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# Book of abstracts

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## Baqi Ba

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**Haunted Data Haunts System: AI Medium Specificity**

Abstract: Examining the circular causal relationship between human and artificial intelligence within a distributed system, this interdisciplinary, practice-based project seeks to explore the key characteristic of data and algorithms in contemporary art practice. Starting with the premise that contemporary art contributes to academic and public discourse in the field of AI culture, taking the "database-centric" architecture (Peter Lind and Markus Alm, 2006) as the foundation of communication, I will examine how hauntological analysis methods (Lisa Blackman, 2019) are oriented within the computational arts: the fundamentally algorithm logic, audio-visual practice and post-human landscape (Donna Haraway, 2013). Within the interdisciplinary framework, I argue that starting from the practical experience and perception and using scientific experimental research methods, it could supplement the lack of precision and complexity of data construction of human social landscape in existing theoretical research, as well as could understand the complex and abstract relationships between human, data and environment in a visible way, and then by taking practice-based works and research in computational arts as examples to clarify the medium specificity of computational media. The project has been undertaken as practice-based research in contemporary art and as such is composed of two equally weighted elements that are mutually constitutive. The practical element takes the form of an audio-visual practice.

About me: Baqi Ba (1994, China) is a director and artist, working with computational media, photography, film and installations. Her work has been exhibited all over the world, which explores cybernetic cinema and computer film, as well as often takes on a political approach as a critique of human machine generated systems especially the ‘circular-causal’ loop relationship between them. She is currently an AV PhD student in Media, Communications, and cultural studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, whose research is looking at the transhumanism in audio-visual practice

## Deborah Ball

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**Auditing persuasive tech: to what extent are design features programmed to steer user behaviour in messaging apps?**

Abstract: This study examines how the read receipt is designed to steer user behaviour in messaging apps and maximise data extraction, mirroring the datafication processes used on the public feed. The read receipt – the tick you can receive to indicate a message has been read - is designed as a prompt mechanism which keeps the conversation active and responsive, producing more data. This cross-platform study focusses on the operations of three apps, Messenger, Whatsapp and Signal, comparing two popular messaging apps produced by market dominant company Meta with an independent company.

The intersection of persuasive app design, user experience and datafication remains relatively unexplored through the lens of private messaging apps. The proposed qualitative research design will create a new participatory digital method with the working title of the Ethical Human Data Lab. Participants will be recruited for a series of workshops, using the Walkthrough Method (Light, Burgess and Duguay 2018) to map Meta and Signal’s messaging app pathways. Throughout a variety of tasks, the participants will use their agency to audit the read receipt’s role within messaging apps and log their emotional responses.

Using actor network theory and political economy frameworks, this research examines how users’ communications are affected by design features and how apps are designed to be addictive. This is informed in part by BJ Fogg’s persuasive technology app development course at Stanford University circa 2000 (Wu 2018). Fogg’s approach builds upon BF Skinner’s 1930’s operant conditioning experiments, which led to the creation of behaviourism theory (Skinner 1953). Therefore, if these design features are built with psychological persuasion techniques to steer users’ habits, how do these techniques manifest themselves in users’ communications?

The prevailing concern is that Meta appears to value market dominance over users’ privacy (Horowitz 2021). If design features datafy our private messages, there’s a potentially a greater breach of privacy occurring there than on the public feed. In contrast, new companies like Signal claim to prioritise privacy, indicating that communications apps could improve their business models to protect users’ data. Ultimately, a new body of work will be created to understand how private messaging apps operate as well as how users navigate them in everyday life

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Wu, T. (2016). The Attention Merchants: The epic scramble to get inside our heads. New York: Alfred A.Knopf.

About me: Debbie Ball is a media and communications PhD scholar at the University of Westminster. Her thesis focuses on how app design features are built to steer user behaviour and maximise data extraction, looking specifically at direct messaging and read receipts. Although she leans towards a cyber dystopian approach, Debbie strives to find a digital good solution to how digital infrastructures frame and shape user’s knowledge, communications, and social interactions. In September 2022, Debbie began working at King’s College London as a digital humanities part time lecturer and started working in a similar role at University of Westminster in January 2023.

## Ayushi Chamoli

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**Impact of Television News on middle-aged Indians with focus on their level of media literacy**

Abstract: The project intends to unfold an argument around TV news, its impact on its audience. The idea is to show that the television news still holds relevance among the Indian audience and impacts their behaviour. It will focus on how middle-aged Indians perceive news production biases and agenda-setting in the prime-time show debates of Hindi news channels. Also, does their socio-economic background and the level of education influence their reception and interpretation of prime-time debates. Over the last few years, the traditional news outlets, across the world, have seemed to lose their credibility. In India, the world’s most populous democracy, a major part of the mainstream television news channels is now perceived as the spokesperson of the ruling party, i.e. the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It is crucial to examine what is the understanding of the same programmes that are being criticised by the world and media experts when it comes to a common viewer. Unlike scientific data, quantifying the emotional effect of TV news content can be difficult. I am looking into minimising the challenges, and major challenges will be analysed once the field work start. Additionally, the researcher aims to explore if the lack of media literacy has anything to do with it.

About me: I am a third-year research candidate at CAMRI, University of Westminster, who found her calling in research after completing my engineering and then working briefly as a journalist and PR analyst. Although I initially aspired to become a broadcast journalist, the decline of news programming quality in my country shifted my focus towards investigating this very issue. I'm fascinated by the puzzling phenomenon of people's indifference to state-fed propaganda. Beyond my academic pursuits, I find solace in watching tennis, absorbing documentaries, and getting engrossed in crime shows.

## Hiya Deb

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**Underrepresentation of Dalits in Bengali Cinema**

Abstract: My research thoroughly investigates the marginalization of Dalits in Bengali cinema, encompassing historical, stereotypical, and socio-political dimensions. Employing an array of sources such as films, scholarly articles, critical analyses, and interviews, I unveil the lack of substantial Dalit representation in the Bengali film industry.

The research commences by contextualizing history, highlighting the deliberate exclusion of Dalits from mainstream narratives in Bengali cinema. It probes the omnipresent underrepresentation where Dalit roles are either absent or peripheral, reinforcing stereotypes and societal hierarchies. The study critically evaluates the industry's lack of diversity and the implications of such exclusion on Dalit representation.

My research adopts a practice-based approach, underpinned by a creative documentary film titled 'Katataar'. It delves into the film's technicalities while examining the socio-political factors contributing to Dalit underrepresentation. It unravels deeply rooted class and caste-based prejudices prevalent in both society and the film industry. The research scrutinizes the influence of dominant narratives, market forces, and a penchant for conventional storytelling that side-lines Dalit experiences.

The film further investigates the repercussions of this underrepresentation on Dalit communities, analysing its effects on identity, self-perception, psyche, and the perpetuation of biases. Moreover, my research underscores the untouched potential for dialogue, empathy, and societal transformation through genuine Dalit representation, particularly focusing on the voices of Bengali Dalit women.

Additionally, the research spotlights instances of resistance and alternative narratives within Bengali cinema. It showcases filmmakers challenging norms to portray Dalit characters authentically and with dignity. These instances illuminate pathways for change, underscoring the significance of amplifying Dalit voices within the industry. Overall, my research acknowledges cinema's potential as a catalyst for societal change. It appeals for collective action from filmmakers, industry stakeholders, and society at large to redress Dalit underrepresentation in Bengali cinema, cultivating a more inclusive and equitable cinematic landscape.

About me: Hiya Deb is a researcher currently pursuing her PhD in Media and Communication at Goldsmiths, University of London. She successfully completed her Master’s in Filmmaking from Kingston University, London in 2016. Her academic journey has been completed by hands-on experiences gained while working in the Film and Television media in India. For the past three years, she has been engaged as an Associate Lecturer in the Media and Communication department at Goldsmiths, University of London. Central to her research focus is the significant importance of exploring the intersection between film, theatre, history, and migration politics, with a specific emphasis on the Partition of Bengal

## Nourhan El-Abbassy

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**Egyptian News Production Under Transition: A Comparative Analysis of the Role of the Egyptian Press Amid Political Turmoil in-light of Ownership and Objectivity**

Abstract: This comparative analysis will examine the Egyptian newspapers’ output during an important time-period in Egypt’s modern history. The research will study the period from June 30th, 2010, few months spanning before the January 25th, 2011 revolution under the rule of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak; until June 30th, 2015, two years after the June 30th, 2013 events and a year under the rule of Egyptian President AbdelFattah El-Sisi. The study aims to analyze the role played by the Egyptian press under transition towards democratization, in-light of ownership, political situation, political economy of the media, consumer power, market pressure and the real essence of journalism. This is reflected in the research questions: What was the role of the Egyptian press towards transition midst political unrest? Is there a correlation between the Egyptian political economy of the media and the production and circulation of media information? and How did the Egyptian press compare in its framing of the events, aftermath, political parties and players and voice average Egyptians during the transitional period? The researcher will compare and contrast the news framing of the press throughout various pivotal political moments and under the rule of four presidents. Thus, it is vital to look into the political economy of the media and the framing theory as the backdrop of this study. The research will analyze the state owned flagship Al-Ahram, the independent Al-Masry Al-Youm, and the opposition party paper Al-Wafd. Creating a panoramic view of the print media landscape in Egypt. The coding scheme will address the newspapers’ choices of news topics, dominant frames in portraying the key political events and the main political players and suggested remedies across Egyptian dailies. Moreover, the findings will fill a gap in the literature, offering an important baseline for Egyptian journalism that can be used as a mirror to assess media performance as a tool of democratic socialization midst country’s transition towards freedom

About me: Nourhan El-Abbassy is a PhD Candidate at the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI), University of Westminster, London. She earned her BA in Journalism and Mass Communication with a Political Science minor and a MA in Journalism both from The American University in Cairo (AUC). El-Abbassy works as a media lecturer at the American University in Cairo and a media advisor at a number of media institutions in Egypt. As of 2010 she pursued both her academic and professional careers, working as a graduate journalism teaching assistant and a research assistant at AUC. She then joined Qatar University as a media instructor and advisor to the assistant dean of students affairs. On a journalistic professional level El-Abbassy was one of the first political journalists to join Al-Ahram Online, one of Egypt’s leading English news portals. She succeeded in covering numerous political events taking place during one of the most challenging years in Egypt’s history. Her articles were among the most read stories covering Egypt’s January 25th, 2011 revolution, protests and sectarian strife. She also worked as a writer and assistant to the editor in chief of the Cairo Review, a journal published by the School of Global Affairs and Public policy- AUC. El-Abbassy has academic experience along with professional experience as a journalist and media researcher. She is interested in media political economy, media literacy, media laws and regulations, Arab media, media crisis management, media and women issue, and media and minorities.

## Helen Jay

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**Where is our public service internet?**

Abstract: This presentation provides an overview and key themes of my doctoral project, which is researching whether the ‘public service’ concept in UK broadcasting is applicable to contemporary policy on digital platforms. There has been considerable analysis in recent years of the consequences of ‘digital dominance’ and the need for greater regulation of digital platforms. However, both the academic literature and the wider policy debate has tended to have a narrow focus on minimising ‘harms’ rather than considering more ‘positive’ interventions aimed at addressing the wider structural incentives of the digital platforms, including whether alternative, non-commercial models should be developed. This is in contrast to UK media policy, where public service broadcasting has been a dominant theme since the creation of the BBC in 1922, and which has sought to deliver positive ‘freedoms’ such as democratic and cultural outcomes through a mix of public models, funding and regulation. The aim of my research is to evaluate the parallels between these two approaches, using historical analysis and interviews with policy-makers and practitioners to understand how the rationale for interventions in broadcasting and digital policy compare, the political, technological and social dynamics that have influenced policymaking in these areas in the UK and what alternative public models of digital infrastructure could look like as a counterpoint to the dominance of the ‘big tech’ platforms. Why have considerations to develop a ‘public service’ approach to digital communications platforms not been a feature of contemporary technology policy? What alternative models are being proposed and what challenges do they face? Given what we know about the implications of mass communications on our democratic and public life, why did we introduce a public service mission for broadcasting, but not for the more recent technologies that have come to dominate our contemporary communications landscape?

About me: Helen Jay is a doctoral student in the Media and Communications department at the University of Westminster. Her research project is focused on whether the ‘public service’ concept in UK broadcasting policy is applicable to contemporary policy on digital platforms. Research interests include media and digital policy, media power, political economy, public service media and technology platforms. Prior to her PhD, Helen was Head of Policy and Corporate Affairs at Channel 4, where she led the public policy, public affairs and corporate communications team, and alongside her research she acts as an external expert and adviser on media and communications policy.

## Paulina Kuranchie

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**Decolonising Public Relations in Africa: Centring Local Epistemes in Ghanaian Political Communication**

Abstract: At independence, African countries were faced with the task of decolonising. Countries were renamed as part of a broader Africanisation agenda. A quest for decoloniality and Africanity was manifest in many ways. However, efforts to decolonise media and communication studies have so far been “media centric”. Outliers such as Public Relations have been left out of urgent debates on decoloniality. This thesis addresses this gap by centring local epistemes in public relations in ways that decolonise political communication, using Ghana as a case study. Despite the growth of democracy in Africa over the last few decades, democratisation in Africa has met with many problems and the role of public relations in Africa’s democratisation is arguably adding to the existing problems. The overarching purpose of this dissertation was to investigate how political parties have utilised decolonised Public Relations (PR), PR strategies, tactics and activities in Ghana’s electioneering campaigns. More importantly, this research was aimed at decolonising Public Relations in Africa by examining the decolonial political PR strategies political parties deploy to win elections. Proverbs instead of global North theories are used to explain what the political parties do in terms of Public Relations. The study employed in-depth interviews and triangulated with a content analysis of media archives. The findings of the research show that while there are opportunities for decolonising PR, the curriculum has to change to reflect the call for decolonised PR. The findings also show that public relations has furthered Ghana’s democracy and ensured that the two main political parties engage voters. Challenges and limitations notwithstanding, the research provides invaluable insights into how African thought and knowledge systems can be applied in public relations, political communication, and its implications for democratisation in Ghana. It contributes original insights to recent debates on decolonisation in African communication and media studies and the subsequent impact of political communication in the African context.

About me: Ms. Paulina Kuranchie is a lecturer at the Ghana Institute of Journalism in Accra, Ghana and a Visiting Lecturer/PhD Researcher at the University of Westminster, London. Her research focus encompasses several critical areas, including Political Public Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability and the Green Economy, and Technology/Social Media Mediated Corporate Communications. Paulina’s research is aimed at shaping informed dialogues on contemporary communication issues and their impact on society and business practices.

## Shao-Wen Lee

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**Who can decide my gender?**

Abstract: "Who can decide my gender?" The research project uses visual methods focusing on gender fluidity and normalisation to explore the problems and gender roles that transgender people encounter when being assessed for gender reassignment surgery. Through participatory documentary and VR creative research: interviewing, recording and combining VR scenario building and role-plays, I want to reflect on social gender construction and the instability of the gendered body in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, if you want to change your ID card to that of another gender, the current law requires that you have to complete a physical gender reassignment surgery, which also means the loss of reproductive capacity. In addition, gender reassignment surgery must be evaluated by two psychiatrists for a medical diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” over a period of 1-2 years in Taiwan. Transgender people also have to gather evidence and show they have lived in their ‘acquired gender’ for a period of time. It also only allows people to switch from one binary gender to the other – male to female or vice versa – which means it doesn’t work at all for non-binary people who don’t identify as either. Therefore, in Taiwan, there are less than a thousand people who have actually completed the surgery and changed their gender status.

During the 1-2 years of evaluation, the doctor, playing the role of God, becomes the gatekeeper of the operation and decides whether to agree with the evaluation. Transgender people frequently have to persuade the doctor in every way to obtain consent for the operation by "giving a performance" to prove that he/she is qualified to be another gender in front of the doctor. However, what is the qualification to become another gender? Do doctors' thoughts epitomize stereotyped thinking about gender concepts of our society in the clinic when they interrogate transgender people? What relations of power govern gendered and transgendered subjectivities in Taiwan?

About me: A film director, screenwriter, and artist born in Taiwan. BA in Fine Arts and MFA in Virtual Reality (VR) and Documentary creation from University College London and Tainan National University of the Arts. He is doing a practical PhD in VR and documentary creation about the transgender experience at Goldsmiths, University of London. He engages in filming video art, films, VR and documentaries. The topics of his films are usually about bodies and social issues, and his last VR project < Touch of Heart > was nominated for the 2022 French New Images film festival and Kaohsiung Film Festival.

## Micaela Lobos

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**Exploring the intersection between Recent Media Transformations and Social Welfare Policy Changes in Latin America**

Abstract: This chapter of my dissertation thesis explores analytically the intersections between evolving media systems and shifts in social policies in Latin America. Since the early 2000s, the region has witnessed a substantial expansion of social policies aimed at alleviating social and economic inequalities while fostering a more equitable distribution of resources (Altman and Castiglioni 2020; Niedzwiecki and Pribble 2023; Quiñonez 2022). Simultaneously, noteworthy technological changes have emerged, accompanied by the rise of novel information platforms (Mastrini and Becerra 2009). These advancements have led to heightened convergence and concentration in telecommunications and the internet across Latin America, thereby prompting shifts in consumption patterns and use (Becerra and Mastrini 2017). This piece of work delves into the correlation between media mutations and changes in material well-being, examining how these factors intertwine and what implications they hold for reducing social inequalities within the region. Drawing upon secondary sources, this chapter investigates media transformations and their relationship with three essential facets of changes in social policies: shaping the social policy agenda, the concentration of economic and political power in the region, and the public's perception of inequality and its potential turnaround.

About me: I have a Political Science and Journalism studies background and a master's degree in Social Policy and Non-Governmental Organizations from the London School of Economics. I'm a PhD in Media and Communication at the University of Westminster. My interests include political communication, digital media, social policy, non-governmental organizations, social movements, political elites, and neoliberalism, particularly in the context of Latin America.

## Suzanna Miller

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**Screenwriting without boundaries: Cinematic Screenwriting to Sonic Cinema. Re-imagining transmodal storytelling with binaural audio**

Abstract: Close your eyes a moment. And listen. What’s different about what you’re hearing through your headphones or EarPods right now? For those who have downloaded this short binaural track, you will notice that there is something more immersive than in a conventional stereo mix. Some may have felt like that bag really was being put over your head? That character speaking was actually coming towards you? If you are someone on the ADHD spectrum, you may have found it easier to focus on than a regular Radio 4 play? What you’ve heard are extracts of dramatic audio works recorded and post-produced in binaural audio. Not the same as virtual reality ambisonic. I’m going to briefly explain what the differences are both to the listener and in the way the drama is produced - and why I coined the term: ‘Sonic Cinema’. I’m going to take you on a short journey of why I believe working in binaural sound can enhance the creative process of writing through to production of audio drama, and how according to the industry specialists I’ve interviewed, not engaging with binaural is potentially a missed opportunity. But binaural audio may also require some health warnings. War of the Worlds may not be a radio play that inspires people to flee their homes in terror in 2023, but what happens when modern radio drama feels like you’re literally ‘in the room’ with the actors? In the same way as listening to a live, yet technically imperfect performance of a band in a pub can make you ‘feel’ a connection that is not there on a perfectly mastered digital download, I propose that binaural audio raises the perception of audio drama through a visceral experience in a digital world, and potentially allows audio drama to no longer be the poor cousin to the screen.

About me: Coming from a practice-based background as a writer and film maker of scripted drama, I discovered to my amazement that practice-led PhDs in screenwriting were a real thing. I was inspired to discover that academic study improved my craft, by the leader of my Masters online screenwriting course based at Falmouth University, John Finnegan. So I was delighted when Goldsmiths gave me the opportunity to explore the uncharted world of cross-modal re imagination of cinematic screenplays into immersive binaural audio drama, recording that creative and practical journey and filling in the gap in academic literature exploring that creative space

## Callum Morrissey

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**Ambivalence in ‘Reunification’: Identity, Postcoloniality and Boundaries in the North, South and Joseon Korean Diaspora(s) in the UK**

Abstract: This project delves into the contested boundaries of identity and homeland within the Korean diaspora(s) in the UK. The unique case study of New Malden presents a globally exclusive coexistence of ethnic Koreans from North and South Korea, as well as China (Joseon). New Malden boasts Europe's largest South Korean community and the largest North Korean community outside the Korean peninsula (Yi 2008; Time 2016). The tumultuous history of the Korean diaspora(s) problematizes the boundaries of citizenship, nation, and subsequently identity and home. Utilising a wide ethnographic lens comprising interviews, participant observation, and virtual ethnography, this research explores the formations, tensions, and negotiations of the multiple, shifting boundaries of Korean identity. By mapping these situational articulations, the project meticulously examines the (de)construction of identity boundaries, considering the proliferating role of media in these processes. This empirical study aims to make a substantive contribution to an under-researched community and offers theoretical insights into diaspora and media on a broader scale. This symposium presentation provides a comprehensive overview of my broader project. Through a project summary and focused analysis of the first empirical chapter's findings—centred on postcolonial Korean identities—I aim to shed light on the intricate dynamics of this unique coexistence and its implications for our understanding of diaspora and media more broadly

About me: Hello there, I'm Callum, and I'm currently a PhD Researcher and Associate Lecturer over at Goldsmiths in the Media & Cultural Studies department. I've got a background from Goldsmiths (BA) and the LSE (MSc), and my current research is all about diving into the lives of the North, South, and Joseonjok Korean diaspora(s) here in the UK. I've got a keen interest in identity, diasporas, postcoloniality, and I've also been delving into research related to North Korean human rights.

## Yazan Nasrallah

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**Embodied Encounters: A Post-Phenomenological Exploration of the Transformative Selfhood within the Digital Age**

Abstract: This thesis examines the philosophical nation of selfhood in digital representations and seeks to contribute to the scholarly comprehension of the ever-evolving human experience within the digital age. It also deepens our insight into the complex interplay of technology, embodiment, and the pursuit of selfhood.

The first part of this study initiates with an exploration of selfhood within the framework of modern Western philosophy. Commencing with Cartesian dualism's division of self into mind and body. Progressing to process philosophy's portrayal of a dynamic, becoming self shaped by external factors. However, a central inquiry arises: How does the self maintain continuity amid constant flux? Phenomenology highlights the significance of lived experiences in defining self, portraying it as a lived body. This prompts us to think about the impact of virtual lived experiences on the continuity of this dynamic self. Accordingly, my argument engages post-phenomenology studying the human experience with technology, to investigate how the self is produced and articulated within the digital virtual experiences. Built upon the foundation of self-production in visual media, the study examines self-manifestation within virtual interactive contexts through Narrative, Body-image, and Performativity frameworks. This interplay between frameworks and technology provides rich ground for analysing the transformative nature of contemporary selfhood. A pivotal aspect of this inquiry involves an examination of whether these technological advancements fragment or unify selfhood.

The practical element of this research focuses on employing motion capture technology, which serves as a reflective medium, enabling the mirroring, transferring, and transforming of representations. The experiment investigates the notion of self through the act of othering, in a future world where individuals are reduced to identical replicas, inspired by Ibrahim Nasrallah's dystopian science-fiction novel "The Second War of the Dog." the study questions the consequences of othering the self.

This research contributes to expanding human experience in the digital age, enriching our understanding of the transformative impacts of technology, and shading the light on the perceptions of self within virtual immersive production.

About me: Yazan Nasrallah is a PhD candidate working on a practice-based project, which practically and theoretically explores embodiment within the field of immersive interactive experiences. Yazan completed his degrees in Architecture BSc, and Digital Visual Effects MSc. He worked as an architect, creative director, UI designer, and lecturer. As he is doing his PhD, he explores the Transformative Selfhood in the Digital Age, delving into the philosophy of self in digital realms, exploring self articulated and produced in virtual mediums, and questioning if tech progress divides or unifies the self

## Nahed Redouane

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**Social Media and the dual role of lawyers from supporting human rights to activism in the 2019-2020 Algerian uprising**

Abstract: This thesis is about social media activism and the dual role of the Algerian lawyers in the 2019-2020 Algerian uprising. The study investigates social networking sites, and elite lawyers as significant actors in the uprising. This project seeks to understand how lawyers use social media platforms as alternative tools of expression and spaces for mobilisation, influence people, practice activism, communicate their activism, and mobilise for the movement. To address the role social media played in mobilisation dynamics during the uprising. The researcher examines how Algerian lawyers used social media platforms for communicating, sharing protest news, gathering, raising legal and political awareness and defending arrested activists. In this instance, lawyers appeared to have played several roles during the 2019 Algerian uprising. Furthermore, this research might change stereotypes about lawyers' real intentions in the Algerian uprising and legitimise it.

About me: Nahed Redouane, is a self-motivated broadcast journalist, TV presenter and reporter with over 5 years’ experience in fast-paced media production, and comprehensive journalism. At present, Nahed is a PhD student in media and communication at the University of Westminster. Nahed obtained her bachelor's in Media and communication from Algiers University. Nahed holds two master's degrees, one in Political Sciences, from the High National School of Political Sciences, University of Algiers 3, and the other is on Media and Development from Westminster University. Nahed’s research interest is digital media, social media, and political activism in MENA, social movements, democratic transition, legal discour and advocacy, human rights.

## Rachel Stamford

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**Pay to Pitch: Are changing patterns of journalism training turning news into an elitist industry and what are the implications for journalism and democracy?**

Abstract: Financial pressures have recently seen a rise in unpaid internships in both the UK and the US, despite studies showing that they tend to exploit workers and exclude low-income individuals from the news industry. However, there is little insight into how the increase in unpaid opportunities affect newsroom culture and whether publishers and journalists have concerns about how the exclusion of non-affluent reporters might impact their news output or their ability to reflect their readership. This research aims to further explore how unpaid reporting opportunities affect journalism as an industry and democratic force. In pursuit of the objectives, this research will involve qualitative interviews with journalists about their concerns regarding diversity or their ability to represent communities as journalism hiring practices change. This research will also include interviews with publishers and editors to understand their approach to work experience and how their hiring practices affect their newsroom and coverage. My goal is to understand the journalist who is usually excluded from these reporting opportunities, and if these work experiences impact newsrooms’ recruitment for full-time positions. I am also interested to know if authority figures in the news industry offer any solutions for elitism within recruitment. Journalism becoming less accessible to minority reporters and aspiring journalists from vulnerable communities is a direct threat to not only journalism as an institution but the important role news plays in informing a democratic public. In studying ways to make journalism more accessible, this research can offer insight into newsrooms’ hiring processes and suggest applicable changes to make the industry work as the democratic force it is intended to be in society.

About me: Rachel Stamford is a current doctoral researcher at CAMRI, University of Westminster. She has worked as a journalist in both the United States and United Kingdom with bylines featured in newspapers, magazines and radio broadcasts. She graduated with a BA in Journalism (Print/Digital) from the University of Central Florida and received the UCF Nicholson School of Communication and Media Best Print/Digital Portfolio Award. She holds an MS in Media, Communications and International Journalism from the University of Glasgow. Rachel’s current research interests include accessibility in journalism and the relationship between media and democracy.

## Sofie Syarief

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**Counter-hegemonic News Media in Indonesia**

Abstract: In the current Indonesian media landscape, eight group of conglomerate owners are regarded as key players. Five of these media owners are politicians, actively using their media companies to influence broader issues and policies to serve their interests. In essence, Indonesia’s current media—especially news media—landscape shows an increasing domination of the elites with oligarchic power that perpetually influence and are being influenced by the governing power, forming a tightly knit hegemony (Gramsci, 1967; 1988; 1947/1971). Yet, resistance occurs. In countries with any degree of authoritarian tendencies, a press that can speak truth to power and has sufficient independence to counter the narratives of regime-oriented media is paramount. Media that can offer alternative views to the longstanding hegemony may have the ability to denaturalize dominant media space—the ones we call ‘mainstream’—and construct realities that oppose the mainstream media’s conventions and are therefore crucial in the attempt to provide counter-hegemonic representations and bring more plurality and diversity to the communication sphere. Following Fenton’s (2016) bid to place alternative media in its broader social, political and economic environment, my research will look at the potentiality of counterhegemonic practices within the alternative news media landscape in Indonesia using Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) assertion of radical political strategy, especially antagonism and solidarity, as part of the strategy for war of position. These two concepts support Downing’s (2000) idea of alternative media—or ‘radical media’— which serves two purposes: to express opposition vertically, that is from subordinate groups towards the dominant power (antagonism), and to build support and solidarity laterally against policies or the power structure (solidarity). The vertical/lateral support proposition of alternative news media also goes in line with the major strategies in war of position. On the vertical aspect, a counterhegemonic project needs to be able to contest the meanings produced and reproduced by the dominant bloc. Meanwhile, on the lateral aspect, it needs to emphasize producing more constructions of counter-hegemony—thus generating counter-hegemonies—rather than destruction of hegemony. Circling back to Gramsci’s conceptualisation of hegemony, and thus the challenge to it, this is the part where the counter-hegemonic quality of alternative media in Indonesia needs further observation: whether their ability to offer vision—which is never fixed—is matched by their ability to take action—possibly in the form of mobilisations and movements that seek to disrupt the existing power relation—in order to materialise both the vertical and lateral function.

About me: Sofie Syarief is a first year PhD student at the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Department of Goldsmiths, University of London. She is researching the counter-hegemonic alternative news media in Indonesia. Having been working as a professional television journalist in Indonesia for the past 15 years, Sofie is exploring how alternative news media may pose challenge to the hegemonic news construction as a direct result of the entanglement between the oligarchic media industry and the governing power in the country. She investigates whether or not alternative news media may function as counter-hegemony within the larger media landscape in a particular political context and media system.

## Sangya Tyagi

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**Exploring Generative AI and bias perception in News Media**

Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its ever-growing comprehensive applications evolve every day, leaving much to be researched and explored about its uses and implications for society. Amongst its vast uses, the utilization of AI in the media and communication industry is speedily gaining traction. From movie scripts to Newsrooms, a particular branch of AI- Generative AI, is showing exponential growth. Around the globe, and especially in first world countries, initiatives involving generative AI in the media production cycle already exist and are gaining popularity. Some Newsroom experiments involving AI such as the AI and Local News at NYC Media Lab, the Nordic AI Journalism, the AI, Media and democracy Lab, and the Local news lab at Brown Institute have made notable progress for the media industry over a very short span of time. With unpresented technological developments such as these, comes a pandora’s box of myths and technology fearmongering about the new and unknown. In an age where bias, misinformation, falling trust in media, and fake news plague the media industry, the introduction of generative AI to the media production process can be assumed to have significant implications. The presentation will propose a pilot study plan devised to understand the use and impact of generative AI and identify key players. Considering that media production and the audience reception of news are merely two sides of the same coin, the presentation will also involve a query into the relationship and impact of generative AI and media production as well as generative AI and audience reception of media generated with the aid of AI.

About me: Hi! My name is Sangya and I'm a first year PhD student at the university of Westminster (CAMRI). My prior research work has been in exploring areas of political communication, digital news, traditional news, and bias perception. My current research interests are digital news media, Artificial Intelligence, media policy, and bias perception

## Rupert Waldron

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**The Creative Labour of Transcultural Intermediation: A Critical Political Economy of Bohemian Subjectification**

Abstract: This presentation summarises findings of a project examining the development and application of productive subjectivity by creative workers in the cultural industry in Mumbai and Shanghai, who have been educated in London universities in art, design and communication. Understanding subjectivity dialectically, as constituted through engagement with global capital as a totality, it considers the life trajectories by which subjects traverse the uneven terrains of capital to develop value-producing capacities for local or global markets.

The specific form of labour is found to be highly subjectively involving in the production of use values themselves also oriented to engaging consumers or audiences at highly subjective levels; in the production of new selves or relations to the self, for example, rather than simple physical reproduction. Further, a salient aspect of the productive subjectivity developed is a specific relation to the multiple temporalities of combined and uneven development: the creative worker places themself discursively between a temporality felt to be advanced – an expression of high per capita value productivity –, and one perceived as non-contemporaneous with itself, the creative intermediary’s task being to help bring the non-contemporaneous location into its full potential, or self-realisation. The paper not only makes a methodological case for a dialectical integration of the study of subjective and objective factors, but also thereby sheds light on the growth of specific forms of industrialised cultural production in locations such as Mumbai and Shanghai, in their life-enhancing potentials, but also their potential to extend the reach of capital into the recesses of the soul.

About me: Rupert Waldron researches and teaches on cultural industry in transnational contexts. He teaches media and cultural studies at London College of Fashion, and his doctorate at Westminster CAMRI researches the interface between UK Art and Design Higher Education and creative labour in Mumbai and Shanghai. Applying a Marxist critical political economy approach to cultural industry, the research grounds itself in the struggle for non-exploited, unalienated creative expressivity for every worker, and the belief that this means ending commodification to develop a non-fetishised creative labour.

## Chiao-An Wang

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**An exploratory study of digital platform policy in Taiwan (R.O.C.)**

Abstract: Nowadays, we live in a world of digital dominance. As users enjoy the convenience brought by digital platforms, digital platform operators are accumulating wealth. Users are unaware that they contribute labour without receiving a wage. It is time to develop a digital platform policy.

To fully understand digital platform regulation, we focus on data protection and a competitive market. Data is a common currency for the Big tech. The Big Tech accumulate capital by selling users’ data to other companies. A competitive market, on the other hand, ensures Big Tech does not become media conglomerates. If they become media conglomerates, they could control the priority of content shown and collect users’ data via algorithms they design. Eventually, the rights and privacy of users will be invaded. What is worse, democracy will be eroded. In this paper, we will review a few cases for helping to develop the Digital Intermediary Services Act (數位中介服務法) in Taiwan (R.O.C.).

Compared with few regulations, we strongly believe self-regulation is no longer an appropriate approach to regulating the Big Tech. Hybrid approaches to regulation— self-regulation along with legislated regulation and civil power— are strongly suggested to be adopted in this paper. Furthermore, we emphasise the importance of media literacy and independent regulators. Media literacy helps users have a critical thinking skill about business digital platforms. Independent regulators, besides, could be an official agency or a civil group that helps supervise the digital platform operator's adherence to regulations.

Digital platforms should be regarded as public utilities because they have become a part of life. However, business digital platforms cannot meet the requirements of public interest. It is time to develop public service platforms to become a combat power against business digital platforms. A public service platform is centralised by citizens and pursues public interest instead of private interest.

About me: I am a PhD. Candidate in school of Media and Communication in University of Westminster. I was a county councillor secretary in Taiwan (R.O.C.). Media policy, political communication, and public service broadcasting are my research areas. Now, digital platform regulation is my primary issue.

## Xuda Wang

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**Is Nye out of date? Re-examining Soft Power Concept and Chinese Practices**

Abstract: Soft power has become a topic of major international debate. Of particular importance is Nye’s concept of soft power concept and its relation to “China’s soft power”. It has been a mobilising point for of the new debates that critique the original concept. The pivotal question is not just about defining soft power but also the extent to which China’s international influence can be called soft power, and how to evaluate soft power in the era of digital platforms. Firstly, the presentation will review soft power controversies from the three dimensions of definition, attributes and evaluation. This part summarises the latest status of soft power research through a systematic review of the literature in recent years. Secondly, the presentation will discuss China’s soft power practice from four perspectives: higher education interaction, media communication, cultural output, and economic attraction, according to the “resource-behaviour-outcome” soft power linear process. The third part of the presentation will combine the theoretical review of the first part and the Chinese practice in the second part to discuss and further elaborate on the research gaps that have not been considered in soft power research in recent years. The “soft power pipelines” and “the multidimensionality and complexity of soft power behaviours” will be the focus of this section. Finally, the author will dialectically answer the question “Is Nye out of date?” in the title and conclusively criticise the insufficiency of soft power and its significant theoretical influence in the discussion of international relations in the era of digital communication using platforms. The main focus will be on how TikTok can be implicated in a more nuanced discussion of soft power with Chinese characteristics.

About me: I’m a PhD researcher at the University of Westminster. Before engaging in academic research, I had many years of experience as a journalist in China. My current research interests lie in China’s influence in Africa and emerging short video media platforms. My doctoral research attempts to make a connection between China’s soft power and the use of TikTok in Africa

## Lana Wrightman

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**How *not* to get to Sesame Street**

Abstract: Sesame Street was a pioneering children’s television programme which premiered on American public television in 1969. It was created to provide inner-city children with a pre-school education using relatively nascent television technology. Children would be taught letters, numbers, social skills and even hygiene via this innovative programme which featured an ethnically diverse cast and Jim Henson’s Muppets. The programme was set in an inner-city neighbourhood modelled on Harlem in New York. As is typical of these neighbourhoods, most of the activity takes place in the street or on the stoop of the brownstone located at 123 Sesame Street.

Sesame Street was hugely successful. Not only did it fulfil its aims of ensuring children were school ready but it was widely watched by both its target audience and middle class families. It proved that an educational children’s television programme could be appealing to children despite its lack of commercial messaging. However, it was not without controversy. Specifically, its ethnically diverse cast with Black, white and Latino characters mixing freely led to it being banned in many parts of the racially segregated southern United States until public protests ensured it was eventually aired.

Fast forward to the present day. Under increasing financial pressures and competition from other children’s programmes, Sesame Street is a drastically different programme from that which debuted in the late 1960s. The financially strapped production company entered an agreement with HBO Max (recently renamed “Max”) whereby programmes debut first on Max’s streaming platform before they are given to PBS months later. The programme has been cut from an hour to a half hour and rather than 130 episodes per season, there are now 36. Sesame Street has also gentrified and rather than a gritty urban street, the set is a riot of colour. This research will explain how Sesame Street, in an attempt to remain financially solvent, has pivoted towards a middle class audience and away from its original mission to educate deprived inner city children

About me: I am Lana Wrightman. After a career spanning over 25 years in public relations, I folded my PR agency and embarked on a postgraduate course. I am now nearing the end of my PhD in Media and Communications from Goldsmiths. My research focuses on American public television and how its mission has been distorted by political and commercial interference.

## Qiaosong Xi

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**Rebellious Daughters: Everyday Feminist Activism on Chinese Social Media**

Abstract: In recent years, debates on gender equality and feminism have ignited across Chinese social media platforms, capturing both domestic and international attention from scholars and policymakers alike. This research project delves into a specific facet of this larger discourse—examining how Chinese women, positioned as "daughters," engage, negotiate, and contribute to these dialogues. Contemporary understanding underscores that gender roles are socially constructed, with the family environment serving as a pivotal influence. For Chinese women, the identity of "daughter" has a paramount significance, emerging within the confines of an enduring patriarchal framework. For more than two thousand years, Chinese women have continuously shaped and reshaped their identities and meanings within a context defined by legal statutes, ethical standards, and societal norms. This transformative journey unfolds not just within their original or marital families, but also resonates across the broader spectrum of family—the community and the nation. This project endeavours to uncover how Chinese women, who actively engage in gender discussions and champion feminist viewpoints on digital platforms, navigate and articulate their gender perspectives. It explores how these women negotiate their roles as daughters within their families and within contemporary Chinese society. Employing a hybrid methodology involving digital diaries and in-depth interviews, this research is currently in its preliminary phase of participant recruitment and pilot study stage.

About me: I'm Qiaosong Xi, a PhD candidate in Media Studies at the University of Westminster. I hold a bachelor's degree in Journalism from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a master's degree in Communication from the University of Westminster. My background includes experience in online marketing and brand promotion in China. My research focuses on the convergent discipline across digital communication, social media, popular culture, audience studies, and gender studies. Currently, my research project delves into the dynamics of the female audience and gender discussions on Chinese social media platforms.