



Extended Call for Papers

This conference will analyze the relationship between power and media, focusing mainly on government censorship, concentration of ownership as well as advertiser and other external influences over all forms of messages. It will examine new ways in which economic, commercial, political and military forces sway users and how the media themselves influence perception and choice of perspective. Finally, it will explore self-censorship and also ways in which ordinary people are using and even making media to take back the power.

Peer-reviews of abstracts will consider methodology and theory as well as empirical detail and accuracy. Of particular relevance are analyses of the overt and covert ways in which governments and others exercise control over communication, for example how the state, as a chief advertiser and legal holder of sensitive secrets, may influence media content, or how companies and sponsors influence reporting, narrative and knowledge, or new ways in which the media themselves, mainstream as well as alternative, steer important perceptions and choices of perspective.

Among additional questions we would like to see addressed: Will future power structures be able to provide and allow the information and communication that audiences and media users demand and need? How are rapid changes in the communication sphere affecting interactions between the media and the other traditional political, economic and cultural power structures and networks? Who are the winners and losers of emerging media economies and battlegrounds? Who will control the flow of information in the coming decade? Will privacy become obsolete?

Transformations in communications have rapidly empowered normal people to increasingly access and produce media messages in effective and affordable ways, and we wish to discuss if or to what extent the media gatekeepers have actually retreated or disappeared. No doubt, we have become authors of our own lives to an extent unimaginable only a few decades ago. Yet, the power to control the access to one's messages is a fleeting experience if not an illusion. Today we see individuals, corporations, shareholder communities, and governments as important media proprietors who accumulate as well as serve power due to also increasing means and possibilities to effectuate and trade influence.

The importance of media sponsors, e.g. states, corporations, non-state actors, financiers, advertisers, sources, story subjects, and others is a further conference focus. Across the media landscape, sponsorship and the process of selling audiences (and their online search information, for example) to marketers are central for profit-seekers. The conference anticipates papers that address the capacity for media entities to become powerful and wealthy in terms of free-of-charge newspapers, broadcasting and cable television, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Baidu as well as streaming services such as Netflix or its pirate counterpart, Popcorn Time, as well as the ethical challenges therein in an increasingly interconnected sphere.

Last but not least, we will consider censors, the individuals, groups, organizations, states, state-like entities, belief systems and cultures who delete and want to delete messages, and their reasons and justifications for doing so. The conference will attempt to address, in a fair and balanced way, the power of the media, media professionalism and responsibility, media ethics, as well as the powers that seek to exploit the media or limit their freedom.

What are the pitfalls, but also the remaining opportunities and the public utility of the news media, in particular, as 'watchdogs', and by definition as critical and antagonistic to power? Some voices point for answers to the remarkably resilient, current media macro-trends of ownership deregulation, content trivialization, commercialism, sensationalism, and alternative rationalities. The concepts of media quality and even democracy and human rights are changing profoundly in view of these long-term, increasingly postmodern tendencies.

Finally, what kinds of creativity and productivity are being promoted and what kinds are being marginalized in the emerging new system, and how? What theoretical perspectives or assumptions that were born in the 20th century need to be modified or discarded, or kept as they are, as we leave the first quarter of the 21st century?