a revival and flourishing of citizenship awareness in China’s media discourse and a rewriting of its Journalism ideas. Professionalism, a utopian-like liberal thought was widely introduced into China’s Journalism discourse in the late 20th century.

However, the citation of quasi-neoliberal concepts both in political economy, media policy, and journalism ideas borrowed from the Western liberal thoughts deepened not only the urban-rural inequality conditions in China but also the unbalanced center-periphery world order physically and intellectually, thus challenging the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and domination of Marxism doctrine in the acclaimed socialist country.

By using the methodology of archival studies and critical discourse analysis, this paper will contextualize the cultural politics of Journalistic Professionalism in China in the wave of political economy transformation and therefore examine the correlations between the Journalism ideas, media policy, and social political ecology in contemporary China. It tries to answer three questions: 1) How did the Professionalism as an idea borrowed from the West engage in the contestation and reconstruction of Chinese journalism discourse? 2) How did the rewriting project in Journalism studies reflect and echo the political economy transformation in Chinese media industry and in a larger scope, the entire social orders? 3) What are the implications of the historical intellectual project to the understanding of media ecology in contemporary China?

It argues that as a political calling of detaching itself from the CPC's administration and thereafter reconstructing in the Capitalistic logic, the issue of Journalistic Professionalism in China should be understood in a contextualized and historicized way. By revisiting the thoughts and contestation on Journalism and Political Economy issues between Marxist and liberal intellectuals within China and abroad, the paper therefore tries to articulate the media’s engagement in Chinese proletariat revolution history in the 20th century and its implications to the current Chinese discourse in the 21st century.

Id: 18545

Title: Global capital, global labor, and global dominance: The case of xXx: Return of Xander Cage

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Hollywood has gone through numerous changes over the past few decades. These changes have been not just in the production of movies, but also in technology, ownership, and the overall functioning of Hollywood. Of these Hollywood going global has been a significant one. Theories of core-periphery regions of media production have traced the flow of Hollywood into other regions outside the United States such as Asia and Africa, while at the same time, theories of contra-flow have traced the flow back to Hollywood not just in content but other services such as post-production activities and animation. In spite of such flows, the dominance of Hollywood studios have remained unchanged. In this context of a global audience and global sourcing of resources for Hollywood, this paper tries to explore a new trend that ensures the sustenance of the domination of Hollywood in global media production.

This paper focuses on the 2017 film XXX: The Return of Xander Cage as a representative text of this new trend. This movie on the surface appears to be a celebration of globalization and cultural blending, a portrayal of the vibrant American society, aimed at everyone around the globe. By undertaking a political economic analysis of XXX: The Return of Xander Cage, this paper peels the layers off this media commodity to not only reconfirm the logic of the market behind creating sequels, but also reveal sourcing and exploitation of resources from regions other than the United States. More specifically, this film reveals a trend in Hollywood, in which the film is not aimed at the American audience but audience specific to certain new markets such as China, India, and other BRICS nations that ensure profits for the production companies. The analysis reveals how the film reaped profits by employing celebrities from these countries and engaging in very country-specific marketing techniques. By tailoring the cast members and marketing techniques of a film to specific profitable markets outside United States, Hollywood is able to legitimize and reinforce its dominance and superiority globally.

Id: 18582

Title: Listing Labor, or Cataloging Collectibles in the Digital Vintage Economy

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: You ask me why I carry cash around with me all the time.

Don't you see all these yard sale signs?

When I flip this first edition for a cool grand,

Then maybe you'll understand...

Wooden Wand, "Mexican Coke"

In this paper, we document and analyze the buying and selling of vinyl records and other collectibles via online storefronts, a set of practices connected with the digital vintage economy. Independent merchants often list their inventories on auction sites such as eBay, while specialized sites continue to proliferate, perhaps most prominently Etsy for handmade clothes, jewelry, and crafts. We focus on the unglamorous and often grueling labor of listing merchandise online. We develop the category "listing labor" to describe this work, which is performed by clerks and other retail employees as well as independent entrepreneurs, and we contextualize it within the history of employment in department stores and other retail outlets. The feminized labor of "shop girls" has been given a digital makeover, and by focusing on the male-dominated culture of vinyl records, we explore how the exploitation (of selves and others) within online retail economies continues to be organized by race and class as well as by gender and geography. DisCogs is the self-described "biggest and most comprehensive music database and marketplace." Millions of new and used records are bought and sold on the site annually. It also functions as an authoritative price check for buyers and sellers alike, attracting seven million site visits per month. Informed by site visits to its HQ in Portland and interviews with employees as well as patrons, we address DisCogs as an employer and a workplace as well as a resource for buyers and sellers. DisCogs models itself on other startup companies in Portland's growing "Silicon Forest," so we aim to highlight the tensions and overlaps between the work culture of DisCogs' campus and the gig economy labor performed by dispersed record store clerks and individual record sellers.

We draw on interviews with record store owners and employees in the Bay Area and Brooklyn to describe how independent merchants use DisCogs as a digital storefront to augment their brick-and-mortar sales. Most independent record stores list their inventory on DisCogs, but their presence is

dwarfed on the site by individuals who flip records to earn a living. The time-honored tradition of “crate digging” has always been a source of exchange- as well as use-value for record shoppers, and DisCogs has upended the practice by providing access to prices and availability for novices as well as connoisseurs. Excited posts and comments in groups like Facebook’s “Thrift Scored Records” evidence the increased difficulty of finding gems priced below their value, even in outlets like flea markets and garage sales where sellers historically were likely to underprice their stock. In this paper, we compare the work of flipping records online with the divisions of labor among employees of branded record stores, while situating vinyl traffic within the broader economy of online markets for collectibles.

Id: 18611

Title: Toward a Political Economy of 'Audience Labor' on Chinese Social media

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: With the popularity of smart phones, as the representative of Chinese social media, Wechat and QQ, which form the media environment are profoundly changing the social structure, affecting people's behavior and thinking path, more and more people establish new habits. Digital labor has been the subject of considerable research in recent years (Christian Fuchs, 2014; van Dijck, 2009; Linchuan Qiu, 2014). But relatively little research has considered digital labor on Chinese social media. This paper asks: How are digital labor involved in the social media production? To what extent should we criticise this involvement?

This paper attempts to introduce the new concepts of labor under the digital economy, for example, immaterial labor, affective labor, free labor, playbour, network labor (Lazzarato, 1996; Hardt and Negri, 2004; Cavicchi, 2007; Terranova, 2000; Kücklich, 2005; Linchuan Qiu, 2014), etc. And then based on the observations, I chose WeChat and QQ as my research object. I argue the people's labor processes on social media with Smythe and Jhally's audience commodity or labor theory. This paper also argues that WeChat and QQ users are gradually involved in the logic of capitalist operation, faced dual exploitation: one is to exploit the content value produced by the user; the other is the value generated by the user browsing the advertisement.

Furthermore, this paper rethinks digital labor in the field of Chinese social media, revealing the hidden exploitation and secondary distribution of user-generated content that are created by users behind the social media. In order to avoid the alienation of communication process, and the most significant is to deepen understanding of environment. In addition, with the change of new media technologies and digital technologies, the inherent linkages between the capitalist mode of labor production and the main body of production (the subjectivity) are also more and more worth pondering, perhaps resulting in "the return of people's traditions".

Nowadays, as a new form of labor, digital labor are filling so-called user-generated content (UGC) platforms at anytime, anywhere. How to distinguish between leisure time and working time? where are the boundaries of the two? How to define? Therefore, in the future study toward a Political Economy, it is particularly important how we argue about digital labor.

Id: 18632

Title: What Makes Political Economy of Communication Critical' A Critical Realist Perspective

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Scholars of the political economy of communication (PEC) often describe this approach as “critical;” however, this term -- critical -- is often used to describe different, if related, aspects of our theory, research, and activism. For instance, Mosco (1996/2009) characterizes PEC’s process of comparison as “critical” in that PEC “sees knowledge as the product of comparisons between research findings and other bodies of knowledge as well as with social values” (p. 10). Shifting from the “how” to the “what,” Hardy’s (2014) stresses PEC’s attention to power asymmetries and the social arrangements that sustain them. Pickard (2013) also focuses on power; however, he describes PEC as “critical” in that it denaturalizes those arrangements. Finally, Fuchs (2011) argues that what ultimately makes PEC critical is its ideological interventionism -- “normative judgment in solidarity with the dominated and for the abolishment of domination” (p. 12). Or, as Marx (1845) put it, “The point is to change it.”

This paper does not disagree with any of these characterizations; however, it argues that PEC’s various critical dimensions (e.g., denaturalizing power, comparative epistemology, and ideological interventionism) can be best understood and integrated by situating PEC within a Critical Realist perspective. Critical Realism (CR) is a philosophy of science developed by Roy Bhaskar (1977) and others as a middle ground between positivism and constructivism. Various PEC scholars have identified PEC as a critical realist approach (e.g., Bettig, 1996; Garnham, 2000; Hardy, 2014; Mosco, 1996/2009); however, the nature and implications of this philosophy for PEC are rarely articulated in sufficient depth. This paper outlines CR’s ontological, epistemological, and (pr)axiological assumptions, and it argues that PEC is “critical” in all three regards. Ontologically, PEC sees social processes as elusive, power-laden, and ubiquitously changing. Epistemologically, PEC derives knowledge about those processes through various comparisons, including between theory and data, part and whole, past and present, and reality and possibility, as well as by evaluating PEC’s insights against competing perspectives. And (pr)axiologically, where those comparisons reveal misconceptions that perpetuate oppression and domination, PEC actively intervenes through critical pedagogy, public scholarship, labor organizing, policy reform, and the support/creation/imaging of radical media and social alternatives. PEC approaches to advertising and media policy are provided as case studies of this critical ontology, epistemology, and (pr)axiology.

Id: 18662

Title: Re-imagining Sony: how a media corporation sustains itself in a changing world

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper offers key initial insights into a broader, early-stage empirical-level case study on the Sony Corporation. The authors consider how the corporation reinvents itself through changing political, economic and technological times. As a publicly traded enterprise since the mid-1950s, Sony has embodied the processes of corporatisation, globalisation and neo-liberalism that has characterised the rebalancing of capitalism from manufacturing to information and services provision in advanced economies. From its origins as an appliance manufacturer into a globally recognised brand in consumer electronics, to one of the world's largest media corporations, managing a diversified portfolio of products and business that include music, film, television and videogames.

Fundamental to the current paper is the management and exploitation of patents and other forms of intellectual property rights that has underpinned the global expansion of Sony, particularly from the latter decades of the twentieth century. The corporation has, in particular, developed innovative strategies to drive returns from intellectual property portfolios across wide arrays of increasingly converged content services and media sectors, spanning regional, national and international market contexts. So, this paper proposes an inquiry into the nature and form of the role of intellectual property rights (copyrights, patents, trademarks) in the evolution of Sony. As such, it will present the first results of a study that draws up on an extensive systematic analysis of each Sony Corporation Annual Report from 1958-2016.

Historically, Sony's interest in media content originated from the impulse to promote its consumer electronics products, e.g., music and the Walkman, film and Betamax. More recently, in the videogame sector, Sony's electronics and media activities are closely aligned for mutual commercial gain (videogame publishing to support demand for PlayStation consoles). As Sony transformed from an electronics manufacturer to an electronics and media corporation, it placed increasing emphasis on the management of patents, intellectual properties and licencing arrangements. With patents, this emphasis was evident in Sony corporate discourse the 1960s and 1970s. It increased with respect to intellectual property and licencing as Sony developed its media businesses in the late-1980s and 1990s. However, the priority attached to intellectual property rights

management and licencing was raised significantly as Sony's media businesses responded to the internet/World Wide Web and processes of digitalisation from the early-2000s.

This study, through its longitudinal analysis of corporate annual reports, will examine Sony's transformation as a corporation, and its reconceptualization of intellectual property rights and licencing management. In particular, the study will draw on the annual reports to examine:

- Changing corporate discourse around globalisation, of which Sony positioned itself as a 'champion' on behalf of Japan
- Emerging modes of internationalised production of physical consumer electronics as well as internationalisation of media content production
- Prioritisation and re-conceptualisation of IPRs and licencing management across Sony's businesses
- Sony's portfolio management strategies related to product and business declines and growth in rapidly changing social, technological and media contexts
- Sony's institutional and organisational reshaping and learning as media-related consumer electronics and content services shifted from analogue to digital, and processes of media convergence accelerated in the digital era.

Id: 18706

Title: Any port in a storm: Safe harbours and 'free' expression in Brazilian Internet law

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In 2015, Brazil passed a law called the Marco Civil da Internet. The law constituted a holistic attempt to defend the civil rights of Internet users, at a time when the Snowden revelations showed how the NSA was undermining them so programmatically. Built around three pillars of network neutrality, data protection and limited third party liability, the Marco Civil gained global acclaim as a “Magna Carta for the Web” (Economist 2014). It is the purpose of this paper to critically examine the last of those pillars – limited third party liability, or ‘safe harbours’ – to assess the extent to which it merits its acclaim in the Marco Civil as a proxy for the freedom of expression of Brazilian Internet users.

I undertake this political-economic, historical and critical-legal analysis by tracking how safe harbours as a tenet of the Marco Civil were contested by powerful actors in the Brazilian media sector, as well as civil society groups, during its passage into law. This analysis is based on interviews with key actors in the stakeholder groups that advocated for, and resisted, the Marco Civil during its multistakeholder and Congressional phases of development.

I begin by looking at the origin of safe harbour legislation in the United States with the 1995 Supreme Court decision establishing safe harbours for ISPs. Described by Schiller as “a camouflaged preferment for electronic commerce” (1999, 72), the entanglement of speech and commerce represented in this landmark ruling are, I argue, also visible in the case of Brazil. I show how web platforms operating in Brazil made securing safe harbours their overall priority for the Marco Civil – with the vaunted network neutrality actually a much lower concern - in order to create a safe environment for their data-driven business models. This was particularly important as, according to Google’s annual transparency reports, in 2012 Brazil became the world capital of content removal requests by a national government. This demonstrates the extent to which the operation of web platforms were disrupted by the arbitrary interventions of state authorities.

The spectre of the ‘global media giant’ (Straubhaar 2016), Grupo Globo, also loomed large in the reckoning for safe harbours in Brazil. Globo, in conjunction with the entertainment industry, applied tremendous political pressure to carve out IP from safe harbours. By examining the controversy that surrounded the IP exemption, I highlight how freedom of expression was greatly undermined in the process.

Communication rights advocates in Brazil also made safe harbours a priority. I show how this emphasis was based on historical factors, namely the aborted efforts at media reform undertaken by the PT government, the recent history of military information control, and the domination of the

Globo media group. Ultimately, I show how the compelling need to secure freedom of expression online in Brazil was not met by the Marco Civil's safe harbour provisions, that other sets of powerful actors in fact benefited most from them, and that the lost potential of this law is currently acutely felt in Brazil.

Id: 18709

Title: Silent Slum: Interrogating Green Aesthetic from the Margins

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: A large number of slum evictions that have taken place in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, India, thanks to court orders, have depicted slum removal as a kind of environmental improvement (Ramanathan 2006). What stands out in these evictions is the way the term environment is operationalised and how it serves to define the needs of a “smart city”, in the language of the State. The green discourse here, also tries to define the aesthetic norms of a modern civilized city, and the unsightliness of the slum is deemed to be polluting. In this paper I plan to look at the discursive associations between slums and pollution that have been brought to the limelight in public and judicial discourse in Mumbai since the early 2000s.

The paper investigates term environment, as a category of popular knowledge, as a set of habits defined by cultural or aesthetic dispositions. The paper is broadly interested in looking at the green aesthetic- a distinct observational system for assessing social space normatively- how it came to become a dominant “regime of truth” (Foucault 1976), how it is deployed and what are its material effects.

These questions become increasingly relevant in today’s time, not only in the context of what Baviskar (2003) calls “bourgeois environmentalism” but also because the present regime is trying to frame urban development and the political economy in the language of cleanliness and the environment. What we see is that the green aesthetic assumes expanded discursive authority in the context of the urban political economic and governmental imperatives. The paper tries to question the cultural and legal compulsions that have required the insertion of the concept of “environment” into the field of politics.

The paper traces the rise of this green aesthetic through an ethnographic study of both slums and gated communities. It looks at one of the largest slum communities in Navi Mumbai, as well as gated communities located nearby. The stories that these communities tell, is looked at through the lens of civility (Diwan and Rosencranz 2001: 97)- which transform truisms like “slums are dirty” to “slums are nuisances”. Once termed as a nuisance, we find a judicial solution, namely environmental procedures made available to remedy the problem of the slum through demolitions and evictions. Through this study we look at the cultural basis on which the idea of sustainability and the environment is based in contemporary Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. I try to investigate the connection in the idea of environmental expertise, of illegal environments, and the urban aesthetic. The core question that the study raises is how the term environment connects to urban aesthetic politics. As Ranciere (2004) contends that the aesthetic discourses of the environment are basically a organization of the sensible, that marks the boundaries of legal/illegal, moral/immoral, beautiful/ugly and green/polluting, which leads us to question whether profound understandings of the environment have an inner engine of taste and desirability. Are slums polluting because they appear so?

Id: 18714

Title: Confronting the New Digital Monopolies: Infrastructure for People, Not Corporations

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper examines the rise of new digital monopolies. This growing problem deserves far more attention than it has thus far received. It is a popular assumption that media ownership no longer matters—or at least matters less—in our digital age. Perhaps counterintuitively, the opposite might be true, especially since ownership in many sectors, including social media, search engines, internet service, as well as some types of news media, is extremely concentrated. The growing monopoly power within news and information systems holds profound implications for the future of journalism and for democratic governance. My presentation will reflect on how media monopolies—whether new platform giants like Facebook or conglomerates of older media like Comcast/NBC—hold tremendous power over political culture and communication infrastructures, both within the US and globally. In particular, I will focus on the policy roots of this monopoly power, and discuss what reforms are necessary for this power to be contested and contained.

There are three general ways of containing and eroding the power of corporate media monopolies. One is to break them up via antitrust measures and prevent monopolies and oligopolies from forming in the first place by blocking mergers and acquisitions. Second, in cases where we concede network effects to the extent that these infrastructures are essentially natural monopolies, we can either nationalize them and/or heavily regulate them by enforcing a social contract where they are compelled to provide a public service in exchange for the right to operate. The third strategy, and in many ways the most important one, is to create public alternatives that can circumvent and compete with corporate monopolies. Such public options are in many ways the best way to guarantee universal access to core communication infrastructures. To establish such an arrangement will require specific discursive strategies and policy interventions. This paper will begin to outline such a political project.

Id: 18813

Title: Working at the Googleplex: workers' newfound paradise'

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Organic gardens, free gourmet food, swimming pools, daycare, generous maternity leave, free haircuts, 24-7 fitness centers, onsite healthcare service, and Wi-Fi enabled commuter buses; these are all part and parcel of working at the Googleplex which occupies a pastoral suburban landscape within sunny Silicon Valley. At the Googleplex, instead of human resources, "People's Operations" ensures employees' well-being with a purportedly unbiased approach and its chief culture officer promotes freedom, happiness, and empowerment of employees. Today, Google is known not only for its search engine but also for reinventing its methods of management over its employees that many firms are trying to emulate (Girard, B., 2009). This paper examines the specific modes of management over labor employed by Google - modes seen as new, participatory, democratic and even contradictory to its capitalist logic.

Google's seemingly idyllic culture and unique work environment are unimaginable for the majority of workers today who barely cling to their jobs and are faced with a radical and rapid erosion of both corporate and government safety net programs like pensions and health benefits. For many young professionals, Google is perceived as being the most ideal place to work, a beacon of the idealized workplace.

However, there was a time in American history when corporations adopted the "gentler" labor management style of so-called welfare capitalism - corporate provision of private welfare programs - in response to the rise of labor unions in the late 19th century in order to ease tensions between capital and labor, curtail unions, and increase productivity and efficiency (Edwards, R., 1976; Marchand, R., 1998; Jacoby, S., 1998). If the 19th century's corporate welfare programs were created to control labor, curtail labor unions and government intervention, then what is the motivation behind Google renewing these practices and expanding employee benefits when there are few labor unions and scarce threats of government intervention? By locating Google's labor control and management within the historical development of capitalism, this paper will investigate this question, and illustrate how new modes of labor management represented by Google carry characteristics of a supposedly bygone era of welfare and are firmly rooted in capitalist development.

Id: 18853

Title: Cultural policy and the conditions of audiovisual labor in Colombia after the Location Colombia Law 1556 of 2012

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper addresses the impact of the two "cinema laws" that have been enacted in Colombia to promote local production for national and international film productions.

Law 814 of 2003 was enacted to provide support and grants for national productions. Despite the increase in both cinema attendance, and Colombian film viewership, the Ministry of Culture opted to extend some of the benefits for colombian productions to international productions willing to produce their films in Colombia. Thus, "Location Colombia" Law 1556 of 2012 was enacted, providing tax credits and similar strategies. By 2016, 22 international film productions had received benefits from the Location Colombia law . Based on those results, and on the many direct and indirect economic benefits to the tourism and hospitality industry, the Ministry of Culture considered the Location Colombia law to be another success story.

However, there were two aspects that were not addressed by the Ministry and which are the main subject of this presentation:

On the one hand, despite the law having been enacted to promote the production of films, one of the projects that received support under the Location Colombia law was the Netflix series "Narcos", which could hardly be considered a film product.

On the other hand, the success was focused on the economic short term results, with no discussion about the working conditions of people involved in those projects, or the loss - elsewhere - of jobs due to the runaway productions, or any sustainability after the benefits of this law are revoked.

The former aspect highlights how the conception of "film" has been loosened in cultural policy to admit a more general "audiovisual" field. It begs an analysis of how audiovisual replaces film and television - or media for that matter - as the concepts in digital legislation of cultural products.

The latter aspect demands for a qualitative study, interview-based, to determine whether labor conditions in the audiovisual market in Colombia have improved or worsened after the "globalization" of Colombia as a film site. As these interviews are currently being carried out, the information that can be gathered from them is only preliminary and may serve only to inform some of the arguments.

The paper presented here will focus on the aspect of cultural policy analysis, It argues that the two laws evidence a shift between a cultural industries and a creative industries approach to cultural policy development for the colombian film scene.

The shift can be seen both in policy construction, and in the presentation of the policy impact by the Ministry of Culture, where, despite basing both laws in the interest of developing an audiovisual market, there is little interest in providing a sustainable scenario for the instance where state support would end. As such, Colombia is prone to join the list of countries that have seen runaway productions come as go as state support wanes.

Id: 18899

Title: The right to (own) sports' The transformation of the political economy of sports media in China

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Sports programming and revenue play an important role in the transforming political economy of the media. In the West, proprietary sports right is the cornerstone system that determines how media access and acquire sports content. All major Western media companies have significant investments in sports rights and harvest staggering revenues from sports programming. Meanwhile, sports businesses rely on the media for both publicity and income by granting media rights to sports coverage. In the case of China, however, media access to sports events is only beginning to be regulated and controlled as proprietary sports rights with many uncertainties.

This research examines the history and political economy of media-sports relationship in China over the past four decades, with a focus on how media access to sports events are defined and transformed. It argues that, at the onset of the Market Reform, media coverage of sports was a cultural and political undertaking. Market mechanisms were introduced only later along with the marketization of the media and the sports sector. Major Chinese media started to recognize and to pay for proprietary sports rights for international sports events and some domestic sports events. Thanks to their dominance in the market, state media like China Central Television (CCTV) have significant negotiation leverage vis-à-vis sports businesses and organizers both at home and abroad. Today proprietary control over sports is becoming the basis to define and to regulate the relationship between sports and media, but the transformation is far from final and is conditioned by the specifics of China's reform and growth.

The collaboration and conflict between Chinese media and Chinese Football Association (CFA) regarding television broadcast of China's football (soccer) league is a key case study in this research. In the 1980s and early 1990s, CCTV as the leading state television network broadcast major soccer games and events in the country in collaboration with the CFA. After the CFA founded the market-oriented professional league in 1994, however, the control and market value of soccer coverage gradually became a profound conflict between CCTV and CFA. While the CFA and the league argued for a sport-rights based model, CCTV refused to pay and pointed out that its previous coverage of soccer was de facto free promotion of the sport. The disagreement between the two sides lasted for years, reaching its climax in 2010 when the soccer league completely disappeared from CCTV programming. In another dramatic turn in 2016, a private company purchased the media right to the league at a very high price and turned state and private television and digital media companies including CCTV into its paid licensees. This brief history is an important part of

the market-oriented transformation of television and soccer in China, and raises questions on the cultural and political roles of the media and sports.

Id: 18907

Title: Shifting value subjects and media reform in neoliberal ascendancy: When logistics trumps democratic norms

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: For those who have been involved in media activism focused on communications policy in the U.S., the first year of the Trump Administration has been an unmitigated disaster. If media reformers of the last decade in the United States found a fleeting foothold, the ascendancy of Ajit Pai to the helm of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission wrenched it loose. Proposals to make drastic changes to Lifeline and to eviscerate the media ownership rules that activists spent the last 15 years defending have passed. The strong network neutrality protections won by his predecessor were undone. Worse, the elimination of network neutrality rules was accomplished by removing jurisdictional concerns over broadband communication from the venues in which activists have found the most success: the Pai FCC's excruciatingly narrow read of the Telecommunications Act would have the FCC overseeing largely telephone networks, not broadband networks. Adding insult to injury, Congress removed privacy protections aboard broadband communications early in the year. These moves are hardly uncontested but the outcomes of these challenges are uncertain.

These shifts reflect the transformation of the emergent value-subject in today's media ecology, as well as in broader capitalism. Manipulation of individuals and emergent 'algorithmic discrimination' are worthy concerns, but are merely the tip of the iceberg. The concepts of commodification and exploited 'free labor' (Fuchs, 2012; Terranova, 2012; Andrejevic, 2012) also don't completely capture what is happening either. Work that interrogates the 'free labor' paradigm has been productive in shifting our attention to possible contradictions in broader capitalist processes, a more comprehensive view of what is transpiring (Caraway, 2016; Srnicek, 2017). By the same token, in some such analyses, the specific activities of communication and (particularly) conduit firms have not been deeply explored enough.

Media are becoming part and parcel of systemwide logistics operations, which means those who have classically sought reform of communications systems in favor of normative democratic ideals and with an eye toward social justice now must perform a double-task. On the one hand, a continued focus on media as sources of information necessary for functioning normative democracies and broadband as a basic necessity remains crucial. However, the challenge has outgrown this conception of media reform. Addressing the worst features of emergent 'platform capitalism' and its logics is the tougher component (Mosco, 2014, 2017; Schiller, 2014; Srnicek, 2017). Reformers will need to grapple with all these dimensions at once, and cease seeing audiences as mere audiences (or even as audience commodities) but as yet another layer of inputs into production processes, increasingly automated, increasingly invisible. Information about users and their consumption is being put to the task of not just informing the production of media content or

the delivery of advertising, but the supply and production chains for other non-media products, if not the management of production chains themselves. What emerges is less a 'corporate libertarianism' (Pickard, 2014) than the reflection of an internal logic of far more consequence.

Id: 18933

Title: Hollywood's Contradictory Year: 2017's Star Wars: The Last Jedi, Beauty and the Beast, and the Modern Commodification of Women's Social Movements

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In 2017, Hollywood saw two contradicting trends. On one hand it was rocked by the sexual harassment and abuse scandals, with women coming forward and revealing not just the names of their abusers, but also the rampant prevalence of such harassment. Along with unequal pay/remuneration in Hollywood between men and women, this scandal brought to the limelight the dismal working conditions of women in Hollywood. On the other hand, the top three box office hits in America: Star Wars: The Last Jedi, Beauty and the Beast, and Wonder Woman were all movies with women in lead roles. Following the trend of movies such as Hidden Figures and Ghostbusters, and paving way for movies such as Ocean's 8, which has an all-woman cast, along with movements such as #MeToo and Time's Up, Hollywood is positioning itself to be championing the causes of women by producing films with women as protagonists. Instead of simply celebrating this trend, there needs to be a critical evaluation of it, lifting the curtains and looking behind the screen to analyze the political economy of these movies and whether or not they truly empower oppressed groups.

This paper seeks to explore the different contemporary strategies Hollywood utilizes to capitalize on feminist social movements through replacing hegemonic male characters with female ones or updating traditional stories through a more "feminist" retelling. By analyzing both 2017's Star Wars: The Last Jedi and Beauty and the Beast as representative of this corporate trend, we will critique the ways in which these pseudo-feminist texts not only contribute little to the social conversation surrounding the evolving roles of women and their representations in media, but how they can also fool the audience into believing that the world they exist in is more equitable because of the higher percentage of women represented on screen. Using prior scholarship from Janet Wasko and Eileen Meehan who have worked at the intersection of political economy, gender, commodity culture, and Disney as a corporate entity and myth-builder, we conclude that this process of creating "feminist" reimaginings of classic narratives ultimately serves to uphold the existing economic structures that maintain social and financial capital within the largest Hollywood studios, specifically Disney. Thus, little to no social progress is made through the creation of these retellings.

Id: 18941

Title: Postfeminist sensibility in the videogame production

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The presentation investigates women videogame workers understanding of gender inequalities in the Polish videogame industry through the critical analytical term of postfeminist sensibility. Rosalind Gill's (2007) concept of postfeminist sensibility is used to investigate workers' contradictory ideas about gender inequalities in contemporary workplaces. Gill et al. (2017:230) demonstrate that postfeminist sensibility can be visible in: '(...) a focus upon empowerment, choice and individualism; the repudiation of sexism and thus of the need for feminism alongside a sense of 'fatigue' about gender; notions of make-over and self-invention/transformation; an emphasis upon embodiment and femininity as bodily property; and emphasis on surveillance and discipline; a resurgence of sexual difference'

The analysis of postfeminist sensibility appeared in a growing body of research about and cultural workers (e.g. Conor et al., 2015; Scharff, 2018). However, it is rarely discussed in relation to videogame production (with the exception of Harvey and Fisher's (2014) work). This contribution aims to discuss gender inequalities in the industry beyond discussions about toxic gaming cultures and difficulties in achieving work-life balance. This contribution corresponds with the conference theme by focusing on cultural workers understanding of gender inequalities and possible obstacles to providing sustainable and thriving working environments in the videogame industry. The presentation focuses on three issues associated with postfeminist sensibility discussed by interviewees: repudiation of sexism and expression of gender fatigue, emphasis on women as advantageous sex in the industry and focus on individual responsibility and self-surveillance. The collected data suggested that workers understanding of gender inequalities is embedded in individualised narratives and neoliberal, entrepreneurial subjectivity.

This paper draws on data from a larger research project which aims to investigate videogame labour in Poland. The discussion is based on analysis of 44 in-depth interviews with Polish videogame producers, further supplemented by analysis of secondary sources (e.g. videogame magazines and industry reports) to enrich it with specific national and historical context. The presentation aims to contribute to the growing body of research about cultural workers' understandings of inequalities in their workplaces (e.g. Conor et al. 2015; Gill, 2014). Furthermore, it also aims to enrich understanding of videogame production cultures outside the socio-cultural context of Western countries.

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Id: 18966

Title: Funding the Global, Forgetting the Local: Critiquing Cultural and Creative Policy in the United States

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: In 2017, Amazon announced its intention to build a second headquarters, in addition to its main campus in Seattle Washington. Almost immediately, cities around the United States threw their hats into the ring to compete to be Amazon's chosen destination. One city, only a few miles down the road from Amazon's headquarters, was among those considering entering the fray, despite its proximity to Seattle and its intimate knowledge of the challenges Amazon's location had caused the region. In order to compete, Tacoma – like the other cities interested in courting Amazon – would need to craft appropriate policy, particularly tax incentives, in order to land the new headquarters.

Creative Industries and Cultural Policy in the United States has distinguished itself from its foreign counterparts not just in its avoidance of national and regional policy, but also in its fractured take on local policy. Most policy exists either at the state level or, in the case of major metropolitan areas, at the municipal. Moreover, most policies are focused on a much smaller range of industries – often just film and television production – and work only via tax incentives. As such, these policies tend to fail in promoting development or any form of long-term education or employment. Instead, they tend to funnel money out of the areas and away from citizens and into the coffers of already profitable media and cultural industries. As such, these policies mark an important step in the increasing political economic disparity seen between municipalities and growing media companies.

In part, this owes to the United States' unique political structure, but it also owes to the relatively limited examination of such policies in the United States. One of the key features of much U.S. policy is a rotating cast at the state level, resulting in shifting priorities with limited local and municipal connections. In response, economically disadvantaged localities have had to invent entirely new structures to compete. This is particularly crucial as such localities have found the development of creative industry and cultural policy a vital step in urban development. This paper uses the Amazon headquarters competition and its connections with creative industry and cultural policy in the state of Washington and the city of Tacoma as comparison points to other examples of policies in order to suggest ways in which such policies in the United States miss the mark, particularly at the local level where they could be the most effective.

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Id: 18990

Title: Outsourcing Television Production: Scripted Original Series and Public Incentives in the Age of Peak TV

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: The current decade has witnessed an unprecedented explosion in the production of original scripted series and mini-series, what FX Networks head John Landgraf has referred to as “Peak TV.” The estimated number of original series produced across all platforms – broadcast, basic cable, premium cable and online services – has increased from 216 in 2010 to 487 in 2017. The rise in production volume has coincided with a rise in public funds allocated for production incentives, tax credits and monetary grants from state, provincial and national governments. This increase is perhaps most evident in the state of California, where the public funds allocated to support film and television production more than tripled starting in 2015, from \$100 million per year to \$330 million per year. Such increases, moreover, have occurred amidst a debate over whether such incentives create sustainable jobs and fuel long-term investment, raising real questions about whether or not incentives represent sound public policy. This study examines the location of production and post-production for scripted original series, a minimum of 40 minutes per episode, over a seven-year periods, 2010-11 through 2016-17 in the case of the American broadcast networks and 2011 through 2017 in the case of American basic and premium cable services and online services. Over that period, the percentage of prime time scripted series 40 minutes or longer on the broadcast networks eligible for production incentives has increased from under 50% in 2010-11 to over 80% in 2016-17. A higher percentage of basic and premium cable series were eligible for incentives in 2011, but both totals increased over the sample period and were over 90% in 2017. The explosion of scripted series on online streaming services, Netflix in particular, is the clearest change in program production over this time period and over 80% of the scripted series 40 minutes or longer in length were incentive eligible in 2015, 2016 and 2017. An emerging focus is on scripted original series that utilize multiple locations for production and post-production in the search for incentives, what one can call the outsourcing of television production in an industrial model. This is most evident with the HBO hit Game of Thrones, which utilizes incentive friendly locations in Northern Ireland, Iceland, Croatia and Spain as well as post-production studios around the world. This is clear evidence of a changing course for program production.

Id: 19074

Title: "The President of the United States Is Racist': A Political Economy Study Examining How Journalists Worldwide Reported on U.S. President Donald J. Trump's Vulgar Description of Poorer Countries and Regions

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: News media accounts of U.S. President Donald J. Trump's reported use of crude language when describing Haiti, El Salvador and African nations during a meeting with senators resulted in rapid condemnation around the globe. On CNN in the United States, host Don Lemon opened his broadcast on January 11, 2018, with this statement. "The president of the United States is racist." In the Washington Post, which first reported on Trump's use of vulgar language, the top headline on its website read: "Trump attacks protections for immigrants from 'shithole' countries." Around the world, news media struggled with ways to report on Trump's use of the vulgar term, with a newspaper in Tanzania describing the comment as "mataifa chafu" or "dirty countries," while a newspaper in Kenya used a Swahili term for excrement, "nchi za kinyesi." In the United States, broadcast outlets also struggled with decisions on whether to use the term. CNN and MSNBC, news broadcasters with a more liberal bias, used the term extensively. The conservative Fox News, however, generally avoided the term. NPR, a public radio network, at first avoided the term but then used it in later newscasts with a listener warning about the language. Likewise, U.S. newspapers also struggled with the term, with several using the term while others using an edited version of the word (such as "s...hole"). Some used the term in headlines while others used it only within an article's text.

This study utilizes a content analysis to explore the news media's reporting of the term. The research examines a total of 15 newspapers, broadcasters and websites in and out of the United States. The study considers how editors and news directors justified their decisions. The study relies on textual analysis to determine possible motivations – such as political bias and the ownership of the media outlet – for the decisions. From a political economy perspective, this study closely examines the role of media in setting the agenda in political discourse as well as the powerful influence of ownership and political bias. Studies have shown that how media report the news influences how people perceive the impact of news events on their own lives. News coverage helps shape the public's awareness of political and social problems, and can impact attitudes and behaviors. Likewise, researchers have determined that the selection, emphasis or exclusion of particular facts and ideas provides a certain context – or frame – to news consumers. This study examines how the framing of President Trump's use of a vulgar term may have served the political and economic motivations of the news media. Emphasis on particular aspects of reality may assist elite societal forces. Some political-economy scholars have noted that the growing power of big media companies can have a detrimental impact on democracy. This study concludes that the need

for media literacy – where citizens better understand the role and motivations of news media worldwide – is more urgent than ever.

Id: 19079

Title: Teachers' Movements in the Circuits of Communication: An Interdiscursive Model

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper inspects the recent upsurge of teacher militancy in places like Chicago by developing a model illustrating the interdiscursive relationship between teachers' movements, education policy, and social structure. In so doing, it inspects dominant media portrayals of teachers, while showing how these portrayals, in turn, develop into dominant discourses that frame the policy debate. Within the context of neoliberal capitalism, the leading frame in the United States and elsewhere has emphasized a theme of "crisis" in education, which sees underperformance of public schools as indicative of their need for market discipline to bring them into line with the demands of the modern economy. Using this logic as a guide, policy-makers enforced a pedagogical turn to persistent test-taking as a measure of a school's worth, and whether or not it should be turned over to privately run charters. In response, teachers' movements have risen with a counter-discourse speaking to the centrality of local public schools to the communities that contain them, while pointing to structural forces to explain the problems within under-resourced school districts.

The model emerging from this paper is built upon two assumptions about the function of education emerging from radical pedagogical thought. Firstly, educational discourses are a reflection of broader discourses coursing through society writ large, and, secondly, education is the central terrain wherein debates over what constitutes knowledge are carried out, and, thus, where social status is distributed. In sum, education is both production and reproduction of society: effectively acting as a mirror to the society that envelops it.

By mediating the process of the development and dissemination of knowledge in addition to the larger conversation around the nature and function of schooling, educators occupy a parallel and comingled arena with the political arena in which dominant discourses are constructed and transmitted. Moreover, these discourses are transferred from context to context in a manner that naturalizes their underlying epistemological assumptions. It is for this reason that the paper develops an interdiscursive model to chart the flow of communicative messages from mainstream media to political discourses, while highlighting how these discourses then get re-contextualized into education policy and practice.

In the neoliberal epoch, the economic downturn of the 1970's served as external stimulus initiating the discourse of educational crisis. Dominant media tropes depicting teachers as incompetent were transferred into discourses faulting public schools and teachers for the nation's problems, which were then re-contextualized into education policy focused on ever greater teacher and student evaluation, which has ultimately fostered teacher resentment and growing resistance to dominant discourses, and their embedded logics and power structures. The resulting teachers' movement is, thus, a product of this cycle of information, which informs why the movement is not framed as being narrowly about the contractual demands of their members, but about the form and function of education in society. It is part of an ongoing discourse between the mass media,

policymakers and teachers: a process that is ever defining and redefining societal structure and the role of education within it.

Id: 19091

Title: Consuming the Meltdown and Spectre Flaws: Moore's Law Comes Home

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Product obsolescence is more than just poorly design products that require upgrades and replacements as a side effect of companies' profit making requirements. These upgrades and replacements are the driving force to accumulate more surplus value and profits, at a continually expanding rate. The waste that the replaced, broken, old, or just not new enough products create is necessary to the profit margins. The ICT industry accounts for the rapid growth, development, and consumption of consumer electronics as a result of Moore's law. Moore's law is both a mathematical calculation and a narrative told about and by the ICT industry. In October 1965, Gordon Moore, founder of Intel, published "Moore's First Law," which basically predicted that the speed of computing processing would exponentially increase every two years. The real world applications of Moore's law, seen in the profits and fortunes in corporations like Intel and other information communications technologies (ICTs) companies, are that with increased processing speed potential, new products can be released in quicker succession, creating, as Barlow notes, a self-fulfilling prediction – "it now has to be true, since the entire computer industry and a good deal of the world economy depend on it continuing" (2004, p. 182). In many respects, Moore's law becomes shorthand for why so many consumer electronics are "released" onto the market. The mathematical and engineering elements become lost as the story becomes an effective way to not discuss the social relations of ICT production, consumption and disposal. However, as political economists have demonstrated, it is not just a math formula that determines when and why products are released or become obsolete.

My paper builds upon my previous research concerning media coverage of the exploitative infrastructures beneath our devices and the ICT industries. Using the case of the Spectre and Meltdown security flaws in the design of the Intel CPU processing units for the majority of the world's computers, my paper explores how popular technology news sources like Ars Technica, CNET, and Gizmodo covered the news about the Spectre and Meltdown design flaws. I explore the degrees to which the design flaws were discussed in terms of planned obsolescence and environmental justice while also examining the implications for repair and reuse of electronics.

Id: 19128

Title: The Politico-commercial Nexus and the Politics of Television Licensing in Bangladesh

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper dissects the power-relations of the expansion of the television industry and evolution of broadcast regulation in Bangladesh while tracing its ‘neoliberal-transformation with post-colonial characteristics.’ Drawing from empirical evidence, the paper unveils the process of licensing private television channels by successive governments between 1995 and 2018. The paper shows that the television ownership in Bangladesh is deeply confined by a hegemonic “politico-commercial nexus” that blurs the boundary between the state versus the market. The paper introduces “the politico-commercial nexus” as a conceptual category as well as an analytical unit and situates it within the broad theoretical approaches of critical and transcultural approaches to political economy of communication and the critique of global capitalism (Chakravartty & Zhao, 2008; Golding & Murdock, 2005; Amin, 2005). The paper defines the politico-commercial nexus as a complex relationship of mutually interdependent interests and interlocking networks between high level political leaders, media owners, advertisers, and top tier industrial conglomerates. The transcultural approach empowers the study to address the complex history of colonial legacy and postcolonial identity formation that shape the integration of political powers and mercantile elites and formation of the nexus. The discussions go beyond the conventional discussion of the “role of state”, and bring in the issues of structural inequalities, including, class divisions, urban-rural divides, and gender into the discussion of ownership structure, television licensing and news production. The paper argues that the synergy of economic interests among the television owners goes beyond the political rivalry among the major parties. The paper also draws upon the impact of ownership on television news production and in broadcast policy-making. The paper then places the findings in the broader historical and comparative contexts of media studies in South Asia. As opposed to any state-centrist or intra-state approach, the paper shows why regional context is important to understand the political economy of communications in the global South, especially where the countries within a region have shared history, culture, and geography.

Id: 19148

Title: Weaponized Bullshit ' The Political Economy of Misinformation and the Commodity of Outrage

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: During the 2017 protests in Charlottesville, North Carolina, Neo-Nazi Robert Ray credited the “spreading [of] our memes” for the growth in support for Neo-nazi protests and online participation. A year earlier, a man shot three rounds into a Washington DC pizza shop in an effort to end the supposed pedophilia ring that was operating in its basement. In both of these cases memes and “narrow” online information environments, such as web forums and social media pages, created the conditions necessary for the propagation of nonsense. More specifically, jokes, memes, and trolling have become an important ideological tool – the comfortable (and profitable) veneer that provides both plausible deniability against critique and a meaningful wink-and-nod to political and cultural in-groups (Nagle, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

The existence of mis- and disinformation is not new, nor are media sources that cater to reactionaries and conspiracy theorists. What has become novel is the ways in which misinformation – or what Frankfurt (2005) calls bullshit - has itself become a cultural industry. Consider, for example, NaturalNews.com and AmericanNews. Each of these sources use inflammatory memes as an “engagement” tool to drive traffic to their website and clickthrough ad revenue, in addition to promoting their own product lines. The memes are also conversational anchors on social media sites that take advantage of user outrage, and shares, to expose misinformation to a wider audience. The need for engagement, often including user-generated content, is the alchemy that turns bullshit into a valuable media commodity. An ever more crowded information environment further commodifies attention in a fractured media landscape. Bullshit – material presented with no regard for its truth content – has flourished alongside alternative news outlets catering to lifestyles and ideologies that celebrate their distance from mainstream information and scientific verification.

Rather than dismissing bullshit as merely frivolous or a symptom of social media culture, a closer consideration may be necessary to understand the impact it is having on sustainable democratic institutions and discourses. Specifically, the rise of bullshit co-opts traditional democratic principles such as mutuality and participation to sell outrage back to viewers as click-bait, alternative truths, or lifestyle choices. The following essay seeks to re-situate bullshit as a commodity of growing importance in the media industries. Understanding the profitability of bullshit offers citizens, activists, and researchers a different set of tools with which to repair and sustain a democracy that is at risk of being inundated with misinformation.

Id: 19153

Title: Life After Prohibition: The Political Economy of Oregon's Recreational Cannabis Industry

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: Recreational cannabis is now legal in Oregon. This presentation will explore the political, economic, and cultural implications of living in post-prohibition Oregon. It will include an analysis of the various sectors that are impacted by this policy change: state government agencies, banking institutions, strategic communication firms, lobbying groups, the proletariat, and private companies. This presentation will discuss and highlight how communication practices, economic policies, and political motives have been shifted as a result of legalizing recreational cannabis in Oregon. As cannabis becomes one of Oregon's most profitable commodities, how does the fetishism of this industry impact the lived experience of local community members?

This research project includes interviews with Oregon's top policy makers, as well as the individuals who own the most successful cannabis companies in Oregon. It will also include an in-depth analysis of the policies and documents that have formed Oregon's cannabis regulations. This presentation will also provide an outline of the history and evolution of cannabis policies in Oregon and an exploration into how banking institutions have played a major role in this evolution. The main goal of this critical analysis is to answer the question: In what ways does legal recreational cannabis in Oregon disrupt and/or contribute to the established political economic system?

Id: 19154

Title: All Things Not Being Equal: The Challenging Predicament of Indie Scripted Web Series On So-Called "Participatory" Online Platforms

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: A lack of meaningful opportunity in traditional film and television labour markets has been shown to be a key motive for why individuals engage in the production of scripted web series. Eager to escape the rigidities of their local content labour markets, and tired of waiting for the proverbial green light, entreprenuring and industrious individuals instead opt to create the opportunities they have never (or rarely) been offered. Creators embark with high hopes that their series will attract audiences and generate revenue. And while this is the case, no independent scripted web series has ever attained the viewership of the most popular viral videos, and generating the kind of revenue required for sustainable production has been rare, with creators often relying on unpaid sweat equity to keep their projects going.

This paper uses a hybrid critical political economy of communication and entrepreneurship studies approach to explore the challenging predicament of the short-form scripted web series in the context of the online, global content marketplace. The paper pays particular attention to the status of the scripted web series format, and the plight of its creators, on the Web 2.0 platforms that have often been labeled as "participatory". The paper demonstrates how the decreasing number of increasingly powerful transnational firms dictates the terms of creators' participation in these spaces. In-depth interviews with creators illustrate the consequences of this predicament, and show how numerous global systemic and institutional forces beyond their direct control have an impact on their capacity to reach and connect with audiences, tell their stories, and monetize their work.

In order to encapsulate the scope of the challenges faced by independent creators of scripted online narrative series, the paper also crucially introduces the concept of the "Participatory Culture Paradox", or the contradictory set of relations that enables creators' activities in the online space, and at the same time, constrains their capacity to find audiences and monetize their work. The paper's findings problematize ideas around access and participation on the web, and demonstrate the uneven effects of Web 2.0 platforms on 'typical' vs. 'professional' users. The paper thus urges scholars to take care when making claims regarding the scope of possibilities that participatory platforms afford more typical users than those who aim to use the web to develop professional scripted screen careers through their entrepreneurial work.

Id: 19178

Title: Where Political Economy and Entertainment Public Relations Run Parallel: An Analysis of Paratexts in Bollywood Films

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: By blending approaches to entertainment public relations and critical political economy of communication, this study explores the significance of paratexts in marketing the cultural products of Bollywood to a global audience. Paratexts are the titles, trailers, posters, opening credits, fan creations, advertising campaigns, reviews, and bonus materials that have become critically important for the Bollywood distributors after the Mumbai-based Indian film industry was officially recognized as an industry in 1998 by the Indian government. We are focusing on film titles, trailers, songs and posters as paratexts, which are texts and features used to popularize the film and may be different from the main text (Gray, 2010). In relation to other paratextual elements of a film, titles, trailers, songs, and posters occupy a special public relations and marketing space, as they serve an introductory function necessary to create "buzz" for the film before its release. Film titles, trailers, songs, and posters have significantly changed in Bollywood in the past few years, mainly due to the way films have been integrated into different models of cultural production and distribution following capitalistic logic (Mörner, 2011). Since 1998, Bollywood has relied heavily on entertainment public relations using glamorous and Westernized paratextual elements to market films in non-Hindi speaking countries, attract global audiences, and create fans for Bollywood's cultural products. For example, out of ten highest grossing Bollywood films of all times, the titles of five were in English, and more than half of the revenue for each film was generated outside India (Pandey, 2009). These introductory features of the Bollywood's products are important marketing tools guiding audiences' reception and interpretation of a film, as they provide basic information about the story and characters and create a relationship with the audience. For example, titles such as "Fan", "One Night Stand" or "Chennai Express" serve a didactic purpose and offer audiences the first interpretation by helping them understand the central idea contained in the film text (Ellis, 1992; Mahlke, 2011). We argue that the Bollywood producers and distributors are heavily relying on commercially-driven paratextual elements such as titles, trailers, songs, and posters as

entertainment public relations tools to strengthen culture industry's economic muscle in a global entertainment market.

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Id: 19249

Title: Imperialism, Localization, Glocalization and Patrimonialism: The Fight For National Control over TV Globo

Session Type: Individual submission

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Abstract: This paper examines power relations in the formation of globalized but still strongly national media firms, like TV Globo in Brazil. More specifically it re-examines two major theories of globalization, localization and glocalization, to understand the complex and shifting power dynamics involved in the construction of a major television network that is powerful at national, regional, cultural-linguistic and global levels. TV Globo is organizationally hybrid, formed by a joint venture of Time-Life and the Globo Organization, from 1964-70, synthesizing US broadcast management and Brazilian programming practices. However, the success of such a hybrid was by no means guaranteed. In 1964-66, it almost failed. This paper examines key agents of both localization and glocalization in the two firms, their actions and the shifting power dynamics they represent. The attempted transfer of knowledge and resources from Time-Life gradually shifted from a focus on localizing its knowledge and resources to selectively glocalizing what TV Globo actually needed to succeed, including the shift of one key Time-Life manager from being the agent of localization for Time-Life to being the agent of glocalization for TV Globo in 1966. That enabled TV Globo to emerge quickly as the dominant producer in Brazil by 1970, and a principal exporter in regional and cultural-linguistic spheres, by 1976. Part of this analysis will come from the critical literature of Brazilian political economy and television history, part of it will come of from published memoirs by several TV Globo managers, and some will come from interviews done by the authors with Time-Life and TV Globo executives.