Media Sector Development Working Group

Abstracts of papers presented at the annual conference of the
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Title: [Panel] Big Tech, Media Development and Journalism Philanthropy: Friend or Foe' Panel description

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Facebook recently announced it would donate $US 300 million to support quality journalism. Google has made a similar commitment of $US 300 million through its Google News Initiative. The Mozilla Foundation, Omidyar Network, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: many new foundations funded with profits from technological industries in Silicon Valley are offering philanthropy to help alleviate the financial crisis in news journalism. Such initiatives, however, are a subject of considerable controversy. Are these new funders using their philanthropy to shape the news agenda? Do these arrangements compromise journalistic autonomy and independence? Are these philanthropic efforts merely tokenistic, given the broader impact these firms are having on news media around the globe? The panel will explore the conceptual and research challenge posed by these questions, as well as the practical aspects of concern to activists, media actors, and others who are considering whether to engage with these funders.

Session Organizer: Susan Abbott, University of Westminster, susanabbott1 (at) gmail.com
Chair: Dr. Victor Pickard, Associate Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
Respondent: Dr. Melanie Bunce, Senior Lecturer in Journalism, and the founding director of the Humanitarian News Research Network based at City, University of London.

Id: 23697

Title: The key philanthropies funding journalism and media: How and why they do it

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper is based on an ongoing research project on media and power run by the Center for Media, Data and Society (CMDS) at CEU. It aims to identify the key philanthropies funding media and journalism and to describe the mechanisms and principles used by them when making funding decisions. The paper will attempt to explain some of the key changes in media development funding during the past decade.

The paper aims to also shortly describe the context in which philanthropies operate, particularly the role played by other key groups in funding media and journalism. The role of governments, which have become a major player in the media market, is going to be analyzed, as funding disbursed by governments has a massive direct influence on journalism and media.

Specifically, Dragomir will present original research from Media Influence Matrix is a global research and advocacy project run by the Media & Power Consortium, a group of experts led by the Center for Media, Data & Society (CMDS) at CEU in Budapest. Part of the Matrix's chapter on journalism funding covers philanthropy funding. Marius Dragomir will speak about the main trends in philanthropy funding. Using data and information gathered in the project, he will aim to answer the following questions: Who are the key philanthropy funders in journalism? Are they mostly international/western foundations or governments? Are local industry groups and individuals funding journalism in their countries? What are the key initiatives philanthropies are funding? How does philanthropy funding in journalism compare with government funding or commercial revenues?

Id: 23698

Title: Philanthropic funding and humanitarian journalism

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Private foundations are an importance source of funding for many news outlets. It has even been suggested that they may offer partial solutions to journalism's economic crisis. But how does private philanthropy affect the practice of journalism? This paper looks at how philanthropic funding shapes the values and practice of humanitarian journalism - journalism focused on natural disasters, conflict, and other crises affecting human welfare around the world.

Id: 23700

Title: Philanthropy-driven data journalism and implications for journalistic practices in Africa

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Over the past decade, philanthropic organizations have poured millions of dollars into different specialized forms of journalism in Africa. These include health journalism, economics/business journalism, science journalism, data journalism, and more recently fact-checking journalism. Support for these specialized forms has come in the form of grants, paid-for trainings, overseas fellowships, seed funds for data journalism projects, and running of data journalism awards. In a context where newsrooms are shrinking and media organizations have less resources to sustain good journalism, this funding has in many places provided much needed relief to media houses facing closure. In some cases, this has led to the burgeoning of new reporting desks for these specific niche areas. While these new specialized forms of journalism are, on the face of it, aimed at addressing existing gaps in news reporting on the continent, not much scholarly work has sought to establish the motives/interests of the various philanthropic organizations involved, the choice of particular journalistic forms they support, and the general impact that such interventions have on the practice of journalism in general. This study explores the rise in philanthropy-driven data journalism and analyses its broader implications for the practice of journalism in Africa. Data journalism has gained significant visibility on the continent, popularized by organizations such as Code for Africa, HecksHackers and others, with support from leading foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Omidyar Foundation, the Open Society Foundation and others. What implications does this have for journalism on the continent? How is data journalism perceived in African newsrooms? Do newsrooms find it useful, or do they just do it because it attracts funding?

Id: 23702

Title: [Panel] Where's the "Development' in Media Development: A Critical Reflection on the Contributions and Outcomes of Media Assistance, Panel description

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: IAMCR's newest working group, tentatively entitled the "Media Development Working Group," considers the efforts of actors around the globe to promote freedom of expression, strengthen the independence of the news media, and foster an enabling institutional environment for pluralism and diversity in the media sector. These efforts, however, are carried out under a staggering array of justifications, and are often influenced by radically different assumptions and ideologies pertaining to democracy and development. Equity of information access, communication power, cultural flows, good governance, poverty eradication, and citizenship are all variously posited as being at stake in efforts to build a better media system, with implications to how this work is approached. As part of the working group's effort to foster a more coherent scholarly dialogue connected to this field of practice, this panel explores some of the diversity implicit in the "development" of media development.

Chair: Susan Abbott, University of Westminster, London
Discussant: Dr. Jairo Lugo-Ocando, Director of Executive & Graduate Education, Professor in Residence, Northwestern University in Qatar

Id: 23703

Title: Nigerian Newspapers and Foundation Funding: The Attractions and Drawbacks of Foreign Aid Funding

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: This paper explores the attractions and drawbacks of accepting funding from foundations, from the point of view of Nigerian newspapers. I describe how journalists who are recipients of philanthropic funding from the likes of Gates and Omidyar negotiate their relationship with these donors. I conclude that newspapers are rather more adept and muscular in their dealings with donors than might be supposed.

Id: 23704

Title: Measuring, monitoring, mapping and modelling a sustainable global media ecosystem: A pilot study

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: UNESCO and others concerned with the sustainability of the news media worldwide recognise that if this issue is to managed, it needs to be measured and monitored (Schneider, Hollifield, & Lublinski, 2016). Several frameworks for media viability indicators have been proposed over the past three years (UNESCO-IPDC, 2015; Schneider, Hollifield, & Lublinski, 2015). However, calls for their implementation have not been answered - until now.

This paper reports on the creation of an ongoing, broad-based, quantitative tool to measure, monitor, map and model the forces shaping media sustainability globally. Data on 264 countries and terrestrial regions, from a range of global databases including the World Bank, Transparency International, OECD etc. and from panel data, were used to create a Media Sustainability Barometer (MSB). Structural equation modelling was used to estimate relationships between MSB factors (political, economic, social, technological, legal and media-specific indicators) and those United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals which constitute the focus for 2019 .

Testing the model using data on G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) blocs, it was established that media sustainability was predicted by a number of UN SDGs, especially SDG No.16 (peace, justice and the right to information).

We anticipate that media leaders, policy makers and other development actors will draw on the MSB into their evidence-based strategic planning. Furthermore, the study will contribute to scholarly discourse into the changing news media ecosystem and the future of global media policy.

Id: 23705

Title: Voice, audience and the 'storytelling turn' in media (for) development

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: As the funding landscapes for media, journalism and development shift towards an increasing presence of private and philanthropic funding a chief concern regards the consequences for programming (Scott, Bunce, & Wright 2019; Schiffrin 2017). One of the identified shifts is the increasing blurring in practice between what scholars distinguish as 'media development' (strengthening media institutions and capacities) and 'media for development' (focus on educational messages and content) (Manyozo 2012; Scott 2014). In particular, many philanthropies interested in direct support to build local capacities for the production of content on specific themes (Kalathil 2017). Indeed, the broader wave of interest in 'instrumental storytelling' – or the 'storytelling turn' - has been argued as being driven by philanthropic foundations (Fernandes 2017). Additionally, direct support for journalism on specific themes is now also beginning to be placed in the context of 'fake news' and of combatting misinformation, as was highlighted in a recent op-ed by UK Foreign Secretary in his announcement of his focus on supporting press freedom (Hunt 2018).

The paper reflects on these trends in the broader landscape of media (for) development with reference to a recent audience research project undertaken with International Media Support (IMS), a media development organisation based in Denmark. The research project, including content analysis and audience focus groups, was undertaken in the context of one of IMS's programmes (funded by the Ford Foundation) supporting journalists to produce stories about local migration in four migration hubs in Africa (Noske-Turner, Twigt & Sajir 2018). The focus was on amplifying the voices of African migrants
The paper engages with Fernandes's (2017) concept of 'curated storytelling' first as a way of attending to some of the problems identified in the findings of the report in terms of a programmatic focus on 'voice' of migrants. In keeping with existing literature (Figenschou & Thorbjornsrud 2015), the report found that the focus on individual migrant voices primarily through human interest frames, while intended to evoke sympathy, could also have the effect of reproducing representations

of migrants as helpless victims, under-interrogating structural and systemic factors. Equally, 'positive' stories of uplift could, in keeping with Fernandes' neoliberal critique, have the effect of responsibilising migrants to be successful, integrated entrepreneurs. Second, Fernandes' concept of curated storytelling is used to understand the audience responses to stories. While most stories elicited the intended sense of sympathy and understanding among focus group participants, some stories were dismissed as misinformation or with a distancing response, and still others with quite profound levels of empathy and enriched understanding. The latter can be analysed to understand the how important authenticity, complexity and 'thickness' are for breaking through the malaise of curated stories and provoking change through media (for) development.

Id: 23706

Title: From media sustainability to vibrant information: Measuring the complex information systems we inhabit

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Now in its 17th year, the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) studies the health of the media sector in 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia. International non-profit IREX, in collaboration with USAID, created the MSI as a tool to assess the development of media systems over time and across countries. It is different from other measurements and indexes in that it looks beyond free speech or press freedom; the MSI measures how effectively traditional and non-traditional sources of news serve their audiences. The primary source for the MSI score is a panel of local experts drawn from each country's media outlets, NGOs, professional associations, and academic institutions in each country. This approach is innovative and participatory; most international indexes are scored by a limited group of experts in global North countries.
While the MSI has yielded a significant depth of knowledge, the type of information it provides is still limited. In the two decades since the MSI was designed, the world has changed profoundly. Digital transformation, the blurring of lines between media producers and audience, the near collapse of the advertising-based media business model, and backsliding among countries that appeared to be moving toward democratization, are among the confounding challenges. Additionally, while the MSI was always intended to yield practical recommendations for the global development, it largely unable to either provide root cause analysis for many of the problems it identifies, or adequately map the connections among different forces that determine the health of a media sector.
This paper analyzes the complex pathways that have been necessary to design a new index to replace the MSI: an Index that measures not just the media but the complex information systems which enmesh today's world. The new index, called the Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) looks at both traditional and non-traditional producers of information; analyzes power inequalities; and attempts to better understand the relationships between people, information, decision-making, and action. The VIBE framework has four 'principles:' 1) meaningful content; 2) accessible channels that facilitate information flow; 3) citizens who are dynamically engaged with information; and 4) citizens who ultimately use that information to take action for transformative positive change.
VIBE measurement draws on mixed methods, preliminarily including open source data, expert opinion, surveys, content analysis and web mapping. The index is being tested throughout 2019

using an MVP (minimum viable product) "agile" approach in 2-3 countries. By the time of the IAMCR we will be able to report on at least one VIBE pilot, especially vis a vis the extent to which VIBE can usefully measure complex information systems and the challenges in operationalizing the framework. Importantly, we will have a good read on how practical the VIBE analysis is to inform governments, civil society, donors, media and tech companies, and global development organizations, about how best to increase the vibrancy of information systems. The presentation at IAMCR will include a description of the journey to design VIBE, an analysis of the prototype testing, as well as designs for the way forward.

Id: 23707

Title: De-westernising media development in Africa

Session Type: Panel Submission

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Abstract: Historically media development has carried on as if it is an ideologically free enterprise yet it is conflicted by interests of the "developers". Technical equipment, funding as well as training come with hidden agendas and values. Colonialism revealed that media development was offered in the service of power, especially to buttress systems of exploitation and to uphold power of colonisers. The colonising Western nations left in place media systems that are still constrained by colonial frameworks. The media development approach to postcolonial media systems will need to be rethought as over the years this has not created viable communication for Africans. De-Westernising media development entails decoloniality, to help undo the remnants of colonial frameworks, and to realign media development needs with contemporary needs in the Africans contexts. The digital media initiatives can succeed if their conceptualisation and policy frameworks avoid colonial tropes and incorporate African thinking. The paper evaluates literature and cases of media development in Southern Africa with a view to De-Westernising and rethink the media development efforts in Africa.