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Critical Data Governance

Authors

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Abstract

This paper is an effort in outlining and positioning a point of inquiry called Critical Data Governance (CDG), to theoretically study data policies and practices. Over the last half a decade, growing datafication across the world has been accompanied by academic research that present critical perspectives to this phenomenon, under the rubric of Critical Data Studies. All the same, we have the now-established body of interdisciplinary work called Critical Policy Studies. Bringing these two areas of research in conversation with each other, I seek to posit a critical approach to the study of data governance. Towards this end, the paper tries to answer the following questions: (a) What are the advances in research on data governance? (b) What is 'critical' about Critical Data Governance? (c) Why is it important to envisage CDG as a robust research paradigm in the realm of Communication Policy and Technology studies? In answering these questions, the paper seeks to question and go beyond the current managerial, instrumental and technocratic approach to the study of data governance.

Submission ID

37

Garbage In, Garbage Out: Predictive Policing and Structural Biases in Automated Criminal Justice Techniques

Authors

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Abstract

The implementation of data analytics over a century ago in criminal justice systems has manifested in the form of large-scale record-keeping, network analysis, crime mapping, and so on. As computing has become exponentially more accessible and efficient, law enforcement agencies have dived headfirst into the realm of big data to streamline police work into something more predictive than reactive. As such, internal policies rest heavier on the idea that quantitative data should influence criminological decision-making, with a

reliance on the increasingly sophisticated communication technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence) afforded to them by massive police budgets. While the notion of policework guided by computers rather than individuals might strike the public as an objective ideal, this has come up against considerable criticism by technology scholars for its failure to recognize the subjectivities enshrined within these systems. This paper aims to address this debate by answering two key research questions regarding predictive policing. First, how does “objectivity” manifest in predictive policing programs? Second, what implications do biases in these programs have for communities that implement predictive policing?

Beginning with a broad overview of the research on big data and the role of objectivity in machine learning and artificial intelligence, I set the stage for a clear application of communication technology theory to a criminal justice setting. Then, I connect existing research from criminology and law that measures the viability of predictive policing along with its level of success in the communities that are policed. I supplement these two bodies of literature by discussing three predominant tools in predictive policing — heat maps, automated license-plate readers, and facial recognition technology — from multiple perspectives, including law enforcement policymakers, police officers, and the communities they police, to understand the numerous implications.

Combining my three forms of evidence (theory from communication technology, theory from criminology, and cases from real-world applications of predictive policing), I make a case that supports the notion that objectivity in predictive policing cannot be obtained, as it relies first and foremost on the subjective decisions made by individuals within the law enforcement system. Further, law enforcement agencies’ use of public relations to support these programs as objective is likened to “tech-washing,” and ignores the growing criticisms of structural biases in policing. While these forms of police work do have demonstrated use and value to communities, they ultimately reify the structural biases upon which they are built.

Submission ID

113

Market and Regulatory Aspects of Expansion of Streaming Services

Authors

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Abstract

The number of streaming services is increasing rapidly globally, altering the availability of content, behavior of competitors and being influenced by increased regulation of streaming services. These changes are leading to increased production of original content, but primarily to a market struggle to acquire and control libraries of audio-visual materials, including many that were not previously considered desirable. Some national and regional regulators are increasingly placing domestic content quotas on total content available on streaming services operating in their jurisdictions. Such changes are also creating cross-border sales that were not previously possible. They are also lowering production quality expectations and budgets and are altering the production environment and consumption patterns.

Submission ID

278

Professionalization of YouTube – The global and the local community standards

Authors

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Abstract

YouTube is a global video portal and the largest online video advertising medium. The decision to be free and rely primarily on advertising revenue makes YouTube accountable to the local markets and standards. With its global presence and popularity, YouTube also need to be sensitive to local market interests while encouraging professionalization of the creators and hosting professional content to continue to attract an audience. One major tool to ensure advertisers' confidence is brand safety and not to demonetize offensive content or taking off content offensive to the local market. Ha will talk about the viewership of YouTube across different countries and the community standards of YouTube, how it balances global presence and local community standards to maximize viewership and advertising revenue.

Submission ID

279

Imperialism ad infinitum? Peril of Netflix's glocalizing entrainment on the right to communicate

Authors

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Abstract

In the recent years, one can undoubtedly argue that global entertainment corporations have dramatically transformed the landscape of both media industry and markets. CNN reported that more than 1 billion subscribers are using major digital entertainment platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime, among others).

Despite the vast body of research investigating the relationship between capitalism, imperialism, and media/communication, questions need to address the recent Netflix's move (especially in the post-global pandemic) to focus on producing non-English language originals in particular, as well as producing global replica of English entrainment for local audience. Viewing this example from this angle is significant to revisit the historiography of the old MacBride Commission's recommendations, and the one-way flow of information (for the RTC research in particular).

It is naïve to assume that Netflix is simply allowing local creatives to tell stories about their own cultures and then distributing them internationally. Yet, this might be seen as a conscious effort from a major capitalist entity to operate and produce content within the western sphere (i.e., North using the old MacBride/NWICO terminology), and launching it to local audience across the globe.

Bringing the theme of the conference to reorient media and communication research in the era of *neo-globalisation*, and as a scholar interested in the right to communicate, in particular, this paper will attempt to reorient research on the right to communicate to assess the case of global Netflix's glocal production of entertainment questioning its impact on the local audience's cultural expression. It will particularly pose questions, such as: Are we seeing a blurred line in the media landscape where notion of cultural hegemony and imperialism are not significant anymore? That local cultures and audience will be simply an aspect in the global capitalist digital media platforms' new markets? That the flow of one-way information and communication would be acceptable for the used-to-be "south countries" as

we see the growth of subscribers and viewership of non-English viewers for the media products?

One must acknowledge that this is not unique to Netflix per se, as we have seen plenty of global “versions” of western (mainly American) shows imported and reproduced with replica even with the décor, sound effects, and selections of hosts, even by local producers. Yet, what is interesting is the implications of this content on the local cultural “lack of policies”: a stance that worth analysing to understand why local media policy makers did not attempt to take a stab in these major transformations? Is this what scholars termed to as “cultural hybridization” that relies solely on glocalizing media content?

This proposed paper will reorient the right to communicate research by refocusing once again on the notion of cultural and media imperialism in the recent years, on the flow of information and communication, on the limits of production of local media content that can compete with a major entity like Netflix. Problematizing the issue more, Netflix is approaching the markets in all possible way (typical capitalist stance), where it is producing local non-English content and distributing it globally (as we have seen in French, Korean, Arabic, and other languages) to English speaking markets on the one hand. On the other, it is undertaking the reverse strategy by bringing English content, producing its replica version using the local language. So far, there are about 80 foreign language productions by Netflix. As the paper will illustrate, it does not matter where the content/language comes from, or even where it is going, the number of subscribers is the main indicator and progenitor for these media platforms to continue. Using a multi-facet theoretical approach that start with the right to communicate research, to political economy, global media policy, and critical media analysis approach, the paper will argue that Imperialism is and will be really *ad infinitum* in media communication research with the existence of the global entertainment digital platforms.

Submission ID

323

Disentangling the relation among trust, efficacy and privacy management: A moderated mediation analysis of public support for government surveillance during the Covid-19 pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

Using a representative survey conducted among 1135 Hong Kong residents, this study explored the underlying mechanism of the effects of privacy calculus (i.e., perceived cost and benefit of disclosure), political attitudes (i.e., political trust, political efficacy) on public support for government surveillance, as mediated by citizens' self-control over privacy management (i.e., privacy self-efficacy) and trust in data controllers (i.e., privacy trust). The study bridged privacy management and public opinion studies, and provided valuable insights on the public opinion of Hong Kong society on government surveillance amidst the political restructuring in recent years.

A series of ordinary least squares hierarchical regression models were used to test the total and direct effects of privacy calculus, political attitudes on surveillance support, as well as their direct effects on the mediators, with demographical information, news media use and perceived threat of Covid-19 infection controlled as covariates. Our results indicated that privacy self-efficacy and privacy trust balance against each other in mediating privacy calculus and political attitudes' effects on surveillance support.

The analysis of the total effects shows that both perceived benefit of disclosure ($B = .435$, $SE = .036$, $p < .001$) and political trust ($B = .409$, $SE = .041$, $p < .001$) exert positive effects on surveillance support, internal political efficacy exert a negative effect ($B = -.052$, $SE = .019$, $p < .01$) on surveillance support; while perceived cost of disclosure and external political efficacy barely show any effect on surveillance support.

The mediation analysis using PROCESS macro (Model 4) in R with 10,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples tested the indirect effects of above factors on surveillance support. The results indicated that the effects of perceived benefit and political trust are partially mediated by privacy trust (perceived benefit: $B = .160$, $SE = .023$, 95% CI = [.116, .208] ; political trust: $B = .300$, $SE = .032$, 95% CI [.240, .366]) and privacy self-efficacy (perceived benefit: $B = .018$, $SE = .007$, 95% CI = [.005, .033]; political trust: $B = .014$, $SE = .007$, 95% CI [.002, .030]) ; while internal political efficacy shows no indirect effect on

surveillance support. Interestingly, as privacy trust ($B = .433$, $SE = .032$, $p < .001$) and self-efficacy ($B = -.119$, $SE = .025$, $p < .001$) shows strong while opposite direct effects on surveillance support, the indirect effects of political trust and perceived benefit work by enhancing privacy trust while suppressing privacy self-efficacy. It is also noteworthy that external political efficacy shows a negative indirect effect ($B = -.012$, $SE = .004$, 95% CI [-.021, -.005]) on surveillance support through its positive effect on privacy self-efficacy, despite of its insignificant total effect.

The moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS macro (Model 59) further explored the conditional role of perceived threat of Covid-19 infection and pro-democracy news media use in this process. The results indicated that while perceived threat only strengthens the direct effect of perceived benefit on surveillance support, pro-democracy media use mitigates the positive indirect effects of political trust, perceived benefit, as well as external political efficacy (mediated by privacy trust) on surveillance support.

Conditioning external political efficacy's effects on different levels of pro-democracy media use yielded noteworthy results as well: while its negative indirect effect on surveillance support via privacy self-efficacy remains unchanged, external political efficacy shows a positive indirect effect on surveillance support through privacy trust when conditioned in low level (- 1 SD) of pro-democracy media use ($B = .227$, $SE = .036$, 95% CI = [.162, .300]), which is mitigated and reversed to negative when pro-democracy media use is increased to the high level (+1 SD). The opposite indirect effects of external political efficacy on surveillance support via the two mediators reveals its dual focus in nurturing both trust and control in privacy management.

Submission ID

347

Research on Privacy Disclosure Willingness of Epidemic Prevention Big Data Application——Based on Privacy Computing Theory

Authors

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, epidemic prevention big data applications represented by health codes have been widely used in mainland China. It collects personal address, movement trajectory, contact information and other information through big data means, comprehensively analyzes the individual's health status and generates a personal QR code, and provides decision-making basis for the public health department's epidemic control actions. The purpose of implementing the health code is to achieve a balance between normal production and life and precise prevention and control of the epidemic, but it also brings concerns about personal privacy issues.

In the past research, although some scholars have paid attention to the tension between big data prevention and control and personal privacy, the existing research still discusses it from the perspective of data collectors and managers. However, few studies have paid attention to the privacy disclosure willingness of the general public as the subject of privacy. Therefore, this study aims to explore what factors will affect the privacy disclosure willingness of health code users in the special context of public health crisis with the help of privacy computing theory, and explain the privacy paradox presented by users' privacy concerns and privacy disclosure behaviors. This study adopted a research method combining questionnaires and interviews, collected a total of 309 valid questionnaires, and conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 health code users of different ages.

This study first found that most users believe that the personal privacy information collected by the health code is more sensitive, and they think it is difficult to control the specific use of the data collected by the health code, so they are worried about the privacy risks implied by the health code. However, users still show a high degree of trust in the data manager of the health code, and show a high willingness to disclose privacy. Health code users also believe that external norms and perceived benefits play an important role in promoting privacy disclosure.

The questionnaire data and the interview content also show that the user's perceived benefits of the health code will significantly improve the privacy disclosure willingness of the users of the epidemic prevention big data application. Among them, due to the overall improvement of the epidemic situation in mainland China and the high frequency of use of health codes, users' perceived ease of use of health codes is higher than their perceived usefulness. However, unlike the theoretical assumptions of privacy computing in the traditional sense, due to personal health concerns and government control factors in public health events, users' perceived risks under the new crown pneumonia epidemic will not affect their willingness to disclose privacy. Among the various influencing factors of users' perceived risk, the sensitivity of the health code to collect personal information privacy and the degree of restraint of external norms will positively affect the perceived risk of health code users; the perceived trust of health code data collectors and users It will negatively

affect the user's perceived risk of the health code.

The value of this study firstly explores neglected public privacy concerns in the context of public health crises, and analyzes the considerations for public privacy disclosure behavior. In addition, this study also updates the explanatory power and applicable conditions of traditional privacy computing theory in the context of public health events. Finally, this study believes that although personal privacy needs to be disclosed in a special period of public health crisis to protect the general interests of society and public health and safety, the public's privacy concerns and privacy concerns are still worthy of attention. The security of the public's private information should be effectively protected through legal, technical and other means.

Submission ID

391

Fighting disinformation through media literacy: From current practices to policy making

Authors

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Abstract

The new media ecosystem has deeply transformed the way online disinformation spreads and multiply in the last few years. Consistent efforts have been made at national and European levels to find efficient ways to fight disinformation and raise public awareness about the dangers associated with being in contact and further spreading misleading information, especially in the online environment. In this context, the current study seeks to gather expert opinions about current practices and possible ways to intervene through public policies in fighting disinformation, with a focus on media literacy solutions. In a European-funded project (YouVerify), we will conduct in-depth interviews with experts, journalists, and policy makers (N=30) in three European countries (namely France, Romania, and Spain), to find possible solutions and actors that could actively contribute to implementing public policy in this area. The interviewees will be disinformation experts (representatives of fact-checking agencies, of NGOs working on media literacy, fact-checking, or

disinformation, researchers doing consistent research in any of these areas), journalists specialized in social and political news (from various types of media outlets), and policy makers (representatives of Ministries of Education in the three countries, Members of Parliament, or Members of the Boards of the media regulators in each country). We focus on three main discussion topics: 1. Understanding experts' perceptions about the main negative effects of disinformation in each country (both at individual and social levels); 2. Understanding the current practices in place in each country to actively fight disinformation, with a special focus on media literacy, fact-checking, and education policies; 3. Solutions to fighting disinformation at system level, with a clear aim at building public policies at both national and European levels. We expect information gathered to help us building strong proposals of policy making, which will be further shared to various stakeholders, including policy makers themselves.

Submission ID

398

Governing pluralism and diversity in communications markets — A comparative analysis of policies, laws and debates in response to dominant Internet platforms

Authors

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Abstract

The rapid rise of large and powerful Internet platforms challenges policymakers and regulators worldwide. Various regulatory problems dominate the current public-policy agenda and the scholarly discourse, including the regulation of privacy and data protection, hate speech and disinformation, algorithmic selection and general questions of competition. Concerns have also arisen specifically regarding the disruption of traditional media markets by Internet platforms. As the main intermediaries controlling access to content, these are ascribed a high potential for influencing and endangering public-opinion formation and media pluralism. This raises new questions about the governance of opinion power and media concentration, which are associated with risks to open public discourses in

democratic societies. Discussions on traditional media-concentration control gained momentum at the turn of the millennium – a period in which media-ownership rules were loosened in the light of convergence and liberalization. But where do we stand today?

This article offers a comparative analysis of the current state of media-concentration regulation and opinion-power control in six countries (Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, UK, USA). It identifies the political importance currently attached to media-concentration control in these countries and scrutinizes the ways in which Internet platforms have been considered in recent regulatory and competition-law reforms. For each country, we conducted an in-depth analysis of media and competition laws, policy and legal documents, as well as academic contributions and media coverage.

Overall, the findings indicate that policymakers currently give less priority to reforms of traditional measures of media-concentration control (e.g., structural measures such as restrictions on ownership and audience share) as compared to the aforementioned regulatory problems arising from platform dominance. For example, several countries have implemented or are considering reforms of competition laws in order to limit the market power of Internet platforms. Such reforms address the characteristics of multi-sided markets and anti-competitive practices of platform companies. They also focus on enabling early intervention in platform markets, e.g., by tightening merger control and introducing ex-ante instruments. Furthermore, reforms are marked by renewed discussions about the relationship between regulation and competition law and the distribution of responsibilities between regulatory and competition authorities.

Unique rules for Internet platforms aimed at safeguarding media pluralism in media law are thus far the exception and have only been introduced in Germany, e.g., in the form of rules on non-discrimination and transparency. In view of increasingly complex media systems and platformization, the policy focus instead is shifting to additional measures of promoting diversity in media and communications markets. These complement traditional instruments of media-concentration control and aim at strengthening the competitiveness of the national media vis-à-vis dominant international platforms, for example by exempting press companies from the ban on cartels, introducing media subsidies or promoting public-value content.

Submission ID

424

Tracing the Imagination of Big Data: Critical Metaphor Analysis of Editorial in People's Daily (2013-2021)

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Abstract

With the rapid development of digital technology, Big Data is increasingly embedded in people's daily life. The concept of Big Data is ambiguous and vague, which makes its meaning open to discussion. The Chinese mainstream media's discourses on Big Data have a tendency to present implicitly the myth of "dataism", which has an influence on the public's cognition. If people accept this constructive discourse, they may lack a comprehensive understanding and objective judgment of Big Data. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and reveal the media discourse on Big Data.

This study attempts to investigate the values, beliefs, and interests of Big Data rhetoric in Chinese media in the theoretical context of sociotechnical imaginaries. Sociotechnical imaginaries refer to a collective vision of desirable futures created by science and technology. They reside in the reservoir of norms and discourses, metaphors, and cultural meanings out of which actors build their policy preferences (Jasanoff and Kim, 2009). Critical metaphor analysis (CMA) was used in this study. Critical Metaphor Analysis reveals the intentions and embedded ideologies of language users through contextual analysis, metaphor identification, metaphor description, and metaphor interpretation (Charteris-Black, 2004).

This study presents a case study of editorials of *People's Daily*. *People's Daily* is one of the most discursive and influential newspapers in China and is the most direct and centralized reflection of mainstream political ideology (Li Ming, 2013). *People's Daily* has published a large number of editorials on Big Data, which reflects the Chinese government's cognitive process and development path of Big Data. The research questions of this study are: What types of metaphors are used in the editorial on Big Data in *People's Daily*? What kind of sociotechnical imaginaries about Big Data are these metaphors constructing? What values, beliefs and interests do these metaphors and sociotechnical imaginaries reveal?

As of December 31, 2021, we have collected 127 editorials of *People's Daily*, with a total of 164484 Chinese characters. We use the authoritative metaphor identification method

(MIPVU) (Gerard J. Steen,2010) to identify all the metaphors. Then we classified all metaphors and calculated “resonance”, which is “to indicate the extent to which metaphor source domains are found in a particular corpus and measure their productivity thereby (Charteris-Black,2004)”. The measure of resonance is that it is the sum of tokens multiplied by the sum of the types of metaphors.

Results show that *People's Daily's* Big Data editorials have four metaphors: the tool metaphors (37.39%), such as “power, engine, and strategic resources”; the natural resource metaphors (28.68%), such as “oil, gold, waves, and ocean”; the product metaphors (27.12%), such as “mining, highway, and data barrier”; the body metaphors (5.62%), such as “portraits, transparent people, mind-reading”; and other metaphors (2.38%).

The first leading imagination is that “Big Data is a production tool and strategic resources”. It constructs the rhetoric that Big Data can boost production from the perspective of pragmatism. It also integrates the nationalist narrative of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Furthermore, it regards the field of Big Data as the space for the game of big powers and the space for globalized competition from the perspective of digital sovereignty.

The second dominant imagination is that "Big Data is oil, gold, and waves". It imagines that Big Data has enormous economic potential and is an irresistible opportunity of the times. But it ignores many potential risks, such as industry monopoly and technology black box. The natural resource metaphors reflect the neo-liberal ideology and technological optimism.

The third dominant imagining is " Big Data is the product". The product metaphors involve such keywords as “mining, refining, highway, and data barrier”. “Mining and refining” still focus on the economic value of Big Data. Moreover, Big Data Highway is similar to the "information highway" proposed by the US. It conveys that China wants to break the data barrier to realize the smooth flow of the data highway, which embodies the efficiency and rationality of technical governance.

The fourth dominant imagination is that "Big Data is the identity portrait". The editorials of *People's Daily* use the body metaphors to call on governments to regulate Internet platforms and pay attention to data protection issues, such as privacy leaks, data ownership and cyber civil rights.

In conclusion, *People's Daily* editorials show an optimistic attitude towards Big Data, giving priority to economic issues related to Big Data while ignoring related social issues. However, more and more data rights and data ethics issues are emerging. It is important to deeply rethink the media discourse and imagination of Big Data to uncover potential pitfalls.

Submission ID

823

Beyond Authoritarianism and Liberal Democracy: Understanding China's Artificial Intelligence Impact in Africa

Authors

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence is viewed as a transformative technology that will bring a huge impact on human societies (Butcher & Beridze, 2019). As the world's second-largest economy, China has shown its ambition to become a world leader in AI technology (Zeng, 2020). Facilitated by the government's Belt and Road Initiative, China's AI companies have reached other continents, encompassing Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe (Abramowitz & Chertoff, 2018) --For instance, by 2019, Chinese telecommunication company Huawei had cooperated with 52 governments (mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia) via its "Safe City" projects, applying a wide range of technologies (including AI) for city governance (Hillman & McCalpin, 2019). However, most media reportage and scholarly analysis on Chinese AI companies' impact on Africa, habitually fall into a Cold-War-style narrative of "Authoritarianism" against the backdrop of "Liberal Democracy". They contend that AI technology provided by Chinese AI companies will assist Beijing's exportation of "its illiberal political values" (Parkinson, Bariyo, & Chin, 2019), strengthen Beijing-led "authoritarian alliance" with the Global South (Andersen, 2020), and finally "replace the liberal international order with its authoritarian vision" (Abramowitz & Chertoff, 2018). This paper suggests that the "Authoritarianism" and "Liberal Democracy" paradigms are insufficient to differentiate the implications of digital technologies in Africa brought by China or the West (e.g., US) and argues AI as a technology heavily relying on data, should be studied through the lens of "surveillance capitalism" and "data colonialism."

The "Authoritarianism" vs. "Liberal Democracy" model was created to describe the division between the capitalist West and the communist Soviet Union in a Cold War antagonistic logic, and China which broke with USSR in the 1950s cannot fit into this model (Thussu, 2019, p.264). On the other hand, "liberal democracies" are not "democratic" *pe se* (Fuchs, 2018). For instance, Jacksonian white democracy in the US is believed to actually sustain the authoritarianism towards Black, Native, and women (Lee, 2021). The unique attributes

of digital technologies further blur the boundaries of authoritarianism and liberal democracy. Media scholars Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias note that “For what today’s infrastructures of connection make possible is a new economic and social formation in which the orders of ‘liberal’ democracies and ‘authoritarian’ societies become increasingly indistinguishable” (2019, p.20). They call this emerging “new economic and social order,” which naturalizes extracting data from all aspects of human life and social relations for profit, as “data colonialism.” They also question the idea that this new order is exclusively promoted by the Chinese government and tech companies, “Critics in the West see this close collaboration between government and internet companies as evidence of Chinese authoritarianism...On closer inspection, however, such initiatives are problematic...the close collaboration between a government...and companies...is a global feature of data colonialism, not one restricted to China, Russia, or the United States” (Couldry & Mejias, 2019, p.57). Couldry and Mejias’s observation coins sociologist Shoshana Zuboff’s notion of “surveillance capitalism,” which points to the tech giants from the US, such as Google and Facebook, constantly surveil individuals, capture and analyze personal data, and sell them for archiving the goal of accumulating capital (Zuboff, 2015, 2019). Data to AI is like oil to the car. By connecting the datafication process with surveillance capitalism, data colonialism, and the globally hegemonic neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007), this conceptual paper aims to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the ongoing extraction (of data), appropriation (of social relation), and commodification (of human life) in Africa.

Submission ID

861

Infrastructures of Digital Sovereignty: The Case of the Russian Internet

Authors

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Abstract

A number of current, high-profile initiatives across the globe (including the Digital Services Act in Europe, the “Great Firewall” of China, Russia’s “sovereign Internet” and “anti-Apple” laws, and many others) are concrete implementations of the “digital sovereignty” principle: i.e. the idea that states should “reaffirm” their authority over the Internet and protect their

citizens, institutions, and businesses from the multiple challenges to their nation's self-determination in the digital sphere.

Presently, digital sovereignty is understood primarily as a legal concept and a set of political discourses. In this presentation, we argue that the concept should also be studied via the infrastructure-embedded "situated practices" of various political and economic projects which aim to establish autonomous digital infrastructures in a hyperconnected world. Although this contribution is also a call for a wider and comparative research programme, we focus here on the case of Russia and its national Internet (Runet), the subject of an ongoing research project.

Thus, in its final part, this contribution outlines four main dynamics identified by our research. First, the Russian government raises a number of obstacles against foreign techniques and alternative infrastructures, considered as "subversive". Second, the technical implementation of these infrastructure-based coercive measures often results in "collateral damage". Third, the current Runet context leads to the creation and development of new "digital champions" under an increasingly close government supervision. Finally, critiques of "governance by infrastructure" dynamics emerge among internet users, which contributes to the rise of new forms of "resistance by infrastructure". We conclude that the Russian discourse on Internet sovereignty as a centralized and top-down apparatus paradoxically open up technical and legal opportunities for mundane resistances and the existence of "parallel" Runets.

This contribution draws upon several lineages of literature, including Internet governance (IG) studies and in particular its subset that addresses the concept of digital sovereignty and the relationship between digital networks and states; the studies of information systems according to science and technology studies (STS) and more specifically infrastructure studies; and finally, studies that combine the lenses of infrastructure studies and IG studies.

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Submission ID

972

The Global is the Local: Unpacking the power and influence of international epistemic and policy communities on Ghana's digital switchover policy-making process

Authors

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Abstract

Berger (2010), observed during preparations for digital migration in Africa that: "... there is neither policy nor strategy. At best, some preliminary technical work is being done by a small team of officials confined within a particular ministry". Looking back twelve years after Berger's observation was made, an aspect rings true for Ghana's experience of digital switchover policy-making. The country had a communication policy-making arena that had produced inadequate policy and a weak broadcasting regulatory regime after over twenty five years of the media sector's liberalisation and commercialisation, and these added to the challenges of fashioning digital switchover policy. In the context of the digital migration policy, external policy actors such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation (CTO), functioned as epistemic communities (Haas, 1992, Davis Cross, 2013) and offered technical policy advice and expertise for African countries to formulate their switchover policies and implementation plans. There was also a host of other international telecommunications consultancies and experts who offered expertise and shared experiences of digital switchover policy-making and implementation from other regions of the world, at seminars and workshops for

regulators, government departments and other stakeholders in the African communication policy arena. Such fora therefore became influential in setting the parameters within which many African countries defined the objectives and priorities for their switchover policy and its completion, illustrating Cogburn's (2005) argument about the extent of developing countries influence on international policy regimes. In Ghana the result was a remarkable alignment of international and local policy actors' prioritisation and framing of switchover policy objectives. This alignment happened at the expense of prior longstanding broadcasting policy and regulatory reform issues. This paper draws on data from interview and documentary sources, and combines the concepts of epistemic communities and historical institutionalism (Stienmo,2008), as analytical frameworks to examine and explain why in Ghana's case, the interplay of external policy actors and domestic structural factors within the communication policy arena aided the prioritisation of digital switchover policy on a narrow and urgent technical frame. The paper argues that the influence of external epistemic and policy communities on local policy actors was decisive in the marginalisation of those longstanding policy issues in the broadcasting sector, which would have provided a stronger broadcasting regulatory framework for the new multichannel television market had they been considered as part of digital switchover policy-making in the country.

Submission ID

1029

Thinking Disability, the Smart City, and Communication Policy? Possibilities for a Decolonizing Project

Authors

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Prof. Gerard Goggin - Nanyang Technological University

Abstract

The smart city is a postcolonial phenomenon that has emerged in contemporary times; its emergence also marks a distinct break from earlier ways of knowing about disability – as objects of charity, medicalized bodies, and also as disabled subjects influenced by the disability rights movement.

As both a conceptual frame of reference and a vision that is being realized, the smart city is increasingly embraced, with many different iterations across Asian nation-states such as

Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, China, and Thailand. Within the smart city, technology and disability come into productive conversation, as visions of a technologically enabled future also conjure particular ideas of disability. This occurs amidst a backdrop of scholarship that have highlighted how technology is a double-edged sword; while it is seen as a means towards the enablement and inclusion of disabled people, technology has also been critiqued for its underpinning logics and problems.

Using the smart city as a focal point, we interrogate how discourses of inclusion, disability, and technology come together and what their implications are for communication policy.

What roles does disability play in technology and how does technology imagine disability? What does it mean to see the smart city as a postcolonial technology and what are the demands the smart city and its corresponding uses of technology places on disabled bodies? And importantly how can the smart city project decolonise ways of knowing about disability, both dominated by Global North disability studies and embedded within ideas of technology, and be mobilized towards the emancipation of disabled people? How does this kind of reimagining help us rethink the current policy paradigms for understanding smart cities?

Submission ID

1035

Understanding the new privacy policies of Chinese digital platform giants under the first Personal Information Protection Law

Authors

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Abstract

Internet users have accused digital media platforms of China of ignoring data privacy. However, how these platforms understood this criticism has not always been explicit. Since the Chinese government promulgated the first Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) on 1 November 2021, these companies have been compelled to respond and

create their privacy policies. This study, therefore, aims to understand how are privacy regulations constructed, characterised and implemented by Chinese digital platforms to comply with the PIPL? The study draws on the conceptual frameworks of digital privacy and image repair to explore how these platforms constituted their own platform discourses to deal with privacy problems and how they played a role in addressing these problems of the new law. Methodologically, this study focuses on the new privacy policies of the four Chinese digital giants: Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent and Bytedance. The first three platforms commonly referred to as BAT are the top three internet companies in China; their products are now part of everyday life for the Chinese people. The fourth company, Bytedance, is known for its global social media product, TikTok. In order to understand commonality and heterogeneity in the privacy policies of these companies, we explore privacy-textual discourses through their representative social media products.

By using digital discourse analysis, the study identified three dimensions of privacy policy-making primarily based on the algorithmic logic. The first dimension consists of characterising privacy policy as the individual privacy-concerned discourses. The platforms portray three key conceptual discursive elements: the definition of individual information, the use of collected information, and the protection of information. The second dimension involves the discourses of intervention deployed by the platforms from clarifying the rights of users to setting the boundaries of data collection and implementing new rules for dealing with privacy problems. To rationalise their interventions, in the third dimension, the platforms acknowledged and negotiated various responsibilities in their discursive responses to the new law. By highlighting their social obligations to keep the public informed and ensure safety during use, the platforms emphasise their transparency and accountability. We thus conclude that the privacy policies of the four digital giants include considerable detail and complexity but do not go beyond the PIPL framework as they are intended to protect the platforms' interests. Their efforts to create their own privacy policies can be seen as the response of official discourse that attempt to repair their previous negligent image. The study also notes that turning the substance and the scope of privacy policy into a hegemonic discourse is a way for these platforms to dominate privacy rules. This may lead to the domestication of privacy literacy for those users who engage with Chinese social media in their everyday life.

Submission ID

1083

Digital Fabric City in China : Taking “Site Code” as example during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

Derived from some architecture studies, the concept of “fabric city” is used to emphasize the complexity of modern cities, which is also considered as a kind of literary analogy. Digital technologies are accelerating the ways of how a society is organized, where individual life is no longer slow and static, and urban events woven by people and places are expanding exponentially. Digital technology not only changes people’s lives, but also reconstructs the way cities unfold.

The Site QR Code is one of manifestations to achieve that during the Covid-19 pandemic in China. As a big data-based and programming language, both the Health Code, which uses green, yellow and red colors to represent people’s health status, and the Site Code, which shows people’s travel trajectory within 14 days, have played critical roles in the implementation of mobility control and safety check during the pandemic. Compared with the Health Code, the latter strengthens the flow management of people, from showing codes to scanning codes, individuals complete a deeper digital binding with specific spaces calculated in seconds.

In urban sociology, place is always seen as an implicit language, but the programming technology turning the place to QR (quick response) code is an exact relational language. The Site Code allows the so-called “fabric city” to have a tangible image.

The process of scanning Site Code for admission, on the one hand, outlines the flow track of scattered individuals by taking specific spatial location as the nodes. On the other hand, this process can qualify, divide and integrate places as a result of some typed actions through different people. Therefore, the city is divided into connected sub-networks with different behavior trajectories, and the interaction of approximate spatial units worthy scholarly attention.

To sum up, in this study we will take the Site Code as research object. In the lens of the intersection between technology and humanity, we will try to draw a dynamic map which is interwoven by the individual flow track and the string of spatial scattered places. Furthermore, we will examine the case of “The hardest Chinese in the epidemiological survey”. Through empirical research on the network public opinion, we will conclude by discussing the textual operation and meaning writing in the connection between personal experience and social structure.

Submission ID

1166

Slantwise Disengagement: Explaining Facebook Users' Acts that Transcend the Resistance and Internalization of Domination Binary

Authors

Dr. Theodoros Kouros - University of Cyprus

Dr. Venetia Papa - University of Cyprus

Abstract

This theoretical and empirical investigation builds upon the concept of “slantwise behavior” to further complicate notions of “digital disengagement” of subjects within technological infrastructures such as Facebook. It has been previously suggested that the ubiquity of data privacy paradox is the most obvious reason for engaging in disengagement practices. Our study attempts to contribute to this discussion by examining the discursive assemblages around subjects’ disengagement within Social Network Sites (SNS). While a proliferation of concepts around disconnection and disengagement from SNS is largely conceptualized by media theorists as a binary construct of resistance or domination, our work attempts to propose an alternative conceptualization of subjects’ disengagement. This paper builds on previous research of the authors that utilized 30 semi-structured interviews to capture subjects’ discursive patterns related to forms and types of disengagement within social media platforms. It employs a novel methodology, that is, an adaptation of market research online tools, to illustrate that disengagement from Facebook can be seen as a hybrid reaction and a complex phenomenon. More specifically, we worked with InDeemo, a tool for “online ethnography”, which provided us with rich data, including screen recorded online activity of subjects, reflections of users on their own activity, videos, and other qualitative data. Our preliminary findings indicate that certain disconnection assemblages cannot be easily classified as resistance practices or as indications of internalization of domination, but rather slantwise behaviors, that is, actions that unintentionally may lead to obfuscation. Such slantwise behaviors include, but are not limited to, use of VPNs for downloading pirate content, disengagement as a means to maintain privacy from friends, relatives, colleagues and employers and so forth. These acts ultimately and when deployed *en masse*, may have an important impact on Facebook’s revenue streams, which are largely based on

users' degree of activity, that is, the more active the users, the more financially successful the platform. In other words, given that inactive users may be seen as a liability for Facebook, this kind of behavior, even though not -intentionally- resistant, produces similar results to resistant practices, such as politically active disengagement.

Submission ID

1189

Narratives of surveillance and workers' imagination: a study of food delivery platforms in India

Authors

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Mr. PRAVEEN M - University of Hyderabad

Abstract

Delivery workers have become a foundational force in the growth of India's multi-million dollar gig economy. While the gig economy has been celebrated for creating job opportunities, questions remain about the nature of these jobs. The platform-based food delivery giants in India like Swiggy and Zomato extensively use artificial intelligence-driven algorithms and surveillance structures to monitor their services—and by extension, their workers. But who does this surveillance system serve is a question which needs deeper analysis. Surveillance systems are very active in the app-based food delivery ecosystem. While the delivery workers who are surveilled are overexposed, the surveillants remain opaque, which raises troubling questions about workers' rights and privacy. The intrusion of these systems into the private space of delivery workers also suggests the possibility that such surveillance has been normalized, given that digital media technologies and digital surveillance are an inevitable part of food delivery platforms. While some scholars have focused on the structural problems faced by platform workers in India, there is a paucity of studies that look at the surveillance structures in food delivery platforms in India, particularly from the viewpoint of the workers themselves. This study explores the food delivery workers' perspectives on surveillance by platforms and hopes to add value to the ongoing conversations around platform capitalism and surveillance society. Through in-depth interviews with food delivery workers, intermediaries (such as restaurant managers) and customers, this study seeks to understand the different narratives around surveillance and how these different stakeholders make sense of it. The study attempts to read these narratives

around surveillance through the lens of Foucauldian theory of discipline, Lefebvrian theories of space and Marxist theories of collectivism. The study also explores how these different stakeholders engage with the surveillance mechanism(s) and how this surveillance may impinge on the rights of the workers as well as customers. We also examine the link between surveillance mechanisms, feedback loops, and the wages of delivery workers. Considering the widespread surveillance in the digital workspace, how workers negotiate with surveillance and find modes to resist it are themes of interest. The study tries to understand the practical strategies employed by the delivery workers to counter the platform's surveillance. We would also like to know whether the surveillance system is perceived as customer-centric, employee-centric, or platform-centric by the delivery workers, customers, and intermediaries, respectively. The insights gained from our study could benefit both workers' collectives and platforms as they seek to develop fairer and mutually beneficial conditions of work.

Submission ID

1209

Advancing Media Pluralism Policies and Research: Innovations in Computational Monitoring of News Diversity in China

Authors

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Abstract

Algorithmic visibility of news has emerged as a key issue for those researching questions of media pluralism, and Chinese platforms are at the forefront of these trends (Zhang, 2020). In this presentation we discuss a new computational tool developed for assessing online news media diversity, based on the proportion of public affairs content in news stories. We then apply this framework to the algorithmic aspects of news distribution across WeChat Official Accounts (WOA) from this social media platform's news providers. The research contributes to the development and understanding of media pluralities across divergent media systems through theorised frameworks informed by computational methods for the analysis of online news corpora. It is argued that transformations in digital media production, distribution and access to online content, especially news, invites researchers to

rethink the application of media policies in national media systems. In that context, frameworks that were previously relied on for comparative national media system analysis now warrant reassessment. The argument is made that de-Westernisation of media studies should include media pluralism/diversity policies within the scope of that project, and this approach can advance our understanding of news media in China. Researching online news and diversity in China underscores the benefits of studying processes as well as systems, and the dynamic interactions between structure, agency and pathways of policymaking.

Keywords: media pluralism policies, computational methods, de-Westernization, China, news diversity, automated curation, platformization.

Submission ID

1465

For Whose Good? The Big Data Public Health Surveillance Project and Data Colonialism in China

Authors

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, China's application of health QR codes provided an efficient health surveillance system to prevent and control the spread of the coronavirus. China's digital responses to COVID-19 are part of the national digital transformation project that promotes big data applications in healthcare among various areas. Over the past decade, China has implemented a universal personal electronic health record system and a centralized health database in response to public health threats. However, it is notable about ethical concerns and pitfalls of social justice concerning privacy and overwhelmed surveillance. Drawing on the literature on public health surveillance and data colonialism, this paper examines how China's big data healthcare policies legitimize the intrusion of private life for the public good and normalize the new data relations of extracting, appropriating, and dispossessing social life as an "open" and national resource to anticipate and govern the future.

As big data facilitate more efficient and flexible public health surveillance systems, they reinforce existing ethical concerns about privacy, discrimination, and stigmatization and

introduce new problems of the unsettled ownership of big data, ambiguous and opaque monitoring and data analysis, and exploitation and appropriation of individuals' social life. The literature on data colonialism sheds light on the new data relations in digital epidemiology. It unpacks big data's economic value for extraction and appropriation and political value for efficient governance and anticipation of the future. Investigating the new data relations can benefit the contemplation of ethical and social justice issues raised in big data public health surveillance. And the case of China offers an experience of non-Western colonial power over homeland populations in today's Cloud Empire.

Through a textual analysis of related policy documents, the paper probes the construction of reality about the operation of the new data relations and the power dynamics among different entities - the state and tech corporations - in China's big data public health surveillance system. The analysis shows that the nationalism discourse dominates in China's big data healthcare project that aims for public welfare but also a globally leading position in the high-tech industry. The policy documents portrayed big data collected from individual citizens as a core production factor of exploitable value and a fundamental and strategic resource to succeed in the technological battleground. Health big data, like the land, belongs to the state. The motivation to protect data safety is thus more out of state security considerations than individual privacy interests. The power dynamics in the digital transformation project display a top-down structure with the state in charge of overall planning and corporations playing a major role in developing specific big data applications and systems. Thus, data collectors and owners in the asymmetric relations of data colonialism are not only enterprises but also the state that dominates the process in China's context. Overall, this research reflects on pitfalls and ethical issues in big data public health surveillance from a perspective of data colonialism in a unique social setting and contributes to the ongoing discussion on technologies' impacts during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Submission ID

1562

Damages and policies: An affordance perspective of social spambots comparison between China and US

Authors

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Abstract

With the development of technology, the traditional view of robots has changed. Robots include not only the physical ones which are often used in production, but also the digital ones that reside in cyberspace, keeping netizens informed and entertained with automatically generated content, or causing troubles by spam marketing and spreading fake news.

From the perspective of affordance, this study focused on comparing spambot between China and the U.S.. Firstly, we raised follow questions: What damages have spambots caused in the two countries (RQ1)? What factors triggered the spambots (RQ2)? Further, we collected governmental laws and social media rules and policies and analyzed the similarities and differences of spambots governance by the two countries (RQ3) and two platforms, Weibo and Twitter (RQ4). And finally, the execution and underlying problems of those policies (RQ5).

To that end, the study divided the affordance perspective into four parts to analyze the threats of spambots, including technology affordance, social media affordance, platform affordance, and contextual affordance. Then the study used the methods of textual analysis to compare the similarities and differences of the policies between the two countries.

The research found that, with technical affordance, the cost for the public to build bots has significantly fallen, giving individuals and companies the opportunity to use spambots for marketing purposes. Social media itself afforded the concept of social flow as well as translocal scenes for online groups. As spambots got involved on social media, false traffic was increased, and information cocoons were intensified, especially among the fandoms in China. Take Weibo and Twitter for example, platforms as such also afforded hashtag movements, which in some cases helped the spread of good deeds, while sometimes aggravated the emotional public with the participation of social spambots.

With contextual affordance, the rules and policies of both the governments and social media platforms of the two countries differed, given the dissimilar social background. Although the two both showed disapproval of the misleading behaviors of spambots, China focused more on the prohibition of fake accounts and false traffic under the background of the celebrity-manic culture, while the US attached more importance to the disclosure of commercial bots and political bots. Further, the overhauls of the spambots by platforms were affected by governmental laws but conducted in more targeted ways. Ambitious as these laws and policies were, however, there were still misconducts in real execution, which called for the reflection of the control of social spambots. This study pointed out, as for the remediation of the online environment, the key responsibility remains with social media platforms rather than government officials, as platforms have advanced technologies in hand to detect, label, and suspend suspicious social spambots behaviors.

Submission ID

1656

Understanding Digital China – Chinese Perspectives on Data-Driven Technology

Authors

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Abstract

This research project investigates the social and cultural dimensions of the digital transformation in the Chinese context. More specifically, it explores Chinese perspectives on the emerging technology trends of artificial intelligence (A.I.), big data, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. Technology plays a central role in daily life in China, both for personal and professional purposes. The country hosts some of the world's leading tech companies and Chinese society has adopted data-driven, automated solutions at a rapid pace over the past decade. Research on China's digital transformation is growing especially in the intersection of business studies, economics, and international relations. However, a relatively under-explored but important research subject is the social-cultural impact of digital technology in Chinese society. The perception of values, benefits, risks, and harms that come with data-driven technology are context-dependent and cultural factors play an important role in how processes of technology adoption are shaped. Technology trends are embedded in cultural discourses that can reveal how relevance is assigned to new innovations in society.

To approach this research interest, the ongoing, multi-step study analyses two central dimensions in the making of meaning around new and transformative technologies: 1) public discourses (in Chinese news media and social media) and 2) Chinese users' attitudes and opinions on technology. The main research questions are:

- How do Chinese news media frame data-driven technology in their reporting?
- How do Chinese users perceive and evaluate technological trends (especially in terms of benefits and risks)?

The empirical part combines several qualitative and quantitative research methods. For charting the public discourse, the study deploys a combination of (quantitative) content analysis and netnography. The primary research subjects are Chinese news reporting on relevant data-driven technologies (e.g., in South China Morning Post, China Daily, People's Daily) and social media discourses (e.g., on Weibo), respectively. To understand users' views, a survey was distributed among Chinese respondents via social media. Next to this, interviews will be held with a smaller sample of Chinese users to supplement the quantitative findings. The preliminary results allow outlining the main themes that dominate Chinese tech discourses and how Chinese users perceive digital culture. This includes an inventory of the prevalent views on benefits and risks that accompany the dissemination of novel, data-driven technologies in the country (and worldwide). It also shows that global technology trends are subject to localisation processes that take place within distinct discourse cultures. The findings of this work in progress further allow for a critical discussion of potential misconceptions and stereotypes about Chinese digital society in the "global West". Chinese users' relationship to technology is complex and nuanced and there is a public discourse on the value and risks of technology happening in China that may be to some extent invisible to the European-/Western "gaze".

Submission ID

1688

Intercorporeality, Symbolic Performance and Aesthetic Discipline: Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Somaesthetics

Authors

Mr. Yeyang Cao - Communication University of China

Ms. Yuwen Qin - Communication University of China

Abstract

Our life is inseparable from the body. Our body is being used as the media by the cultural environment we exist in to influence and change our cognition, thoughts, and action through aesthetics. However, with the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), the computer has been able to simulate human aesthetics visually and intelligently, and participate in analyzing and performing human body images, which is causing huge changes in somaesthetics. Somaesthetics is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry proposed by American pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman who aims at promoting and integrating the

theoretical, empirical, and practical disciplines related to bodily perception, performance, and presentation. This paper combines theories from phenomenologists, including Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as philosophers and sociologists, such as Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, to discuss AI's influence on somaesthetics from three dimensions: perception, representation, and the shaping of subjectivity.

This paper takes two emerging computer vision technologies – *IBM AI Vision* (a video and image analysis system built by *IBM Research-China* and *Tencent Sports*), and *PhysCap* (Physically Plausible Monocular 3D Motion Capture in Real Time, a system developed by *Max Planck Institute* and *Facebook Reality Labs*) as examples to summarize their mechanisms and applications in understanding and performing body image, as well as their effects on body consumption and body training. The former pays particular attention to the AI-generated basketball highlight reels themed in accordance with fans' online poll of description (e.g., accurate, powerful, wild, consistent) to match popular NBA stars. The latter traces the process of PhysCap in finding the space-time coherent joint angles and global 3D pose through CNN. All the research materials are collected from websites and academic papers, and analyzed through observation notes and theoretical notes.

After sorting out those materials, this paper has extracted three theoretical concepts – 'intercorporeality', 'symbolic performance', and 'aesthetic discipline' for the explanation of AI's influence on somaesthetics. In conclusion, artificial intelligence influences somaesthetics by diminishing the creativity and intercorporeality in the body's perception, by intensifying the symbolization of the body, and by strengthening the discipline of the body's aesthetic behavior. Just as the American philosopher John Searle described that the computer is 'syntactic' rather than 'semantic' in the famous 'Chinese Room' experiment, AI cannot semantically understand and produce contents at present, their somaesthetic behaviors are still command executions operated along with the fixed syntax (computational process, framework, code, data, etc.). Even if the neural network is established by imitating humans, the 'black box' – the interpretability of the neural network is still the biggest threat of aesthetic discipline. To this end, this paper criticizes the relationship between technologies and the body from an aesthetic perspective, giving a warning of transferring the power of body decision-making from ourselves to technologies and the capitals behind them.

Submission ID

1745

Multistakeholder governance and the Internet: mapping environmental discussions at the Internet Governance Forum

Authors

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Abstract

In 2020, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) set the 'environment' as a main thematic track for the first time. The IGF is a non-binding discursive venue within the United Nations system in which stakeholders from different countries discuss current and emerging global Internet-related issues. This paper employs text mining techniques to provide a longitudinal analysis of environment-related discussions inside the Internet Governance Forum. It builds on a textual analysis of verbatim transcripts of IGF meetings to understand what the key environment-related themes discussed at the IGF are and how do these themes change over time.

The Internet Governance Forum's mandate is to provide a platform to address policy issues about the Internet. Some criticize the IGF for an apparent detachment from actual policymaking processes and outcomes. Others highlight how the IGF may play an important role in setting a policy agenda for Internet governance. Throughout the years, the IGF seemed to be settled as a venue for social ordering in Internet governance (Pohle, 2016), as it contributes to legitimizing and sustaining performative ideals of multistakeholder governance (Epstein, 2011; Hofmann, 2016).

This paper is a close look at how the environmental agenda developed inside the IGF since the creation of the Forum in 2006, culminating in the deliberate emphasis on environmental matters during the IGF in recent years. The topic modeling analysis of transcripts from past IGF meetings demonstrates a convergence between environmental discussions at the IGF and at other UN system venues and initiatives.

This paper indicates that whereas sometimes Internet governance "hot topics" are established within the IGF and then propagated through other Internet governance settings, the environmental theme inside the IGF has been pushed in the event as part of a broader UN-led agenda for climate governance, especially regarding the UN Sustainable Development Goals and their intersection with information and communication technologies. Through the environmental example, this paper offers a framework to think about Internet multistakeholder governance in light of broader UN governance initiatives.

Submission ID

1918

AI Federalism: How Subnational Policy Tackles a ‘Global’ Technology

Authors

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Abstract

Recent AI governance research has focused heavily on analyzing strategy papers and ethics guidelines for AI published by national governments and international bodies (Jobin et al. 2019, Schiff et al. 2021, Radu 2021). Subnational governments are often left out of the AI policy discussion (Schmitt, 2021). However, specific cases point towards the important role of subnational structures. US federal states, for example, have already implemented laws governing specific contingencies of self-driving vehicles (Brundage & Bryson 2016). Others target different AI systems, e.g. Florida’s ‘iBudget’ system or Massachusetts’ ban on the government’s facial recognition usage (Lucero 2020). US cities have also passed legislation and are a key site of AI implementation. Federal bodies may have a better ability to learn and adapt norms to localized circumstances than the national government (Squitieri 2021), and local communities may be the key to innovate AI governance (Verhulst et al. 2021).

Therefore, to better understand the current dynamics of AI governance it is crucial to take into account the context of policy making beyond international bodies and federal governments and adopt a perspective we term ‘AI federalism’. When, and on what grounds, do subnational policy institutions issue policy documents on artificial intelligence? What are the links, or contrasts, to national policy efforts, and how can the subnational AI policy discourse be situated within existing federal structures?

To answer these questions, we analyzed German AI policy documents on the subnational level based on qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2014, Puppis 2019). We understand AI policy documents to be documents issued by public sector actors addressing policy issues mentioning Artificial Intelligence. Lacking a generally agreed-upon definition for AI, we retrieved documents that use the generic term “AI” or “Artificial intelligence” from the regional governments’ central website. We inductively coded them in MaxQDA to identify recurring themes and their distinct negotiation in different German states.

Between 2016 and 2021, 40 AI policy documents were published on the subnational level, with state governments and state chancelleries being the main issuers. Five documents were co-authored with actors in the private sector and research. The content analysis reveals five main issues: the relevance and interconnection of regional economic and research endeavors for the successful development and implementation of AI; areas of AI application, which miraculously match a given state’s regional economic identity; a tension between cooperation and competition, similar to the one apparent in national AI policy; rhetorical devices and narrative characteristics that mirror those found in the German AI strategy all while ‘localizing’ them to the respective state; a focus on ethics associated much more with the incorporation of citizens than in national AI policy documents.

Beyond the impact subnational AI policy documents may have, or not, they provide a foundation for how AI is negotiated and implemented at a level ‘closer’ to citizens. Our empirical results thus contribute to a better understanding of AI governance more broadly. Although Artificial Intelligence is considered to be a new, global technology and policy field, AI is created, contested and ultimately shaped within existing political structures and dynamics.

Submission ID

1965

Minjujui Seoul: Digital Government Platform for Citizen-Led Policymaking and New Forms of Digital Citizenship in South Korea

Authors

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Abstract

Bringing together the critical scholarship of digital citizenship (Hintz et al., 2018; Isin & Ruppert, 2020) with the research of digitally mediated civic engagements (Dahlgren, 2009; Papacharissi, 2010), I conceptualize the digital citizen as a figure that emerges in particular historical and geographical configurations whose civic agency emanates from lived experiences of practicing and expanding existing citizen rights. Through a case study of Seoul's digital government platform 'Minjujui Seoul' (<http://democracy.seoul.go.kr/>), I examine how new forms of digital citizenship evolve in South Korea while citizens draw on digitally equipped civic agency and civic practices that facilitates greater government accountability and more equitable citizen-led initiatives.

Minjujui Seoul is a Seoul's official digital platform for citizen-led policymaking launched in October 2017 through the collaboration between the Seoul Metropolitan Government and *Parti*, a co-op of young developers and democracy activists. Like many big cities around the world, Seoul has been adamant about integrating digital technologies into everyday governance to respond to increasing civic needs and declining budgets. Yet, unlike many smart city initiatives in the U.S. or Western Europe that focus on data-driven governance and entrepreneurship (Baykurt & Raetzsch, 2020), the mayor's team in Seoul and *Parti* devoted their capacities to materialize the value of accountability and inclusivity in the design and operation of their platform. When citizens propose policy ideas through Minjujui Seoul and get more than 50 votes from the public, the relevant department is supposed to respond to the issue within two weeks. The policy suggestions that receive more than 500 votes are refined through discussion between related interest groups and experts, and then put into the public deliberation again. Upon the participation of 5,000 citizens, the mayor publishes the statement and continuously reports the progress through the platform.

During 6 months in 2019, I conducted participant-observation of *Parti* members' works to make Minjujui Seoul and discussions for public deliberation. I also interviewed 2 government officials, 3 technologists, 4 activists, and 10 citizens who participated in the establishment of Minjujui Seoul. Then, I conducted textual analysis on related policy documents and suggestions posted on Minjujui Seoul from 2019 to 2022. By clearly dividing roles among developers and civil servants, and using the existing e-government system for inter-department communications, government officials and *Parti* have successfully embedded Minjujui Seoul into local governance. Acting with other citizens to make municipal ordinances out of their daily experience, such as building public indoor playgrounds for children, or relocating alley cats from reconstruction sites, people experience a grassroots form of digital democracy which empowers marginalized voices (e.g. non-voting citizens like children and non-human residents like alley cats) that have been excluded from the existing system.

I found the possibility of new forms of digital citizenship emerging through the collaboration between local government, technologists, and citizens to contest the hierarchical governance and developmental citizenship in Korea and institutionalize the horizontal communication and diverse citizens' involvement in decision-making processes. This study contributes to alternative understandings of digital democracy emerging outside the US and Western Europe which rearticulate tech-oriented or entrepreneurial meanings of digital government toward the imagination for a more inclusive and equitable civic participation.

Submission ID

1993

Fissures in Cyberspace: The Threat of National Internets

Authors

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Abstract

The internet in its inception had been thought by many as an ideal uniting virtual space which superseded, and even had the potential to erase national borders. And that it did not allow the law of the land to rule over the virtual activities of the people who belonged to it. However, the internet as we know it is far from this all encompassing rhetoric it carries. While immaterial in nature, the physical infrastructure that it takes to make this global internet is ridden with resource inequality. This plays a significant role in determining which nations get to make the big decisions. Arguably, this discomfort led a few governments to put in place laws in a way that what was once a seamlessly continuous network grew fault lines in the global internet resulting in "balkanised" or sovereign internets. This effectively leaves its citizens with an internet that is entirely controlled and subject to the country's legal norms. Oftentimes the reason cited for such a move is as a protection from cyber attacks. Examples include Iran's National Information Network (NIN), the Chinese internet, and Russia's Rунet. However, these are not the only countries which have taken this course. Other governments too have employed a variety of means to restrict free flow of communication across the Internet, including data localisation, internet shutdowns, and internet filtering, all of which effectively cut off parts or entire states from global networks. In this paper I would like to examine how the Indian government too has taken steps in this direction through new legislations, of which the IT Rules, 2021 stands out. India's top rank in the total number of internet shutdowns in the world is further evidence of this move.

Submission ID

2030

The Implementation, Implication, and Limitation of “Informed Consent Principle” in Facial Recognition Technology (FRT): A Comparative Case Analysis of EU, US, and China

Authors

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Mr. Zhuo Zhong - School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University

Abstract

The principle of informed consent, which fully reflects the respect for human autonomy and free will (Guo, 2021), remains one of the lawful bases to process personal information, as listed in EU *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR), the US privacy acts, and *Personal Information Protection Law* of China. However, the lack of substantive provisions matching the principle has led to the fact that its effects and implications in law enforcement are rather limited, far from legislators' expectation, which has aroused global doubts and criticism (Kostka, Steinacker, & Meckel, 2021; Tian, 2018). Most importantly, the regulatory frameworks of informed consent principle, which have been rooted in the “Pre-digital Age”, encounter greater enforcement dilemma in artificial intelligence (AI) contexts such as facial recognition technology (FRT).

Regulating the applications of FRT has been a Collingridge dilemma, within which the implementation of informed consent matters much yet turns out complicated worldwide (Muravyeva et al, 2020). Here is a comparative analysis of influential FRT cases in the EU (Swedish DPA vs. Swedish High School), the US (Patel vs. Facebook), and China (Bing Guo vs. Hangzhou Safari Park), all of which have violated the principle of informed consent. By fully comparing the implementation and implications of informed consent principle in these three FRT cases of three different regulatory frameworks, this study aims to figure out the limitation and application of informed consent in FRT contexts.

We argue that the informed consent principle in FRT regulation cannot achieve the ideal goal of “the right to be adequately informed” and “the right to information self-determination”.

First, being adequately “informed” is the internal normative requirement of giving free “consent”. Only when one is fully informed, he/she can give valid consent. As for FRT applications, (1) “face scanning” does not directly bring tangible harms, and (2) the FRT providers may conceal the risks of processing biometric data in complicated privacy policy, and (3) FRT providers tend to emphasize the convenience of such applications unilaterally through verbal notification and persuasion. All these lead to “an induced consent” as the information subjects are not really “informed” but tend to think that “it’s simply a face-scanning”.

Second, if the FRT provider, or the biometric information processor, or the platform, takes advantage of its dominant position to offer limited alternatives, or even merely one option, the user of information subject in a weak position will find it difficult to freely agree and might be forced to consent. This is extremely common in employment and education contexts, where employees and students are in disadvantageous positions to say “no”. Moreover, the secondary use beyond the scope of authorization and purpose to achieve functional expansion of facial biometric data, including cross-verification with other associated databases, also weakens the lawfulness of an authorization bundle.

In summary, the validity of informed consent in FRT regulation is questionable, whether due to the inadequate knowledge and rationality of information subjects, or because of “forced consent”, “consent fatigue”, “authorization bundle”, and “function creep”. There is also ambiguity of being “informed” or giving consent in FRT contexts because “capturing facial information without direct contact” significantly undermines the effectiveness of consent principle in regulating FRT and protecting biometric data. As a result, FRT applications are confronted with the dilemma of “whose consent is required” and “even if it is possible to determine who is to give consent, it is impossible to achieve freely given, specific, and unambiguous consent”. This study critically reflects the implementation of informed consent principle, one of the fundamental principles for data protection, in FRT regulation, and explores its legal implications and practical limitations, enriching our understanding of the universal principle of informed consent, and the unpredictable risks of FRT applications.

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Submission ID

2190

Who can be the Weibo supervisor? the co-production of social media governance in mainland China

Authors

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Abstract

The new media makes everyone a gatekeeper (Schweisberger et al., 2014). Public opinions on online censorship and government intervention are more diverse and dependent on specific circumstances than expected (A. F. Zhang et al., 2017). Weibo has tried a new way of using users to govern users, namely Weibo supervisors. Weibo supervisor went live on September 27, 2017. It is a new way of co-production of social media governance for Weibo to dispose of pornographic, illegal, and harmful information on it, thereby purifying the environment of Weibo. Weibo users can pass the assessment and examination to become Weibo supervisors and participate in the governance. The number of Weibo supervisors is capped at 2,000, only some of the eligible applicants have become Weibo supervisors. This study collected the public personal information of successful and failed applicants and try to explore the potential admission mechanism of Weibo supervisors.

This study uses Python to crawl the data of both successful and failed applicants of Weibo supervisors from July 27, 2021 to August 02, 2021. Using the keyword of “Weibo supervisor” (*wei bo jian du yuan* 微博监督员), 404 successful applicants were obtained. Using the keyword of “Weibo supervisor” (*wei bo jian du yuan* 微博监督员) with “application” (*shen*

qing 申请), “failure” (*shi bai* 失败), “result” (*jie guo* 结果), 404 fail applicants were obtained. In the data, be Weibo supervisor or not was used as the dependent variable. Gender, GDP of location, the integrity of information, including birthday, personal introduction, email, education, and occupation, previous verification number, registration year, following number, follower number, and post number are used as independent variables. This study uses binomial logical regression to estimate the effect of the above independent variables on whether to be a Weibo supervisor.

489 (71.78%) of successful applicants were male. The distribution of the post number, the following number, and the follower number of successful applicants all show a long-tailed distribution. According to the result of binomial logical regression, the male with less previous verification number who register early are more easily to be the Weibo supervisor. The integrity of information is not related to whether the user can be the Weibo supervisor. The number of posts, followers, and followings also have no effect on whether the user can be the Weibo supervisor.

This study addresses a new approach to collaborative social media governance that uses users to govern users. This research is an area less covered by previous research, which helps to promote the expansion of Internet governance research content.

Submission ID

2209

Child Rights Impact Assessment: A tool for re-building a digital world for children to thrive

Authors

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Abstract

Digital technologies permeate every waking hour of children’s daily life. Some are built into the very environment in which children live – public transport, homes and schools. These technologies promise ample opportunities for leisure, learning and development. However, children’s best interests remain disproportionately underrepresented in the design and operation of many digital products and services, exacerbated by the rise of the attention economy and data-driven leisure and education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child, Article 3 states that *“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”* General Comment 25, para 12 clarifies that *“the best interests of every child is a primary consideration”* in the *“provision, regulation, design, management and use of the digital environment”*. This requirement is not only the obligation of signatory states, as primary duty bearers. According to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework, businesses too are “required to comply with all applicable laws and to respect human rights”. How then can digital providers realise child rights in their product and service provision by design? One way to do that, we argue, is to apply Child Rights Impact Assessment - a tool that has primarily been used in public policy and legislative processes to anticipate public decisions’ impact upon children and their rights- in the design and development process of digital product and services. We present the benefits and challenges of Child Rights Impact Assessment in general and an example of its application in a digital context, specifically in relation to age verification.

Submission ID

2340

The AI ethical standards network and its implementation: embedding high-level principles into the socio-technical design of AI systems.

Authors

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Abstract

AI is increasingly crucial in everyday life and social relations, which raises both expectations on AI’s capacity to foster human well-being as well as concerns about the risks for human autonomy and integrity (Renda 2019, Boiler 2018).

Recently, the awareness that the full potential of this technology is attainable only by building a trustworthy and human-centric framework in order to avoid both misuses of AI applications capable of endangering people and underuse because of a lack of public acceptance has notably spread across all stakeholders (Floridi et al. 2019).

Not by chance, in the past few years, we have witnessed a flourish of initiatives setting ethical codes and good governance principles for AI development. They usually converge around a common set of guiding principles, including respect for human autonomy, prevention of harm, fairness, privacy, transparency, and explicability (Whittaker et al. 2018, Jobin et al. 2019, Berkman Center 2020). However, many studies raise concerns about a “principle-to-practice” gap, noting that AI’s developers and deployers (mostly private companies) often fall short in ensuring effectiveness and enforcement of the principles they adhere to (Mittelstadt 2019, Schiff et al 2020).

On the one side, the principles-to-practices gap testifies of “ethical washing” practices put in place by companies to delay or soften state regulation (Greene 2019, van Dijck and Casiraghi 2020). On the other side, some scholars identify the complex socio-technical nature of AI systems as a factor making it difficult to translate high-level principles into operational routines (Schiff et al. 2019, Hallensleben et al. 2020, Kitchin 2017, Hildebrandt 2019).

This paper aims at advancing the discussion on the implementation of ethical standards in AI development and deployment by realizing a data-driven mapping of the frameworks proposed so far.

Unlike previous attempts to map the landscape of ethical guidelines, which just focused on the frequency and distribution of ethical instances arbitrarily grouped into ‘silo’ categories, this study pays attention to their different degrees of abstraction and interconnection.

To this purpose, a content analysis has been conducted distinguishing between values (the goals to be reached developing AI systems), principles (normative criteria guiding action) and requirements (conditions to be satisfied to fulfill principles).

Then, the result of the coding activity has been employed to perform a network analysis in order to outline the relationship between different values, principles, and requirements.

Results point out an underlying structure of normative elements in experts and stakeholders discourses, which could support the design of more effective governance arrangements to put ethical standards into practice.

Finally, insights from the empirical analysis will be discussed against the current tools and regulatory approaches to deal with AI ethical challenges advancing recommendations to prevent the risk of mere technological solutionism and poor accountability and representation.

Submission ID

2357

Payment Processors, Brand Safety Controversies, and the Deplatforming of Sex

Authors

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Abstract

The visibility of sexual content online has become a lightning rod for regulatory attention, both formal—from government legislation—and informal—from social groups and public condemnation (Mueller, 2015). For example, the 2018 passage of SESTA-FOSTA in the USA made platforms liable if ads for prostitution appeared on their sites, forcing sites that were not able to guarantee compliance to shut down. In 2021, OnlyFans cited the difficulties of meeting the policies of payment processors in its announcement (since retracted) that the site would stop hosting sexual content. The deplatforming of sex has become a focal point for understanding how platform economies work against legal-but-controversial content, leading to calls for regulation that can “protect the young and the sensitive” while also protecting publishers of legal sexual content “from the commercialism percolating through the technology stack” (Tiidenberg, 2021, p.9).

Payment processors have particular significance in the regulation of online content. Along with advertisers, they are popular targets of demands for regulatory action, the subjects of constraints through their relationships with global financial institutions, and without them sites struggle to appeal to producers. Researchers examining money as a communication technology note that the market for risk that predominated in offline payment models--where risky business paid higher fees--was more forgiving than the current system in which risky content is typically banned outright because online payment service providers "must guarantee that all the transactions they conduct will be low risk for chargebacks" (Swartz, 2020, p. 93). In a platform economy in which cultural producers of all kinds are increasingly dependent on the functioning of online platforms (Poell, Nieborg, & Duffy, 2021) this binary approach to risky content has profound consequences for access to resources for many producers. As Swartz (2020) notes, payment processors contribute to sexual content falling afoul of the "seemingly arbitrary," but actively political, (Swartz, 2020, p.103) categorization of acceptability on online platforms.

This paper examines the deplatforming of sex by payment processors as an example of the regulatory role played in the platform economy by corporate intermediaries beyond the platforms themselves. In the deplatforming of sex, the values expressed in payment policies or attributed to advertisers become the regulations for content on global publishing

platforms. In a platform economy, the visibility of the network of commercial relationships that have formed around online content, along with efficient digital tools to “name and shame” commercial intermediaries, contribute to cutting off producers from sites on which many are financially dependent. This paper takes a comparative perspective, examining how financial policies, such as high insurance rates, that were obstacles in offline contexts can become more restrictive in digital environments even as options for payment seemingly increase. Incorporating perspectives from public relations research, platformization, and communication policy, this paper argues that conflicting normative values surrounding sexual content, enforced by public controversies and international legal frameworks, transform into regulatory barriers to participation in online communication and draws on research from affected communities to make the case for regulatory alternatives.

Submission ID

2436

Sovereign Internet Through Ownership: The Case of Russian and China

Authors

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Abstract

The possibility for a state to establish a sovereign and independent internet has been a topic of recent debates. Some countries' efforts in creating sovereign internet may contribute to the fragmentation of global networks that are likely to stagger opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and economic growth worldwide. Politically, these trends raise questions regarding cybersecurity, internet governance, data privacy, and the protection of human rights online.

China and Russia are notorious for their high levels of internet censorship. How close are these countries to establishing an entirely sovereign internet? What obstacles do they face? To address these questions, I take a comparative political economy approach with a focus on internet ownership. I build upon the frameworks proposed by Howard et al. (2011) and Howells & Henry (2021) that identify four targets of internet governance: internet infrastructure, internet service providers (ISPs), websites and online platforms, and internet users. From the ownership standpoint, I concentrate on the first three targets. This

focus on specific internet targets allows for direct and generalizable comparisons between the cases.

This study shows that, from the perspective of internet ownership, China faces fewer obstacles than Russia in establishing sovereign internet. The Chinese government early recognized the potential of the internet to promote collective action and facilitate information flow. Therefore, the government not only established centralized control over both the infrastructure and the application layer of the internet, but also achieved ownership control over ISPs and invested in the development of domestic online platforms and websites. In Russia, the internet had been mostly privately owned and maintained with little government intervention until around 2012, a significant time lag compared to the first censorship efforts in China. The Russian government, through ownership, controls only a small share of internet infrastructure and ISPs. The government owns stakes in domestic internet companies but allows citizens to use Western media and websites. Even with recent government ownership consolidation efforts, the lack of direct control over the infrastructure limits the ability of the Russian government to establish a truly sovereign internet as the internet network infrastructure is difficult to reconstruct and reorganize after the fact.

Instead, the Russian government relies heavily on laws and regulations and, more recently, on installed equipment (DPI systems) in the server rooms that block, filter, and slow down websites. As more countries around the world aim to increase their control over the internet but generally lack comprehensive control over the infrastructure, they might find the Russian model of internet censorship more fitting. To prevent the further fragmentation of the global network and deterioration of the freedom of the internet policymakers and international actors should advocate for the preservation of the global connections, regulations and restrictions on the export of surveillance technology, and adherence of domestic internet-related regulations to the international human rights laws.

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Submission ID

2462

Regulatory Responses to Fake News in the Asia Pacific Region: A Text Mining Research of Public Sentiment, Emerging Regulatory Debates and Policy Directions

Authors

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Dr. YOWEI KANG - National Chung Hsing University

Abstract

Introduction

The adverse effects of fake news on democratic norms and processes are attributed to the lack of media literacy among consumers, media giants' intentional or un-intentional oversights, and government regulations that have yet to catch up with the latest media technologies (Bhunia, 2017; Galeon, 2018; Radsch, 2017; Rogin, 2018; Tambine, 2017). In a small number of cases, deliberately misleading 'news' that attempts to undermine elections could pose a threat to national security. Intermediaries such as Google and Facebook may be required to take such content down, but fact-checking and monitoring will be sufficient in most cases. (Tambine, 2017). Alarming examples include Russian fake news interference in U.S. presidential election in 2016 and the British referendum on Brexit (Radsch, 2017). In the Asia Pacific region, China's intensive interference through fake news and the "50-cent army" has affected Taiwan's local election in 2018 (Rogin, 2018). China similarly meddles with the Cambodian election (Rogin, 2018).

Literature Review and Research Questions

Upon a preliminary review of recent publications on fake news, extant literature tends to focus on patterns and factors of fake news diffusion through social media outlets (Galeon, 2018; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018) and regulatory responses to deter fake news through media literacy programs, industry self-regulation, and government intervention (Cantero-Gomez, 2019; Tambini, 2017).

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the determination of fake news is often based on a country's political and press freedom (Radsch, 2017). The proposed study will explore external factors (such as the political freedom index and world press freedom index) to explain how countries and regions in the Greater China Region would debate regulatory issues and subsequent policy proposals related to fake news deterrence in their countries. We would particularly examine China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and

Singapore, where various political and press freedom levels exist. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What keywords, phrases, and topics about fake news regulations emerged from Asia Pacific region countries?

RQ2: What will public sentiment in regulating fake news emerges from Asia-Pacific region countries?

RQ3: Will the political freedom index (as produced by Freedom House) explain findings reported in RQ1?

RQ4: Will the world press freedom index (as produced by Reporters without Borders) explain findings reported in RQ2?

RQ5: Will the political freedom index (as produced by Freedom House) explain findings reported in RQ1?

RQ6: Will the world press freedom index (as produced by Reporters without Borders) explain findings reported in RQ2?

Research Method and Preliminary Findings

This study employs a text mining method to content analyze (Attewell & Monaghan, 2015; Chen, 2018; Ignatow & Mihalcea, 2018) the following data/sources included in our corpus. They include news articles (from Lexis/Nexis databases), policy documents to regulate fake news (from governments, think tanks, international organizations, and research institutes), and social media outlets to identify keywords, topics, and themes. Relationships between these extracted terms explain the relationships among public sentiment analysis (Cambria, Das, Bandyopadhyay, & Feraco, 2017), keywords, key phrases, salient topic modeling, political freedom index, and world press freedom index. Our preliminary findings have established the inverse relationship between press freedom, intention to regulate fake news, and public sentiment supporting the government's intervention of speech freedom in the Greater China Region.

Submission ID

2582

On a path to media subsidy evaluation

Authors

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Abstract

The structural crises of Western journalism (Nielsen, 2016) intensifies as the world heads into the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic. While German newspaper's sales revenue increased marginally in 2020 (BDZV, 2021, p. 19), declining advertising revenues could not be offset. Ultimately, gross revenues decreased again, just the same as for the rest of the world (BDZV, 2021, p. 4; WAN-IFRA, 2021, p. 69). In light of economic hardships but also social and political repercussions, questions of state support for media organizations in the form of media subsidies become more prevalent than ever (Bleyer-Simon & Nenadic, 2021).

Media subsidies are well-established tools of media policy since the 1960s (Trappel, 2018, pp. 75, 79), forms of direct and indirect subsidies, allocated directly or indirectly, currently exist in a variety of countries (Puppis, 2010; Murschetz, 2020). Recent efforts to increase direct and indirect subsidies are highly controversial even among journalists, however. Critique ranges from potential state-interference in press freedom to inefficient resource allocation and incentivizing outdated business models (Kaltenbrunner, 2021, p. 8; Murschetz & Trappel, 2013, p. 377). Arguably, concerns may root in a lack of sufficient evaluation of subsidy measures and their respective effects. The research objective for this paper is to identify criteria to develop an evaluation tool for media subsidy measures.

The project will be conducted in a mixed-method design, as is prevalent in policy evaluation research (Sager et al., 2021). A document analysis of available program information will identify the 'program theory', that is the underlying ideas, structures, functions and processes of a not yet determined media subsidy program (Rossi et al., 2019, pp. 65-79). Then, a not yet determined project supported under said program will be subject to an analysis, assessing outcome, output and impact of the program (Sager et al., 2021, pp. 104-109) by content analysis and interviews.

Policy research defines the policy cycle as a five-step process: (1) problem definition, (2) agenda setting, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy implementation, and (5) policy evaluation (Puppis & Van den Bulck, 2019, p. 6). Policy evaluation analyzes output, i.e. the written laws, outcomes, i.e. in what ways behavior of those addressed by a policy changed and finally, impact, i.e. the extent to which a defined problem could be solved (Rossi et al., 2019, pp. 16-17). Policy evaluation identifies measures, implementation, expected and empirical results, ultimately defining causing mechanisms for the latter (Sager et al., 2021, pp. 33-35).

Despite its relevance in the post-pandemic world, media policy research does not put emphasis on evaluation yet (Beck & Dogruel, 2020, p. 8). Descriptive, frequently cross-country comparative analyses of subsidies predominate (Kaltenbrunner, 2021; Puppis & Pedrazzi, 2020; Puppis & Bürdel, 2019; Murschetz, 2013; Künzler et al., 2013), only Haas' (2012) analysis attempts to include evaluation.

Building on decades of evaluation research (Rossi et al., 2018), this research project aims to develop an evaluation tool for media subsidies to close this substantial research gap. To the best of my knowledge, there is no current model to systematically evaluate media subsidies. Such a tool must exceed mere economic criteria of cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency. Keeping in mind the substantial role (semi-)professional journalism and journalistic content plays for the functioning of democratic societies, the tool considers journalistic effects of media subsidies with regards to quality and diversity of content, as well as structural effects on media organizations, i.e. advanced training for journalism professionals, and technological innovations. The multi-dimensional tool to be developed enables scholars and lawmakers to assess a subsidy program.

Submission ID

2621