Communication, material and discursive power dynamics

Two-day colloquium

28 – 29 October 2016
Department of Informatics and Media
Uppsala University

The colloquium is co-organised by the Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University, and DESIRE, the Centre for the study of Democracy, Signification and Resistance
# ‘Communication, and material and discursive power dynamics’
## Colloquium programme
### 28 – 29 October 2016, Uppsala University

**Venue:** Ekonomikum, Kyrkogårdsgratan 10, Uppsala. Room: H429 (Faculty Club)

**Day 1, Friday 28 October**

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<th>Registration – Coffee, 8.30-9.00</th>
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### Panel 1: Journalism and power, 9.00-10.30
Chair: Vaia Doudaki, Uppsala University, Sweden

- **Barbie Zelizer**
  University of Pennsylvania, USA
  *When the Wrong Kind of Authority Neutralizes Journalism: The Cold War, Journalism and the US Presidential Race*

- **Göran Svensson**
  Uppsala University, Sweden
  *Using a critical institutional approach in the analysis of power struggles over media and journalism*

- **Saba Bebawi**
  University of Technology Sydney, Australia
  *Forces of discursive power: Developing a culture of Arab investigative journalism*

**Coffee break, 10.30-11.00**

### Panel 2: Power, institutions and organisations, 11.00-12.30
Chair: Pär Ågerfalk, Uppsala University, Sweden

- **Jason Glynos**
  University of Essex, UK
  *On the politics and ideology of evaluation research. Cooption, contestation and performance*

- **Mathieu Berger, Benjamin De Cleen**
  Catholic University of Leuven (UCL), Belgium - Free University of Brussels (VUB), Belgium
  *The Interpellated Citizen: Subject positions and subjects’ positioning in a ‘Citizen Lab’ on healthcare reimbursement*

- **Therese Monstad**
  Uppsala University, Sweden
  *Communication and practices of authority in organisations*

**Lunch break, 12.30-13.30**

### Panel 3: Media, power, politics, 13.30-15.30
Chair: Mats Edenius, Uppsala University, Sweden

- **Charlotte Knorr**
  Leipzig University, Germany
  *On polarization and attribution – Discursive power dynamics across different online-constellations*

- **Jernej Amon Prodnik**
  University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
  *O power, where art thou? Mediatization and the shifting power relations between politics and media*

- **Anu Kantola**
  University of Helsinki, Finland
  *In the Mood for Power: Mediated Emotional Styles of Power, Finland 1950 – 2015*

- **Dawn Wheatley**
  Dublin City University, Ireland
  *Power, politics and press releases: journalism practice and trade union agendas*

**Coffee break, 15.30-16.00**
### Panel 4: Conflict, memory and trauma, 16.00-17.30
Chair: Annika Waern, Uppsala University, Sweden

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**Dinner, 20.00**

**Day 2, Saturday 29 October**

**Coffee, 8.30-9.00**

### Panel 5: Social movements and change, 9.00-10.30
Chair: Nico Carpentier, Uppsala University, Sweden

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<td>Ylva Ekström</td>
<td>Uppsala University, Sweden</td>
<td>Social media and everyday initiatives for social change among youths in East Africa</td>
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**Coffee break, 10.30-11.00**

### Panel 6: Power, aesthetics and design, 11.00-12.30
Chair: Jenny Eriksson Lundström, Uppsala University, Sweden

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<td>Annika Waern</td>
<td>Uppsala University, Sweden</td>
<td>Players as co-designers: Agency and control in the design of live role-playing games</td>
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**Lunch break, 12.30-14.00**

### Panel 7: Fans, gamers, lurkers and non-users, 14.00-16.00
Chair: Andreas Hamfelt, Uppsala University, Sweden

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Papers’ abstracts

Day 1, Friday 28 October

Panel 1: Journalism and power, 9.00-10.30
Chair: Vaia Doudaki (Uppsala University, Sweden)

**When the Wrong Kind of Authority Neutralizes Journalism: The Cold War, Journalism and the US Presidential Race**

_Barbie Zelizer (Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, USA)_

This paper addresses how Cold War sentiments and standards of action have undermined US journalistic coverage of the current US presidential race. When the Cold War ended in 1989, its mindset went underground, surfacing periodically to lend form to events and issues in need of public consensus. The current US presidential race constitutes one such circumstance. Cold War notions of enmity and the journalistic standards of action that developed in response are being replicated today in coverage of the US presidential race. Acting as Cold War warriors in an environment fuelled by powerful notions of enemy formation, journalists of the Cold War era made sure that conformity and homogeneity ruled in their coverage, and even during the height of McCarthyism they embraced a belief that “reporting from nowhere” was the best way to offset political interference. This model of journalistic action, which adhered to aspirations of impartiality, balance and objectivity as a means of dealing with conflict, constitutes the exemplar for US journalists’ current coverage of the presidential race. Yet it is far from useful in covering today’s politics. Rather, it short-circuits journalism’s capacity to respond to changes in contemporary political culture and renders it ineffectual in the face of rising forms of populism and the actions of Republican Party candidate Donald Trump. US journalists, then, are invoking the wrong kind of authority to cover politics today. Not only does this set of affairs forcefully constrain journalists’ ability to provide the kind of coverage needed by the US public, but it also displays an adherence to the past that neutralizes the development of alternative modes of journalistic conduct that might be more widely responsive to current circumstances.

**Using a critical institutional approach in the analysis of power struggles over media and journalism**

_Göran Svensson (Uppsala University, Sweden)_

The presentation will introduce how media and power can be studied using the conceptual framework of critical institutionalism (Svensson 2015). Critical institutionalism offers a way to describe and analyse power and the contestation of media.

The conceptual model is used for the analysis of discussions on hate speech or “net hate” and its relation to media and journalism in a Swedish online social discussion forum and in mainstream media. Questions asked are: (1) how is critique and criticism of media and journalism institutionalised (2) what are the implied consequences of the critique, if any, on media and journalism and (3) how does the media used contribute to the linking of institution and critique in this discussion?

The first conceptual element is the critical, seen as the capacity and propensity to ask questions and, most importantly, ask questions that question. Such questions become contestations that actively may shape and change the institutions in their social setting - in short criticalization of institutions. Specific forms of critique are also identified as expressions of different forms of criticality, opening a space of multiple forms of critiques and criticisms.

The second conceptual element is the institutional. Human action, thinking and social organization can be seen as or be linked to institutions. Critique, criticism and media criticism can all be studied and analysed in terms of institutional production, reproduction and transformation – in short the institutionalisation of critique. Such institutions have the capacity to exclusively or mutually influence each other, but institutional alteration can also be mediated or articulated by a third part – in this case the media used.
Critical institutionalism is elaborated using these three aspects: the critical perspective on media and communication institutions, the institutional perspective on critique and the mediation/articulation of them through different forms of media. Power struggles in and over media and communication are thus investigated in terms of the mediated relations between institutionalization of critique and criticalization of institutions.

**Forces of Discursive Power: Developing a Culture of Arab Investigative Journalism**  
*Saba Bebawi (University of Technology Sydney, Australia)*

This study looks into the various factors that play a role in the development of investigative journalism in the Arab world as a potential tool for democracy-building. It labels *forces of discursive power* as shaping the formation of a culture of Arab investigative journalism, and which can be summed up as: levels of freedom of information, state control, social pressures, culture of journalism, and the political instability of the region.

Investigative journalism is a vital part of the development of mature democracies. It serves the functions of (1) exposing ‘wrongdoing and deceit in public office’; and (2) acting ‘as a key mechanism of public accountability’ (Street, 2011: 193). In the Arab region (which this study identifies as the member states of the Arab league), the media have been mainly state-controlled, opinion pieces have been monitored, and investigative reporting has been regarded as threatening. Commercial media enterprises have sought to steer away from social and political issues and focus more on entertainment - an area that also yields larger financial returns.

However, in some Arab countries which have undergone a structural regime change (such as Egypt and Tunisia), or which have undergone constitutional amendments (such as Jordan), media institutions have supposedly been freed from the control of the state thus enforcing their role in promoting deliberative public spheres. In addition to these countries, investigative journalism is also practiced at a small scale in conflict zones such as Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Although it cannot hold officials accountable due to political chaos, there have been successful stories coming out of these countries that bring to light important issues pertaining to the conflict.

This study engages with the concept of media power within the public sphere as a conceptual framework for understanding the extent to which the role of investigative journalism could be realising, developing and promoting a deliberative Arab public sphere. Here media power is defined as ‘a label for the net result of organizing a society’s resources so that the media sector has significant independent bargaining power over and against other key sectors (big business, political elites, cultural elites, and so on)’ (Couldry and Curran, 2003: 3). This project perceives investigative journalism practice through this definition of media power, and positions it as enacting ‘subaltern-counterpublics’ (Fraser 1993), that ‘contest and compete with other publics, thus contributing to a representative sphere rather than a ‘single, comprehensive, overarching public sphere’ (Fraser, 1993: 14). It also perceives investigative journalists and their work as ‘voices’ (Couldry 2010) or ‘interlocutors’ (Fraser 2007) within the Arab public sphere, that actively aim to challenge and change public discourse. This study argues that there is a potential for the Arab mediated public sphere to be more representative, especially through the role of investigative journalism.

**Panel 2: Power, institutions and organisations, 11.00-12.30**  
Chair: Pär Ågerfalk (Uppsala University, Sweden)

**On the Politics & Ideology of Evaluation Research. Cooptation, Contestation & Performance**  
*Jason Glynos (University of Essex, UK)*

Government departments and agencies, including local authorities, are more and more in the business of commissioning services to serve their local populations. In theory, and in order to secure ‘value for money’, organizations of all types are being encouraged to bid for service contracts under conditions of competition. Anticipating and evaluating the performance of an
organization to deliver services thus entails demonstrating how such delivery can or does represent the best ‘value for money’.

Increasingly, however, the essential contestability of ‘value’ in ‘value for money’ has been dragged kicking and screaming into the spotlight. Standard cost benefit models that take for granted the equation between ‘value’ and ‘readily ascertainable monetary value’ are no longer regarded as adequate to the task because they leave out of their calculus activities that are experienced as valuable even though they have no ready-to-hand monetary value assigned to them. Less clear is what we should subsume under the category ‘value’, and this open-ended problematization has prompted a shift in associated discourses and practices of evaluation. On the one hand, drawing on the fields of democratic theory and ecology, we find the explicit promotion of values and processes hitherto marginalized in standard cost-benefit approaches to evaluation: well-being, environmental sustainability, co-production, empowerment, personalization, cohesion, resilience, citizen-participation, stakeholder engagement, etc. On the other hand, we find attempts to actively incorporate those values and processes, as well as any number of other valuable fugitive experiences, into a calculus that is more inventive and expansive in its practices of quantification, more creative in the assignment of monetary proxies, and/or more encouraging of stakeholder involvement and collective decision-making. Among other things, such shifts in discourse and practice have given rise to alternative approaches that seek to actively bring evaluation research into closer contact with processes of governance, such as SROI (Social Return on Investment), as well as affiliated stakeholder-oriented research methodologies such as ABCD (Asset-based Community Development), and Participatory Action Research (PAR).

These developments have been welcomed in many quarters. Many see them as ushering in a new era of progressive, collaborative evidence-based policy formation and implementation. But such developments have also come with many caveats, hesitations, and warnings. Some, for example, worry that using quantification and monetary proxies in the service of progressive ends, however creative in their application and well intentioned in their aims, is ultimately self-defeating. Also problematized is the appeal to key values and processes like resilience, community cohesion, empowerment, personalization, and citizen-cum-stakeholder participation, particularly when set against the background of austerity-boosted neoliberalizing trends that materialize and promote norms of competition and individualization. According to this view, far from contesting problematic background norms, these developments in evaluation methodology are seen as instruments that encourage the further entrenchment of such norms and associated precarities.

Advocates of evaluation approaches that appeal to ideas and values that go beyond standard cost-benefit parameters display a keen awareness of the role meaning and collective judgement play in processes of evaluation and, ultimately, governance. It is worth asking, therefore, under what conditions the appeal to certain values or techniques of quantification and monetisation, as well as processes of participation, can be said to offer a progressive alternative to standard cost benefit methods of evaluation, and under what conditions they should be considered as largely coopted by a neoliberalizing status quo. I draw on poststructuralist political theory, including the associated notions of hegemony and ideology, to develop a framework within which to critically explore the way such evaluation methods and techniques are performed in the shadow cast by the competition imperative.

The Interpellated Citizen: Subject positions and subjects’ positioning in a ‘Citizen Lab’ on healthcare reimbursement

Mathieu Berger (Catholic University of Leuven (UCL), Belgium) and Benjamin De Cleen (Free University of Brussels (VUB), Belgium)

Deliberative methods for citizen participation in public policy have become increasingly popular. Important questions about their power dynamics – and therefore about their democratic character – have been raised (e.g. Fraser 1990; Mouffe 1999; Sanders 1997; Young 2000; Cooke & Kothari 2001; Mansbridge et al. 2010). This paper takes an empirical look at the power dynamics in citizen deliberative processes by zooming in on how citizens are invited and interpellated by these processes, and how they respond to this invitation.
We take our material from a deliberative process on health care reimbursement organised by the Belgian King Baudouin Foundation in the autumn of 2014. Throughout the three weekends of this ‘Citizen Lab’, 32 Belgian citizens discussed the allocation of financial resources among health care treatments. The analysis is based on a combination of a discourse analysis of recordings and transcriptions (a total of 397,323 words), on the one hand, and ethnographic observations, on the other.

We first formulate some general remarks on the power dimensions of the fact that citizens’ discourse is invited by an institution with particular aims in a particular operational and communicative framework designed by that institution; stimulated, mediated and monitored by facilitators who work for the inviting institution.

Combining discourse-theoretical insights on interpellation and subject positions (Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Glynos & Howarth 2007) with Goffman’s interactionist insights on the way participants are positioned and (re)position themselves in public interactions (Goffman 1979, 1981; Berger 2012, 2015a), we then focus on how citizens were interpellated by the Citizen Lab, how they responded to these invitations to speak as citizens, how these power dynamics played out during the Citizen Lab, and how this impacted on the discourse produced throughout the Citizen Lab.

The Citizen Lab invited citizens to speak in a number of different and partly contradictory ways: as Belgian nationals, as ordinary people, as individuals (rather than as representatives of particular societal groups), as enlightened laypeople (not experts, but ‘ordinary’ people who are given ‘enough’ background about health care), and as participants (in the process of the Citizen Lab). These different subject positions indicated to citizens impacted on their discourse, both in terms of what may or may not be mentioned and what or may not be said about it (e.g. a focus on the allocation of budget among health care reimbursements, and not on the health care system as such), and in terms of the registers citizens may or may not use to express themselves (individual opinions and to some extent experiences rather than expert knowledge or true ideological or party political stances). We show how these positions offered to citizens and the accompanying registers need to be understood in their interdependency and tensions with the position of organisers, facilitators, and ‘resource persons’ in the Citizen Lab, which came with different ‘tasks’ and different speaking registers.

Citizens strongly identified with the subject positions offered to them by the Citizen Lab, took to heart the ‘task’ that was given to them, and responded to the invitation put to them in registers stimulated by the communicative context. Simultaneously, however, citizens resisted a number of limitations imposed on what they could speak about (e.g. despite continuous attempts by the facilitators to keep citizens ‘within the frame’ of allocations of budget they did speak out about the health care system as such). They also drew on alternative speaking registers (e.g. professional expertise) and sometimes resisted the registers and terminology promoted by the Citizen Lab (e.g. they resisted certain elements of the bureaucratic language of health care reimbursement using experience and a more humanistic vocabulary). These resistances and creative ways of dealing with the terminology proposed by the Citizen Lab impacted rather profoundly on the development of the communicative framework and on the outcome of the Citizen Lab.

Communication and practices of authority in organisations

*Therese Monstad (Uppsala University, Sweden)*

Many contemporary organizations rely on a horizontal structure where local experts need to acquire authority. Despite this, the overall model appears to be the bureaucratic model where authority is distributed vertically and authority of position and expertise is considered to coincide. These two contradictory models can coexist because the relationship between authority of position and authority of expertise is loosely coupled. However, this contradiction may result in a gap between managers and subordinates as subordinates lose trust in managers if decisions are not based on expertise. Organizations commence to acknowledge this gap and consequently aim to bridge it. This paper explores how organizations initiate communicative practices in order to negotiate authority among organizational members. The results point to the importance of
providing communicative tools that assist members to reach coorientation in their interactions. As a result, the negotiation and sharing of authority seems to be more prone to take place.

Panel 3: Media, power, politics, 13.30-15.30
Chair: Mats Edenius (Uppsala University, Sweden)

On Polarization and Attribution – Discursive Power Dynamics across different Network-Constellations
Charlotte Knorr (Leipzig University, Germany)

The aim of the presentation is to investigate degrees of polarization as functional category of attribution processes between two extreme positions to (de)construct public guided controversial online. For the analysis, statements posted in highly frequented online forums of online editions of three German news-papers that cover right, left and liberal political spectrum will be used. The journalistic articles focused either on the so-called “welcoming culture” [Willkommenskultur] or Angela Merkel's Statement “we can do it” [Wir schaffen das] – two key issues, which can be embedded in the ongoing refugees’ crisis with start in 2015.

As digital media establish important dispositifs (Wetzstein & Huber, 2016), they provide the material and social infrastructure of discourse production (Keller, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) – but in “ab-sence of physical location” (Sidoni, 2013, p. 37). Considering power, as the ability to define a situation (Altheide, 2013), different modes of participation (Carpentier, 2011) outline “short term structure dynamics” (Fuhse, 2015) across different network constellations online. In this vein, the activists’ political participation (Neumayer & Svensson, 2016) must be investigated as discursive power dynamics across networked power-constellations, thus in the light of micro and macro contexts (Van Dijk, 2015).

The underlying statement is that: single news elements from an article can be coded as stimulus used by both journalists and producers (Bruns, 2008) to produce communicative material (Dahlgren, 2013). Hence, the elaboration of the stimulus is embedded in their equivalent and different situative and social contexts on different online debate platforms.

The study then asks, how the stimulus can be used to depict argumentative structures between producers themselves as well as between producers and journalists? And which modes of attribution processes can be identified?

Following an integrative perspective, the presentation closes with potential solutions to (de)construct the production and dissemination of situational discursive interactions in short term organizational online-contexts, and their implications to integrate them in long term debates.

O Power, Where Art Thou? Mediatization and the Shifting Power Relations between Politics and Media
Jernej Amon Prodnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Mediatisation is seen as one of the fundamental concepts for many European media and communication scholars, especially those focusing on the changes in institutional politics and political communication. Authors basing their research on the mediatisation approach claim that “media have become the most important arena for politics” (Ampuja et al 2014, 112), with mediatised politics consequently losing its autonomy and becoming “dependent in its central functions on mass media” (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, 250). These early observations, which built on the idea of “media logic” (Altheide and Snow 1979), have later been criticized by some mediatisation scholars, which led to the formation of two distinctive research traditions, the institutionalist and the social-constructivist approach (Hepp 2013), or what Ampuja and others (2014) defined as the weak and the strong approach to mediatisation. While mediatisation remains a heterogeneous approach to study the impact of the media in society, a common agreement between the authors exists that influence of the media is intensifying in all social spheres and institutions. In the most general sense, mediatisation therefore ascribes increasing
power and autonomy to the media as technical/technological and social institutions, leading to fundamental transformations in the existing social relations.

In the empirical part of the paper, different assumptions developed in the mediatisation approach are related to Slovenian institutional politics with an aim to analyse: a) what are the views of the representatives of political parties regarding the supposedly increasing power of media and their influence on institutional politics, and b) whether and in what ways political communication in Slovenia has been changing and adapting in relation to the (supposedly) increased power of the media. The study is based on ten semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in-person with key representatives of seven parliamentary and three extra-parliamentary Slovenian parties or groups. The aim of the conducted interviews was not to focus exclusively on the media, but was broader in its scope, with an objective to gather comprehensive information about the parties’ internal and external communication and their positions on democracy-related issues. The interviewees’ views on the current state of the media are consequently not approached in isolation, but are related to the opinions expressed for the other topics. A critical reflexive analysis of the responses reveals negative views of the party representatives regarding the increasing power of the media and their own dependency on the media logic, but also shows that these views are in stark contrast to how parties themselves perceive democracy and conduct politics, most obviously through adoption of branding, self-promotion, and selling of the party.

The paper looks at different inconsistencies present in the responses of the interviewees, which seemingly point in the direction of blame-shifting, and relates them to the instrumental view on media and communication channels present in the existing social order. The paper builds its critical insights for the analysis of the interviews on the approaches of media sociology (e.g. Bourdieu, Schudson) and the political economy of communication. It claims that besides epistemological and theoretical failures, the mediatisation approach does not fully take into account the economic organization of the media, the changes in the political sphere and other contextual issues, which necessitate a dialectical and relational view on the analysed social institutions.

**In the Mood for Power: Mediated Emotional Styles of Power, Finland 1950 - 2015**

*Anu Kantola (University of Helsinki, Finland)*

This paper explores how societal elites staged emotions and deployed emotionally effective styles of power in journalism throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. Drawing form a growing body of research on emotions and media, I propose a new empirical way of studying Williams’ styles and structures of feeling in media and journalism with a quantitative and qualitative study on a leading Finnish current affairs magazine Suomen Kuvalehti (1950–2015). Journalism evolved to a stage of power where elites legitimise and justify their actions with performances, which set the emotional tenor and meaning of power and authority. I explore the dynamics of three emotional styles—paternal, bureaucratic and individualistic—which generated different communities of feeling and positive and negative feelings. Studied over time, fluctuations in mediated emotional styles indicate social dynamics and power shifts, and also help to explain the rise of the bureaucratic style in the 1970s, the business-driven marketization in the 1980s, and the more authoritarian styles since 2000.

**Power, politics and press releases: journalism practice and trade union agendas**

*Dawn Wheatley (Dublin City University, Ireland)*

Journalists are idealised, both by themselves and the public, as exercising autonomy over their work and having immunity to external influences. However, the reality of news production – a highly routinised system – means that external actors will always play an important role in shaping content. This paper looks at media coverage surrounding the introduction of a public health scheme offering free GP care for all children under 7 in the Republic of Ireland in 2015. There were various key groups affected by the policy: politicians, the health service, trade unions and parents. One trade union representing doctors supported the scheme, while one opposed it and took a legal challenge. This research involves a qualitative content analysis of stories (n=44)
from five news websites during the final period of negotiation and implementation. The trigger for the story was of particular interest and, where possible, original press releases were sourced and compared with the final news story. The results show the influence of trade unions in triggering stories, which allows them to become primary definers in the stories; journalists constructed texts in a way that places the union arguments at the beginning. They often appeared as the only source used; their frames, rhetoric and perspectives were in effect unchallenged. Yet there was one group whose voice was missing completely: the perspectives of parents.

The constructive, subjective nature of news production is well established, and this research builds on the role of “rules” and routines in day-to-day news production. Practice theory as a framework is important, and specifically structuration theory is used to analyse the balance between individual decision-making by journalists and their compliance with the “rules” of online news production. Of particular relevance are the ideas of legitimation as a rule and domination as a resource. By participating in action and practices that support the existing system, journalists are contributing to the recreation of such a system. Similarly, by using information subsidies as the starting point and primary frame for a story, journalists are reinforcing the influential position of high-profile interest groups; in this instance trade unions can see this is an effective method of getting their perspective into the public domain. In the context of a professional newsroom, this raises questions about the positioning of power. The journalist can be considered an actor under pressure, seeking story ideations; when external actors can offer an ideation, typically in the form of an information subsidy, it places significant influence with the actors. This must also be considered in terms of the power of unions as external actors - their professional media operations, combined with their perceived legitimacy, ensure their message is likely to register with journalists. More marginalised voices, who may have more direct experience and insight into the issue involved, are excluded. The research suggests that, despite the potential for external sources and new perspectives to be heard – through widened online networks – it may be the case that source networks are narrowing.

Panel 4: Conflict, memory and trauma, 16.00-17.30
Chair: Annika Waern (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Blogosphere, Memory and New Social Movement: A Thinking through the Shahbag Movement in Bangladesh
Sanchari De (Lund University, Sweden)

The Shahbag movement refers back to the Liberation war and the genocide of 1971. The study of the case of the Shahbag movement of Bangladesh in 2013 is important to highlight the complex interrelation between new social movement, memory and cultural struggle. This paper will elaborate how memories of the past and past movements in general are responsible for elevating a local movement to a global stature. By applying this conceptual framework to the Shahbag Movement this paper will argue that the study of this complex relation is important in comprehending the relation between contested memories and reconstructions of history in blogosphere.

Witnessing absences: social media as archives and public spheres
Yiannis Mylonas (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia)

The study inquires on the ways content-specific social media pages can function as alternative public spheres, by examining the photography-orientated Facebook and YouTube pages entitled ‘old photographs of Thessaloniki’. The study focuses on the online encountering of absences, notably events of socio-political importance with a traumatic impact, which were marginalized by historiography and erased from the city’s material form. In particular, it looks at the ways these absences are witnessed, remembered and negotiated online, through their formal and informal traces. Departing from Benjamin’s and Agamben’s theorizations of memory, media and witnessing, and Derrida’s work on specters, the study concludes that the pages form a highly
informed digital archive in constant development that fosters narratives enhancing cultural
 toleration and understanding, while challenging official master frames. A class-orientated
 understanding of the city’s ‘ruinification’ and oblivion is, however, undermined, although it
 remains in a ‘spectral’ form.

Visual sociology as a tool to de-naturalize nationalism: A case study on Greek
Cypriot memorials
Nico Carpentier, Vaia Doudaki, Yiannis Christidis, Fatma Nazli Köksal

Cyprus is an island with a long history of antagonist conflict, which has largely been driven by a
set of nationalisms. Nationalism is often seen as a type of discourse about the self and the other,
where the pivotal signifier of the nation is articulated in two ways, as the nation-as-people and
the nation-(as-)state (Billig, 1995: 24). Even if we wholeheartedly consent with this approach, we
also want to embed the Cypriot nationalisms in a discursive-material knot perspective
(Carpentier, forthcoming), which allows emphasizing how nationalism combines discourses and
materials in always contingent ways.

This combination of the discursive and the material, in particular, nationalist assemblages
is, for instance, important to understand the role that statues and commemoration sites play in
the south of Cyprus. These very material objects and places are not neutral, because of the
invitation they extend to Greek Cypriots to align themselves with particular constructions of the
Turkish (Cypriot) other-as-enemy, and with the heroic and sacrificial Greek (Cypriot) self.

This article is grounded in a normative ambition to agonize the Cyprus conflict, an
ambition that is translated into the de-naturalization of the support that the large majority of
Greek Cypriot statues and commemoration sites provide for a Greek Cypriot antagonist
nationalism. This de-naturalization process has been organized in four phases. In a first stage,
Greek Cypriot antagonist nationalism, and its counterpart, Turkish Cypriot antagonist
nationalism, have been analyzed, paying ample attention to their constructed and interdependent
nature. In a second stage, the role of statues and commemoration sites in the Greek Cypriot
antagonist-nationalist assemblage was analyzed, during a three-month long ethnographic
research project. The third stage consisted out of the communication of this analysis, optimizing
the reach and potential de-naturalizing impact of the analysis by reverting to a multi-modal
intervention which centered around two photography exhibitions in Cyprus, where both genres
(photography and exhibition) were deployed to communicate an academic analysis. This article
is particularly concerned with the fourth stage, which dealt with the evaluation of the reception
of these two exhibitions (using self-ethnography and textual analysis), and with the relatively
simple question of how visitors responded to (one of) the two exhibitions.

Day 2, Saturday 29 October

Panel 5: Social movements and change, 9.00-10.30
Chair: Nico Carpentier (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Self-Mediation Practices of the Anti-Austerity Movement - A Dialectic between the
Symbolic and the Material
Bart Cammaerts (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK)

In this presentation I will develop the double articulation of mediation as being relevant to
meaning making processes enacted by activists and the symbolic nature of mediated power on
the one hand, but also to material processes inherent to media and communication technologies
and the way they are being appropriated and shaped by activists on the other. Furthermore, a
dialectic between both implies that there is an interaction between the materiality of media and
communication technologies, self-mediation practices of activists and the ways in which the
symbolic is articulated and carried out. I will argue that we can see this dialectic operating at the
level of disclosure, examination and remembrance - three Technologies of the Self (cf. Foucault), which ultimately also has consequences for the construction of collective identities and for the ontology of social movements.

**Does Social Media Reveal a Crisis of Democracy? What Utah and the 2013 Federal Closure of National Parks Can Tell Us**  
*Juho Turpeinen (University of Helsinki, Finland)*

Does social media reveal a crisis of democracy? If so, what can be done about it? Tea party politics, popular in Utah, were implicated in the 16-day federal government closure of national parks in 2013. The closure – the result of a congressional disagreement over the funding of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) – was widely unpopular in Utah, not least due to its effects on gateway communities. Based on a hermeneutical analysis (thematization) and contextualization of same-page user comments posted on the websites of the two largest daily newspapers in Utah, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News*, this paper argues that much of the discourse regurgitates the rhetoric of political and business elites, whether or not beneficial to Utahns at that point in time. The self-described grassroots identity of tea partiers suggests both identity politics and an attempt at regaining agency in the politics of a federal government too far removed from, even antithetical to the everyday needs of Americans. At the same time, the paradoxical nature of the movement points to a deteriorating state of democracy in America.

Following the explosion in popularity of social media in recent years, many have been shocked by the discussions they have found there. One explanation has been that those discussions existed before as well, and what was lacking was a public forum. But does this answer the question, of whether they reveal a crisis of democracy? Drawing on political theorist Chantal Mouffe, this paper aims to reveal the material and discursive power relations whether referred to or present in the comments, and argues that the notion of a crisis of democracy betrays a global trend of neoliberalism – a too great shift away from equality, reducing trust in democratic institutions and increasing the popularity of far-right movements.

Furthermore, by utilizing Nico Carpentier’s theory of media participation, this paper argues that comment sections, when properly moderated, could offer a platform for agonistic discourse. For Carpentier, participation ranges from minimalist – where media professionals control participation, often resulting in a homogenous, non-political audience – to maximalist, where a more heterogeneous and political audience has greater freedom to participate in a multidirectional way. By applying this theory to Mouffe’s claim that “the aim of democratic politics is to transform antagonism into agonism,” it becomes necessary to have forums where people can freely communicate their ideas that allow for identification, but do not “construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary.” More agonistic social media, then, could help nudge politics in a more democratic direction.

The digital context of this paper constitutes an inherently intertwined relationship between social media discourse and the state of American democracy. Here, digital culture does not only function as the source of research material, but as an object of study and a locus of participation and discursive representations of power.

**Social Media and everyday initiatives for social change among youths in East Africa**  
*Ylva Ekström (Uppsala University, Sweden)*

The possibilities for participating in the so-called social media revolution and actively informing ongoing processes of social change and development are unevenly distributed in the world. Nevertheless, it is necessary to nuance the notions of inequality through the understanding of an intersectional interplay between different power dimensions, as well as to nuance the comprehension of the ongoing media revolution in order to see how the particularities of every specific socio-cultural environment shape the appropriation of new media technology, social media applications, and different forms of communication in different ways.
Despite the uneven access to social media, such tools create unprecedented possibilities for mobilisation, participation, empowerment and social change for people all over the world. This paper, attempting to examine these issues, focuses on the African continent and in particular on the contemporary generation of the African youth who has grown up with access to mobile phones and digital media tools and has managed to leapfrog the older generations when it comes to using these tools. This paper attempts to critically investigate and discuss a few examples of social change and development initiatives in East Africa and its diaspora with the particular aim of improving the conditions for particular marginalised groups in society. These initiatives arise from a generation of media-savvy youths that in a variety of creative ways make use of social media tools and applications to reach their own chosen objectives.

The examples are drawn from the author's own multi-sited ethnographic research among youths in Kenya and Tanzania – in their lived realities in Eldoret and in Dar es Salaam, as well as online - and the paper is theoretically inspired by ongoing discussions about how to understand the particularities of media appropriation in African contexts (see e.g. Uimonen 2015; Bruijn & van Dijk 2012; Nyamanyoh 2011; Willems 2011; Spitulnik 2002).

The examples show how youths take initiatives to attempt to change the world around them themselves when authorities, school, the state etc. are failing, to bring about development. They may not succeed to break through the unequal structures of the societies they live in, but the examples brought up here show how they at least try and how they often find their own ways of using the particular new media tools and applications that they have access to – despite in many cases slow internet connection if any, old fashioned mobile phones, and at times even no electricity. As the analysis points out, this type of, often self-acquired, literacy creates conditions – or at least the imagined sense – of agency and empowerment of these youths, when dealing with social issues and in the management of their own lives.

Panel 6: Power, aesthetics and design, 11.00-12.30
Chair: Jenny Eriksson Lundström (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Informatic Aesthetics in the era of Algorithmic Conditions
Felicity Colman (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK)

If we wanted to characterize the informatics aesthetics of the computerized, digital era of 1980-2020, one of the key methods for describing this aesthetic would be through consideration of its algorithmic condition. Operating within an unstable, speculative framework, algorithmic conditions have been explored using the metaphysical concepts of necessity, contingency, and possibility (such as Leibniz articulates in the Discourse on Metaphysics, 1686). While the algorithmic condition of the 2000s are different to the ones expressed in the Discourse, the use of modal methods for analysis of this state are still engaged, speculatively assisting in mapping out the technological, philosophical, material, and discursive changes that digital algorithmic conditions have brought to different communities. However, as Hans Poser (2013) notes, modal concepts [as afforded by algorithmic conditions] pose a categorical difficulty for analysis in that they themselves constitute philosophical systems, but they have not been used systematically to describe technology. In contemporary terms, the biotechnological ecosystem is generative of and constituted by a number of components that we articulate as the contemporary human algorithmic condition. If quantum conditions have become known frameworks for knowledge of the modern world, then what comprises the new grammar of [digital] informatics? This paper engages Hannah Arendt's address of the analogical human condition (1958) to consider the informatics aesthetics of the Human Algorithmic Condition, as work toward the development of an ethics of communication coding. First, the paper examines one aspect of this situated grammar of informatics; that of the aesthetic strategies that have modified, made obsolete, and expanded their 18th century discourses, to encompass the terms of digital behaviours as well as the quantification of forms of power, in and with which aspects of social coding operate. Secondly, the paper considers (with regard to Poser's problematic) if and how modal analysis has been used to
describe the specific works, creative ideas, events, that the informatics aesthetics signals, examining the notions of power inherent within the processes that aesthetic indicators highlight.

Players as co-designers: Agency and control in the design of live role-playing games

Annika Waern (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Play (including game) design is to some extent always collaborative. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) talk about game design as a form of ‘second order’ design, where only the prerequisites of an experience are designed. The experience is created by the players in playing, and is fundamentally dependent on how they choose to engage with the design. When Bjögvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren (2012) discuss how design projects should take ‘design after design’ into account, this is almost a trivial observation for games.

However, design is also a necessary prerequisite. Players subscribe to the design and follow the rules of a game, because they trust that doing so will create a more interesting experience than breaking them (Back, 2016; Suits, 1978). Hence, play design relies on a delicate balance between the control exerted by designers and the voluntary engagement of players, a balance that is negotiated differently in different genres and very often influenced by the conditions of production (Prax, 2012).

This article explores this balance in the context of live role-playing games (larp) (Montola, 2009; Stenros & Montola, 2010). Larp present an interesting locus of exploration, as they are unusually dependent on co-design and volunteer work (Castiello Jones, Koulu, & Torner, 2016) from players. Larp are also interesting in the sense that in most productions, the designers never leave; they are actively present during all phases of design before, during, and after play. This means that designers do not just offer a design: they also design the co-design process.

This study will focus on how co-design was designed in two high profile productions with very different ambitions: the Inside Hamlet production staged in 2015 at Elsinore castle, in Denmark, and the College of Wizardry production repeatedly staged at Czocha castle, in Poland. Both are semi-professional productions, but with very different ambitions. Where Inside Hamlet strived very clearly to be art, College of Wizardry aims to provide broad-scoped entertainment. In the interactions designed for Inside Hamlet, the vision of the artistic director was foregrounded in a similar way that a director’s vision would be foregrounded in theatre. Inside Hamlet shifted the balance of power between designers and players towards the former, in a way that created a strong alibi for transgressive play but also in a common player experience expressed as “to have played it badly”. By contrast, the College of Wizardry production continues to tap heavily into the participatory tradition of larp. The production has been able to capitalize on a large amount of volunteer labour to produce a commercially sustainable production over several years. The analysis, focusing on processes and practices of agency and control, will scrutinize how these effects were achieved, in both cases, through the deliberate design of co-design.

Panel 7: Fans, gamers, lurkers and non-users, 14.00-16.00

Chair: Andreas Hamfelt (Uppsala University, Sweden)

Beyond the digital divide: Investigating non-use in the age of post-digital society

Claes Thorén and Mats Edenius (Uppsala University, Sweden)

“The digital divide” is a term used to describe penetration and absorption (adoption speed, lagging adoption) of digital innovation and forward-moving product innovation in any given geographical region and/or socio-cultural strata. The term supposes a binary division between the technological haves and have-nots, drawing a line in the sand between those with resources, infrastructure and cognitive abilities to enjoy digital technologies and those lacking in either aforementioned categories. Academic and political discourse around digitization is often focused on the conversion of the have-nots into fully-fledged digital users notably in initiatives such as “Digital4EU2016” at the European level, and “The Digitalisation Commission” at the national, Swedish level. The term digitization is in these instances portrayed as the norm, imbued with
utopian societal virtues such as democracy, climate efficiency, participation, sustainability, equality and effective communication. Indeed the road to an enlightened society seems to be paved with virtues intimately associated with inhabiting the “right” and most promising side of the divide. Meanwhile, several analog technologies are currently enjoying a minor renaissance such as the vinyl record and the cassette tape, as well as anti-smartphone initiatives such as the Light Phone and the Punkt, mobile phones that are designed to be used as little as possible.

Focusing on this counter-movement, this paper applies assemblage theory to a qualitative case study consisting of a comparative content analysis of the promotional and journalistic material taken from two technological artefacts ostensibly occupying each side of the digital divide, and rhetorically promoting opposite versions of “liberation”: Apple’s iPhone, (representing liberation through digitization) and The Light Phone (representing liberation from digitization). Thus, digitization emerges as contested ground, and at stake seems to be the very quality of life of its users (or non-users). This paper presents a critical inquiry into active non-use of digital technologies and traditional, linear models of technological progress focusing particularly on the return of analog technologies and asks: What does technology resistance and non-use of smartphones reveal about the utopian notion of liberation through digitization?

The study contributes to the discourse around empowerment and technology use, and preliminary results indicate that moving away from the properties and values pertaining to the physical artefacts themselves (i.e. the traditional notion of the divide) and instead embracing the social structures the artefacts in turn reside in, allows us to open up a less technologically deterministic discussion and provide a more nuanced perspective on the nature of innovation itself, value chains in practices, and problematizing the digital divide as a theoretical construct. In other words, refinement (in terms of the experienced value for a “user” of any kind) does not necessarily come from the latest fashion or the newest technologies; rather it emanates from the practices that a product or a service affords.

Lurkers, Posters and Power in an Online Cultural Public Sphere

Jakob Svensson (Uppsala University, Sweden)

This paper attends to political discussions in Qruiser, the largest online dating site for LGBTQs in Sweden. Qruiser does not only offer an online space for ‘cruising’. There are also possibilities for political discussions. For this paper I focus on power relations between lurkers (participants who read but do not publish online) and posters (participants who publish) in discussions in the forum Politics, Society & the World. I have spent time on the forum, observed, participated and interviewed participants there.

Within the field of political communication, it has been argued that it would be wrong to narrowly focus on realms of institutionalised politics. Non-institutionalised online arenas, not primarily directed towards decision-makers, may become spaces for political participation. If we understand politics as concerning the organisation of society and our co-existence in it, the exploration of non-normative identities can be considered as important for political participation, since it helps us to think reflexively about our life situations, our society and our place in it. Hence, this study is situated within the area of cultural participation since it revolves around political participation in an online cultural public sphere, a site of popular culture offering images and symbols that evoke emotions and affective investments that constitute reasons for participating politically.

Previous research on posters’ meaning-making practices has found two frames that provided posters with anchoring points for their participation: the left versus the right, and islamophobes versus a politically correct multiculturalist elite. The role of sexual identity was used to argue for standpoints within these frames. The discussions were antagonistic, full of trolling and flaming practices. The general bitchy tone could be understood as ‘queer flaming’. Interview data also revealed that posters were motivated to impress lurkers, rather than to understand, agree with, or learn from other posters. One interviewee stated: “You don’t win over XX in this way; it is about getting others to see the flaws in his argumentation”.

This paper continues the examination of the relation between posters and lurkers, focusing on the rather complex power relations between them. As the research findings have indicated so
far, on the one hand, the antagonistic tone in the forum pushed less self-confident debaters into a lurking mode (which has also been suggested in academic literature on lurking). On the other hand, as the fantasy of persuasion highlights, the idea of an audience of lurkers was pivotal in posters’ meaning-making practices. Posters who were not recognized, or felt that they did not have a lurking audience on their side, soon lost interest in participating in the discussions on the Qruiser forum.

**Between global competition, marketing, deviant play and cheating: High-end raiding in World of Warcraft**

*Patrick Prax (Uppsala University, Sweden)*

Massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) and virtual worlds (and as a specific example, *World of Warcraft*) have been shown to be co-creates by players though play (Bartle, 2004; Castronova, 2005). Game culture and even parts of gameplay are largely dependent on player creations (Pearce, 2006; 2009; Taylor, 2006; 2009). The influence of player participation does not end here. The analysis of player-created content, like interface modifications (Prax, 2012) and collective learning tools, shows that the influence of player participation does extend to the design of the game itself. A special mention needs to be made here on competitive raiding, where groups of players compete to defeat newly released levels (Chen, 2009). Competitive, high-end raiding has been shown to have a particular subculture (Ask, 2011; Golub, 2010) and while high-end raiding is a niche play style, it is a particularly visible practice spearheading the engagement of the game community with new content. High-end raiding requires players to use every possible advantage they can get, which has led to practices that are seen, by some, as cheating (Consalvo, 2009).

This study investigates the power relations in this space, where a subculture of players, on the one hand, strains the game design of *World of Warcraft* through their extreme practices of optimization, and on the other hand it provides content to the game community that benefits the developer of the game. For this reason, the study focuses on a conflict around the ban of a prominent high-end raiding guild, during a race, based on allegations of cheating. The analysis is based on interviews with members of this specific guild and examines how the members of this subculture understand their role and the exploitation of their work. It is also investigated how the practices of policing ‘cheating’ by the production company reflect on the members’ perspective on the role of the player.