# Book of Abstracts

PhD Symposium in Media and Communications

University of Westminster

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## Namrata Acharya

Affiliation: City, University of London

Title of presentation: Community Media as a Catalyst of Transformative Climate Justice in India

Abstract: Transformative climate justice is an emerging area of research that deals with the disruption of the existing power equations involved in climate change policies, leading toward an inclusive decision-making process through a bottom-up approach (Newell, et. al, 2020). In contrast, communication about climate justice in India predominantly follows a top-down approach, marginalizing the voices of communities most affected by climate change. (Belfer et al., 2017). Many start-ups in India are challenging this dominant paradigm through solution-focused community media, inclusive of the perceptions of climate justice by those affected by climate change. This form of journalism aligns with the growing scholarship on evolving models of climate reporting which provides greater agency to citizens and emphasizes impact-oriented journalism (Trionfi, 2023). However, community media in India lack recognition in the public sphere, with their correspondents marginalized within the hierarchical structure of journalism (Thakur, 2024). This research aims to study the role, values, processes, challenges as well as the potential of community media outlets toward transformative climate justice. Simultaneously, this project aims to map community media outlets in India within the climate reporting landscape as a form of solution-oriented journalism that challenges dominant paradigms of climate communication. Inspired by action-oriented participatory research, a field of research that adds to the knowledge base and at the same time contributes to local communities (Worthington et al., 2011), this research, going beyond the binaries of alternative and mainstream, aims to place community media in the broader media landscape based on their role and potential. At the same time, it endeavors to enhance the effectiveness of community media as agents of climate justice through an iterative process involving consultation, consensus, possibility of an experiment, and refinement.

Bio: Namrata Acharya is a PhD candidate in the Department of Journalism at City, University of London. Her research focuses on community media and transformative climate justice. Inspired by the works of Dr. Jean Drèze, she aims to experiment with the concept of action-oriented research in journalism. Previously, for nearly twelve years, she worked as an assistant editor with Business Standard newspaper in India, covering issues related to environment, business, and development, followed by a short stint as a freelance journalist. She has a keen interest in climate reporting and is a recipient of several journalism awards and fellowships.

## Mohammed Alrmizan

Affiliation: City, University of London

Title of presentation: Turkish International Media: TRT between Political Communication and Public Diplomacy

Abstract: This PhD study explores how Turkish international media contributes to and reflects Turkish political communication and public diplomacy. It takes Turkish Radio Television (TRT) as a case study investigating how TRT Arabi and TRT World reported news and covered events related to the Middle East. In addition, the research further explores how those two outlets' journalists feel about their networks and roles. The study is based on triangular methods of quantitative content analysis, qualitative textual analysis, and interviews. It selects four important and regional events in the Middle East for analysis. The findings indicate a heavy reliance on Turkish official sources and quotes in some events while defending Turkish foreign policy and reflecting public diplomacy in the messages communicated in the news coverage.

Bio: Doctoral candidate in the Department of Journalism at City, University of London researching Turkish international media, political communication and public diplomacy by studying the case of Turkish Radio Television (TRT). His research draws on two case studies for its outlets, including TRT Arabi and TRT World, to explore how they report events related to the Middle East and their communicated messages and narratives. He has his former degrees, including an MA in journalism and communication from Istanbul University, Turkey and a BA in media studies from the University of Wisconsin, United States.

## Debbie Ball

Affiliation: University of Westminster, CAMRI

Title of presentation: Auditing Persuasive Tech: To What Extent Are Design Features Programmed to Steer User Behaviour in 'Private' Messaging Apps?

Abstract: This thesis interrogates the asymmetric relationship between Meta and their users, maintaining scrutiny on flawed platform design while the industry introduces new 'revolutionary' AI products to the public. Using actor-network theory and critical political economy frameworks, the study investigates the intersection of persuasive app design, user experience and datafication. The work examines four messaging apps - Facebook and Instagram Messenger, WhatsApp and Signal - comparing three Meta products with one produced by a privacy-conscious, not-for-profit company. As deliverers of datafication, persuasive design features such as Like buttons, notifications and read receipts support Meta's lucrative advertising models. The read receipt operates in a similar way to the Like button, keeping users online for longer and influencing their communication habits (Johns et al 2024). The concept of persuasive technology was first propagated by Stanford University's Persuasive Tech Lab in the early 2000s, adapting BF Skinner's behaviourist operant conditioning theory to app design (Fogg 2003, Skinner 1953). There, the next generation of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs learned how to make apps "stick" and widely adopted by users as everyday communication tools (Stolzoff 2018). Correspondingly, if apps deploy persuasive design features guiding users towards datafication, the notion of ‘private' messaging spaces is problematic. Is the privacy promised in these spaces a socio-technical illusion of privacy? Or, per Zuckerberg's vision for WhatsApp for Business, do Meta's longterm expansion plans directly contradict the use of end-to-end encryption? (Johns et al 2024). This study intends to move beyond the attention economy to define a further concept of emotional privacy that should be respected rather than mined by app design protocols. By examining how the read receipt mediates users’ messaging habits and relationships, new knowledge will be created on how to produce socially good, user-empowering communications. A new mixed method, Auditing Design Features Method, has been devised combining algorithmic auditing (Sandvig et al 2014), walkthrough method (Light et al 2018) and media go-alongs (Jørgensen 2016). All will be implemented in three ethically designed stages to respect participants privacy, commencing with an auditing workshop of 20 participants recruited from lower income and diverse backgrounds.

Bio: Debbie Ball is a design features doctoral researcher at the University of Westminster, creating socially good solutions to the asymmetric relationship between Big Tech and users. Debbie lectures in data and society at Westminster, following two years as a digital humanities lecturer at Kings College London. Academic achievements include: a future of AI and music creation keynote at Going Global in Auckland funded by British Council New Zealand and Pacific in September 2023; attending Digital Good Network's summer school at University of Sheffield in June 2023; and a distinction in Social Media, Culture and Society MA from Westminster in 2020.

## Yasmine Barbosa

Affiliation: City, University of London

Title of presentation: Framing the Gatekeeping Process in a Post Me Too World from a Gender Perspective: When the Manosphere Intersects with Journalism

Abstract: This research investigates the backlash to the #MeToo movement that has been carried out by masculinist narratives and its impact on journalism. It incorporates gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014) to understand the journalistic coverage of these related stories. The manosphere is a conglomerate of communities that defend men’s rights and seek to awaken men to what they call the myth of male privilege and gender inequality (Zuckerberg, 2018). Manosphere adherents (also known as masculinists) mobilise on social media in discussions involving gender, such as the trials related to the #MeToo movement and, more recently, the US trial involving Johnny Depp and Amber Heard (Moro et al, 2023; Nestešová, 2023). Masculinists have also been increasingly involved in massacres encouraged by the misogynistic ideologies circulating in these communities (BBC, 2011; 2023; The Guardian, 2022; 2023). Newspapers, cable news networks and journalistic websites play a particularly important role in mediating this reality (Vos and Heinderyckx, 2015), sometimes constructing narratives of spectacularization of these cases (Baughman, 2023). The aim of the research is to analyse the way in which recent events involving the manosphere and the backlash to the #MeToo movement are reported and whether masculinist narratives have an impact on newsroom processes. The methodological procedures rely on interviews (Kvale, 2011) with journalists and content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013) of the stories written by them.

Bio: Yasmine is a PhD researcher at the Department of Journalism at City, University of London. She holds a Master in Communication from the Federal University of Minas Gerais and a BA in Journalism from the Federal University of Ouro Preto (Brazil). During her masters she acted as a researcher in the research group on media, gender and activism, and as an undergraduate she developed a monograph on online hate speech that was awarded by the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPJor). Yasmine research interests focus on gender studies, in interface with online misogyny and with an emphasis on journalism.

## Marianne Brown

Affiliation: City University of London

Title of presentation: Music for All: Transformative Elements of Music Projects for Women and Children Fleeing Domestic Violence

Abstract: This study aims to explore the benefits of music projects delivered at a women’s refuge for mothers and children. The research refers to my work in this field, delivering community music projects. I would like to know how the music workshops make a difference to the refuge environment and the families living there. This includes how the families may or may not have changed because of participating in these projects, and any transformative or immediate effects the music projects might have on this community. Research outcomes from previous music projects will enrich my body of evidence for a discussion and analysis. My personal experience, journals, music performances, lecture recitals and discussions will contribute to the research outcomes. The methodology will demonstrate action research and auto ethno-graphic research methods. The primary research question asks: Can music become a changing force, leading to transformation and positive outcomes for the lives of women and children living in refuge due to domestic violence? This presentation explores the early stages of this research from my first year of PhD studies with a focus on identity, ethics and my own positionality as musician, researcher and experience working as a musician in the women’s’ refuge community.

Bio: Marianne Brown (also known as Marianne Tyler Brown) Cellist

Prof Cert Hons RAM, L.R.A.M PGDip RNCM, MA City, PGCHE QTLS, MSc.

Marianne is a performer, alongside her work in teaching, research, and counselling. She studied the cello at The Royal Academy of Music (UG), Royal Northern College of Music (PG) and then Liszt Academy, Budapest. She later attended City University of London for Masters in Cultural Management, MSc Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck writing about music in wellbeing and community settings. Marianne continues her PhD research in music and transformation at City University. Her research areas include transformation and music projects in women's refuges. This is an area Marianne has worked in for over a decade, producing music projects in the refuge environment.

## Yassmin V Foster

Affiliation: Goldsmiths University of London

Title of presentation: My Likkle ‘Ouse Party

Abstract: The 1970s Caribbean house party was a phenomenon pivotal to Black British life in the 1970s and is the focus of this paper. Britain’s post-war hostile environment meant that Caribbean homes had to double as carefully curated semi-public social spaces. This paper offers the first study of the Black British House Party and argues that the primary experience afforded Black people time and opportunity to move freely. This dancing, eating, drinking and reasoning space played carefully selected music that permeated the bodies that embodied these moments and brought them closer to themselves and each other. The house party allowed the community space to embrace the body's desire, and movement practices generated by the extension and the retraction of the limbs, feet, torso, head and hips (Palmer 2010). This conscientious space is a determining characteristic of Black professional dancers with careers into the 80s and 90s, where their worlds became part of their public creativity (Adair 2000). I share my knowledge through the lens of a second-generation Black British woman raised in sound system culture, I employ small anthropology as an autoethnographic tool to connect personal experiences to wider cultural, social and political meanings of the era (Sobers 2023). I offer this as my sole experience and by no means suggest that mine represents all Black communities in 1970s Britain (Adair 2000). The house party occupies a “representational space”; however, the space is re/formatted in its shift from private to public, and the rules of the home are altered for the duration of the dance (Lefebvre 1991). This research is concerned with the physical, mental and social relationships, that are inseparable when thinking about the production of space as an uninvestigated byproduct of the Black British house party.

Bio: Yassmin V Foster is a researcher, artist and teacher based in London, UK. She is a proponent of work that challenges the supposition that the movement created by Black people is unworthy of scholarly investigation. Yassmin is a Stuart Hall PhD scholar at Goldsmiths University, her current research investigates “Why and How did Black Communities Construct Spaces Outside of State Control, in the 1970s?”. She holds a BA (Hons) Anthropology and Media and Choreomundus – an International master's in dance, Knowledge, Practice and Heritage. She works in the arts, culture and education and has presented her research across the UK and USA.

## Harry Meadows

Affiliation: University of Westminster, CREAM

Title of presentation: Personal Ecologies: Insights from a Community Gardener’s Gamespace.

Abstract: In this paper I share insights from a community art project that investigated how art practice could contribute to the UN Sustainability Goal of Climate Action. The investigation took place in Southampton, an area insulated from the most immediate and devastating effects of climate change, but with its own air pollution problems. I wanted to find out about actions taken by local citizens with a practice of environmental stewardship. I was also interested in the relationship between this action and the ecological imaginary. My questions were: Under the conditions of climate crisis, who are the citizens engaged with stewardship of complex ecosystems? How do ecological imaginaries act with their tools, methods and motivations? What can artists engaging with ecology learn from the ecosystems imagined by community gardeners? For over a year I recorded observations and conducted interviews with community gardeners, before focussing on one participant with an ecological practice intersecting: social organisation; gardening; exotic pets; and digital sensing systems. From their account, key actors of the ecosystem were identified and rendered as characters in a video game. The playable format made this rich and complex practice sharable through exhibition at a public art gallery. The game then led to the production of a commentary video enabling the research participant to feedback on how their practice was represented in gamespace. This screen recording of the participant’s gameplay with a voiceover of comments, corrections and observations, was then included in the exhibition. From analysis of the project, themes emerged: tool kits are invented for environmental stewardship where ways of knowing are shared and hierarchies of knowledge challenged; radical landscapes are imagined where the imaginary is an actor alongside humans, plants, animals and machines; multiple publics slip between geographic space and gamespace to create moments of (in)visibility. In this paper I will report on insights gained into citizen action on climate, and how these ecological practices can be shared and discussed through game engine simulation.

Bio: Artist and lecturer Harry Meadows leads Critical Zone Observatory. This research framework explores sculptural possibilities for practices of ecological citizenship and creates partnerships for artists, games designers, musicians and scientists. This practice-based research imagines new methods for art practice under the conditions of climate crisis. These themes are explored in his recent exhibition Personal Ecologies: The Community Gardener at Gods House Tower, Southampton (2024). Since 2014, Meadows has held the post of senior lecturer in Fine Art at Arts University Bournemouth. He is currently a doctoral researcher with the Centre for Research and Education in Art and Media (CREAM) at the University of Westminster.

## Yazan Nasrallah

Affiliation: Goldsmiths, University of London

Title of presentation: Digital Faciality

Abstract: This practice-based PhD research explores the face as a site of ethics, affect, and identity within both physical and digital realms. For Emmanuel Levinas, the face is a site of ethics, where ethical responsibility emerges through face-to-face encounters. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize the face as a semiotic construction emanating from and reflecting a particular socio-historical milieu, capable of transmitting various meanings based on the political regime it inhabits. Faciality, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, demystifies the face, presenting it as a complex, non-natural system intertwined with political dynamics. As they state in Thousand Plateaus, “[We] don't so much have a face as slide into one” (1980: 177). The notion of external appearance reflecting inner character and personality traits stems from the pseudoscience of physiognomy prevalent in the 18th and 19th centuries. Jenny Edkins, in Face Politics, highlights the persistence of physiognomic methodologies in contemporary digital facial imagery. This research interrogates digital faciality and the politics of the digital face. Emerging technologies such as facial capture and the standardization of facial appearance raise significant concerns about control, and identity formation. By focusing on the mask as a tool, including avatars, filters, and deepfakes, this study investigates analogical correlations between the face and digital facial images. It investigates how the morphability and manipulative potential of the digital face shape societal norms and perpetuate dominant identities. Additionally, this study explores digital strategies for dismantling digital faciality, reflecting on various modalities such as the cinematic face, non-representational art. This research aims to uncover how digital transformations impact our understanding of identity, ethics, and the human condition in an increasingly digital world.

Bio: Yazan Nasrallah, a Palestinian-Jordanian Architect and VFX artist. currently, Yazan pursues a Ph.D. at Goldsmiths University of London, focusing on exploring the face in the digital media.

## Kym Oliver

Affiliation: City, University of London

Title of presentation: Black Disabled Women & Gender Expansive People, Alone in a Universe: Locating the Roots of Intracultural Dissonance through Law, Media and other White Supremacist Mechanisms

Abstract: We currently live in a world shaped by the historical and present delineation between heteronormative non-Disabled Whiteness and the other. However, even within the outlier group, there is a hierarchy. A clear demarcation between those who get to be the 'other' (inhabiting the world alongside those currently at the centre of our consciousness) and those who are racialised as Black, gendered as Woman and are Disabled. Black Disabled Women & Gender Expansive People are still near non-existent within the academic landscape as both subject and as knowledge producers. They also face disheartening levels of active erasure within art and media. This fabricated lacuna is rooted in history, present societal structures, media, culture and reinforced by law. Intersectionality helps us understand how the oppression of different groups, disabled, poor, women, children and racialised, converges within the Black Disabled Woman’s body. Imploding and erasing her from our consciousness and concepts of personhood. This PhD project seeks to understand the intracultural dissonance that exists within Black Communities in relation to Black Disabled Women and Gender Expansive People. Within the community, there is overwhelming stigma and taboo which surrounds the topics of illness and Disability, leading to an exacerbation of already alarming health disparities within the medical system and beyond. However, due to the pervasive and insidious nature of white supremacy and its mechanisms, before we even begin to dissect these realities, we must first locate the Black Disabled Woman within the universe. This presentation will provide an overview of some of that process, its challenges, some historical context, and some initial learnings of how the law has served as a sword rather than a shield in creating this present dilemma.

Bio: Kym is a Thinker, Public Speaker, published Writer, Guest Lecturer, Creative, PhD Researcher and Consultant, with an international, diverse list of credits including Google, UNFPA, University of Oxford and NASA. They are passionate about psychosocial approaches to understanding the cultural harmonies and dissonances within marginalised communities and hold a related Masters. They Co-Founded The Triple Cripples - a platform dedicated to Disabled Women, and Gender Expansive people; and the intracommunal healing organisation, Our Living Archives. Kym, is a board member for the Black Feminist Fund and strongly believes that funding grassroots feminist movements and Black Disabled feminist researchers can pave the way toward loving Black Feminist Futures.

## Marcos Ortiz

Affiliation: Goldsmiths, University of London

Title of presentation: Mapping the Endogamous Interdependencies and Dynamics of Post-Uprising Chilean Media

Abstract: This presentation looks in detail into the entanglements of Chile’s traditional print media with other actors of society and – using archival research as well as qualitative network analysis (QNA) – it sheds light on these relations that are often invisible to most. The interconnections unveiled by this analysis does not only consider institutions – universities, political parties or corporations – but also the individuals that are part of them, such as academics, specific politicians and CEOs. The first part of the presentation analyses two maps of relations created around El Mercurio and La Tercera, Chile’s two most influential newspapers. This section also categorises the actors into three groups – core actors, peripheral actors, and outsiders – and outlines each one’s characteristics. The second part highlights nine different dynamics that explain the political economy of both newspapers. Consolidated dynamics are those that persist since Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship, evolving dynamics are those that have developed since the end of the dictatorship in 1990, and emerging dynamics refer to those that were only established since the social uprising of 2019. Overall, this presentation argues that QNA and elite mapping can become key allies for media and communications in order to unveil power relations and agenda setting theory. Furthermore, it concludes that these methods align with some of critical theory’s main precepts and goals, such as the use of multidisciplinary mechanisms to expose structures of power.

Bio: Marcos Ortiz is a PhD candidate researching Chile’s traditional print media. In 2019, Chile experienced a social uprising that challenged the prevalent neoliberal system. Marcos’ research explores the underlying reasons why the Chilean traditional print media, entangled with other hegemonic actors – political parties, corporations and think tanks – aimed to secure the political economic status quo even after it was put into question during the Chilean Spring. In this endeavour he investigates institutions of power that prevail from the Pinochet years to revisit and reinvigorate Western theorisations of media power and ideology from a Global South perspective.

## Simone Pellegrino

Affiliation: Goldsmiths, University of London

Title of presentation: *Toxicus Amor Fati*: Politics of Chance in the Age of Contingency

Abstract: Chance regulates a significant number of contemporary cultural practices. From the oracular character of entropic LLMs in generative AI (Parisi, 2013; Hui, 2019; Bridle, 2023; Roncaglia, 2023) to the functioning and perception of the lottery, social media (Cotter et al., 2022) and other successful unscripted media texts, fortune and destiny arise as the mediated products of meaning-making processes of affect. This paper questions the way the “phenomenologically vitalizing movement of rhetorical animation” (Berlant, 2010, 95) offered by contemporary cultural practices of chance, contributes to a love for fate that, repurposing the Nietzschean expression, results toxic for the late-modern individual. In an era of contingency, where the subject barely exists in the tense, schizophrenic (Jameson, 1991) surprises of the present moment, how is chance reified as an ideological surrogate of historicity? As these supplant the authentic, stable experience of extended temporality with condensed proxies of quasi-theodical connection with the past, and libidinal hope for the poietic creation of the future, the purpose of this research consists in evaluating the extent to which media discourses that precede, punctuate or follow the unpredicted event, might make for epistemological tools functional to the implementation and reinforcement of chaotic, cognitive (Berardi, 2005) and abstract (Toscano, 2008, 2014; Han, 2021) forms of power in late-modern capitalism, as well as the formation of a resilient and progress-confident neoliberal subject, and the reproduction of an ontologically liquid (Bauman, 2000; 2005), opaque and unpredictable society. This study follows a multi-methodological qualitative approach that draws on both phenomenology and critical discourse analysis (CDA) that, despite their foundational distances, are employed in tandem so to assess the hegemonic implications of chance from multiple vantage points. Questions of temporality and space, consciousness and attention, affectivity and desire are central to this project, as the risks that contingency poses to the state of agency, creativity and resistance in the late-modern individual are closely examined and juxtaposed with the therapeutic, liberating and nomadic (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987) possibilities that chance and, more specifically, its irrational renditions might rather offer.

Bio: Simone Pellegrino is a PhD researcher at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he draws on ethics and philosophy to study the hegemonic character that chance takes on as it regulates an array of contemporary cultural practices. At 22, Simone is currently the youngest candidate in the Graduate School, and he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Alongside his PhD-related activities, Simone supervises a research project for UIS Research Centre, a pioneering, student-led think tank that works on policy papers concerning Italy's most compelling issues. For the organisation, his team is assessing the current state of Italy’s cultural output. Named "L'Ennesimo Nuovo, Analisi e Proposte per una Cultura del Futuro" (The New, Again: Analyses and Proposals for a Culture of the Future), the project gauges the nation's ability to effectively foster a culture which resists the current zeitgeist and, most importantly, offers pathways to a viable creation of the future. Simone is also assistant to the organising committee of ‘21st Century Magic and Spirituality in Media and Culture’, a symposium hosted by MCCS department at Goldsmiths, which fosters a cross-disciplinary dialogue on spiritual practices with scholars from other internationally leading institutions, such as MIT (USA), Rutgers University (USA), Concordia University (Canada), Trinity College Dublin (Ireland).

## Fred Scott

Affiliation: City, University of London

Title of presentation: Philosophical and Spiritual Implications of Ferruccio Busoni’s Doktor Faust

Abstract: Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) did not live to complete work on his final composition, the opera Doctor Faust. A lifelong preoccupation with the Faust legend informed significant aspects of Busoni’s creativity and found ultimate fulfilment in processes of synthesis and syncretism, akin to alchemy and exemplified in the composition of Doctor Faust. In Busoni’s centenary year this paper will focus on elucidating these processes with specific reference to their philosophical and spiritual implications. In the course of Busoni’s opera, the Faust story, which first appeared in 1587 (published by Johann Spiess, Frankfurt), forms the spine of a wide-ranging speculative narrative in which Busoni examines the trope of ‘Man and his desire’ in the quest for ‘genius and the pain that accompanies it’. This paper will demonstrate Busoni’s synthesis of Renaissance occult philosophy, authentic ritual magic and the syncretism of religious systems; Reformation, Roman Catholic dogmas and the Buddhist concept of enlightenment. In the principal action of the opera is a grand meta-synthesis of philosophical and religious positions where the questing protagonist is asked to explain and clarify the fruits of his search for ultimate meaning after a vast clash of ideals represented by Platonism, Natural Science, Jurisprudence and Theology results only in unresolvable conflict. In Busoni’s Faust version the scope of the drama reaches beyond the traditional morality tale of the legend’s origin and transforms it into a Gesamtkunstwerk of unprecedented depth articulated, according to Busoni’s philosophy of composition, by a wealth of musical means. Busoni unites music of both archaic origin and relentless modernity with a self-authored libretto in a unique and transcendent magnum opus.

Bio: London-born Fred Scott studied piano at the Royal Academy of Music and has performed worldwide. He has also worked in the commercial music sector broadcasting for various media including BBC, ITV and Channel Four. Having been dedicated to music education for over 40 years he is currently conducting PhD research at City University into The Musical, Literary, Philosophical and Spiritual Syncretism of Ferruccio Busoni’s Doktor Faust. Recent work has been published by Routledge, Musikproduction Höflich, SRIA (London) and Soundpractice Music with other materials in preparation. Fred practices Forensic Musicology and is a Cardiff University Bond Solon Certified Expert Witness.

## Matthew Stewart

Affiliation: Goldsmiths, University of London

Title of presentation: Digital Forms of Organisation: Graph Theory and the Spatial Division of Labour

Abstract: This paper provisionally explores the spatial logic of graph data structures. It positions the graph’s ubiquity within contemporary platform infrastructures as an expression of capital's compulsion to move ‘beyond every spatial barrier’ that finds expression through new organisational forms. To do so it proposes to analyse the historic work of key avant garde architects as managerial exemplars who have worked with graph theory to implement processes of labour fragmentation and the increased spatial separation of conception and execution in production. By examining these themes over a longer protracted period, it will attempt to link organisational forms of the so-called ‘platform economy’ with the multi spatial firm emerging in the early 1970s.

Bio: I’m a doctoral researcher in the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies department at Goldsmiths. My research is looking at the intersections of value, architectural and computational forms to analyse the transformation and intensification of production processes over the long downturn—a period of protracted crisis taking into account the 1973 global oil crisis and 2008 financial crash. It does so by focusing on four provisional themes in relation to the remaking of labour processes and digitisation (value, abstract time, spatial organisation and social technique).
My background is in architecture and I teach on the BA Architecture course at University of Westminster

## Kin-Long Tong

Affiliation: University College London

Title of presentation: Rethinking the Politics of Scale: Independent Publishing for Social Changes in Hong Kong and beyond

Abstract: This study explores the role of indie publishing and bookselling in facilitating social change among Hong Kong citizens from 2012 to 2022, drawing on interviews with 45 independent publishers and booksellers, spatial and bibliometric analyses, and textual analysis of indie publications. In this project, indie publishers and booksellers refer to small-scale practitioners who are not directly controlled by the state, major for-profit corporations, or nonprofit institutions. Existing literature conceptualizes indie publishing as a form of cultural resistance against dominant oppressive structures. This research complicates this notion by examining the dynamics of resistance and domination through the lens of production scale. During political crises, characterized by heightened demands for reading, writing, and political engagement, indie publishing and bookselling emerged as alternative platforms for political participation by former politicians and journalists in Hong Kong. This context saw a notable rise in indie publishing and bookselling activities in the city over the decay, serving as a significant case for publishing studies. The presentation is divided into two sections: the first part delineates the key characteristics of small-scale production and examines its distinct affordances in driving social change within cultural contexts. The second part explores how digital tools, such as Google Maps, social media, and crowdfunding platforms, serve as appropriate technologies, providing individuals with affordable solutions to sustain and amplify the impacts of small-scale practices without necessitating expansion. However, as governmental repression intensified, these activities faced significant limitations, leading many practitioners to join a migration wave to Britain, Canada, and Taiwan. Despite these challenges, for some, small-scale practices embody a pragmatic approach that facilitates the continuation of their endeavors in new contexts.

Bio: Kin-long Tong is a PhD candidate from the Department of Information Studies at University College London and serves as a visiting lecturer in the Department of Media, Culture, and Creative Industries at City, University of London. His research spans critical information studies, DIY culture, independent publishing, and archival practices. His ongoing PhD project delves into the political possibilities inherent in small-scale cultural production, with a particular focus on indie publishing in Hong Kong. His scholarly work has been featured in peer-reviewed journals such as International Journal of Heritage Studies, Sociological Forum, and ZINES Journal.

## Xuda Wang

Affiliation: University of Westminster, CAMRI

Title of presentation: Digital Soft Power Paradigm and Practice

Abstract: Academic discussions on the concept of soft power have always overlooked the important role of the Internet and social media platforms. Existing discussions on the role of communication technology in international influence focus more on platform or infrastructure construction, while ignoring the information disseminated. Some scholars even equate digital soft power with digital diplomacy in terms of concept. Therefore, my research starts from a theoretical perspective and explains the concept of digital soft power and its two paradigms on the Internet: actor-centered and structural. This study takes videos, pictures, texts and other information disseminated on social media as the research object and explains how they are disseminated and influence the target audience. Subsequently, my presentation will explain existing academic research and discuss the digital soft power of the United States, Russia, India, South Korea and Japan. Finally, I will explain the similarities and differences in the digital soft power of the case countries.

Bio: Xuda Wang is the president of the PhD Society of the University of Westminster and PhD student representative of CAMRI. His current research interests lie in China’s influence in Africa and emerging short video media platforms. His doctoral research attempts to make a connection between China’s soft power and the use of TikTok in Africa.

## Haiyue Zhang

Affiliation: University of Westminster, CAMRI

Title of presentation: How does Chinese Journalism Combat International Fake News: Fact-checking Methodology for Mingcha

Abstract: As of 2020, about 81% of all Chinese Internet users consumed online news (CNNIC, 2020). With the growing consumption of news via online media, the online news environment is more dynamic and complex (Guo, 2020). Fake news spreads in China not simply because there are technologies to circulate it. As Maria (2018) observed, rather a deep sense of societal insecurity, the increasing politicization and commercialization of information and a craving for self-expression propel it. Among other preventive measures, fact-checking is considered as one of the effective ways to combat fake news (Graves, 2016; Amazeen, 2020; Kumar, 2022; Walter et al., 2020). Due to the concern over the authorities’ strict political control and censorship, many Chinese news media do not have a special fact-checking column compared to the West and the topic of fact-checking news is also very limited to human health (Covid-19) and social life. Although China's control over the news and communications industry has become stricter in recent years, the Paper (澎湃新闻) launched the fact-checking platform called “Mingcha (明查)” in 2021 mainly focused on international fake news. In China, there is much fake news related to international news, and this international fake news is widely circulated on online platforms and social media, which has created a great obstacle to the Chinese public's understanding of the international situation. Against the backdrop of the development of digital media in China, Mingcha, as the country's first news production organization primarily focused on fact-checking, has developed its unique approach to news production. While drawing on international fact-checking methods, it has crafted its distinctive methods to cater to the Chinese domestic audience. Diverging from the conventional news production process of topic selection, interviews, and editing, the process of fact-checking news involves tracing back as the initial step upon identifying a topic. In the process of tracing and verifying authenticity, supporting materials and technological tools play a crucial role. Related reports have been read more than 130 million times on Mingcha’s main website, with more than 30 manuscripts reaching more than million, a single article up to 4 million times, and a total of more than 10 million views on the WeChat platform (Li, 2022). Due to the unique nature of fact-checking news, this study analyses the qualitative content of a total of 244 fact-checking reports of Mingcha from June 2022 to May 2023 in three main areas: the fact-checking target, the fact-checking process, the fact-checking solution. It will explore the production process and characteristics of fact-checking news in non-western countries. In addition to categorizing and qualitatively analyzing Mingcha’s content, the specific production process, as reflected in in-depth interviews from 4 fact-checkers in Mingcha, will be presented. From their personal perspectives and practical experiences, this includes how journalists trace different forms of fake news, seek supporting materials with technological assistance, conclude five fake news labels and cooperation with the university and experts.

Bio: My name is Haiyue Zhang, a third-year PhD student at the CAMRI Institute, University of Westminster. My research interests include fact-checking journalism, fake news, and the Chinese media ecology. Currently, I am working on my PhD thesis, which focuses on transparency in fact-checking journalism. The abstract I submitted for this conference is a chapter of my PhD research, specifically exploring the production process of fact-checking news in China through qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. Other parts of my PhD thesis will address transparency. I am very eager to participate in this conference, gain insights from experts, and learn from other scholars' research, as it will significantly aid in completing my PhD thesis.