CAMRI conference, the University of Westminster, 22-23 May 2025
Marylebone campus, 35 MARYLEBONE ROAD, LONDON NW1 5LS

Welcome to our fiftieth anniversary conference. We are delighted to welcome so many distinguished delegates from so many parts of the world.

This conference celebrates 50 years since the first undergraduate Media degree in the UK was launched at what is now the University of Westminster. And so it marks not only half a century of our School of Media and Communication, but also of the institutionalisation of this subject within the UK university sector. This offers a unique opportunity to reflect upon aspects of the histories, presents, and futures of the field of Media and Communication, both in this country and beyond.

Over 21 panels, four keynotes, and one plenary session, we will explore what lessons we can learn from the emergence, shaping and development of this field. We will ask where we are now and how we matter. And we will consider how we can respond as a field to those future challenges — political, social, cultural, environmental, technological — that we can anticipate.

We look forward to learning from each other, to sharing ideas and experiences, and to making new collaborations, memories and friendships.

Professor Graham Meikle and Professor Maria Michalis

Programme outline

Thursday 22 May	Room
9:00-10:00 Registration and coffee	MG28
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11.45-13.00 Panel 1B Journalisms	M306
11.45-13.00 Panel 1C Policy Research and Academic Influence	M322
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13.00-13.45 Lunch	MG28
13.45-15.00 Panel 2A Thinking with Paddy Scannell	M321
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13.45-15.00 Panel 2C Global Screens	M307
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15.30-16.45 Panel 3A Media Histories 1	M306
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16.45-17.15 Break	
17.15-18.15 MeCCSA **Plenary**	MG14
18.15-19.15 **Keynote** — Nick Couldry	MG14
19.15- Drinks reception	MG28

Friday 23 May	Room
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13.30-14.45 Panel 5A Social Media Activism	M321
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15.15-16.30 Panel 6A Gender	M321
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16.30-17:00 Coffee	MG28
17:00-18:00 **Keynote** — Payal Arora	MG14
18.00-18:15 Closing remarks and Farewell	MG14

Information for attendees

Format: Panels are 75 minutes long. They comprise up to four 15-minute presentations, followed by 15 minutes Q&A. We ask all panellists to respect these timings to make this an insightful and enjoyable conference. We also remind all delegates not to interrupt speakers while they are presenting.

Presenters: Please arrive in the room for your session 15 minutes early, so you can meet the panel chair and set up your presentation. You can run your presentation from your own laptop, using the in-room HDMI or VGA cables to connect to the projector. Alternatively, you can bring your presentation on a USB stick or email it to yourself to download to the room's fixed computer.

Wi-Fi: The Eduroam network is available. If you do not have access, you can connect to the UoW-Conf-Venues network, using the password: C0mm3r5!

Conference hashtag: #UoWMEDIA50

Catering: The conference menu is fully vegetarian as part of our commitment to sustainability and reducing the event's environmental impact.

Name badges: Please wear your name badge throughout the conference, and return the lanyard at the end so it can be re-used.

Fire safety: In the unlikely event of an evacuation, please exit the room through the nearest exit. The designated fire marshals (security) will ensure you are directed to the appropriate exit from the building. Please move at least 50 metres away from the building in either direction, and do not return to the building until directed by fire marshals to do so.

Session details

KEYNOTES AND PLENARY

KEYNOTE Lina Dencik. Thursday 10:15-11:15. Chair: Pieter Verdegem. Room MG14

State-tech power laid bare: what does it mean to talk about data justice in the current moment?

Historically, a key task of media and communication studies, within a broader framework of critical social science, has been to expose and explain power structures and relationship to alleviate both latent and manifest unnecessary and unwanted human suffering. Often this concerns itself with uncovering how media power is bound up with other forms of social power, whose interests are being served and how. Yet as our information systems have complexified and become further embedded in everyday activities, it appears that we are now in a moment when such power dynamics no longer need uncovering; they are being played out in the open. From Elon Musk in the White House to the UK's AI Opportunities Action Plan inviting further partnerships with Big Tech, it is now clear for everyone to see that state-tech relations have a defining role for the future of society. Yet what is the nature of these relations? What avenues are available to advance social justice in such a context? And what role can media and communication studies play? This talk will reflect on data justice debates in the current moment, focusing on both the nature of computational infrastructure as well as the broader (geo)politics that contextualises it, and will make the case for the advent of a marked shift in state-tech relations that require us to (re)consider what responses might be appropriate in order to advance conditions that will enable human flourishing.

KEYNOTE Nick Couldry. Thursday 18:15-19:15. Chair: Natasha Whiteman. Room MG14

The space of the world: can human solidarity survive social media and what if it can't?

In this lecture, drawing on his recent book for Polity, Nick Couldry will reflect on the global space of social communications and interaction that has been constructed over the past three decades through a commercialized internet and the emergence of digital platforms whose business model depends on the extraction of data from their users and the shaping of user behaviour in order to optimize user behaviour that will generate advertising value. What if those conditions – valid perhaps in their own commercial terms – have guaranteed a space of human interaction that is larger, more polarized, more intense, and more toxic than is compatible with human solidarity, and as we have seen recently, increasingly complicit with toxic forms of political power? This would be a major problem for humanity that social theory might play some role in deconstructing and potentially even solving, by formulating alternatives. So how might we build a different space of the world, less likely to be toxic and more likely to generate the solidarity and effective cooperation that humanity needs if it is to have any chance of addressing its huge, shared challenges?

KEYNOTE Guobin Yang. Friday 11:45-12:45 Chair: Tarik Sabry. Room MG14

Will You Hear the People Sing? Narrative Imagination and the Future of Digital Communication

As we ponder the histories, presents, and futures of media and communication amidst all the buzz of "artificial unintelligence" (Broussard 2018), it is imperative to center the voices of the marginalized, disempowered, and exploited peoples around the world. The voices of these people, and the silences that never get to be voiced, have an emotional and moral power that cannot be matched or replaced by algorithm-driven machines. To center their voices is to document, preserve, and celebrate stories of ongoing struggles for justice, as well as to excavate untold stories of past and present forms of slow violence and harm. It is to understand the sources and power of the narrative imagination in their everyday struggle. In this talk, I examine forms of narrative imagination on Chinese social media to reveal the possibilities of grassroots storytelling under conditions of commercial and state-sponsored platformization. Distinguishing between storytelling and storyselling (Han 2024), I show how social media users reframe social issues and experiences in creative and iterative processes of networked participation. Lessons from these digital storytelling practices are distilled for understanding the challenges and possibilities of future digital communication.

KEYNOTE Payal Arora. Friday 17:00-18:00. Chair: Winston Mano. Room MG14

Pessimism to Promise: Building Inclusive Tech with the Global South

When it comes to new tech, the mainstream headlines are bleak: Algorithms control and oppress. AI will destroy democracy and our social fabric, and possibly drive us to extinction. Payal Arora in her 2024 MIT Press book, *From Pessimism to Promise*, longlisted for the Porchlight Business Book Awards, argues that the West is suffering from a "pessimism paralysis" – a despair, and even impotence towards all things digital. While legitimate concerns drive these fears, we need to equally account for the fact that technology offers young people something incredibly valuable—a rare space for self-actualization. There is a contagion of optimism in the Global South, where 90 percent of the world's youth reside. As AI disrupts sectors across industries, education, and beyond, these young creators have become lead navigators of all manners of forced disruptions, leapfrogging obstructive systems, norms, and practices to rapidly reinvent themselves. Drawing on ground level realities in diverse global contexts such as engaging with refugees in Brazil, to creatives and gig workers in India and Bangladesh, Arora reveals what drives these groups to be hopeful despite the formidable risks and harms. She argues that pessimism is the privilege for those who can afford to be in despair; the rest of the world have little choice but to be hopeful if they want to have agency over their futures. We need to take heart in the power of numbers, as the creators from the majority world infuse algorithms with everyday aspirations, pushing for a new digital order.

MeCCSA PLENARY SESSION. Tamsyn Dent, Christine Geraghty, Einar Thorsen and Milly Williamson. Thursday 17:15-18:15. Chair: Milly Williamson. Room MG14

The Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) is the recognised learned society for our field, formed in the early 1990s. MeCCSA works to promote and defend the interests of researchers, educators and students in these subject areas. In this invited plenary panel, current and former chairs and national executive members of MeCCSA will reflect on current conditions for the field in the UK context, drawing upon insights into its history, and debating potential future developments.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

Session 1A Power. Thursday 11:45-13:00. Chair: Xin Xin

Paschal Preston — How 'Words are Weapons': The Nexus of News Media/Journalism and the Conduct of War and related Foreign Policy in two periods: 1900-1920 and 2000-20s

This paper focuses on one sub-domain of political communication, those special moments of 'politics by other means' as countries engage in war, when 'Words are Weapons', and media are weaponised to advance warfare. After a brief introductory section, part two of the paper draws on classic texts (Lasswell, Hobson, etc) to examine the period surrounding the First World War (WW1). It maps the contours of a recognisably 'modern' nexus of news making and war making amidst classic (modern) imperialism and the rise of truly 'mass media' in the heartlands of industrial and colonial capitalism. The paper identifies key features of this new paradigm -- the technical and institutional innovations, linkages and tensions, and typical discursive practices marking the nexus between news media/journalism on the one hand and warfare and related foreign policy practices on the other. It also observes aspects of a (potentially) radical 'new diplomacy' model which also briefly emerged in hot-house context of WW1.
Part three draws on recent academic work and empirical materials to remap the changed nexus between mediated news making and war making in the contemporary. Part four explores the most significant changes over the two periods and their implications for communication studies disciplines.

Anat Rosenberg — The Rule of Law, Affect, and Mediated Mass Persuasion in the Age of Populism

This paper is part of a contemporary history of mediated mass persuasion mobilized in forty weeks of protests in 2023, against Israel's government's attempt at a regime overhaul, providing a case study for the terms of persistence of the liberal rule of law in the age of populism, and media communications' key role in that context. The research is organised by selected case studies in which the protests engaged with elements of the liberal rule of law, such as responses to governmental moves to curb judicial independence; or engagements with the right to equality. It draws on the digital archives that accumulated over a short period, providing a qualitative analysis of content, performance, and form, with experimental additions of a quantitative visual study and a soundscape production. A central proposition examined through this history is that the mass media and its affects have become inseparable from the rule of law and necessary for its existence in liberal democracies. If correct, this posits a challenge to liberal legalism's conceptual association with reason as distinct from affect, and with the public legal system as distinct from for-profit systems, particularly the media system. The case studies meanwhile shed nuanced light on the mediated relationship between affect and factual complexity concerning legal systems.

Xin Xin — Between Attraction and Alliances: A Critical Analysis of Media Discourse on Italy's Participation in the BRI (2019–2024)

Since China formally adopted soft power as state policy in 2007, scholars have increasingly interpreted Beijing's "charm-offensive" initiatives through this lens—most notably, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, mainstream analyses often underplay the geopolitical contest that shapes how soft power is produced and perceived. This study foregrounds Italy's unique journey: from its 2019 decision as the first G7 country to join the BRI, through its December 2023 withdrawal, to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's July 2024 "relaunch" talks—as mediated by Al Jazeera English's (AJE) online news coverage. Employing Reisigl & Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, triangulated with Eagleton's and van Dijk's concepts of ideology, this study conducts a three-step critique: (1) a social-diagnostic reading situating each report within China's post-2007 soft-power strategy and Italy's G7 alignment; (2) an immanent critique, which closely examines AJE's wording to see how it softens or downplays certain realities (euphemization), takes some facts for granted (presupposition), and frames issues as a clear "us vs. them" (polarization); and (3) a prospective critique offering recommendations for more geopolitically transparent media coverage. The analysis reveals that AJE alternates between celebrating economic and cultural cooperation and smoothing over strategic tensions—thereby shaping audience perceptions of China's soft power within broader alignment dynamics. Italy's BRI exit emerges not as a failure of attraction but as a signal of geopolitical recalibration, underscoring the need to revise Nye's soft-power theory to account for the interplay of media discourse, great-power rivalry, and strategic alignments.

Session 1B Journalisms. Thursday 11:45-13:00. Chair: Debbie Ball

Stela Lechpammer and Dino Brumec — Disconnection Between the Younger Generation of Aspiring Journalists and Traditional Print Media: A Case Study of Reading Habits Among Journalism Students in Croatia

This study examines the reading habits of undergraduate journalism students at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia, with a focus on their engagement with printed newspapers. As future journalists, these students represent a key demographic for understanding the prospective trajectory of the print journalism industry. This issue is particularly salient given Croatia's anticipated cessation of newspaper sales at newsstands in 2025 - a policy that would make it the sole EU member state without newspapers available at such outlets, as highlighted by the Croatian Journalists' Association. This development accentuates the urgency of addressing the challenges facing print journalism in Croatia and has broader implications for trends across Europe. The research investigates students' overall news consumption patterns and their perceptions of the relevance of print media. A quantitative survey was conducted among 244 students, and the findings reveal an alarmingly low level of engagement with printed editions: only 13 respondents reported reading them daily or regularly. However, the majority of respondents expressed the belief that printed newspapers remain a vital societal resource. This paradox highlights a disconnection between the younger generation of aspiring journalists and traditional print media, raising critical questions about the sustainability of current print journalism models.

Shujun Liu, Haiyan Wang and Zizheng Yu — Moving to Campus: Examining Motivations and Outcomes for Journalists Transitioning to Academia in China

Journalism is currently confronting numerous challenges, which has led many journalists to explore alternative career paths. One such path, transitioning from the news industry to academia, has been relatively underexplored. This study employs semi-structured interviews with 14 Chinese journalists to investigate this career shift. Our interviews reveal three patterns of transition in China's context: (a) a complete transition to academia, (b) dual engagement in both journalism and academia, and (c) assuming senior academic positions through interchangeable professional titles. Additionally, this study identifies multiple factors driving journalists to leave the industry, spanning the media environment, institutional constraints, and personal motivations. In contrast, motivations for entering academia often stem from the desire to systematize knowledge and pursue innovative journalistic ideas, making this transition not simply a career change but an extension of core journalistic values. Moreover, this study uncovers potential conflicts during the transition, particularly concerning professional identity and practices. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of occupational mobility within Chinese journalism, highlighting the complex dynamics between professional shifts and identity renegotiation.

Christopher Silver — Towards a hauntology of digital journalism: the 'digital grinding wheel' and ghost newspaper institutions

As sites of collaborative potency, newsrooms have been forced to submit to increasing commodification of their output in aid of maintaining the traditionally handsome profit margins anticipated by proprietors (Pickard, 2019, pp. 71-74). An entity that Abernathy (2018) describes as a 'ghost newspaper' then emerges, 'when […] newsroom staffing is so dramatically pared back that the remaining journalists cannot adequately cover their communities' (p. 24). This paper posits the *ghost newspaper institution* as a pervasive cultural condition in which the immaterial afterlife of print newspapers of record remain present in an undead form. Drawing on interviews with journalists from the Gannett/Newsquest owned *Herald,* this paper details how the ability to step back from the churn – a challenge for journalists in all ages – is aggravated by historic proximity to journalism's 'high modernism' (Hallin, 1992). The *ghost newspaper institution* reflects a journalism that has undergone transformations captured in Fisher's (2012) concept of hauntology: in which contemporary culture is haunted by lost 20th century futures (p. 16). This condition is manifest one participant's description of the 'digital grinding wheel': contemporary forms of practice which foreclose on the building of interpretive communities and other 'resources necessary to produce the new' (Fisher, 2014, p. 7).

Haiyue Zhang — Fact-checking in China: normative and strategic transparency of Chinese journalists in fact-checking reports

This study investigates how fact-checking journalism in China presents the principle of transparency. Fact-checking is considered one of the effective strategies for combating fake news, and maintaining transparency in the news production process to build public trust. Adherence to transparency is also a fundamental principle of journalistic professionalism. In China's current digital media ecosystem, existing research has identified a trend of de-professionalization within Chinese journalism. Facing declining advertising revenue due to the rise of social media and stricter censorship from the Chinese government, Chinese commercial news outlets must

both adopt a more pro-government stance to ensure their survival and enhance their credibility to compete with social media for audience attention. Based on semi-structured interviews with five fact-checkers working at fact-checking organizations within Chinese commercial media and one collaborator from the university, the study finds that, Chinese fact-checkers employ proactive, normative transparency to demonstrate professionalism while integrating reactive, strategic transparency to adapt to their political circumstances. This study contributes to the global debate on transparency in fact-checking journalism, particularly within the political context of non-Western countries, thereby enriching the global fact-checking network. Additionally, it provides insights into the digital transformation practices within China's journalistic ecosystem.

Session 1C Policy . Thursday 11:45-13:00. Chair: Steven Barclay

Policy Research and Academic Influence

The University of Westminster and CAMRI have a strong history of policy-focused academic research. But what influence does academic research really have on policymakers in national and local government, and those in media producing organisations? Des Freedman remarks that: "Despite the vast amount of academic literature on the political significance, cultural importance and economic basis of public service broadcasting, academics ended up playing a relatively small role in these crucial policy debates." (Freedman, 2008). We could perhaps substitute any other area of media for 'public service broadcasting' and this view would still be valid. For those working primarily in the academic sphere, the process of forming policy in practical legislative terms can seem remote and disconnected from their concerns. Equally, policymakers operate in a different world of pressures, timescales, practicalities, to those of the university. Policymaking organisations also run their own research programmes working to sometimes different methodologies, but with institutional access to different datasets and populations. Policymakers will always need evidence to base their decisions on. How can academics maximise their influence? What factors make for successful or unsuccessful policy influence? This panel invites academics who have been involved in the process to reflect on their experiences.

Steven Barclay — Academia, advocacy, and national and local government

Experience of the world of policy making shows that academic insights can only filter into practical measures through a broad and complex nexus of pressures, jurisdictions, and audiences. The impetus behind academic research can be at odds with the timescales and priorities of policymaking. Partly for its differing conditions, policymaking organisations often have their own research functions. Yet policymakers also rely on academic research for ideas and the most prestigious and rigorous research. For advocacy and lobbying purposes, sometimes personal relationships are at the heart of influence. Yet the ability to make an evidence-based argument remains powerful. To convince stakeholders of the value of a position, both influence and evidence is necessary. This paper presents a perspective on research in the service of policy making from a range of contexts, and initial findings of a National Institute of Health Research project to use media research in the

service of public health within local government, exploring the notion of 'evidence-based policymaking'.

Steven Barnett — The public interest and press power: how UK media policy is (still) dominated by legacy publishers

For at least four decades, UK governments across the political spectrum have been convinced that newspapers are instrumental in setting agendas and moulding popular opinion. While this has been the subject of much academic enquiry and commentator speculation, less has been written about the power of the press over media policy making. Despite dramatic declines in traditional newspaper readership, those assumptions have continued to influence – and dominate – government thinking as ministers have looked to introduce new policy initiatives in response to a rapidly changing media environment. Corporate and commercial interests of publishers have consistently trumped the public interest. I will look at three case studies where I have been personally involved in seeing press power at work in determining media policy priorities: 1. Reform of press regulation. In the aftermath of phone hacking and the Leveson report, a new framework was designed to that would have made the press accountable to an independent regulator. After furious lobbying by the press, a key part of the incentivisation process – passed by Parliament – was repealed in the very last Act of the Sunak government. 2. Local journalism initiatives. One of the key recommendations of the 2019 Caircross report, set up to look at ways of ameliorating the crisis in local journalism, was a new Institute for Public Interest News that would fund grassroots news projects. This was rejected after representations from the corporate regional groups, part of the powerful industry umbrella body the News Media Association. 3. Online Safety Act. News publishers were given two major exemptions from the OSA, leaving the press unaccountable for any of the harms covered by the Act which placed new obligations on big tech companies. I will end with some reflections on the longer term implications for journalism and whether anything might change under the new Labour government.

Helen Jay — Perspectives from a (former) policy insider

It has been suggested by Freedman (2008) and others that the dominant influences on media policy come from a closed group - but what does it mean to be within that 'insider' circle? How do the relationships between public service media providers and policymakers play out on an everyday basis, and what can academics learn from the trades of policy and public affairs in order to successfully influence policy? This paper will seek to provide an 'insider-outsider' perspective on the influences on UK media policy, drawing from experiences working both as a policy professional employed by a public service media organisation, and as an academic and independent activist on media policy issues.

Maria Michalis — From the margins to the table: Lessons from civil society engagement in shaping digital policy from below

Maria Michalis will reflect on experience with British and European civil society organisations and how they have been trying to have a voice and influence policy developments. She will also talk about policy making inclusivity and diversity by drawing on her work with UK, European and international policy makers and

stakeholders in areas such as public service media in the age of video-on-demand, radio spectrum and digital terrestrial distribution, Internet community networks. In doing so, she will consider what might work and what the challenges are.

Session 1D Gender and Chinese Social Media. Thursday 11:45-13:00. Chair: Graham Meikle

Rising gendered tensions in Chinese social media landscapes: Feminist practices, investigations, and representations

Increasingly characterized by global centres of power in China and the US, current social media landscapes are shaped by emerging trends, cultural formations, and social media-enhanced "community building" (Wang and Wu). Yet, the global impact of these social media power centres and what this means for culture and identity open many questions, especially in China and for contemporary Chinese culture (Chen and Lunt 2021; Meng 2018; Fitzgerald et al, 2022). Social media can mediate change as well as tradition and gendered hierarchies. This panel addresses key questions around: what are emerging feminist practices on and in Chinese social media ? How are women, in particular, shaping, resisting, and re-imagining culture and identity? Jingjing Fu and Xumeng Xie examine the ambivalent nature of 'frivolous' work on social media, arguing that gendering of labour shapes the foundations for social media's affective economies – and raising commonalities worth questioning across social media. Yingwen Wang examines Douyin creators' motivations for creating short form video content through an intersectional lens, finding real opportunities for women to rewrite traditional modes of creative and identity expression. Yue Qin examines how emerging discourses of 'motherly speaking' on Douyin both subverts and challenges gendered social hierarchies. Taken together, this panel provides important insights into the current state of social media use in China, identifying gendered tensions in emerging feminisms and cultural trends.

Jingjing Fu and Xumeng Xie — Frivolous work and affective economies of 'social' media: Experiences of Chinese young women

In this paper, we bring together empirical findings from two research projects to examine the predominant and ambivalent notions of social media as either a promising or precarious landscape for young women to navigate. Focusing on two vastly different Chinese social media, we have been able to identify how participants in these two research projects commonly relate to the digital as enabling a form of connectivity and intimacy—for them to build, develop and maintain interpersonal connections with like-minded people or people of similar interests. However, it is notably similar how these young women's digital practices are frequently dismissed as frivolous and trivial for its deviation from dominant patterns and forms of engaging in serious economic, cultural and political activities facilitated by these digital platforms. By deploying a critical and feminist lens to digital economies, we hope to account for the intensification of immaterial and affective labour put into the maintenance and management of intimacy on social media. Far from being frivolous work, this labour is critical to understand the dynamics of social media and its affective economies. Our contention is that through meticulous examination it is not only possible but necessary to reveal how social media platforms do not simply

economically benefit from this form of labour but actively promote it. We conclude with a theoretical and ethical question to rethink academic and political discourse of governing and regulating social media platforms. We argue that dominant narratives continue to prioritise the economic aspects such as compensating exploitative work, whilst overlooking or downplaying their exploitation of the promise of facilitating social and public spaces.

Yue Qin — Battle for Discourse: The 'Motherly Speaking' Revolution of Chinese Women on Douyin

In recent years, *MuDaoHua* (母道话, motherly speaking) has emerged as a unique feminist discursive trend in China's digital sphere. Originating as a twist on the Chinese Slang *Shuo Ju Gong Dao Hua* (说句公道话, objectively speaking/to be fair), where *Gong* (公, objectively/male) is replaced by *Mu* (母, mother/female). This wordplay satirically exposes the male-centered perspective embedded in 'objectively' discourse. This subversive wordplay has inspired a wave of female users on Douyin, a popular short-video platform in China, to create a series of gender-conscious 'motherly speaking' terms to counter the male-centric discursive system and its derogatory expressions toward women. This wave of female-driven word creation challenges male-dominated narratives and foreground women's voices in digital discourse. Using digital ethnography, this study examines how female users strategically use neologisms and linguistic innovation to reclaim their voice and challenge the gender biases underlying discourse. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, the study indicates how women are compelled to internalize patriarchal discursive violence but resist it through mimicking, gender reversal, and resignifying to reclaim discursive agency. By interrogating these discursive strategies, the study deepens discussions on gender, symbolic violence, and the transformative potential of digital platforms. This research contributes to understanding contemporary digital feminism in China, illustrating how social media amplifies marginalized voices and fosters new forms of resistance.

Yingwen Wang — Rewriting tradition: Douyin as a creative lifeline for older rural women in China

This study explores the motivations of older rural Chinese women to become short-video creators on the popular platform Douyin through an intersectional lens. It addresses the question: How do intersections of gender, age, and rural identity shape their motivations and practices as content creators? Drawing on in-depth interviews with eight women aged 60 and above, the research uncovers how these women use digital media to navigate structural constraints and redefine traditional

caregiving and family roles. The findings reveal that these women are motivated by the desire to pass time, express creativity, and connect with others. These motivations stem from caregiving responsibilities, social isolation, and limited leisure opportunities in rural settings. Douyin offers a flexible platform that allows them to balance traditional family roles with autonomous leisure activities, record their lives, share cultural practices, and gain visibility. As creators, they challenge ageist stereotypes and traditional gender norms by showcasing vitality and individuality in digital spaces. Additionally, they navigate structural inequalities such as rural-urban divides and digital exclusion while transforming their roles within families and communities. Through the intersectional framework, the study highlights how gender, age, and rural identities simultaneously constrain and empower these women's engagement with Douyin. These intersecting identities amplify challenges like isolation and marginalisation but also create pathways for connection, creativity, and resistance. By leveraging the platform, these older women redefine their roles, preserving tradition while challenging stereotypes and asserting agency within their sociocultural contexts. This dual function of empowerment and narrative reshaping underscores the transformative potential of digital platforms to address structural inequalities and foster social change.

Session 2A Thinking with Paddy Scannell. Thursday 13:45-15:00. Chair: Tarik Sabry

Thinking with Paddy Scannell: Media, Time, Experience and Everyday life

This panel showcases, using different examples from the media and their uses, how Paddy Scannell's phenomenological approach has inspired new insights into the study of media and communication. Emily Keightley draws on Paddy Scannell's analysis of media time to add a third modality: "the time of experience". She builds on insights from both memory studies and media sociology and suggests that the integration of the time of experience into our understanding of mediated time is critical if we are to avoid reading off experience from the temporal structures of media technologies. Taking his cue from Paddy Scannell's foundational scholarship on the phenomenological dimensions of media and communication and, in particular, his work on broadcasting, Aswin Punathambekar shows how Scannell's work on broadcasting and daily life is crucial for teasing out the temporal foundations of digital media platforms like WhatsApp. Focusing on 'Afrokology' as a method, Winston Mano shows how Scannell's phenomenological approach enabled the field of media studies to acknowledge limitations and opportunities by meaningfully engaging with lived experiences originating from 'other' contexts. Building on Paddy Scannell's notions of 'lived experience' and media 'care-structures', Tarik Sabry extends the critical debate on trans-mediality by rehearsing a key question: Can we give transmedia/trans-mediality a phenomenological interpretation?

Emily Keightley — Time, postcolonial memory, and media sociology

Concern with the nature of temporality under the conditions of late modern media culture has become increasingly marked as a concern across the social sciences and humanities – a temporal turn. This has resulted in of a wide range of analytical perspectives which deal with different modalities media time. This has included technological time, genre and content time, and institutional time amongst others.

While the diversity of ways of thinking and talking about modalities of time signals the increasingly nuanced thinking around the nature of mediated time, it also poses a fundamental challenge for empirical research in this area: how can time be understood in ways that address and account for its multiple mediated modalities and their composite interactions? Responses to this question have largely involved an effort to understand both the qualities and quantities of mediated time. However, in this talk I will draw on Scannells' analysis of media time to add a third modality: the time of experience. Building on insights from both memory studies and media sociology, I suggest that the integration of the time of experience into our understanding of mediated time is critical if we are to avoid reading off experience from the temporal structures of media technologies. At the same time, experience should not be seen as the sole locus of contemporary temporality. We need to think of media as involved in plural ways in the constitution of a set of temporal conditions which shape the remembering practices themselves and create possibilities for the synthesis of experience. Using empirical examples located in a particular socio-historical context – that of contemporary postcolonial diasporic communities - I trace the entanglement of these modalities of time, offer up possible routes to an analytical rapprochement between them, and consider the ethico-political possibilities of doing so.

Winston Mano — Afrokology and the Everyday Life Approach in Africa

Paddy Scannell's work opens our thinking about the media and everyday life in ways that interrogates the spatial and temporalities of daily life. It raises serious and necessary questions about the coming together of individual, domestic and public routines in different contexts. Through engaging with the repetitive, unchanging daily scheduling we get a grasp of the transformative cultural logic of media in everyday life. Since the 1980s scholarship in our field has put more emphasis on the ideological structural and political economy issues, with little attention to routine everyday life of media consumption. Paddy's work not only focuses on media texts but daily life in terms of intentionality and authenticity. He argued for examination of phenomenological dimensions of daily media consumption. His work on social history of broadcasting inspired contextual work that aided work on decolonising the field of media and communication studies. My paper will show how it enables the field to acknowledge limitations and opportunities by meaningfully engaging with lived experience originating from 'other' contexts. This step holds promise for a more self-critical field that welcomes scrutiny of media and communication studies' underlying principles, methodologies, and theories, thereby enabling a serious reflection and pluriversality, beyond tokenistic gestures towards diversity. My own work on radio and everyday life deploys Paddy Scannell's frameworks to implicate other ways of seeing and knowing in our field. Through a decolonized approach to audience studies using an Afrokological perspective, there can emerge a critical examination of the epistemic boundaries within current knowledge and practices of media, leading to more innovative understandings of audiences in everyday life. Afrokology can play a pivotal role in highlighting previously overlooked and alternative theoretical perspectives from Africa and the global South, fostering respectful representation and reciprocal engagement within media and communication that align with the lived experiences of people who engage with media.

Aswin Punathambekar — The Poetics and Politics of WhatsApp

Our understanding of WhatsApp and other such digital platforms is oriented around questions of misinformation, propaganda, and the rise of majoritarian nationalisms the world over. While these are vitally important questions, I approach this digital terrain from a different angle, one that is concerned with poetics and the time of everyday life. I do so with the hope that what we discover by taking a different path might also shed light on the political and possibly help us grasp the cultural foundations of the political. Specifically, I draw on Paddy Scannell's foundational scholarship on the phenomenological dimensions of media and communication and in particular, his work on broadcasting. I begin by showing that Scannell's work on broadcasting and daily life is crucial for teasing out the temporal foundations of platforms like WhatsApp and one register below, of specific practices like sending Good Morning and Good Night messages. Through a close analysis of WhatsApp interface and affordance(s), I explore how digital platforms produce and disclose our world through, as Scannell puts it, "moments of visibility and tangibility." And finally, I turn to Scannell's reflections on the worldmaking capacity of media technologies and suggest that it is only through careful engagement with how digital platform use is woven into the rhythms of ordinary, everyday life that we can discern how the ordinary and the momentous are intertwined (a casual rumour that gains algorithmic power, leading up to a public political event. for instance).

Tarik Sabry — Transmedia, 'involvement-whole' and the question of experience

Media cultures across the globe are becoming increasingly transmedial both at the level of production; raising new and important questions about the political economy of digital media, and in the context of audiences' uses of transmedial texts, uses that have already prompted media scholars to rethink the concept 'audience' anew. Transmediality is now central to writing, teaching and thinking about what Freeman and Gambarato (2019: 2) have called: 'the complex and fundamental shifts that digital media technologies have wrought on the media industries and their audiences'. By way of extending the critical debate in this growing subfield of media and cultural studies, I take my cue from paddy Scannell's phenomenological approach to rehearse the following question: Can we give transmedia/trans-mediality a phenomenological interpretation? Here I propose a double manoeuvre: First, I argue for the need to rethink what we mean by *media* in the age of transmediality. What 'media' are we referring to in trans-media? How can a broadening of media's definition help us unpack the complex relations and care-structures (Scannell 2014) that go into transmedial world-building? Second, a phenomenological interpretation of transmedial practices, this paper advances, is best tackled through what Heidegger thought of as the 'relational totality of [*transmedial*] involvements' (Scannell 2019: 39). The questions I rehearse in this paper are not merely concerned with technology or technicity, but also with the kind of multi-sensorial forms of communication humans derive from transmediality. I am concerned with the complex transmedial relations that exist between screen media, non-screen media, (face, voice, talk, *muttersprache*, affect, experience, structures of feeling, being-with) and the everyday contexts in which these relations come into being as a totality.

Session 2B Inequalities. Thursday 13:45-15:00. Chair: Carl Jones

Marilia Jardim — Communication and the dimensionality of discourses

The problem of stereotypes in representations of the Other is often framed in the problem of "two-dimensional" images that flatten the complexity of subjects. In a semiotic reading, the production of such "images"—meaning both the iconic structures (such as photographs, videos, or pictorial representations) and imprints, which can be generated through verbal, gestural, and situational utterances—generate models of reality that enact losses of dimensionality in both representations and theoretical models. The reduction of events, phenomena, and subjects to such one-dimensional occurrences is a driver of linearity in communication, leading to a binary organisation of discourses that privileges a logic of algorithmic verification and authentication. As dimensionality can offer an image for complexity—while the linearity of binaries leads to algorithmic visions of reality that support the emergence and prevalence of dogma—the present proposal aims at recovering the ethos of classical semiotic theories in which analysis is the "uncovering of complexity", in a process through which the reading of meaning generates more meaning. By recovering the postulates from the structuralist tradition—such as in the works of Algirdas-Julien Greimas and Louis Hjelmslev—we aim to offer a model to regain dimensions of Communications in both physical and digital media.

Carl W. Jones — Innovative Strategies for challenging colonial thinking and practices in the production of publicity campaigns within the spectacle of Mexican Advertising

This practice-based research asks *How can a decolonised poster campaign generate a conversation about the production of colonial and racist thinking through the spectacle of publicity and create greater diversity in Mexican Advertising?* Hybrid practice-academic methods explore how a multimodal campaign can disrupt the colonial and racist thinking underlying Mexican publicity. Academic theory framework maps the history of key concepts including Post-colonisation, Racism, and Decolonisation. Aims include uncovering if there is an issue of racism in Mexican Advertising? What are the solutions to the general effects of colonialism in advertising that Mexicans are offering? The research is structured in five phases: a *Mexican Communications Review;* collaboration with local communities; implementation of a decolonized visual campaign; analysis of media reaction; and engagement with the Mexican advertising community for solutions. The findings reveal that decolonised posters can disrupt colonial and racist thinking underlying Mexican Advertising. Instead of being a top-down process, advertising practices can be questioned from the bottom up by delinking them through collaboration with local peoples and creating a conversation in the media to remove 'colonial thinking' from branded messages. Concluding that communication can be encoded using semiotic theory to challenge the advertising industry. Revealing a 7-stage strategy to remove colonial thinking from advertising communication eliminating hidden messaging that disturb consumers.

Nessa Keddo — The platformisation of inequalities for promotional industry practitioners of colour

The past five years have seen a drastic transformation in the inequalities experienced by practitioners of colour working in fields such as advertising, marketing, public relations and communications. With the recognition of failed diversity initiatives, evidence shows how the capitalised labour of these practitioners is shifting from traditional capacities within media agencies and in-house brands. Instead, many are exiting into independent capacities, such as launching their own media agencies, diversity consultancies and/or navigating careers as content creators. In light of these changes, through interviews with practitioners of colour, this paper longitudinally tracks these varied inequalities and how technological affordances have increased inequities, capacities for self-organising and battles to professionalise their value. These provocations do not only exist through forms of platform labour, but how those working in-house or media agencies face challenges with the obligatory deployment of data and generative AI tools. At a time where the involuntary onset of these tools is rapidly devaluing labour in these service industries, this paper finds that inequalities and misogynoir are increasingly platformised and, whilst a progressive step, how these emerging forms of independence increase the perils of precarity.

Wing-Fai Leung — Critical Approaches to the History of East and Southeast Asian Contributions in the British Screen Industry

This presentation addresses invisibility and marginalisation of on- and off-screen East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) creatives in British film and television from the early 1980s to the present. It addresses the impact on representation, industrial practices of the screen sector, the roles of media organisations and public broadcasters, and the lack of academic research on this subject within the field of diversity and labour studies (Eikhof, 2024; Leung, 2023; Newsinger et al., 2024). Through archival research of production information, resources from broadcasters and media organisations, and journalistic and trade press data, this study examines industrial contexts and the production histories of selected film and television works in the UK, and the roles of organisations such as the BFI and public broadcasters. The case studies include 8 films and 4 TV series, e.g. *Ping Pong* (Leong Po-Chih, 1986) and 'Red Eye' (ITV, 2024). This paper triangulates quantitative and qualitative data as a preliminary report, accounting for the continuous under- and misrepresentation of ESEA creatives in the screen sector and addressing the main research question: how does the under-representation of ESEA creatives impact on their work in the UK film and media industry, and identity politics of the ESEA community in Britain?

Session 2C Global Screens. Thursday 13:45-15:00. Chair: Alex Sergeant

Miriam Berg and Pinar Aslan — Beyond Borders: Gender, Identity, and the Appeal of Turkish Serials Among Women in Southern Europe

This study examines the cultural impact of Turkish television serials (*dizi*) on female audiences in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, focusing on how these serials foster cross-cultural exchange and reshape perceptions of Turkish identity in Southern Europe. Originating from a Muslim-majority nation, *dizi* have attracted a diverse following in Western contexts, resonating with viewers who do not share ethnic or religious ties

with Turkey. By blending conservative values with contemporary themes, these serials create a novel media dialogue between Turkey and Southern Europe, challenging traditional East-West distinctions in global television. Through qualitative surveys, in-depth interviews, and observation within fan communities, this study investigates how women in Southern Europe engage with the gendered narratives within *dizi* and how these narratives influence their views on Turkishness. Using a feminist media framework, the research highlights how *dizi* not only captivate audiences but also encourage reinterpretations of identity that bridge cultural divides. This analysis underscores the serials' role in broadening the global media conversation, presenting Turkish identity as adaptable and responsive to diverse cultural settings. This research contributes to discussions on media globalization, cultural identity, and gender dynamics, offering insights into the influence of non-Western media on Western audiences. As an example of South-to-North cultural flow, this study demonstrates the potential of popular media to reframe cultural narratives in a globalized world.

Miriam Berg, Merfat Alardawi and Noura Al Obeidli — Global Expansion and Cultural Adaptation: The Transnational Success of Turkish Television Serials in the Gulf

The rise of Turkish television serials represents a pivotal development in global television, illustrating the increasing influence of cultural products originating from non-Western regions. Initially achieving widespread popularity in the MENA region, these serials have since expanded their reach to audiences in Africa, the Americas, and various parts of the Global North over the past two decades. Particularly notable is the emergence of Gulf audiences as a significant market for Turkish serials. This comparative qualitative study investigates whether younger viewers in the Gulf—specifically in Qatar, the UAE, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—are engaging with Turkish serials produced exclusively for US streaming platforms. These newer productions depart from the traditional long-form, melodramatic format, incorporating more diverse, edgier, and often more provocative narratives. Based on 30 focus groups conducted in the Gulf, the study examines how these serials are received by younger audiences and whether their increasingly Westernized approach is fostering engagement or contributing to alienation. The findings suggest that, while these serials are designed to appeal to new audiences, some younger viewers perceive a loss of cultural authenticity, a trait that had previously underpinned the global success of Turkish serials. This research highlights the complexities of transnational media flows and underscores the shifting dynamics of global television consumption.

George Dawei Guo — Demystifying Ethnographic Documentary Filmmaking in China and Beyond: Revisiting Phil Agland's *Beyond the Clouds* (1994)

This paper critically examines the history of ethnographic documentary filmmaking in China by revisiting British filmmaker Phil Agland's 1994 series *China: Beyond the Clouds*. Granted unprecedented access by the Chinese government, the series offers an intimate portrayal of life in Lijiang, a small market town in Yunnan Province, during the early post-Cultural Revolution years. Its nuanced storytelling, exquisite cinematography, and innovative blend of music and narration vividly capture the joys and struggles of rural Chinese life. The analysis situates *Beyond the Clouds* within the broader context of international documentary portrayals of China, contrasting

Agland's novelistic approach with earlier works by Chris Marker, Joris Ivens, and Michelangelo Antonioni. Agland's immersive two-year residency in Lijiang, coupled with his single-camera techniques, exemplifies a commitment to authenticity and emotional depth. His focus on individual stories and relational dynamics distinguishes his work from the overtly political or observational styles of his predecessors. The paper also reassesses Agland's political conservatism and optimism about modern Chinese society, evaluating their relevance in light of growing concerns about autocratic governance under Xi Jinping. Ultimately, it champions the enduring value of independent documentary filmmaking, echoing Agland's vision of revealing the humanity behind the headlines.

Xintong Jia — 'Don't put all your eggs in one basket': The Postfeminist and Entrepreneurial Subject in Chinese Reality Dating Shows

Intimate relationships are presented as personal business in reality dating shows, where dating candidates perceive intimate relationships as work, illustrating the growing influence of the entrepreneurial mindset on contemporary perspectives on dating and personal lifestyle choices. The entrepreneurial self is framed as a project demanding a lifelong and all-encompassing process of transformation and upgrading. Drawing upon audience reception with 23 female viewers in China, this paper examines the entrepreneurial subjectivity embodied by female contestants in a Chinese reality dating show, *New Matchmaking Conference*. This paper opens with a discussion of theorisation of the postfeminist and entrepreneurial subject within China and abroad. It examines three themes that collectively form the representation and construction of the entrepreneurial subject on reality dating shows: 'women behind the masquerade: crafting an eligible female dating partner', analysed through an updated discussion on the female masquerade; 'the middle-class imagination', elucidating the bourgeois taste and lifestyle presented by dating candidates in post-socialist China; and 'the unpaid labour of self-branding', revealing how reality dating TV commodifies and exploits the self through the promise of symbolic fame, and how contestants curate a positive persona and gain media visibility via the show. This paper aims to make empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature on entrepreneurial subjectivity, postfeminism, and reality dating TV.

Session 2D Data 1. Thursday 13:45-15:00. Chair: Debbie Ball

Ahmad Assem — What is (not) data?

The hegemony of datafication in media and communication studies frames the digital condition within logics of quantification, extractivism, and surveillance, often foreclosing alternative conceptualisations of the digital. This paper critiques this reductionist paradigm by asking: What is not data? Drawing on Yuk Hui's philosophy of the digital object and Derrida's logic of the supplement, I argue that digital objects must be understood as ontological entities in their own right, rather than as tools subservient to calculative frameworks. The digital object's relational and contingent dimensions reveal excesses and gaps that resist assimilation into data-centric logics, opening possibilities for rethinking mediation beyond extractive grammars. By desaturating media discourse from the dominance of datafication, I propose a post-datafication framework that foregrounds the ontological complexities of digital mediation. This theoretical intervention challenges the field of media and

communication studies to move beyond calculability and engage with the speculative possibilities of digital objects as active sites of ontological negotiation.

Debbie Ball — Auditing persuasive tech: to what extent are design features programmed to steer user behaviour in 'private' messaging apps?

Despite the unabated rollout of 'revolutionary' AI products, scrutiny on the asymmetric relationship between Meta and their users' needs to be maintained, focused on flawed platform design. This study investigates the intersection of persuasive app design, user experience and datafication, using actor-network theory and critical political economy frameworks. The work examines four messaging apps - Facebook and Instagram Messenger, WhatsApp and Signal - comparing three Meta products with one independent, not-for-profit app. As deliverers of datafication, persuasive design features such as Like buttons, notifications and read receipts propel Meta's lucrative advertising models. It is proposed that the read receipt operates similarly to the Like button, keeping users online and influencing their communication habits. Persuasive technology techniques were propagated early 2000s by Stanford University's Persuasive Tech Lab, adapting behaviourist operant conditioning theory to app design (Fogg 2003, Skinner 1953). There, future Silicon Valley entrepreneurs learned how to make apps "stick" and adopted by users as everyday communication tools (Stolzoff 2018). Correspondingly, apps built with persuasive design features problematise the notion of 'private' messaging spaces. Is the privacy promised real or a socio-technical illusion of privacy? Or, per Zuckerberg's WhatsApp for Business vision, do Meta's expansion plans undermine the implementation of privacy through end-to-end encryption? (Johns et al 2024). It is important to move beyond the attention economy to define a concept of emotional privacy, a value that should be respected rather than mined by app design protocols. The Auditing Design Features Method has been devised to investigate this socio-technical dilemma, combining algorithmic auditing (Sandvig et al 2014), walkthrough method (Light et al 2018, Duguay and Gold-Appel 2023), focus groups (Bryman 2016) and media go-alongs (Jørgensen 2016). Insights into this imminent field work will be included in the presentation.

Victoria A.E. Kratel — 'We Don't Want to Be Addicted to Social Media!': Young Women's Counterproposals for Everyday Digital Media Use

In recent years, the field of media and communication has broadened its scope by inverting its perspective. Beyond focusing on media use, it has increasingly addressed digital media non-use, i.e., digital disconnection. As society at large grapples with managing both offline and online spheres, governments are contemplating regulations, while tech companies publish mission statements aimed at making the world even more digital. Recognizing that media users lack outlets to voice their positions on the integration of digital media, this study adopts a techno-feminist perspective, giving special attention to women in their emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 29) from Norway and Germany (N=20). To this end, the research employs an art-based pen-and-paper method alongside semi-structured interviews, focusing on these women's current digital media habits and their envisioning of alternative, more ideal scenarios. While all participants reported relying on digital media in their daily lives, they simultaneously critiqued its omnipresence. To achieve more balanced digital media use, participants suggested various changes. Some

believed they simply needed to adjust their own behaviors, while others proposed changes to technology design or called for interventions by authorities.

Ling Qiu — The Use and Regulation of Computational Propaganda in International Communication

The concept of "computational propaganda" was first proposed by American scholar Samuel Woolley and British scholar Philip Howard in 2016. This research regards computational propaganda as the purposeful dissemination of information on social platforms through the use of algorithms, automation, and manual planning and display. This information may be true or false. This research aims to explore the following questions: (1) what are the similarities and differences between computational propaganda and traditional propaganda? (2) What are the technical characteristics of computational promotion? (3)What are the positive and negative applications of computational propaganda in international communication and its impact on international information dissemination? (4)How to leverage the positive aspects of computational propaganda, regulate and domesticate it? From the perspective of the technical characteristics of computational propaganda, in the process of digital technology development, automated programs, robots, botnets, online spam, and false grassroots movements have become ways of propaganda. Among them, the role of social robots in information production and dissemination is becoming increasingly important. The study adopts quantitative analysis and empirical research methods, based on a large number of practical cases and analysis of the content and dissemination path of clearly measurable promotional information. The technological characteristics of computational propaganda have brought about changes to the entire chain of information dissemination: mixed authenticity of information content, diverse subjects and precise customization of information production, automation, precision, and normalization of information dissemination, and voluntary and involuntary information reception. This change in the entire chain of information dissemination has both positive and negative effects in international communication: it increases information transparency and brings about information fog; It not only expands the scope of information, but also brings information cocoons; It not only enhances the permeability of information, but also brings about an information gap. Overall, the tension of "connection" and "disconnection" brought about by computational propaganda in international communication. Under this tension, thinking about the relationship between humans and technology becomes increasingly important. In other words, if computational propaganda cannot be avoided, then how people can tame computational propaganda and make it exert its advantages within a safe and controllable range has become an important issue that urgently needs to be deeply considered. From the perspective of domestication theory, this article proposes a four stage method for domestication computing propaganda, which includes identification, utilization, debugging, and transformation. That is, to be aware of and recognize the existence of computational propaganda; Utilize computational promotional features to enhance information dissemination efficiency; The application of policy regulation to calculate propaganda; Transforming computational advertising into public domain computational advertising effectiveness.

Session 3A Media Histories 1. Thursday 15:30-16:45. Chair: Alex Sergeant

Anh Dinh-Hong — When the popularity of podcasts in Vietnam is partly rooted from the long-established radio listening habits of Vietnamese people: From wartime communal radio and public loudspeakers

Using archival research, media analysis, and textual analysis, this study explores how Vietnamese people's long-established radio listening habits were developed through communal radio during wartime and public loudspeakers from a historical perspective (1945–2024), and I argue that these habits contribute to the popularity of podcasts in contemporary Vietnam. VOV, Vietnam's national radio broadcaster, was founded on September 7th, 1945, just five days after President Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam a Democratic Republic (Tạ Ngọc Tấn, 2001, p.112; Nhân Hạnh, 2003, p.7). However, shortly after Vietnam proclaimed its independence, the country became entangled in long-lasting wars that lasted for around three decades, all to protect its unity and autonomy. The development of a national radio station during that time was considered crucial because it could serve as a communication channel between the central government, local authorities, and the general public, mainly within the country (Dang, 2008). Vietnamese people needed to listen to the radio daily to update announcements and air defense during wartime. Until the 1960s, public loudspeakers connected to each neighbourhood and broadcasted scheduled announcements regarding food stamps, military service examinations, immunizations, and street cleaning. Loudspeakers were closely intertwined with the transmission of daily news and established a familiar bond with individuals and households. They continually aired, encouraging and reminding people to adhere to evacuation instructions. During the spring of 1975, they operated at full capacity, disseminating the news of Saigon's liberation. According to Đặng Quỳnh Lê (2022), loudspeaker systems gradually gained popularity nationwide and became widely utilized in remote areas and towns. Public loudspeakers are still used in inner-city blocks and suburban towns today. After 1980, portable radios were imported into Vietnam and gained popularity due to their convenience and compactness. The Vietnamese populace continues to maintain the long-standing habit of consuming radio usage until now (Phạm Xưởng, 2021). Radio use has been a long-lived tradition, mainly for broadcasting announcements. Nevertheless, in the 2000s, such announcements shifted towards modern radio formats. The nation experienced a shift in the way of listening. The former communal space transitioned to an individual space with a singular compact radio in each family home. Until this decade, podcasts have appeared in this nation and gained much popularity. Internet users aged 16–64 spend around 50 minutes daily with podcasts (DataReportal, 2024). Podcasts are still used in individual spaces (like small portable radios) but on personal devices such as smartphones, tablets, and smart speakers. Vietnam currently features about 3000 podcast channels and over 76,000 episodes spanning 124 different genres as of March 2022 (Liulo.fm, 2022). The Music, Radio & Podcasts market in this country is expected to experience a growth rate of 5.02% from 2024 to 2029 (Statista, 2024). Vietnamese people's long-established radio listening habits contribute an important part to this nation's easy acceptance and growth of the podcast format.

Inês Ferreira Fernandes — Media history: the Portuguese law of the press before and after the carnation revolution - reflections from authoritarianism and revolution

From 1933 until 1974, Portugal lived under the authoritarian regime Estado Novo. Known for its strict regulations of the media with censorship and propaganda as tools of the regime, it determined what was newsworthy and built an alternative reality of the country (Ribeiro, 2014, 2017). On the 25th of April 1974, a military coup overthrew the regime and with it the end of the prevailing law of the press and censorship. The aim of this research is to analyse and understand how the law of the press evolved and was portrayed in the final years of the regime against the first months of democracy. For that, the research takes on the law of the press from 1972 and compares it against the law of 1974/75, and the coverage received in the newspaper *O Século*. The research is conducted through document and journalistic analysis and intends to understand the impact such laws had in the path of Portuguese journalism. In contemporary Portuguese journalism, censorship is still a sensible subject and an eco of 48 years of authoritarianism. How the law of the press contribute to the change in the journalistic field is what this research aims to understand.

Hanna Gawel — From Pirated Signals to Platform Sovereignty: Lessons from Fifty Years of Media Disruption

This paper examines pivotal moments in media history where technological and cultural disruptions reshaped the field of Media and Communication (Krieger 2023; Langvardt 2024; Raboy 1994; Syvertsen *et al.* 2019). It explores how these moments, from the subversive influence of pirate radio in the 1970s to contemporary debates over platform regulation and digital sovereignty, have catalyzed shifts in media practices, policies, and academic inquiry (Berrada 1981; Buell 2023; Chapman 1990; Cordell & James 2021; Doliwa *et al.* 2023; Gagnon 2022; Jenks 2017; Nyman 2018; Soley 2019; Walsh & Greene 2020; Webb 2010). Using a historical-comparative approach, the study combines archival research, discourse analysis, and case study methodology. Key cases include the impact of pirate broadcasters on UK media regulation (Lister 2017), the role of social media during the Arab Spring(Al-Jenaibi 2014; Meral & Meral 2017; Papaioannou & Olivos 2013), and contemporary movements advocating for decentralized digital networks(Salaverría *et al.* 2024). These methods allow for a multidimensional analysis of how media technologies have been creatively adapted by marginalized voices to challenge institutional power. The findings reveal recurring tensions between innovation and control, demonstrating media's role as a contested space for political, social, and cultural struggle. The analysis also underscores the importance of academic engagement in recognizing and amplifying these disruptive moments, fostering a deeper understanding of media's influence on society. The paper concludes that Media and Communication studies must draw on these historical lessons to address future challenges, including platform monopolies and global inequalities in digital access, advocating for scholarship that is both engaged and inclusive.

Sandeep Mertia — Digital Futures Beyond Hype-Cycles: Parsing Computing History in/as Global Media History

Contemporary media futures have become increasingly tethered with computational innovation. In the last couple of decades, we've seen the emergence of a vast body of critical scholarship on global digital cultures that is attentive to the majority of the

"users" and "gig workers" in the post-colonies and the global South. However, the "hype-cycles" that originate in Silicon Valley, from big data to generative AI, still cast a long shadow over the historical experiences and future horizons in rest of the world. How can we reassemble the global history of computational media to better navigate its increasingly speculative futures? Based on long-term historical and ethnographic research on computational cultures in India, I identify three key phases of inflection in the former futures of computing since the mid-20th century. First, the efforts to indigenously build and import the first electronic computers in the 1940s and the Cold War era. Second, the 1990s dot-com boom and the Y2K bug. Third, millennial developmentalist innovations such as the 'Simputer' and 'Aakash' tablets before the mass adoption of mobile internet by the 2010s. I would argue that looking at the processes of recycling the failed hype of technology in these three phases could help expand and deepen the global media history of our digital present and its possible futures.

Session 3B Histories of the Field 1. Thursday 15:30-16:45. Chair: Toby Bennett

Gabriele Balbi, Gianluigi Negro, Maria Rikitianskaia, Carlos Alberto Scolari and Dominique Trudel — Information and Communication Theories: beyond the US tradition

This paper aims to de-Americanize the history of information and communication theories by focusing on four scholarly traditions: Chinese, Latin American, French, and Soviet/Russian. It addresses questions about how these theories were developed regionally, the key concepts and figures involved, and their connections to other disciplines and other theorists all over the world, including American theorists like Claude Shannon and Norbert Wiener. The paper is based on a research into the heterogenous corpus of academic handbooks and papers within these traditions, highlighting contributions by scholars such as Cai Changnian, Antonio Pasquali, Robert Escarpit, Jean Meyriat, Andrei Kolmogorov, and Aleksandr Kharkevich. Three key findings emerge. First, there is no single history of information and communication even within one region. There are histories and, therefore, different interpretations of the terms within the field. Second, connections to American scholarship persist. For example, communication scholar Wilbur Schramm influenced both China and Latin America. The third insight reveals the ambiguity of the field of information and communication as the discipline. In different regions, the theory is placed in different theoretical traditions: from mathematics to literary and social sciences. Ultimately, this research challenges traditional boundaries between information and communication studies, underscoring complexities, reciprocal connections and tensions shaping the discipline.

Toby Bennett — **Codes, conversations, circuits: An institutional history of Encoding-Decoding at the Open University**

Stuart Hall spent eighteen years at the Open University's Faculty of Social Sciences and was affiliated for much longer. Yet this relationship is poorly understood. "Encoding-Decoding in the Television Discourse" (1973) was developed while Hall consulted to a 1971 OU course, "Decision-making in Britain", further applied on arrival as Head of Sociology in 1980, later becoming canonised within media studies.

As a pioneer mass distance-learning institution, underpinned by its Institute of Educational Technology (IET), OU academics were perhaps unusually attuned to students' media literacy and interpretive capacities. The IET drew from the "conversational" theory of cybernetician Gordon Pask (extended by Diana Laurillard): a view of knowledge-construction that attends to the objects and systems through which learning materials are accessed, as much as students' cognitive ability to comprehend them. Both Hall's and Pask's critical reinventions of communication as transmission are evident in the final (1997) course Hall worked on, "Culture, Media and Identities", operationalised in the "Circuit of Culture". Just as Hall nurtured the OU's intellectual life, I argue (drawing on archival work) that the university played an important role shaping his thinking. Similarly, any future study of media is enriched when the institutional contexts of its development are made explicit.

Mary Kay Culpepper — Written in Ink: Insights from Five Decades of Studying and Making Media

In the fall of 1975, the Polytechnic of Central London began its media degree programme and I was a first-year media student at university in the U.S. It was the first step in a career that has given me a front-row seat for observing trends that have radically changed the field. Autoethnography is a valuable method in media study (Adams et al., 2017), and my project incorporates diary entries, professional artefacts, and reflective storytelling braced by academic research with the aim of illustrating how my trajectory from reporter to magazine executive reflected significant shifts in the media landscape. I also describe what compelled me to return to media study at the University of Westminster to explore the construction of everyday creativity. I situate my findings in the context of five inflection points the media landscape: The digitisation of production (Garrison, 1983); upheaval in advertising and circulation models (Powell, 2021); the effect of corporatisation and consolidation (Chiappenelli et al., 2006); the dimensionalisation of brands (Tarkiainen et al., 2008); and the inversion of the relationship between media producers and creators (Napoli, 2016; Schultz, 2000). In conclusion, I argue that this last point holds promise for everyone who consumes and makes media now.

Susan J. Douglas — The Impact of the 'Westminster School'

Westminster—previously the Polytechnic of Central London—may be best known for launching, in 1975, the first undergraduate degree in Media Studies in Britain. But its impact on research and scholarship in the field of media studies has been enormous; James Curran labeled its approach "the Westminster School." This presentation highlights the school's early signal contributions, to name just a few: through the work of Nicholas Garnham, its emphasis on political economy of communication; through the work of James Curran, the importance of Marxist media history; and through the work of Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, the necessity of deep archival research into media history and institutions. Through the invention of a curriculum with few preexisting texts, the establishment of *Media, Culture & Society*, and the faculty's publication of scholarly books and articles, Westminster paved the way for a crucial and alternative new stream in media studies especially opposed *Screen* theory and Althusserian Marxism. Drawing from interviews with key founders of the school as well as secondary sources, this presentation will lay out why the early days of Westminster were so foundational to the field.

Session 3C Technoskepticism. Thursday 15:30-16:45. Chair: Pieter Verdegem

Technoskepticism: Between Possibility and Refusal

Technoskepticism (SUP, 2025) is a topical, and timely multi-authored 50,000 word monograph written by an intergenerational group of 14 key researchers and artists (David Adelman, André Brock, Aaron Dial, Stephanie Dinkins, Rayvon Fouché, Huan He, Jeff Nagy, Lisa Nakamura, Catherine Knight Steele, Rianna Walcott, Kevin Winstead, Josie Williams, Remi Yergeau, and Lida Zeitlin-Wu) who comprise the [DISCO (Digital Inquiry, Speculation, Collaboration, and Optimism) Network](#), a Mellon-funded research group dedicated to analyzing race, gender, disability, and technology. This session will feature David Adelman, Aaron Dial, Jeff Nagy, Rianna Walcott, Kevin Winstead and Lida Zeitlin-Wu.

Our relationship with technology is often transactional or exploitative, and this is especially true for marginalised users. On this panel we question our position as co-producers – those who make *with* technologies – as opposed to fungible, exploited in the production *of* technology. Refusal is an especially precious space of possibility, particularly for those who have historically not been given the option to say no. People of color and disabled people have long navigated this space between possibility and refusal of the newest technologies in ways that can empower our understanding of the potential technoskepticism can offer. The case for technoskepticism unfolds across three sections: the first focused on disability, creative use of wellness apps, and the desire for diagnosis; the second on digital nostalgia and users who produced communities online before home pages gave way to profiles; and the third focused on the violence inherent in A.I.-generation of Black bodies and styles. Finally, we reconfigure even the process of *making* academic knowledge, from writing as an individual towards a collective practice. We discuss our engagement of play as method; how our physical surroundings became co-participant; and how our varying subject positions created a generative tension in the writing process.

Paper 1 — Technology and/as care

We consider clinical fixations with fixing errant bodyminds through the use of high-capacity digital tools, and counterdiagnostic impulses wherein mad, crip, BIPOC, and trans users refashion what it means to have a wayward body in the age of social media and biocertification. In "Desiring Diagnosis," we highlight specific moments during which the overwhelming persuasive power of diagnosis establishes stubbornly immutable and essentializing ideas of who we are and what causes pain and suffering. "Searching for Digital Wellness" contains subsections like "Good Feelings, Bad Feelings: Wellness as Cure," "Hygiene," "Productivity," and "Mindfulness" that analyze mobile digital "wellness" and productivity apps like Insight Timer, Flora, Written? Kitten! and others. This chapter reads these examples and their viral rise as part of an increasingly technologized practice of health-as-techne. These apps both stigmatize neurodivergence, diverse bodies, and Asian spiritual practices and provide fugitive moments of possibility for us to know ourselves.

Paper 2 — Digital Nostalgia and making home(pages)

We think through the making of home(pages) in our engagement with the internet, and the production of nostalgia and ephemera as acts of refusal. "Nostalgia Gone to Bits" defines digital nostalgia as the search for a transitional object that can buffer or mediate the abrupt transitions engendered by platform change. It contains subsections that close read objects like Bedroom TikTok videos and the Asian American film *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (2022)*,* to explain how Black and Asian American digital nostalgia capture both feelings of loss and joy. The joy of refusing technology for those, like Asian Americans, who are often closely identified with it, lives alongside the melancholia of perpetual transition that marks digital temporality. "The Longing for Home: Nostalgia for Digital Platforms," takes up racialized and disabled refusals to forget chat rooms, blogs, and early social networks like MySpace and BlackPlanet where many of us built digital homes that hosted our communities. This chapter speaks from a Black feminist perspective that centers neglected media like personal home pages, TikTok posts by prisoners, and queer Tumblr to argue for the political uses of nostalgia as well as the utility of letting go of platforms that never served us.

Paper 3 — Blackness and A.I.

In our discussion of large language models (LLMs), we challenge the deracination of A.I. and question its ability to authentically reproduce—and co-produce—Black vernacular styles as both cause for concern and a site of possibility. "Blackness and A.I" argues that AI and algorithms are always already racialized. While we are long past the point where we can imagine AI/algorithmic processes to be neutral, we have not yet fully embraced the idea that AI and algorithms are instantiations of whiteness and modernity. This chapter speculates on how AI programs might look, act, and feel different if Blackness was the core ideology around which they were designed. A.I. is consuming and producing Blackness at an alarming rate. AI—in the guise of the LLMs informing ChatGPT—already possesses a style, one that in many ways is incommensurable with Black life. Nonetheless, in "Playing with Black Style" we attempt to engage with A.I. Chatbots that simulate Black voices and culture in order to see if it could play the dozens, speak in Black vernacular styles like patois, or otherwise animate new ontological understandings of Blackness.

Paper 4 — Methods and processes

We elaborate on the process of producing an experimental monograph. Written in first person plural voice and interspersed with short single-author personal anecdotes, *Technoskepticism* was written collectively by scholars of digital media, STS, communication, Black Studies, disability studies, and Asian American Studies, spanning a wide range of methods and topics. *Technoskepticism* is accompanied by an immersive digital artwork entitled "Technoskepticism Soundingboard: Observation of a Speculative Process" by Dinkins and Williams. This piece contains a navigable virtual set of cabins, including images and sounds from our time co-authoring *Technoskepticism* across a week in the Pennsylvania Catskills. We explain how the site itself caused generative friction, throwing into sharp relief the impact of a disabling and racially hostile environment on our access and creative process, and drawing parallels between our methods of co-production and radical technological

production by marginalised users. We offer 'Technoskepticism' as a response to contemporary and future technological challenges; negotiating both what was anticipated, and what we have yet to discover. We position 'refusal' and 'skepticism' as distinct from 'inability', and while acknowledging how the urge to refuse new technologies emerges from specific racialized histories, we also emphasize how care can look like an exuberant embrace of the new.

Session 3D Migration. Thursday 15:30-16:45. Chair: Nathasha Fernando

Nathasha Fernando — Social Media to the rescue. Forms of solidarity, activism and community building on digital spaces: Racialised Italians' response to #BLM

Following the rise of the #MeToo movement, the social isolation that followed the Covid-19 pandemic and the global ascent of the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been an increase in discussions and initiatives on digital platforms. In Italy, the alignment of these various phenomena has created a new fertile ground that helped the proliferation of discussions on race related issues arguably for the first time. These have been mainly led by second generation/ racialised Italians (the terminology used to define this group is still being debated in Italy, within the community itself). This paper will look into the forms of digital activism that developed in Italy, specifically in the years between 2020-2022, and how these tried to disrupt forms of structural racism, epistemic violence (Spivak,1998), silencing (Dotson, 2011) and question the concept of allyship. I draw upon postcolonial feminist theory and the concept of intersectionality to explore how the #BLM movement provided an opportunity to address various forms of oppression in Italy, and the strength it gave many second generation/racialised Italians "to organize one's own" (Roth, 2003) movement. Interviews and autoethnographic observation are employed to understand the limits and potential of transnational solidarity around issues of race.

Amira Halperin — New Uses of Communication and Integration of Refugees in the Era of AI: the Case Study of Middle Eastern Refugees in the UK

The Era of AI marks a dramatic shift in managing migration and connectivity for refugees. The number of people fleeing their homes has doubled in the last decade. As of 2024, 120 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR). Following The Fourth Industrial Revolution, technological innovation and solutions became major pillars of refugee integration. Mobile phones and internet access are critical to refugees' safety and security, AI Technologies are being used increasingly in border zones to improve border control and border security, and more. At the same time, there are also digital risks related to ethics in AI, and the potential for discrimination and bias. My research investigates the integration of Middle Eastern refugees in the UK through new media technologies and explores the core theoretical approaches and developments of media and communication, technology, and migration.

GuoTing Lin — The Affective Routes of Indigenous Issues in Taiwan's Self Media

Affect refers to the latent "virtual co-presence," describing emotional expressions and habits shaped by memory, experience, and thought. Through social media, this virtual copresence of affect is not merely private but also performative and creative in front of audiences, aiming to reconfigure public emotions. Audiences engage in the global media cultural landscape through self-presentation, introducing various emotional engagements that render affect as a fluid and dynamic phenomenon, collectively shaping identities in digital contexts. In Taiwan, Indigenous peoples use diverse forms of self-presentation to bring audiences together into Indigenous communities with shared values. However, different modes of communication within these communities shape distinct imagined communities. On social media, this creates echo chambers within communities while also forming heterogeneous chambers across communities. Audiences attempting to "encounter others" oscillate between echo chambers and heterogeneous chambers, defining the scope of ethnic community performances. Does this communication process break through heterogeneous chambers or deepen echo chambers? This study, based on interviews with eight influencers focusing on Indigenous issues, reveals that they employ various strategies for advocacy, leveraging diverse and controversial topics to attract audiences. It also highlights the significant impacts of expanding and interconnecting echo chambers.

Núria Simelio — Digital Narratives: Transforming Discourse on Migration in the Media

Migration policies have long been a strategic concern for the European Union, both within its borders and in third-party countries (Frontex, 2023). Media and Communication has played an important role in framing public perceptions of these policies, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups such as women and children. (Del Rio & AFEQ, 2020). This study analyzes the digital narratives of Moroccan and Spanish media outlets on X and Facebook, highlights relevant aspects in the field's history. Media outlets have historically constructed collective imaginaries that modelled public understanding of migration and influenced policy discourse. Through a content analysis of eight social media profiles published throughout 2024, we categorized variables into five areas: formal aspects, contextualization, narrative themes, treatment, and interaction. The findings underscore how media representations—often partial and fragmented—continue to form perceptions of Europe and Spain as migration destinations. The study reveals an inadequate portrayal of diverse migration actors, particularly the underrepresentation of women's voices. This research emphasizes the ongoing need for more inclusive, accurate, and ethical narratives. These lessons highlight the media's responsibility to adapt to new issues, ensuring it remains a vital force in transforming migration discourses in the digital world.

Session 4A Geopolitics, Arab Culture and Communication. Friday 10:00-11:15. Chair: Naomi Sakr

Geopolitics, History and Lived Experience: Forces at Play in Arab Culture and Communication

The extent to which European and US military power and its impact on international relations have shaped the lives and everyday experience of people in Arab countries over generations is rarely given enough attention in commentary outside those places that have been on the receiving end of multiple forms of nefarious foreign interference. Yet the impact of this power and influence on approaches to communication in these locations has been and remains immense, as the papers in this panel show. Legacies of colonial subjugation are seen in an enduring discourse of resistance and a perennial struggle over how the political is expressed. Complicity between authoritarian governments and their foreign allies that have for so long supported them through the supply of weapons and military assistance enables the former to block, through multiple layers of censorship and surveillance, the kind of research that would feed into public debate on performing arts and aesthetics, or open exchanges and productive dialogue with academic colleagues across the globe. The four papers in this panel address the colonial legacy and contemporary complicity with repression from different angles, but all share a focus on geopolitics and the everyday as played out in Arab media and communication.

Omar Al-Ghazzi — The anticolonial historic meta-narrative in Arab media and culture

Part of my forthcoming book on the politics of history in Arab media, this paper examines the production of history through acts of re-presencing, defined as communicative practices that resurrect and/or reclaim a historic symbol. It focuses on anticolonialism as a meta-history in Arab media, wherein re-presencing of anticolonial symbols produces history as a transtemporal confrontation between colonialism and those who resist it. Re-presencing here does not just mean the resurrection of a forgotten symbol, rather it is a recommitment to a repertoire. Drawing on Syria and Libya, I show how Arab political activists anchor their communication in an anticolonial language and symbolism to bolster their legitimacy. I draw on the afterlives of anticolonial flags in Syria, and anticolonial heroes in Libya. Since 2011, activists and politicians have reclaimed their anticolonial legacy, albeit for various political motives that at times were in support of foreign interventions of former colonizers and current imperial powers. Despite the political ambiguity and struggle over re-presencing, the fact that anticolonial semiotics has been the terrain of contention shows there is no escape from the structural effects of colonial subjugation of the Middle East that extends from the past to the present.

Dina Matar — Limitations of western-centric political communication during war: Gaza as case study

Since the start of the 21st century, the confluence between politics and communication in the Arab region and its diasporas has been subject to ruptures brought about by a sequence of momentous events: the second Palestinian intifada (uprising) in 2000; the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US; the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq; the grassroots Green Movement demonstrations against Iran's presidential elections in 2009; popular protests erupting in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Morocco, and Bahrain, and then in Algeria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, and Sudan. With the war waged against Gaza by a ferocious Israeli military machine after the October 2023 attack on Israel by the Palestinian group Hamas, a serious rethinking of the co-constitutive dynamics between politics and communication in the

region became essential. In this paper, I explore the perennial struggle over expressing the political in the context of extreme violence by a settler-colonial state and the time/space configuration in which politics and communication have become ever more tightly integrated. The analysis focuses on Israel's war against Gaza to address how the lived temporality of permanent war and lived legacies of colonialism that Palestinians are exposed to pose a challenge to Western-centric political communication, as theory and practice, and demand new approaches to addressing informality and marginality.

Tarik Sabry — Aesthetic experience and performing arts in the Arab region: Towards an audience-centred perspective

The question of aesthetic experience remains at the margins of scholarship in the nascent field of Arab cultural studies, and in the compendium of research on the performing arts in the Arab region. This, I argue, is largely due to a detrimental lack of engagement with audiences in the region, both in scholarship and in cultural policy circles, where performance art audiences remain largely under-valued: if they are researched at all it is mostly through the lens of quantitative methods, which are not equipped to examine audiences' aesthetic experiences. Audience research in that context emerges as a power game governed by exogenous rules of cultural capital. In this paper, I engage with aesthetic experience as a central hermeneutic endeavour, arguing that a critical engagement with Arab performing arts audiences' aesthetic experiences necessitates both an archaeological manoeuvre and a re-articulation of two keywords: 'experience' and 'everyday'. The article advances, using evidence from quantitative and qualitative research funded by Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), that allowing the audiences of performing arts in the Arab region to speak may be a step towards democratizing the triangular meaning making process among the performer, the audience, and the art institution, and a means towards dislocating, if not liberating, the categories of Arab culture, art, performance and experience from their teleological articulations.

Naomi Sakr —Geopolitics and knowledge production: Factors in 50 years of Arab-IAMCR relations

What impact have geopolitics had on the evolution of Arab media scholars' relationships with their international counterparts? Has the alleged 'nonchalance' of North American and European governments towards authoritarianism and human rights abuse in Arab countries affected the sharing of agendas for research on media and communication in the region? Drawing on interviews and archival research originally conducted for a chapter commissioned for a history of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) published in 2023, this paper seeks to understand why the input of Tunisian, Algerian and Egyptian thinkers to New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates in the 1970s was not sustained, despite contributions such as that of Egypt's Samir Amin, renowned as a pioneer of dependency theory. Tracing the geopolitical backdrop to structural changes in the Arab media landscape from the 1970s to the 2020s – from the rise of the emigré press through the advent of satellite television and social media to streaming – the paper plots the involvement of media scholars from Arab universities in IAMCR exchanges and concludes that intergovernmental relations were a significant factor in these researchers' relative isolation.

Session 4B Histories of the Field 2. Friday 10:00-11:15. Dimitris Boucas

Raúl Fuentes Navarro — On the history of the Latin American academic field for Communication Studies.

This paper argues how, over more than fifty years, but especially in the last thirty, dense and resilient international networks of collaboration and mutual recognition have been built in Latin America, which, despite the persistence of internal and external factors of disarticulation, sustain and renew purposes once clearly formulated and shared as a "Latin American thought" in the field of communication studies. Such networks were created and are sustained by diverse groups of colleagues and were institutionalized by national and regional academic associations (ALAIC, FELAFACS), UNESCO chairs and specialized journals with "inter-Latin American" perspectives (*Chasqui, Comunicación y Cultura, Diálogos de la Comunicación, Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación*), edited mostly in Spanish language. The development of common referents in Latin America for the study of communication and the constant expansion of the limits for the realization of multiple academic and socio-cultural projects generated in such a "field" are, undoubtedly, the product of multiple and very lively academic communities that debate and accumulate knowledge, but which for decades have been also generating and strengthening practical articulations, on diverse and interconnected scales, despite the marginalization and the growing scarcity of available resources in almost every country of the region.

James F. Hamilton — Challenges and Futures of Critical Media Studies Seen Through the Transformations of 'Alternative Media'

This paper addresses the epistemological trajectory of critical media studies, critical media practice and their possible futures by addressing the transformations of the scholarly topic and practice of 'alternative media'. Epistemologies of critical approaches to the study of media and communication continue to exemplify the analytic value of contextuality and historicity, which beneficially and necessarily continue to enlarge the field topically and geographically. However, a crucial means of more fully avoiding a fragmented patchwork of narrowly-focused and isolated case studies is concomitant additional epistemological attention to relationality, which addresses the mutual determination of localized phenomena and their conditions. In few other topic areas can the analytic value of recovering an expanded epistemology be demonstrated than that of 'alternative media'. Isolated case studies of progressive-left alternative media have appeared since the 1980s, with those of radical-Right alternative media since the 2000s, yet largely in isolation from each other and from a more substantial engagement with mutually-determined and determining conditions. By contrast, an expanded epistemology can focus analysis on how an expressly progressive media practice has become (also) one of the radical Right by exploring their mutual determination as well as of/by neoliberalism's slow eclipse amidst increasingly global fundamentalist-authoritarian populisms.

Catherine van Reenen — Where Media Theory Meets Medium Theory: On McLuhan's Links to Psychical Research

Several scholars have explored how spiritualists and psychical researchers contributed to the construction of modern ideas about media and communication, including the very concept of a 'medium'. Less well-recognized are the historical connections between twentieth-century media theory and what I will call *medium* theory: the various explanations proposed to account for the strange phenomena supposedly produced by medium*s*, i.e., persons allegedly gifted with the ability to channel unknown psychic forces or spirits of the dead. This paper draws connections between the media theory of Marshall McLuhan and the medium theory of a group of North American and European psychical researchers active during the early- to mid-twentieth century, including Thomas Glendenning Hamilton, Gustave Geley, Charles Richet, and Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. It argues that the link between these distinct domains of 'media study' consists in their shared reliance on Western civilizational models, notions of progressive technological development, and racial hierarchies. The paper thus responds to calls for alternative histories of media studies that complicate conventional narratives of the field's development, and contributes to ongoing efforts to better understand how race serves as a 'constituent exclusion' of media studies.

Carlos A. Scolari — From Telenovelas to Teatime: Bridging Latin American and British Studies on Media, Communication, and Culture

The 1980s marked a transformative era for cultural studies, with the global rise of British cultural theory paralleling the emergence of a Latin American paradigm in communication research, driven by Jesús Martín-Barbero and Néstor García Canclini. Despite their shared focus on cultural processes, these developments unfolded with minimal academic exchange. By the 1990s, Latin American scholarship began to receive tentative international recognition, yet significant barriers to integration persisted. This proposal aims to map the historical and theoretical relationships between communication studies in Latin America and Europe, with a focus on intersections with British cultural and media theories. Key moments include the clandestine circulation of Stuart Hall's *Encoding/Decoding* (1977) during Argentina's military dictatorship and the 1993 English translation of Martín-Barbero's *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*. Through a critical analysis, the study seeks to uncover the factors that have constrained transatlantic dialogue, assess the current state of these exchanges, and propose strategies for fostering greater intellectual convergence. By exploring these issues, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of global knowledge flows and the evolution of cultural and communication paradigms, bridging gaps between Latin American and European traditions.

Session 4C Maps and Methods. Friday 10:00-11:15 Chair: Doug Specht

Nathan Schneider — The Study of Negative Space

This paper introduces an approach to scholarly work concerned with the study of negative space in media economies: a practice of understanding current realities in order to recognize the more just, equitable possibilities that do not currently prevail but nevertheless could. The approach draws on diverse fields, including platform

studies, theories of mediation, media archaeology, legal and corporate governance scholarship, and religious studies. Research methods can center on accountability through relational organizing, community-centered database development, experimental design through software prototyping, and theorizing grounded in practice. The activities described here have already begun to shape thinking in media studies and beyond, but they remain only loosely articulated, and they leave room for further development in methodological rigor, breadth of practice, and diversity of imaginative resources. This paper aims to spur a conversation about the means and ends studying the media possibilities that do not exist but might and perhaps should.

Doug Specht — Maps as Communication: Unveiling the Power of Cartographic Narratives

This paper explores the multifaceted role of maps as powerful tools for communication, extending far beyond their traditional function of geographic representation. This paper examines how maps serve as visual narratives, shaping perceptions, influencing decision-making, and mediating complex information across various domains. The paper investigates how cartographers tackle the challenge of representing intangible phenomena, emotions, and social dynamics. Furthermore, this paper will analyse the use and misuse of maps, highlighting their potential to manipulate public opinion and justify political and territorial claims. Combining historical analysis, case studies, and interviews with cartographers and geopolitical experts, this paper will reveal that maps are not neutral artefacts but rather are one of the most complex and misunderstood tools of communication, filled with subjective interpretations imbued with cultural, political, and social biases. The paper concludes that critical map literacy is an essential part of media literacy in today's information-rich environment, enabling individuals to decode the hidden messages and power structures embedded in cartographic representations.

Kirsty Styles — Climate change or social change? A comparative analysis of the UK news media's 'cultural emissions'

The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of 'the media' in bringing about the 'age' of the Anthropocene – the age of humans. Based on a submitted PhD thesis, the literature review shows how such 'creative destruction' has happened alongside colonialism, industrialisation and globalisation. It also highlights the limits of framing 'environmental' issues as such, as these are often 'social' at their source. Its theoretical framework brings together theories of 'sustainability', 'the press' and 'social values' to frame a new concept, 'cultural emissions', as a cyclical phenomenon relating to media 'content' and affecting 'the commons'. Looking at the news media specifically, a comparative content analysis of UK newspapers from the past 50 years provides evidence of this phenomenon over time. The findings suggest our focus must move beyond 'climate reporting' or coverage of environmental issues when considering cultural emissions. Newspapers have particularly prioritised motoring, and more general 'lifestyle' content, in both editorial and advertising, which informs how markets and societies behave. The paper concludes that more work must be done to understand the values that inform media content, how these appear, and the effects and impacts this may have on ensuring a 'safe and just' future world.

Xuda Wang — Discussion on methodology in the digital age: How to Conduct Academic Research on TikTok

The rapid growth of users, especially young people, has made TikTok a social media that needs to be taken seriously in communication research. As Kułaga (2024, p. 212) mentioned, the disruptive impact of TikTok on "visual communication and digital creative engagement" is revolutionary. Therefore, how to conduct academic research on an emerging, different and influential platform is an urgent and worthy topic. This study attempts to answer two key questions to achieve a breakthrough in the research gap. First, what research methods can TikTok learn from other social media, especially YouTube, a video platform? Second, after experiencing the challenges of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, what aspects of TikTok's academic research can achieve breakthroughs compared with previous platform research? To answer these two questions, the researcher selected the 20 most cited papers on TikTok, Douyin, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X in the past five years on Google Scholar, totalling 120 samples. The research methods used in the samples will be summarised and compared with TikTok. Meanwhile, this study interviewed ten well-known scholars in communication and sorted out their views on how to research TikTok. The two research methods refer to each other to explain the similarities or differences between TikTok's methodology and other platforms.

Session 5A Social Media Activism. Friday 13:30-14:45. Chair: Anastasia Kavada

Lorenzo Coretti and Anastasia Kavada — The Afterlife of Social Movements on Social Media

This paper explores the use of Facebook pages by social movements once they disappear from the streets. Our analysis focuses on three European movements that mobilised around issues of democracy, public accountability and economic inequality: Popolo Viola, that protested against Silvio Berlusconi's government between 2009 – 2011, and two 'movements of the squares', Occupy London in 2011 and Nuit Debout in Paris in 2016. Drawing on a content analysis of the most popular 520 posts published on each movement's main Facebook page after they vanished from the streets, our paper shows that, with the passage of time, these pages become mobilisation infrastructures for more recent movements. Instead of publishing their own posts, they promote and amplify the posts generated by other movements or they stimulate discussion by sharing media content on important stories. Our analysis raises the question of whether movements actually die when they vanish from the offline realm or whether they live on as 'zombie infrastructures', as 'living dead' movements whose technological body has been taken over by other causes. This demands a reconsideration of the concept of social movement lifecycles, suggesting that rather than dissolving or becoming institutionalised, movements may reinvent themselves as digital mobilisation infrastructures.

Godswill Ezeonyeka — Collective remembering: the postcolonial potential of social media in activist films

Dziga Vertov's vision of documentary film capturing working-class people's experiences authentically can be seen as the precursor of activist films. Across film history, advancements in media technology and shifts in audience expectations have brought Vertov's vision closer to reality, particularly with the use of social media in activism. This paper is derived from my PhD research, applying a postcolonial lens to explore how social media amplifies diverse voices and fosters collective storytelling. Using the #EndSARS movement against police brutality as a case study, the paper examines the role of social media in the visual presentation of activism in Nigeria. Although the movement began in 2017, it gained significant momentum in 2020 through the widespread sharing of photos and videos. I used Instagram to identify and recruit diverse participants to collate their experiences for the production of a non-linear interactive platform. The platform – Networked Narratives – integrates personal perspectives into a network of short video clips, allowing viewers to navigate via varied entry points and comparison options. By moving beyond linear formats and democratising the filmmaking process through social media the platform exemplifies the postcolonial possibilities of presenting multiple, authentic stories in activist films.

Aliaksandr Herasimenka and Anastasia Kavada — Studying Social Movements Using 'Local' Social Media: Telegram and the 2020 Belarus Uprising

The widespread adoption of instant messaging platforms (IMPs) by social movements is crucial in repressive regimes, where activists face increased risks. In this paper, we focus on the Belarus Uprising of 2020, one of the largest and longest recent movements in an authoritarian environment, and its use of Telegram for organising. Based on a content and thematic analysis of 4,665 pieces of content shared in eight movement channels on Telegram during the first week of the uprising, the paper identifies some of the key aspects of movement organising on IMPs. We explore how the movement used Telegram to build a framework of participation and to resist state repression. We also investigate the movement's leadership mechanisms, and the balance between anonymous local leaders who administer Telegram groups and celebrity leaders who are prominent in the media. Our paper shows that the movement's framework of participation offered on IMPs fostered innovative adaptations and tactical shifts in terms of the functions played by different types of leaders and the ways they wield power. We also highlight the challenges IMP-relying movements face in repressive regimes, such as digital infiltration and the mass prosecution of users who participate in the movement's Telegram channels.

Chen Yang and Ming Pan — Bridging the Digital Divide? Opportunities and Resistance Inside the Influencer Village in Rural China

Yuanfeng Village, located in central region of China, has transformed into an "influencer village," with 37 active influencers and many more aspiring to join. This research explores how this phenomenon has reshaped the village's agrarian economy and examines villagers' struggles and resistance in adapting to the digital ecosystem. Using an ethnographic approach, we spent three weeks in Yuanfeng Village, conducting interviews with influencers and their partners (most of whom are Chinese Muslim) and participating in their content creation processes. The influencer economy in the village is deeply rooted in traditional family and social networks,

reflecting the structure of a Chinese "acquaintance society" (Fei, 1992). The mega-influencer has significantly influenced microand macro-influencers to varying degrees. While the e-commerce boom has boosted incomes, a persistent digital divide hinders progress. Many women, often illiterate, display agency in using digital tools but are constrained by limited education and resources. Additionally, rapid socio-economic shifts have strained relationships between villagers and influencers,

further complicated by obligations to repay personal favours (人情债). The burdens of unpaid digital labour (Qiu, 2016) and intensive physical work continue to discourage some villagers from fully embracing the trend. This study contributes to discussions on digital labour, platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017), and the interplay between tradition and technology, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities of rural China's influencer economy.

Session 5B Regulation. Friday 13:30-14:45. Chair: Maria Michalis

Kobina Ano Bedu-Addo — The Genealogy of Regulation: Post-independence African developmentalism and contemporary media regulation effectiveness, the Ghana case

The centralisation of media in many post-independence African countries under government control was justified on the basis of uniting the diverse, in some cases historically bickering ethnic groups under one unified nation to achieve pressing developmental tasks. Free and independent ownership of media was therefore not encouraged, as this would, in the view of Africa's liberation heroes distract from the nation building project. However, the impact of this so-called developmentalist approach to media development on the creation and development of media regulation structures and systems in African contexts has not been examined. Using Ghana as the main case example, and with references to other African countries, this paper investigates how the developmentalist approach to media development with its emphasis on centralised state control and oriented towards development, influenced how media regulation institutions and systems in African contexts were set up and have developed. The press in many post-independence African countries had been vanguards during the pre-independence struggle for self-rule, yet became centralised controlled institutions managed by governments to achieve post-independence priorities of nationhood, such as unity, literacy and education, with the media generally enduring a difficult post-independence history of repression under authoritarian and military governments (de la Brosse and Frère 2012; Ngangum 2019; Sampaio-Dias et al 2019)g   Under this framework, it was justified to utilize the media as an essential instrument in the developmental efforts of the nation, but also as an outlet for governmental propaganda in contexts of little if any independent media organizations. This lack of independent media is also reflected in the lack of independent media regulatory bodies for the media sector. The post 1990s wave of democratic reforms in Africa and the liberalization of media it engendered has seen reformed media and communication regulation structures on the continent that largely follow the colonial political and linguistic legacies found in Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone Africa (Diop 2023). Though largely reformed, some media regulators in the current digital platform environment on the continent retain vestiges of centralized government control, and thus, are not adequately adapted to the complexities and requirements of media regulation in the converged digital media

environment as regulators (Nwankwo, 2019). This paper relies on data from policy documents, legal texts and media discussions for its examination. It also draws from African media developmentalist literature (Ansah, 1985; Boafo, 1987) and combines this with historical institutionalism perspectives (Pierson and Skocpol, 2007; Steinmo, 2008) to serve as its framework. Given the post-independence developmentalist media development trajectories, the paper seeks to establish the extent of connections between developmentalist frameworks and contemporary media regulation structures and systems, and on this basis, also whether media regulation structures and systems have been effective in regulating the sector in Ghana and other African countries given such legacies.

Dimitris Boucas — Digital capitalism: understanding its dynamics and its limits

Fifty years ago Western societies were on the cusp of an emerging information/knowledge-based economy and society. Fifty years on, they have embraced an Internet-based, digital capitalism, where daily social and economic activity and human communication are heavily mediated by social media and other digital platforms. Significantly, these are largely structured through big tech companies (platforms) such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple, which create dependencies and lock-in effects for users. The paper uses a survey of 1000 competent users, conducted as part of the NetCommons project, to evidence such effects. Drawing upon the work of Boltanski and Chiapello on the "new spirit of capitalism", Nancy Fraser on "cannibal capitalism", and Shoshana Zuboff on surveillance, it proposes an understanding of digital capitalism through the relationship between ideologies of networking and convenience, global production structures, as well as algorithms and business models of the big GAFA. It argues that this relationship is contradictory and exposes the limits of digital capitalism from a socio-economic (inequalities, exploitation), political (surveillance, digital sovereignty) and environmental perspective.

Marko Milosavljević and Melita Poler — The Unmentioned Gap: the Lack of the State Media Ownership Regulation within the EMFA as a Potential Danger for Media Freedom

The European Media Freedom Act, adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of European Union in 2024, represents a major regulatory and binding act that affects all the European Union member states as well as other countries that are involved in the EU media sector in a number of potential ways.
Regarding the role of the state and (ruling) politics, the document establishes some key protection measures, particularly strongly addressing the role of the Public Service Media (both in the introduction and in Article 5) and the role of the state advertising (Article 25). However, the potentially problematic role of the state and its potential for interference in the media freedom is not addressed also through the prism of the issue of the state ownership of the media. The state ownership of media is not even mentioned in the document, yet in a number of EU member states as well as EU member states' candidates there are specific state-owned media, sometimes at national, sometimes at regional or local level, through municipalities and other state entities (Milosavljević and Poler Kovačič 2024).

The presentation will provide key elements and arguments for the need for the state media ownership regulation at national and other potential levels.

Hannu Nieminen — European digital sovereignty and the small states

In the studies of International Relations (IR), three main schools are often mentioned: realism, idealism/liberalism, and critical. In this paper a critical approach to IR based on political economy will be followed (see e.g. Veseth and Balaam 2024). The main question is: what is the role of small European states in the EU's digital strategy? The answer is sought trough three sub-questions: 1) According Lehdonvirta (2022) and Bradford (2023), despite USA and China having the lead in relation to economic power and digital technology, the EU has shown globally that by deploying effective regulatory means, democratic political regulation of the digital sphere can be possible. The question is, however, to which degree the rapid advance of AI and its ongoing all-pervading application has changed this analysis. 2) The second question concerns the comparison of the economic and technological potential of the main EU members to the EU's digitalisation-related media and technology policy decisions. Especially the rivalries between the three main European economic powers – Germany, UK, and France – will be examined (see Mansell 2023; Puppis, Mansell, and van den Bulck 2024). 3) The third question concentrates on the potentials of the European small states to effectively participate and influence EU decision making in strategic issues, such as EU regulation on AI and its global infrastructure. How have the small EU members managed to deploy their potential in the EU decision making, e.g. in the cases of DSA, EMFA, and EU AI Act, and do they have a realistic alternative to change the rules of this game? The initial conclusion is that for EU to be competitive globally against USA and China, it must act as one entity – meaning that EU should have strong and unified strategy concerning digital economy (see EU 2024). As an empirical case, the decision making concerning the Finland's position on the EU Act on AI will be analysed through policy documents, interviews, and media reports.

Session 5C Data 2. Friday 13:30-14:45. Chair: Graham Meikle

Eyüp Al — Tracking the Audience in the Digital Age: From Content-Based Approaches to Data Colonialism

Since the position of the audience within the media industry has always remained uncertain, efforts have been made to interpret the relationship between the audience and the text. While this relationship historically brought content to the forefront, it has undergone a significant transformation under the influence of digitalization, taking on a data-driven form. This study aims to explain a new condition in which the audience-text relationship is no longer an experiential domain but is instead reduced to mere numbers and data. In this new framework, content-focused approaches and audience experiences are almost entirely disregarded, giving way to a space dominated by data colonialism. The focus has shifted from understanding what the audience derives from a text to monitoring the frequency and patterns of their consumption. It appears that the traditional audience-text relationship— encompassing thoughts and emotions—has been sidelined, while their actions are subjected to continuous surveillance in a state of data colonialism. From this perspective, the audience's digital actions are prioritized, and their viewing

experience is reduced to quantifiable metrics. The unique engagement between the audience and the text is redirected toward personalized content production, advertisements, and the creation of similar content, turning the audience into a consumable commodity and enabling their absolute traceability.

Taylor Annabell and Nina Vindum Rasmussen — **An algorithmic event: The celebration and critique of Spotify Wrapped**

Each year, Spotify encourages its users to share aesthetically pleasing data stories 'wrapped' and repackaged from their listening behaviour. We approach 'Wrapped' as an 'algorithmic event', defined as a moment in time in which there is a collective orientation towards a particular algorithmic system and associated data. To examine how people make sense of 'Wrapped' as an algorithmic event, we bring together ordinary Spotify users to explore datafication through a series of prompts and creative activities, including a modified version of the 'walkthrough' (Light et al., 2018) and a craft-based exercise. We position our participants as co-analysts, following the work of Robards and Lincoln (2017) and Markham (2021), inviting them to generate insights into algorithmic cultures, datafication and the reconfiguration of the self. Drawing on workshops with over 200 participants, we find people critique and contest claims that Spotify 'knows' them as individuals and meaningfully engages in classification and personalisation. But they also identify how the logics of Wrapped resonate with how they think about music consumption and taste, modifying their behaviour in anticipation of what it will reveal. As such, we argue that algorithmic events like 'Wrapped' are useful ways to think through data capture and algorithmic systems.

Guilherme Giolo — **The Aesthetic Turn: Theorizing the Rising Role of Cultural Aggregation in Popular Culture**

Aesthetics – aggregates of cultural references, activities, and attitudes that communicate implicit, affective messages – are increasingly central to understanding popular culture, politics, and society. For instance, in 2024 Kamala Harris' campaign used the fluorescent "brat green" to align with the brat aesthetic, resonating with millions of young adults online, while Donald Trump's campaign found support among tradwife influencers, who champion traditional gender roles and anti-feminism. These examples, alongside aesthetics like cottagecore or 2014 Tumblr, illustrate how meaning in the digital age is increasingly implied through cultural assemblages rather than explicitly articulated through discrete symbols. This paper argues that these developments point to an "aesthetic turn" in communication—a shift distinct from earlier linguistic, cultural, or visual turns—with profound implications for the future of Media and Communication. Drawing on existing research, it begins by delineating the semiotic and cultural singularities characterizing aesthetics, and how these traits afford meaning-making. Next, it connects these characteristics to the communicative affordances of digital media, emphasizing how platforms have fostered the development of aggregation as main mean of communication. Finally, it situates these developments within a half-century of evolving media practices, proposing a research agenda to theorize and explore further forms of cultural aggregation in popular culture.

Yukun You and Trine Syvertsen — 'Beating tech with tech': The use of apps and technological measures for digital disconnection

In recent years, taking breaks from digital connectivity has emerged as a significant sociocultural phenomenon, reflecting broader shifts in how individuals navigate hyperconnected lives. Paradoxically, many turn to the technology itself to limit their use — "beating tech with tech". This paper examines the role of technological measures in facilitating temporary disconnection from smartphones and digital media. These measures include silent and airplane modes, turning off notifications, deleting and setting time limits on apps, downloading disconnection apps, or using a simpler phone. Drawing on the statistical analysis of two representative surveys from Norway (2018 and 2023), the study highlights a preference for simple strategies—silencing, removing, and deleting—over complex tools like disconnection apps. It identifies socio-demographic trends, showing that younger, highly educated, and politically left-leaning individuals "use tech to beat tech" to a higher degree. It also reveals how technological especially app-related measures resonate with individuals' perceptions of online and smartphone (over)use, contributing to a nuanced understanding of disconnection practices. While these measures address personal struggles with hyperconnectivity, they also raise critical questions about broader societal and technological challenges, such as digital backlash and the paradox of technological solutions, which are vital for future media and communication studies.

Session 6A Gender. Friday 15:15-16:30. Chair: Natasha Whiteman

Shiny Angel, Radha Bathran and Manash Pratim Goswami — Gender Redefined: A Comparative Analysis of Traditional Advertising and Femvertising in Indian Context

Historically, advertisements in India have reflected societal norms, often portraying women in domestic roles—a pervasive discourse that has reinforced gender stereotypes for decades. However, in response to increasing public and academic critiques of gendered representation, the advertising industry has begun embracing more inclusive, gender-sensitive approaches. This shift has given rise to femvertising—a dynamic strategy in advertising that highlights women's empowerment and promotes gender equality, challenging long-standing patriarchal norms. This study offers a comparative analysis of traditional, stereotype-driven advertisements and contemporary femvertisements, exploring how the representation of women has evolved. Utilizing Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis, the research examines the visual and linguistic elements in advertisements and how they contribute to gender-sensitive messaging. By contrasting these two forms of advertising, the study reveals the shift from objectification to empowerment and highlights the potential of femvertising to influence public attitudes towards gender equality. In uncovering how advertising in India has evolved in response to social and cultural shifts, this paper demonstrates the power of media in shaping societal norms and addressing gender disparities. Through this critical analysis, the study underscores the importance of advertising as a tool for promoting a more inclusive and equitable media landscape, offering new insights into the ongoing conversation about gender representation in Indian media.

Nicola Bozzi — **Becoming Platform: Masculinity, Infrastructure, and Social Imagination**

This presentation discusses the evolving relationship between digital platforms, framed as infrastructures for the performance of the self (Bozzi, 2024), and the rise of powerful, hypermasculine figures like Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Joe Rogan as cultural avatars or social disruption. Using the popular Joe Rogan Experience podcast as the main case study, my main argument is that this popular format has facilitated broader cultural shifts that call for urgent critical inquiry from media and communications scholars. Firstly, the personification of complex social and cultural issues like "free speech" into individual battles between individuals and the establishment - e.g. Elon Musk vs liberal Twitter (Ferrari Braun, 2023); Donald Trump vs the US political class). Secondly, the rise of "platforming" as both a discursive metaphor and a business model, offered as the only solution for a masculinity in crisis against "woke" and "cancel culture" (Ng, 2022). Ultimately, the "becoming platform" of Rogan, Musk, or Trump fuels the dangerous identification of aspiring influencers and social media users with communicative capitalist (Dean, 2014) and platform capitalist (Srnicek, 2015) models. The presentation combines a media and cultural studies approach (discussing relevant material like JRE-themed reaction videos, memes, and AI-generated digital art), with a broader-picture sociological reading that draws from platform studies and Internet studies and a theoretical speculative approach.

Ekaitz Cancela Rodríguez and Anita Fuentes — From Cultural Hegemony to Digital Violence: Feminist Approaches to Media and Power

This paper examines how media systems construct and sustain power dynamics, focusing on their role in the political economy since the 1970s and the production of Cold War cultural hegemony (Schiller, 1975). Hollywood, backed by Wall Street, crafted narratives that extended U.S. influence globally, while establishing media systems as tools of geopolitical strategy and economic dominance (Schiller, 2000). Drawing on the continuum of violence (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004)—encompassing direct, structural, and cultural forms—we argue that media infrastructures reinforce embodied insecurities across both personal and geopolitical spheres, embedding practices of control and perpetuating power imbalances (Ballestrin, 2022). Advertising technologies, through emotional manipulation, commodify experiences, reshaping counterhegemonic movements like feminism. This is particularly evident in movements such as #MeToo, where corporate interests capitalize on women's struggles, turning them into marketable narratives (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Media thus functions as both a vehicle for cultural production and a tool of economic exploitation, reinforcing dominant power structures while perpetuating hate speech and violence. This paper advocates for feminist, reflexive, and ethnographic approaches to cultural and media studies (Denzin, 1977; Tandon, 2018) to examine the intertwined dynamics of power and communication. Rooted in an ethics of care (Held, 2005), these methods prioritize affective connections (Ahmed, 2004) within platforms, while providing new avenues for pedagogy, organization, and the creation of new imaginaries (Fuentes & Cancela, forthcoming).

Qiaosong Xi — Rebellious Daughters: exploring everyday feminism on Chinese social media

With the emergence of the fourth and fifth waves of feminism, the movement increasingly started to emphasise global solidarity among feminists, challenging colonial legacies and embracing diverse gender identities (Matos, 2017; Desai, 2009). However, scholars question whether current regional feminist discourses remain constrained by Western-dominated narratives, often failing to address the unique challenges faced by women in the Global South (Spakowski, 2021; Mehta, 2020; Wallis, 2015). This study explores Chinese online feminist communities to examine how they navigate everyday gender oppression within families, proposing a de-Westernized framework for constructive, non-radical resistance (Mustafa, 2023). Focusing on everyday activism as a pathway to gender equality, this ongoing doctoral research project employs online ethnography to analyse two popular Chinese social media platforms, Weibo and RedNote. It examines how online platforms foster feminist community-building and how young Chinese women navigate feminist thought to challenge family-based gender oppression and wider societal norms. Chinese feminists contend with deeply rooted patriarchal structures shaped by Confucianism ideology and reinforced by contemporary nationalist narratives. Centering the identity of Chinese daughters, this research underscores the significance of everyday activism in resisting patriarchy. It seeks to enrich feminist and activist scholarship, offering insights into grassroots resistance, challenging Western-centric narratives in global feminist theories, and proposing locally contextualised approaches to gender equality.

Session 6B Media Histories 2. Friday 15:15-16:30. Chair: Charles Brown

Yanning Chen — Remembering Chinese Mobile History through Second-Hand Consumption: Personal Cultural Memories of Old Mobile Phones

The widespread adoption of mobile phones in China began in the late 1990s and 2000s, Their popularisation paralleled the country's market-oriented economic reforms (1978-) and global technological advancements in mobile network services, configuring consumers' individual, social, and technological remembering. Drawing on online qualitative interviews with 30 male digital enthusiasts, this study explores vernacular engagements with mobile technology histories through the consumption of second-hand mobile phones as vintage collectibles. It identifies three types of personal cultural memories (van Dijck, 2004): memories of unfulfilled desires and technological deficiency, memories of youth and adulthood, and memories of public mobile technologies. The first two types are more autobiographically focused, with the former reflecting generational memories of encountering innovative technological artefacts amid societal changes during the post-socialist period. The third type of memory highlights reflections on the public and glocal histories of mobile technologies, wherein China acted both as a recipient of advanced technologies and as a lagging manufacturer, experiencing regional disparities induced by the Reform. This paper addresses the conference's theme of media histories and presents, particularly highlighting the 'recurrence' of past mobile technologies through vernacular remembering practices. The case study illuminates the intersection of personal, local, and global dimensions of the history of media technologies.

Justin Grandinetti — Televisual, Cinematic, and Mobile: Tracing the Historical Lineage of Mobile Streaming Media

In 2016, Netflix's CEO boasted that the platform's worldwide expansion heralded the birth of the world's first global television network (Netflix Media Center, 2016). Such a statement mirrors colloquial narratives in which streaming is positioned as the "next evolution" of television and/or cinema. Scholars, similarly, have debated the parallels and distinctions of where streaming fits into a longer history of audio-visual media (Spigel, 2004; Bennett, 2011; Boddy, 2011; Parks, 2019). However, individuals around the world now stream more than ever from mobile devices. This increasingly mobile orientation of streaming necessitates a reconsideration of the medium's historical antecedent technologies. This presentation interrogates the oft overlooked and comparatively unsuccessful attempts at mobile and portable cinematic and televisual technologies, in turn decentering a media lineage that privileges a fixed spatial orientation. Through a media archaeology approach, I highlight the material and discursive continuities and disruptions of televisual and cinematic history (Huhtamo, 2011). Specifically, the examples of the portable television and the drive-in cinema demonstrate attempts at audio-visual entertainment untethered the fixed sites of the urban cinema and suburban living room. Overall, presentation provides an alternative mobile and portable history of streaming media, with particular attention to attempts to monetize spaces and times through novel technologies.

Emerson Johnston — **The Role of Usenet in AIDS Discourse (1982–1986). Decentralized Architecture and Community-Driven Health Communication**

This paper intervenes in historical debates about early digital communication and AIDS crisis discourse by examining how Usenet's socio-technical infrastructure shaped new forms of health communication between 1982-1986. Drawing on computational analysis of over 15,000 threads and 43,000 comments across six newsgroups, I demonstrate how the platform's unique affordances—particularly its decentralized structure and identity protections—enabled marginalized communities to challenge dominant medical and media narratives. Through a mixed-methods approach combining sentiment analysis, network mapping, and topic modeling, I trace how AIDS discussions evolved across different digital spaces, revealing distinct patterns of knowledge production and community formation. The findings complicate traditional top-down models of health communication: while AIDS-related content showed significantly higher negative sentiment than general discussions (mean scores -3.42 versus 0.60), it also fostered sophisticated hybrid discourses where medical expertise and lived experience coexisted. Analysis of key "bridge figures" reveals how users strategically leveraged Usenet's architecture to translate clinical knowledge across community boundaries while preserving vital privacy. This study contributes to our understanding of how early digital infrastructures mediated public health discourse, while advancing theoretical frameworks for analyzing the relationship between technical systems and marginalized voices in emerging digital spaces.

Session 6C AI. Friday 15:15-16:30. Chair: Alessandro D'Arma

Alessandro D'Arma — News, Generative AI, and Copyright: An Analysis of Stakeholder Positions in the UK Policy-making Context

The unauthorised use of copyrighted journalistic content to train large language models powering generative AI tools has heightened tensions between news publishers and technology companies, creating a new policymaking frontier. News organisations allege copyright infringement and advocate for licensing schemes, while tech firms defend such practices arguing they are permissible under existing copyright regimes. These disputes unfold amid growing concerns over the long-term sustainability of public interest journalism and increasing reliance on third-party platforms for news distribution – and, as newsrooms integrate AI into their work, for production as well. This paper examines how stakeholders in journalism and technology frame these challenges, interpret copyright laws, and the solutions they propose. The study draws on written evidence submitted to two recent inquiries by the UK House of Lords Communication and Digital Committee, culminating in the reports *Large Language Models and Generative AI* (February 2024) and *The Future of News* (November 2024). These inquiries provide an empirical basis for understanding how journalism institutions in the UK are responding to the perceived threat of AI in its current emerging phase, focussing on a legal issue that exposes news organisations' core economic interests and vulnerabilities, exacerbating the already fraught, and unequal relationships with technology firms.

Adrian Hillman — The role of Artificial Intelligence in the construction of news: Challenges and opportunities facing journalism in an age underlined by increasing distrust in knowledge-producing institutions

News is constructed through a myriad of processes reflecting the cultural and social context in which newsrooms operate as well as the work routines and ownerships structures that govern news organisations. Natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms have now enabled news organisations to automate content creation, significantly improving efficiency. These algorithms can analyse data, generate headlines, and write news articles. Such innovations have opened opportunities for journalists to focus on investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, while also providing real-time news to an information-hungry audience. However, the rise of AI in news construction also brings its own set of challenges, one of the most significant issues being trust. This paper will discuss how AI is currently used in news organizations, highlighting successful projects and lessons learned. The democratisation of content creation and the potential for personalised, data-driven news experiences also hold immense promise. Yet the industry must grapple with profound issues of trust, ethics, and transparency to maintain the integrity of journalism in an era where traditional knowledge-producing institutions are met with scepticism.

Joanne Kuai — Journalism as an Institution in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Rapid developments in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) have presented disruptive challenges — and unique opportunities — for a wide array of media industries, including journalism. In this media landscape, the narrative of "AI is transforming journalism" has gained considerable traction, often portrayed with a sense of inevitability. However, preliminary findings from research reveal a striking disconnect between this popular discourse and the on-the-ground realities at news organizations. This paper draws from empirical evidence for how Chinese journalists perceive and use AI, and how they deploy boundary work to maintain their autonomy

and critical distance even as they slot into the government's vision for AI supremacy. Through qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with Chinese journalists from various news organizations, the study examines how journalists, as both users and mediators of algorithms, treat the technology under China's national vision of becoming a global AI superpower. The findings reveal that GenAI applications such as ChatGPT have captured Chinese journalists' algorithmic imaginaries. Despite acknowledging the potentially transformative power of GenAI in society, Chinese journalists view the technology as tools rather than threats and see limited use cases of GenAI in journalism as they stress automation is not desirable and humans will always be the final gatekeepers. Positioned within China's unique political and media landscape, the research underscores the complexities of journalistic practice in the GenAI era.

Mai Omer — Hallucinations, AI and the New Imagery of War

AI-generated images have increasingly seeped into the social imagination as user-friendly platforms popularised their production. This paper examines AI- images of Gaza generated by Zionist Israelis as a lens to explore the social imaginaries shaping contemporary violence. As artist Hito Steyerl notes, AI- images are 'mean images,' drawn from biased datasets, rooted in exploitative labour practices, and produced at a high environmental cost. They insert an unmistakable sense of dread into a slick, hallucinatory reality. This sense of dread becomes a full-blown nightmare in AI-generated imagery of crisis, such as the visuals of Gaza. Over the past year, I have collected these nightmarish images to understand Israeli society. Despite my Israeli background and my deep familiarity with Israeli traumas, drives, and violence, the aftermath of 7 October left me shocked, struggling to comprehend my communities' perceptions of reality. Drawing on the work of Andre Brock, I will conduct a visual analysis of AI images to argue that they not only reflect but sustain the social fantasies underpinning cycles of trauma and violence. Finally, I ask whether these technologies are destined to magnify humanity's worst impulses or if they could somehow expand our political imaginations towards alternative futures.

Speakers

Eyüp Al was born in 1989 in Germany. In 2014, he started working as a research assistant at Marmara University, Faculty of Communication. In 2015, he completed his master's degree in the Cinema department at Marmara University with his thesis titled "The Relationship Between Image, Reality, Power, and Gaze in the Context of Eye and Camera". In the same year, he was accepted into the PhD program in Communication Sciences at Marmara University and completed his doctorate in 2020 with the thesis "The Transformation of Time-Space Experience from Classical to Modern: Cinema as a Mass Communication Form". Al became an associate professor in 2022 and continues his academic career in the Department of Radio, Television, and Cinema at Marmara University. He is working as a visiting fellow in the department of Media and Communications at The London School of Economics and Political Science. His published books include "The Experience of Time and Space in Cinema" and "The Construction of Digital Society".

Shiny Angel is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Mass Communication at the Central University of Tamil Nadu, driven by a lifelong passion for advertising and a deep curiosity about the evolving roles of women in society. Her academic research focuses on Advertising and Gender Studies, where she investigates the intricate connections between advertising practices and their impact on contemporary gender dynamics.

Taylor Annabell is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the ERC Starting Grant HUMANads project at Utrecht University. Her research interests include platform governance and influencer cultures, everyday experiences of datafication and gendering of digital memory work.

Alessandro D'Arma (PhD) is a Reader in the School of Media and Communication at the University of Westminster, where he also leads the doctoral programme. His research centres on communications policy and the political economy of media industries, with a focus on issues around public service media, the politics of media policy and the digital transformation of the media industries.

Payal Arora is a Professor of Inclusive AI Cultures at Utrecht University and co-founder of two inclusive tech initiatives- Inclusive AI Lab, and FemLab. She is a leading digital anthropologist with two decades of user experiences in the Global South. Payal is the author of 100+ articles and award-winning books including "The Next Billion Users" with Harvard Press. Forbes named her the 'next billion champion' and the 'right kind of person to reform tech.' She has been listed in the 100 Brilliant Women in AI Ethics 2025 and won the 2025 Women in AI Benelux Award. Her new book with MIT Press "From Pessimism to Promise: Lessons from the Global South on Designing Inclusive Tech" has been longlisted for the 2024 Porchlight Business Book Awards. 200+ international media outlets have covered her work including the Financial Times, Wired, and The Economist, and Tech Crunch. She has consulted for several organizations including Spotify, KPMG, Adobe, IDEO, and Google. She has given 350+ keynotes in 85 countries for events such as re:publica, COP26, and the World Economic Forum, and TEDx talks. She is a Harvard and

Columbia University, and [Rockefeller Bellagio Resident Fellow](#) alumni, and lives in Amsterdam.

Pinar Aslan is an Associate Professor of Communication at Üsküdar University in Istanbul, Turkey. Her research focuses on Turkish dizi and international fandom, examining alternative cultural flows through the lenses of creative industries, fandom studies, and participatory culture. Her interests also extend to popular culture, cultural heritage, and intercultural communication. Dr. Aslan holds degrees in Public Relations and Comparative Literature, along with master's degrees in Public Relations and Cultural Studies. She earned two PhDs: one from Universidad de Salamanca, Spain, centered on female identity, iconicity, and media studies; and another from Istanbul University, Türkiye, investigating the success of Turkish television series in Latin America within a soft power framework.

Ahmad Assem is a doctoral candidate in Media and Communication Studies at Mid Sweden University and a member of DEMICOM. His research explores the intersection of technology, culture, and knowledge, focusing on the ontological and philosophical dimensions of digital media. Adopting a deconstructive approach inspired by Derrida and Yuk Hui, Assem examines how technicity shapes cultural imaginaries and perceptual frameworks. His work investigates the mediation of human experience through technological systems, with a particular interest in how digital objects challenge and expand the boundaries of datafication.

Debbie Ball is a design features doctoral researcher at CAMRI, University of Westminster, writing about 'privacy' in messaging apps and Big Tech's insatiable datafication models. Debbie lectures in data and society at Westminster, following two years as a digital humanities lecturer at Kings College London. Recent achievements include a keynote on the hopes and fears for AI and music creation at Going Global in Auckland funded by British Council New Zealand and Pacific in September 2023 and attending Digital Good Network's inaugural summer school at University of Sheffield in June 2023.

Steven Barclay (PhD) specializes in media and education policy and practice, both historic and contemporary. He currently researches the relationship between education, media and with health, with Greater Essex Health Determinants Research Collaboration and is a Research Fellow at Anglia Ruskin and Essex Universities.

Steven Barnett is Professor of Communications at the University of Westminster and an established writer, author and commentator, who specialises in media policy, regulation, political communication, and the theory and practice of journalism. Over the last 30 years, he has advised ministers and shadow ministers across the political spectrum, and has contributed to numerous select committee and public enquiries. He was called twice to give oral evidence to the Leveson inquiry, and has acted several times as specialist adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications and Digital. He has recently been appointed to a DCMS panel examining the Future of Television.

Radha Bathran is a Professor at the Central University of Tamil Nadu, specializing in research on mass-mediated influences on society. Her work primarily addresses issues related to gender, violence, and cybercrime, with a focus on their impact on

women, youth, and children. She has conducted extensive application-oriented research in critical and digital media literacy, highlighting their potential to transform mindsets and foster social responsibility. Additionally, her research explores mass-mediated gender attitudes and their implications for societal change.

Kobina Ano Bedu-Addo, Ph.D., lectures in communication policy and other media courses at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (Uni-MAC-IJ) formerly the Ghana Institute of Journalism. He studied at the Ghana Institute of Journalism, Lambeth College, UK, and the University of Westminster, UK, where he completed his Masters and Ph.D. education. His research interests cover media policy, public service broadcasting futures in Africa, convergence, digitalization and their impact on African media and communication policy-making, media regulation and regulatory regimes and the development of Africa's creative media environment.

Toby Bennett (PhD) is Senior Lecturer in Media, Culture & Organisation in the School of Media and Communications at University of Westminster. He leads the MA Global Media Business, in partnership with the Communication University of China. Recent published work includes "Corporate Life in the Digital Music Industry" (Bloomsbury 2024) documenting how employees in major record companies managed and shaped digitisation processes, and "What was cultural economy?", a themed special section of the *Journal of Cultural Economy* (17:5) exploring the cultural turn towards political economy at the Open University's Faculty of Social Sciences during the 1990s.

Dimitris Boucas (PhD) is a Lecturer at the School of Media and Communication, University of Westminster. He has studied computer engineering (University of Patras, Greece), advanced information technology (Imperial College), science and technology policy (University of Sussex), social sciences (Open University). His doctorate at LSE was on information society policy and the role of the state in Greece. His research interests include theories of communication and digital capitalism, digital technology policy, critical Internet studies, media policy, and alternative Internet models. Among other research collaborations, in 2016-2018 he worked on the EU-funded project netCommons, which examined community networks as complementary or alternative to the standard Internet. Dimitris has published on information society theory and policy and on digital capitalism and has taught at various Universities, including the LSE, the London Metropolitan University, the London College of Communication at the University of the Arts London, the City University of London, the University of Paris (Dauphine) and the University of Piraeus, Greece.

Nicola Bozzi is Lecturer in Critical Media Practice at the University of Greenwich, where he teaches primarily in the BA Media Communications. His research interests are platformed identities and social media aesthetics. As an academic, Nicola has contributed to journals like *Social Media + Society*, *Television & New Media*, and *Information, Communication & Society*, while as a freelance writer his articles have appeared in publications like Domus, Frieze, and Wired Italia. He curates an occasional newsletter about comedy, media, and culture titled *Letdown Comedy*, and you can follow him on social media as @schizocities.

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DISCO network is an intergenerational group of 14 key researchers and artists: David Adelman, André Brock, Aaron Dial, Stephanie Dinkins, Rayvon Fouché, Huan He, Jeff Nagy, Lisa Nakamura, Catherine Knight Steele, Rianna Walcott, Kevin Winstead, Josie Williams, Remi Yergeau, and Lida Zeitlin-Wu). DISCO (Digital Inquiry, Speculation, Collaboration, and Optimism) Network is a Mellon-funded research group dedicated to analyzing race, gender, disability, and technology.

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