A Call for Papers for the ICA post-conference on Strengthening Communication for Social Justice through Education and Research

Date: 25 June 2024
Organizers:
- Pradip Thomas, University of Queensland
- Karin Wilkins, University of Miami
- Silvio Waisbord, George Washington University

Venue: The University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, Brisbane

Sponsors: School of Communication & Arts, University of Queensland & School of Communication, University of Miami

Deadline for abstract submission: 1 March 2024
Abstract word limit: 250
Registration Fee: None

Following the 70th International Communication Association Conference (ICA), 20-24 June 2024, leading academics who work in the area Communication for Social Change and Social Justice plan to organise a post-conference event on the theme of Strengthening Communication for Social Justice through Education and Research on 25 June 2024 at the University of Queensland.

The distance between the Gold Coast and the University of Queensland is around an hour and a half. We are pleased to confirm that we will provide transport from the Gold Coast to the University of Queensland and back. And that refreshments, lunch and afternoon tea will be covered for all participants.

The main aim of this event is to explore the spaces for social justice in the pedagogy of communication for social change, build a network of associates with existing and emerging academic programmes and to strengthen educational and scholarly initiatives.

This event seeks to explore the pedagogic relevance of key themes associated with Communication for Social Justice and to explore the extent to which they have been incorporated into formal academic teaching and research programmes. The conference will discuss emerging trends and shifts in the dynamics in the teaching and research of Communications for Social Justice, particularly in terms of digital and mediated technologies.

The following topics are identified as the main themes of the discussion and dialogue during the post-conference under the general theme of Communication for Social Justice. We invite communication scholars and researchers to address the following themes:

Communication for social justice as an overarching theme

Social justice is described as a movement toward equal access to resources, opportunities and privileges for all. Social injustices however are global in scope, affecting the lives of many people. The gap between those who have access to information, knowledge and opportunities and those who
have not is growing wider. Communication for Social Justice explores communication processes, as well as appropriate media and channels that leverage social justice and bring about positive changes in the society. Communication scholars, academics, practitioners are seeking ways to strengthen communication theories, methods and practices for enabling marginalised and oppressed people across the globe to engage on behalf of just and fair opportunities for themselves.

We invite contributions to focus on these key questions in light of how we incorporate these issues into our course and curricula. We are particularly interested in how our academic programs in communication build from and contribute to critical social justice.

- How has contemporary scholarship conceptualized and studied communication for social justice?
- What has been the role of digital media in this research?
- What are the opportunities and threats in relations to digitalisation and ICTs advancement in the discipline of communication and social justice?
- What are the ways and approaches to strengthen open communication for social justice?

Some of the themes considered for organizing these discussions include:

1. **Exploring media plurality and media movements**

   The role of media in the promotion of social justice is important, remaining a valuable channel to create awareness of injustices and to motivate and mobilize to demand justice. Media reform movements worldwide have played their part in the democratisation of media and lobbying for the provisioning of public space for deliberation and the critical questioning of governance and public affairs (Segura & Waisbord, 2016). Media movements also may provide an inclusive space for marginalised and underrepresented strata of society to exercise their communication rights to demand for social equality and equity. Further and deeper critical analysis would need to look at areas of digital communication along with other means, in considering how they may enhance social justice endeavours. How have themes related to movements and social justice been incorporated into pedagogies linked to communications for social change?

2. **Engaging with Digital Media Alternatives**

   Innovations in digital technologies have impacted the media, offering a radical shift in communication processes. While further strengthening the practices of media and journalism, digital media have enabled more people to become active producers and disseminators of images and meanings (Couldry et al., 2018). Digital media have provided an enabling platform for marginalised, unheard and underrepresented voices that have been neglected by the mainstream media. Thus, empowered citizens that make best use of digital affordances, appropriating technologies such as mobile phones and social networking sites may add a new dimension of digitalisation of a public sphere for social justice (Uldam & Vestergaard, 2015). While we acknowledge the benefits and opportunities offered by digital development to close the digital divide, we should also recognise that socio-economic inequalities have widened due to inequitable access to information, knowledge, power and resources in the digital arena. This has had a negative effect on meaningful participation in the digital public sphere (Couldry et al., 2018). How have digital media alternatives been incorporated into pedagogies linked to communications for social change?

3. **Opening access to information**
Appropriation of digital space is associated with open access to knowledge and information in digital age. Open movements, in particular open access and access to information movements, have gained a momentum in the 21st century, becoming a tool serve for social justice. Access and utilisation of open knowledge in the digital domain and transparent and open communication may contribute to informed public participation in social and governance affairs. On the other hand, unequal access to knowledge and information in the public digital sphere poses a threat of widening inequalities (Couldry et al., 2018). Affordable access is key to the enabling of social justice. How have themes related to open access been incorporated into pedagogies linked to communications for social change?

4. Recognizing social media in approaches to social justice

Social media in a digital arena may contribute to social justice, by enabling people to have voice and dialogue relevant to their particular contexts. In contexts where mainstream media is influenced by political and commercial bias, the rise of independent and citizen-created media may contribute to the production of public knowledge, thus facilitating mobilisations of voices of informed citizens and collective actions for social justice (Couldry et al., 2018). How does one incorporate social media in our pedagogies keeping in mind that social media are in themselves conflicted entities?

Provisional Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30-10.00</td>
<td>Arrival, Registration, Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10.30</td>
<td>Opening Session: Setting the Scene: Objectives, Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-11.30</td>
<td>Exploring media plurality &amp; media movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30-12.30</td>
<td>Engaging with digital media alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30-1.30</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30-2.30</td>
<td>Opening access to Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.30-3.30</td>
<td>Recognizing social media in social justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.30-4.00</td>
<td>Session on Networking, Sharing, Exchange</td>
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Invitation to submit abstracts:

Abstracts of approximately 250 words (one-page Word document excluding references) should be emailed to pradip.thomas@uq.edu.au by 1 March 2024. The abstracts shall include full contact details, including name, department, institutional affiliation and e-mail address. One person can send a maximum of two abstracts. In the case of co-authors, one of the authors shall be responsible for correspondence. Selected abstracts will be requested to submit a max of 750 words of an extended concept paper no later than by 1 May 2024.

Reference

