RESEARCHING CITIZEN MEDIA

An interdisciplinary workshop

University of Manchester
15th – 16th September 2016

GENEALOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE

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Introduction

Heightened distrust in traditional forms of governance and mainstream media industries has given rise to alternative repertoires of action that now occupy a prominent place in public consciousness across the globe. In this context, unaffiliated individuals and collectives have come to play an important role in articulating various forms of political and aesthetic expression, whether in physical sites (as in the case of street art and parkour), on virtual platforms (blogging, mockumentaries, fansubbing), or across hybrid environments that combine embodied and digital practices, as in the case of documentary film-making. In producing and disseminating such citizen media content, engaged individuals and collectives seek to reclaim public and digital spaces in pursuit of non-institutionalized agendas, effect aesthetic or socio-political change, and express personal desires and aspirations.

Conducting research in this fluid, fast changing and sometimes high risk environment poses numerous methodological and ethical challenges that are yet to be adequately explored. This event will offer a platform for discussing these challenges and sharing research experiences that involve different forms and platforms of citizen media.

Workshop Organisers

This workshop is organised by the editors of a new Routledge series, Critical Perspectives on Citizen Media.

Please see the companion website for details: www.citizenmediaseries.org

Twitter: @CitMediaSeries

Programme: 15 September 2016

9.00-9.30	*Registration*	
9.30-9.40	*Welcome*	Luis Pérez-González (University of Manchester)
9.45-11.00	*Keynote I*	**Lilie Chouliaraki (London School of Economics) Witnessing Conflict Today** Chair: Bolette Blaagaard (Aalborg University, Copenhagen)
11.00-11.30	*Coffee*	
11.30-13.00	*Panel I*	**Citizen Media and Performance** Chair: Tanya Notley (Western Sydney University)
	11.30-12.00	Jess Allen (University of Manchester) Troubling Tracktivism: Reflections on the successes and failures of a rural, relational eco-activist performance practice
	12.00-12.30	Rebecca Johnson (University of Manchester) Renarrating Occupation: The Parkour Guide to Gaza
	12.30-13.00	Gemma Sou (University of Manchester) Humanitarian Video Games: Navigating their Procedural Rhetoric
13.00-14.00	*Lunch*	
14.00-15.00		**Bolette Blaagaard (Aalborg University, Copenhagen) Archives, Genealogies and the Politics of Location** Chair: Luis Pérez-González (University of Manchester)
15.00-15.30	*Coffee*	
15.30-17.00	*Panel II*	**Translation and Digital Media** Chair: Kostas Arvanitis (University of Manchester)
	15.30-16.00	Henry Jones (University of Manchester) Researching Wikipedia's Translators: Challenges and Possibilities
	16.00-16.30	Chuan Yu (Hong Kong Baptist University) The Ethics of Cyber-ethnography: Researching Citizen Media in China
	16.30-17.00	Neil Sadler (University of Manchester) Researching Twitter: Challenges and Opportunities

Programme: 16 September 2016

9.00-10.15	*Keynote II*	**Cristina Flesher Fominaya (University of Aberdeen)** **Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas in Researching Activist Communication Strategies** Chair: Andreja Zevnik (University of Manchester)
10.15-10.45	*Coffee*	
10.45-11.45		Chair: Mona Baker (University of Manchester) Nadine El-Enany (Birkbeck School of Law, University of London) Guerrilla Art at Australia House: Closing the Camps and Exposing the Violence of the Settler Colonial State
11.55-12.55		Andreja Zevnik (University of Manchester) The Subject of Resistance: Between Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement
13.00-14.00	*Lunch*	
14.00-15.30	*Panel III*	**Ethics in Social Movements and Activism Research** Chair: Cristina Flesher Fominaya (University of Aberdeen)
	14.00-14.45	Kevin Gillan (University of Manchester) Politics, Ethics and Research in Contentious Environments
	14.45-15.30	Tanya Notley (Western Sydney University and Tactical Technology Collective) Media Ethics as Activism
	15.30-16.15	Derya Yuksek (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) Community Media as a Participatory Contact Zone and their Role in Conflict Transformation
16.15-16.25	*Closing remarks*	Mona Baker (University of Manchester)

Keynote presentations

Lilie Chouliaraki
London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Witnessing Conflict Today

Digital witnessing, our engagement with death through local participants' own recordings of the conflict zone, introduces new challenges in the journalism of conflict. Whilst, like past practices of journalistic witnessing, this one also invites its publics to witness the suffering and death of conflict as a moral event that requires a response, digital spectacles differ from past ones in that they inject into the practice of witnessing three different kinds of doubt: doubt around truth (how do we know this is authentic?); doubt around sincerity (how do we know this is all there is?); and doubt around appropriateness (should this be shown or not?). Corresponding to the three pragmatic claims of the communicative public sphere, these three forms of doubt around truth, sincerity and appropriateness simultaneously challenge the limits of traditional journalism to act as a public institution that confidently narrates conflict to its publics and invites us to take a stance. This is because, given the multiple actors filming in conflict zones, digital witnessing breaks with the professional monopoly of the journalist and becomes a complex site of struggle where competing spectacles of death and suffering, each with their own interest, vie for visibility. How the journalism of conflict and its public ethics of witnessing change under the weight of this new epistemic instability is the focus of this presentation.

Lilie Chouliaraki is Professor of Media and Communication at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has written extensively on media ethics, particularly the problem of mediated suffering, digital journalism, human rights/humanitarian communication as well as Discourse Theory and Analysis. She is the author of fifty peer-reviewed articles or book chapters, two of which are award-winning; and author or editor of seven books, including Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis' (EUP, 1999 with Norman Fairclough); The Spectatorship of Suffering (Sage, 2006/2011) and The Ironic Spectator. Solidarity in the Age of Post-humanitarianism (Polity, 2013; Outstanding Book Award 2015; International Communication Association).

Cristina Flesher Fominaya
University of Aberdeen, UK

Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas in Researching Activist Communication Strategies

In this presentation I will present some of the challenges facing activists and researchers exploring activist media and communication strategies in a complex media ecology. While most methodological discussions centre around formal or technical discussions of social media archiving and network analysis, less discussed are more qualitative or ethnographic analyses of activist collective communication strategies and the issues they grapple with in relation to power, access and strategic dilemmas. In this session I will present some examples of activist communication strategies from my own research on Spain's Indignados/15M movement and how this differs from some dominant analyses in the field. I will then offer an overview of more qualitative methodological approaches, showing how these correct some of the more technologically deterministic narratives of techno politics in vogue at the moment. I will then discuss some of the ethical and methodological dilemmas this form of analysis poses for the researcher/activist, including what to do with information gleaned from privileged insider access, and the difference between critical analysis and accepting activist narratives at face value. I will not provide a definitive take on these issues but rather raise some questions for an open discussion about some of the dilemmas and challenges faced by ethnographic media researchers in the field as well as the special possibilities these qualitative approaches offer for advancing our knowledge of activist communication strategies in a digital hyperlinked world.

Cristina Flesher Fominaya is a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) at the University of Aberdeen. She was a Senior Marie Curie Fellow at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth from 2013-2015. She has a PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. She is an editor and founder of Interface Journal and an editor of Social Movement Studies Journal. Her latest book is Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings are Changing the World, from Palgrave Macmillan.

Panel presentations

Jess Allen
University of Manchester, UK

Troubling Tracktivism: Reflections on the successes and failures of a rural, relational eco-activist performance practice

Tracktivism is my own neologism for a contemporary performance practice that combines walking art, talking art (dialogic practice) and ecological activism. The term – which simply denotes walking along tracks with activist intent – was originally conceived as a deadpan antidote to 'slacktivism', urban slang for the sedentary trend of participating in 'feel-good internet campaigns that [don't] actually help anybody or [have] political impact[;] pretending to care while sitting on your butt in front of a computer' (Urban Dictionary 2015: n. p.). It derived from my desire to step away from the convenient, conscience-assuaging laziness of social media-based activist monoculture (without suggesting that it is wholly ineffective); instead exploring how embodied commitment to long-distance walking could be used to facilitate meaningful face-to-face conversation with strangers randomly encountered en route. Borrowing from the aesthetics of walking art, the performance walks are shaped carefully around a specific ecological issue (food, water, renewable energy), their distinctive form acting as a provocation or guide to the subsequent dialogue. In this sense, tracktivism is a peripatetic, pastoral, pedestrian version of what performance theorist Wallace Heim terms 'slow activism': artist-mediated, creatively-convened conversations that may form an 'occasion of character' sufficiently persuasive to effect behavioural change, or shift perception through an 'ethics of character or virtue' (2003, p. 184).For the past three years I have been experimenting with and refining the methodology of tracktivism through doctoral research practice. Comparing and contrasting three very different performance pieces that comprise the current oeuvre, I will reflect on the successes and failures of tracktivism as a methodology for rural, relational, eco-activist performance. I consider how contemporary performance can both challenge and sit within rural communities, and how it might function with/across a dispersed and often disenfranchised population. I also suggest that walking and talking might be reframed as embodied practices of interruption, Peter Sloterdijk's philosophical space in which we take time to ponder and transform the ideas or stimuli we receive, rather than thoughtlessly conducting or re-transmitting them in impotent feedback loops; disrupting the 'stagnant flows' of social media with embodied, real-world, convivial action.

Jess Allen is an aerial dancer, ecological performer and walking artist from Aberystwyth. She is currently completing a (second) PhD in walking and moving in rural landscapes as an eco-activist arts practice, for which she was awarded a President's Doctoral Scholarship from the University of Manchester. She uses walking to create unexpected performance encounters in unusual locations. Originally a biologist, she gained her first PhD from Aberystwyth before re-training in contemporary dance, latterly at Coventry with an MA in Dance Making and Performance. She has worked as landscape officer for local government, dance lecturer (experiential anatomy/improvisation), arts facilitator (AHRC Multi-Story Water) and as an aerial performer for Blue Eyed Soul (UK/US), Full Tilt and EVERYBODY dance (UK/Europe). She recently guest edited – with Bronwyn Preece and Stephen Bottoms – 'Performing Ecos', the ecology and climate change-themed special issue of international theatre ethics journal Performing Ethos.

Bolette B. Blaagaard
Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark

Archives, Genealogies and the Politics of Location

This presentation draws on a historical case study to elaborate a methodological approach to theorising citizen media. The aim is to shift the perspective on citizen media from digital and contemporary sites, politics and products to the embodied, political act of citizenship in citizen media by exploring mediated conceptualisations of citizenship in places and periods of history where they are often overlooked. Recent theories of citizen media tend to focus on either digitalisation, visualisations and contemporary uprisings, or on citizen media as a challenge to professional journalism. I propose to shift the focus to the embodied, political act of the citizen by exploring mediated conceptualisations of citizenship in the colonial space and time of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John. Today, these islands are known as the US Virgin Islands (USVI), but a hundred years ago they were Danish colonial possessions and home to plantation owners and descendants of enslaved people alike. From 1915 to 1925, DH Jackson, a descendant of enslaved people, wrote, edited and published the newspaper The Herald as part of his project to enhance the qualifications, political assertions and conditions of the workers on the islands. From the perspective of citizen media as an embodied, political act, The Herald actualises mediated political acts of citizenship. Today, The Herald is available to read on micro-film at the Danish State Library in the town of Aarhus, Denmark. This case study presents a number of theoretical and methodological challenges to the current conceptualisation of citizen media. If we understand citizen media as standing in opposition to professional journalism, or as defined by the technological developments of the late 20th to early 21st centuries, The Herald does not qualify. However, if we look at citizen media as an embodied political act, The Herald is the epitome of this concept. Moreover, the fact that The Herald today is stored in an archive in Denmark, rather than The USVI, calls for further reflection on the politics of the archive and postcolonial relations. The presentation addresses this complexity by first reflecting on the postcolonial power of the archive that maintains The Herald and on my position as a Danish researcher in relation to the memory and heritage stored on these micro-films. Second, I engage with a genealogical reading of citizen media in order to argue that The Herald is indeed an instance of citizen media despite its professional layout and the fact that it was a commercial enterprise. And third and finally, I argue that theorising a contemporary concept such as citizen media in a historical context necessitates a politics of location in which the cultural memory in the archived documents of The Herald and the politics of the archive are continually negotiated and questioned.

Dr. Bolette B Blaagaard is Associate Professor of Communications at Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark. Her research focuses on the intersections of culture and journalism with an emphasis on citizen produced and disseminated media, and she has published on this topic in international journals including Visual Communications, Journalism Studies, and Social Identities. She is the co-editor of among others Deconstructing Europe. Postcolonial Perspectives (Routledge 2012) with Sandra Ponzanesi, After Cosmopolitanism (Routledge 2013) with Patrick Hanafin and Rosi Braidotti, Cosmopolitanism and the New News Media (Routledge 2014) with Lilie Chouliaraki, and Citizen Media and Public Spaces (Routledge forthcoming 2016) with Mona Baker. Blaagaard is moreover the co-series editor of a new Routledge book series entitled Critical Perspectives on Citizen Media, with Luis Peréz-Gonzaléz and Mona Baker, Manchester University, which aims to define and advance understanding of citizen media as an emerging academic field located at the interface between different disciplines and practices.

Nadine El-Enany
Birkbeck School of Law, University of London

Guerrilla Art at Australia House: Closing the Camps and Exposing the Violence of the Settler Colonial State

This study examines recent actions carried out by the London branch of the International Alliance Against Mandatory Detention (IAMD), a loosely defined collective of activists from across the world who oppose the Australian government's policy of detaining refugees offshore. This policy sees all refugees who attempt to reach Australia by boat detained indefinitely in dire conditions on Christmas Island and on the remote Pacific islands of Manus, PNG and Nauru in conditions found by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to be in violation of the Convention against Torture. Detained refugees are regularly subjected to violence, abuse, rape and sexual assault. Extreme self-harm and attempted suicide are common and five refugees have died. The paper understands this racialised violence through a conceptual framework that builds on and racial formation theory and critical race theory. Drawing on the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Renisa Mawani and Dean Spade, it argues that racism is structurally produced in a manner which makes racialised groups vulnerable to premature death. Two creative actions by IAMD activists are examined. The first is a work by guerrilla projectionists who lit up the Australian High Commission in London with the faces of refugees who have died in Australian offshore detention. The second saw activists attempt to take a boat into the Australian High Commission, an action designed to simulate the Australian government's brutal 'stop the boats' policy at the border of its diplomatic territory in London. While justice for those who have suffered at the hands of the Australian government is unlikely to be achieved through these creative interventions, they contribute to making visible the ongoing racist violence that has defined this settler colony since its inception, a violence that its rulers both deny and seek to conceal. In turn, these actions can help to bring about a material reshaping of the national psyche, both in Australia and in the heart of the colonial motherland, enabling a broader understanding of the causes and effects of structural racism and violence, as well as hastening the end of such brutal policies.

Nadine El-Enany is Lecturer at Birkbeck School of Law, University of London, where she co-directs the Centre for Research on Law and Race. Nadine teaches and researches in the fields of migration law, European Union law and criminal justice. She has published widely in the field of EU asylum and immigration law. Her current research focuses on questions of race and criminal and social justice in migration, protest and death in custody cases. Nadine is Chair of the Runnymede Trust Emerging Scholars Race Forum. She has written for Media Diversified, the Guardian, London Review of Books, Truthout, Left Foot Forward and Critical Legal Thinking.

Kevin Gillan
University of Manchester, UK

Politics, Ethics and Research in Contentious Environments

'Research ethics' often signifies a bureaucratic process through which we attempt to guarantee that we will do no harm to our research respondents. For those researching areas of social life that are in some way contentious, however, a genuinely ethical approach to our work is more complex. This presentation will note some limitations of the bureaucratic approach to research ethics. First, the requirement to 'complete' one's ethical considerations before embarking on fieldwork discourages reflexivity and adaptation in what should be an open ended process. Second, the formulaic approach to ethical review taken in most institutions means that what many scholars consider to be the real ethical challenges of research are never considered. For researchers in contentious environments, the political nature of their research – whether understood through the positionality of the researcher vis-à-vis research participants or through the potential impacts of research findings – raises key issues of ethics that simply will not dissolve in a bureaucratic solution. I will go on to explore a number of principles and practices that might contribute to a genuine research ethics. These lessons will be drawn from a group of social movement scholars who have focused particularly on the ethical difficulties of research in ongoing periods of contentious politics: see, for example, contributions to Social Movement Studies 11(2). Rather than offering any instructions for a 'one best way' of approaching research ethics, I will highlight a series of dilemmas that researchers often face, drawing out what is at stake in making ethical decisions. Genuine research ethics will be described as an ongoing, continuously negotiated process with significant methodological ramifications.

Kevin Gillan is a scholar of social movements with a particular interest in understanding the development and communication of political beliefs and values that are critical of contemporary capitalist structures. He has researched and published on theories of social movements (particularly in relation to the framing perspective), anti-war and peace activism, globalisation and new media. These themes came together in a book titled Anti-War Activism: New Media and Protest in the Information Age (Palgrave, 2008, with Jenny Pickerill and Frank Webster). Recent publications include two edited collections: Research Ethics and Social Movements: Scholarship, Activism and Knowledge Production and Occupy! A Global Movement (both Routledge, 2015). Kevin is Editor-in-Chief at Social Movement Studies and Chair of the research network Movements@Manchester.

Rebecca Johnson
University of Manchester, UK

Renarrating Occupation: The Parkour Guide to Gaza

As a means of reclaiming and playfully expanding the ensemble of possibilities of urban space, parkour has attracted considerable interest across digital media cultures. The practice takes on a particular poignancy performed in the occupied territory of Palestine, where citizens seek to simultaneously create a sense of home and liberation within an environment of imprisonment, poverty and conflict. This paper takes as its case study a short tour guide video produced by the Gaza Parkour Team in response to a similar video by activist graffiti artist Banksy, which was published online by The Guardian in March 2015. The text is presented within the context of global media flows, and temporally situated in the post-9/11 era – understood as an unfolding historical moment characterised by unprecedented global connectivity and inflected by hegemonic narratives surrounding Islam and Muslims. Combining narrative theory (Baker 2006; de Certeau 1984) with elements of Deleuzian philosophy, I firstly seek to demonstrate how the performance of parkour in the Palestinian territory in itself constitutes resistance to post-9/11 narrative hegemony on an epistemological level. I will then consider the digital mediation of the performance/tour for its various implications as an emerging form of political expression in the digital age. More broadly, this paper seeks to outline some of the challenges involved in "conceiving of a contemporary moment from within that moment" (Berlant 2011), especially in a temporal context so fraught with complexity and paradox. Ultimately, I argue that under conditions of narrative hegemony, it is only on the epistemological level that such paradoxes can be identified and resolved. Furthermore, the globalised Palestinian narrative of resistance may offer one route into doing so.

Rebecca Johnson is a 3rd year AHRC-funded doctoral student at CTIS, University of Manchester. Her thesis is a socio-narrative exploration of performative responses to Islam and the War on Terror, drawing on a data set of 12 audiovisual texts in French, Spanish, English and Arabic. The performative genres are hip hop, comedy, punk and parkour. She argues that the texts are part of an epistemological groundswell that is symptomatic of our time, whereby contradiction and aesthetics emerge as key tools for resistance to neoliberal hegemony. Prior to commencing her PhD, she worked for five years as a freelance translator, and before this she worked for different organisations linked to international affairs. She has two master's degrees: Translation & Interpreting Studies (University of Manchester, 2012), and International Relations (University of Birmingham, 2008).

Henry Jones
University of Manchester, UK

Researching Wikipedia's Translators: Challenges and possibilities

Ranked seventh amongst the most visited websites worldwide, Wikipedia holds a unique position in modern society, not only as an extremely popular platform for the production and circulation of knowledge, but also as an example of a large and highly successful citizen media project. Indeed, it serves as a compelling example of the possibilities that networked digital technologies have opened up for mass collaboration on an unprecedented scale between geographically dispersed individuals, and the growing desire of ordinary citizens to actively participate in the creation, manipulation and distribution of media content.

Translation plays a central role in the Wikipedia volunteer community's efforts to give "every single person on the planet […] free access to the sum of all human knowledge" (Wales 2004), and yet its importance has largely been overlooked in previous research. My research contributes therefore towards a greater understanding of Wikipedia's interlingual information flows by investigating the activity of volunteers involved in collaborative translation practices within the English- and French-language editions, focusing on the creation of articles relating to world cities.

Conducting research into Wikipedia is rarely straightforward however. This presentation will focus on the intriguing blend of methodological possibilities and challenges with which scholars must engage in this area of investigation. Specifically, it will consider the methodological implications of the unstable, ever-changing nature of Wikipedia's content and discuss the difficulties presented by the vast scale of the digital encyclopedia project. Finally, it will make use of a selection of Wikipedia's in-built research tools to suggest solutions to these issues, whilst highlighting the need for a highly flexible approach to methodology design when working in dynamic online contexts.

Henry Jones is a final-year PhD student in Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. His research investigates Wikipedia from a cross-cultural perspective, focusing on the networks of volunteer translators operating within and between the English- and French-language versions of the multilingual user-generated encyclopedia. Henry holds a Masters degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies from the University of Manchester and a BA in French Studies from the University of Sheffield.

Tanya Notley
Western Sydney University, Australia

Media Ethics as Activism

Our personal media ecologies influence the way we think, feel, behave and interact with one another, and media producers therefore have a responsibility to engage with key ethical questions about their practice. In this presentation, I define media ethics as a reflective engagement with the approaches and practices that define how media responds to the urgent problems of the day and to existing power imbalances, in light of where we have been and where we hope to be in the future (Ward 2013).The media that activists use to drive social change is often created in ways that are informed by particular values and ethics. However, these values and ethics are not always visible in the media artefacts that are created. This presentation will consider the preparatory discussions, processes and practices that activists often engage in to support the negotiation of ethical media practices. In particular, I will discuss research I have carried out with a network of ten organisations – based in and working across different countries and regions – that use video as a primary method to create social change. I will consider what we can learn from these and other media activist groups about what it means to negotiate ethical media activism in and across multiple and complex contexts and use this analysis to propose a framework for analysing the ethics and values embedded within activist media.

Tanya Notley is a communication and social change practitioner, educator and researcher. She has 15 years of experience working in the areas of social justice and human rights, community-based and online media initiatives. Tanya is employed as a Lecturer in Internet Studies and Digital Media in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at Western Sydney University and she is a researcher with both the Institute for Culture and Society and the Digital Humanities Research Group. She collaborates with a number of human rights and social justice organisations to design communication initiatives for social impact. Her current research projects are focused on the emotional mapping of cities, human rights micro-tasking and investigating the politics of data centres.

Neil Sadler
University of Manchester, UK

Researching Twitter: Challenges and opportunities

Twitter represents an important arena for citizen media praxis, allowing unaffiliated citizens to reach potentially large and geographically distant audiences in previously unimaginable ways while also constituting an important resource for scholars as a hugely detailed archive of digital life. Nonetheless, it also presents significant theoretical and methodological problems. Although the scholarly literature on social media has moved beyond reductive "utopian" and "pessimistic" approaches (Haunss 2015), it is still in its infancy and suffers from a tendency to conflate different platforms, treating them as homogenous and ignoring important differences between them. This presentation offers a critical appraisal of Twitter from a qualitative researcher's perspective, discussing the opportunities that Twitter presents as a very large, searchable database containing information that would in many cases not have been recorded in previous eras, as well as the challenges facing researchers operating in this environment in terms of the limits of what analysis of Twitter can tell us, finding and applying appropriate theory, selecting data, negotiating the ethics of the complex boundary between "public" and "private" online and the practicalities of working with qualitative Twitter data. I refer throughout to my doctoral research examining the way in which three Egyptian citizen journalists narrated the 3 July 2013 military intervention in Egypt and attempted to articulate narratives distinct from the dominant institutional narratives of the period. I argue that Twitter represents an invaluable resource for researchers and that a great deal of existing theory can be brought to bear on it, provided that we are prepared to be innovative and flexible in our approach.

Neil Sadler is a final year PhD student at the Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester and also holds an MA in Translation Studies from the same institution. His doctoral thesis focuses on the analysis of bilingual narratives of the 3 July 2013 military intervention in Egypt, as told on Twitter in English and Arabic, using an approach combining sociological and narratological theories of narrative.

Gemma Sou
University of Manchester, UK

Humanitarian video games: Navigating their procedural rhetoric

Popular culture representations of refugees are often dehumanizing and decontextualized. However, this paper argues that refugee-related 'serious games' have the potential to move away from representations that perpetuate a politics of pity towards refugees and to present more politically, historically and culturally contextualized narratives that may catalyse activism. Serious games are video games designed with a purpose other than entertainment and they focus on many contemporary social issue. Grassroots activist groups often design refugee-related games, and these regularly challenge the 'victim-saviour' narrative that dominates popular culture. This is possible because their 'possibility spaces' allow players to explore politically, historically and culturally contextualised narratives. Additionally, video games communicate differently than traditional media because their representations are not only found within their images, text and speech, but also in how they simulate social processes that the player navigates. Therefore they not only have visual and verbal rhetoric, but through their simulation of 'real world' processes they also have procedural rhetoric, which makes their arguments particularly persuasive (Bogost 2010). As such, this paper aims to draw attention to the sophisticated messages that take place in serious games and which have the potential to bring about a sense of social responsibility among western audiences to work towards global social justice. This research involves playing refugee-related serious games. Researching the procedural rhetoric in video games can be challenging, because it is necessary to explore the multiple pathways that have been scripted and programmed into the game – these are not always easy to find and navigate through. Therefore, the game must be played multiple times, in multiple ways, and you must ensure you do not try to 'win'. It is also difficult to remain focused on unpacking potentially sophisticated representations of social processes, when faced with visual representations of refugees that can essentialise refugees, and from a starting position in which I personally question the ethics of gamifying refugees' experiences.

Gemma is Lecturer in Disaster Management at the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute at the University of Manchester, and she completed her PhD in Development Studies at the University of Manchester (2015). Her research focuses on the representations of human vulnerability, with a particular focus on humanitarianism. She also looks at the interplay between cultures and disasters in the 'global south'. In particular, she is interested in the cultures of vulnerable populations and humanitarian organisations, and the effects these cultures have on disaster response. Gemma has worked on diverse projects for BBC Worldwide, Goldsmiths University of London, the ESRC and DFID, the Ford Foundation, The Natural Environment Research Council, the World Bank and UNOY Peacebuilders, based in The Hague.

Chuan Yu
Hong Kong Baptist University

The Ethics of Cyber-ethnography: Researching citizen media in China

In a world where technology is ubiquitous, few ethnographic projects can be conducted 'unplugged'. Undertaking ethnographic studies of Internet-based forms of citizen media is particularly challenging in terms of data collection, establishing a relationship of trust between the 'prosumers' of citizen media content in online communities and the researcher, and adopting an appropriate code of ethics. This presentation will focus on the ethical dilemmas faced by Internet researchers of citizen media communities when they use online methods to collect qualitative data and as they represent cyber-ethnographic fieldwork in academic writing. I will begin with an overview of Internet research and the ethical dilemmas that researchers are likely to encounter, before moving on to discuss the specific case of the Chinese Internet, which is governed by the Chinese government – indeed, the government claims exclusive sovereignty over it. Drawing on a study of two online citizen media communities, Cenci Journalism Project and Yeeyan, I will describe how I approached participants in these communities, particularly Yeeyan, using the methods of participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. During my nineteen-month long cyber-ethnography in Yeeyan, I confronted a number of ethical dilemmas, including: the choice between covert and overt research; the blurred boundary between public and private spaces; the storage of research data and the loss of research context; and the potential for a breach of confidentiality during the writing-up phase. Finally, reflecting on my experience, I will argue that researching citizen media on the Internet should draw on available ethical guidelines for both online and offline settings, such as those provided by the Association of Internet Researchers; be sensitive to the cultural and socio-political context in which the research takes place; and apply available guidelines in a flexible, reflexive and contextually nuanced manner that foregrounds the rights and safety of the individual participants.

Chuan Yu is a final year PhD candidate in the Translation Programme at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her current research focuses on collaborative translation, online translation communities, translation competence, translator identities and the use of ethnographic methodologies in TS research. Her PhD project titled, Collaborative Translation in Online Communities of Practice: An Ethnographic Study of Yeeyan, is an interdisciplinary study which intersects with Media and Communication Studies, Anthropology and Sociology. Chuan Yu also undertakes translation work, as well as providing teaching assistance for the Programme. Her translation and editing work includes academic textbooks such as An Introduction to Language and journal/magazine articles published on open access platforms. Before joining HKBU, she was employed as a Lecturer in China and as a Confucius Institute Teacher in the US.

Derya Yuksek
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

Community Media as a Participatory Contact Zone and their Role in Conflict Transformation

Although the participatory nature of community media has attracted significant scholarly attention in recent years, the role they play in conflict transformation remains under-researched. Building on Chantal Mouffe's (2000, 2005) model of agonistic democracy, this paper explores the peace-building function that community media may serve in the context of the Cyprus conflict. It examines how community media content production processes that bring together Greek/Turkish Cypriot youth, emphasizing a maximalist form of participation, may contribute to a shift from antagonism to agonism in this divided island. Methodologically, the research covers four stages. The first stage surveys peace-building projects aimed at Cypriot youth, drawing on two case studies (Yin, 1994) to gain a better understanding of their participatory intensity in relationship with conflict transformation. The second stage, which draws primarily on action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), involves the organization of community media training and production sessions held in partnership with schools and existing Cypriot community media organizations. The third stage consists of in-depth interviews with participants in these sessions to shed light on their perceived contribution to conflict transformation using agonistic means. The final stage, which revolves around 16 focus groups with Cypriot stakeholders and youth, delivers a reception analysis (Staiger, 2005) of the community media content produced in previous stages.

Derya Yuksek holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Trieste and is a doctoral researcher at the Communication Studies Department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). Her research interests include alternative and new media, participatory communication, conflict transformation, social movements, and youth. Her doctoral thesis explores the potential of participatory media production processes for conflict transformation, focusing on the specific context of Cyprus conflict. Prior to joining VUB, she worked as a manager and consultant in various international cooperation projects in the fields of culture, education and media.

Andreja Zevnik
University of Manchester

The Subject of Resistance: Between Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights Movement

A couple of years after the emergence of the Black Lives Matter campaign, discussions as to how to understand and where to locate this movement have now started. Does this movement represent a continuation of the civil rights movement (grounded in actions of civil disobedience and non-violent protests) that was at its strongest in the period between 1950 and 1970; does it represent a (critical) response to the narrative that framed the civil rights movement as a non-violent movement for racial equality, or does BLM embody something else? This presentation engages with the different narratives surrounding the Black Lives Matter initiative and the framings of the civil rights movement through which it aims to theorise a subject of resistance – one that is either a collective (a movement) or an individual subject of resistance. The presentation then compares the 'new' subject of resistance with how the subject of resistance is framed through the civil rights movement and explores their potential for reframing and re–engaging with democratic politics.

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