CALL FOR PAPERS

The Ascent of Community and Activist Media: Theorising the turn to counter-power media and communication

Postconference to the 2024 ICA Conference; Preconference to the 2024 IAMCR Conference

This event brings together scholars from the ICA’s Interest Group in Activism, Communication and Social Change with colleagues from the IAMCR’s Community Communication and Alternative Media section. We invite scholars to consider the rise of ‘alternative’ forms of media and communication – including community, activist, radical and grassroots – in the context of a significant uplift in academic scholarship, coupled with the appearance of a plethora of new mastheads and initiatives in the digital age.

Background

In 2016, the inaugural edition of the Journal of Alternative and Community Media brought together leading scholars to set an ambitious research agenda for the field of community, alternative, radical, and activist media and communications studies. Definitions of ‘counter-power media’ (Fenton 2016), the importance of identifying and discussing the ‘longitudinal shifts in media power’ (Kidd 2016), a re-focus on ‘context, human agency and political economy of media’ (Rodriguez 2016), and the need for our scholarship to ‘engage energetically with information policy activism’ (Downing 2016) were just some of the calls made, 8 years ago, about the future challenges and trajectories for our field. In all, questions of power are central.

The information age continues to expose fundamental challenges to the boundaries and binaries of alternative, community, and activist media. As trust in mainstream media continues its decline and media monopolies – and platform capitalism – consolidate their stranglehold, audiences are actively seeking out grassroots and community alternatives for their news and information needs. In short, audiences, practitioners and the research field are experiencing a ‘turn’ to forms of counter-power media and communications, and this is our focus.

This event will bring together established and emerging scholars of community, alternative, and activist media, social movement studies, political economy of the media, media policy, participatory communication and media democracy from the two leading media and communications research associations to explore and address critical questions of theory and practice in a post-pandemic, post-trust
society. The diverse interests and expertise of ICA’s Activism, Communication and Social Change interest group and IAMCR’s Community Communication and Alternative Media section ensure a day of productive and dialogic exchange, with the aim of advancing a critical research agenda for the future of our field.

This event invites scholars to engage with considerations of power within the following broad themes:

- Intersectional inquiries into community, alternative, radical, and activist media and practices
- Spatial dimensions of counter-power media – the importance of place, for example urban resistance, the rural poor, and the networks that bind
- Historical reflections on theoretical underpinnings of the field, and future directions
- The rise of alt-right philosophies and narratives as interpretations of alternative and grassroots activism
- Decolonizing and participatory approaches to research and practice-research
- The role of community, alternative, radical, and activist media in advancing and expanding human rights and freedoms
- The role of social movements in contemporary counter-power and counter-hegemonic narratives
- Activism and resistance in Indigenous media content, processes, and practice
- Production and growth of media that services minority, ethnic and other diverse communities.

In alignment with the creative, contingent, and DIY approaches of activist, alternative and community media practitioners, participants will have the option to engage in creative audio practice to present their work instead of a traditional conference format. Please indicate in your abstract submission if you are interested in exploring this.

Participants will also have the option to attend a field trip to visit three of Brisbane’s community radio stations: radical youth station 4ZZZ, multilingual broadcaster 4EB, and First Nations broadcaster Triple A. This field trip will take place the day after the Post/Pre-Conference (Wednesday, 26 June) at an additional cost that will cover return transport to Griffith University Gold Coast (about a one-hour drive). Please indicate in your abstract submission if you would be interested in participating in this field trip.

**Event details for the ICA Post-Conference and IAMCR Pre-Conference**

**Date:** Tuesday, 25 June, 2024

**Time:** 9.30am – 4pm

**Venue:** Griffith University Gold Coast Campus, Southport (direct tram line from ICA conference venue)

**Cost:** There is no cost to participants for the Post/Pre-Conference, however, there will be an additional cost of approximately $50USD for the field trip to Brisbane community radio stations on Wednesday, 26 June.

**How to participate**

If you are interested in participating in this event, please submit a 200-300 word abstract responding to the themes. Abstracts must include a title, author/s name, affiliation, and contact details. As per above, please also indicate if you would be interested in presenting your work in the form of a creative audio production AND/OR the field trip to Brisbane community radio stations on Wednesday, 26 June.

We particularly encourage submissions from scholars from all career stages, and from diverse backgrounds. Abstract submissions are due **by 5pm (AEST) 19 February, 2024.**

Please send any questions and your abstract submissions to icapost@groups.griffith.edu.au