

ICA 2007 conference theme chair report

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For the 2007 ICA conference, 4 keynote panels, 16 theme panels, 4 grassroots panels, one theme event and one film program were organized. The organization was the joint effort of Sonia Livingstone, Benjamin De Cleen, Seeta Peña Gangadharan (grassroots panels), Gary Gumpert (the grassroots and local policy panel), Susana Kaiser (film program), John Kim (film program), Fred Turner (Web 2.0 plenary), and myself, in close collaboration with Michael Haley and the ICA staff. I here wish to thank all of them.

1. A summary of the philosophy of the theme activities

The organization of all theme related activities was structured by a number of principles, which are important enough to be reiterated here. The first principle dealt with **protecting the theme**, which implied that all theme activities needed to be related to the theme of creating communication: content, control and critique. Although a first sight obvious, this principle played a crucial role in a large numbers of decisions.

The second principle was the **generation of diversity**. Our academic field is characterized by a wide variety of strands, approaches, and paradigms, and emphasizing this polyvocality of communication studies was one operationalization of diversity. But also facilitating diversity in gender, age, profession and geography (taking the context and history of existing imbalances into account) was an important element in structuring our decisions.

The third principle was to **stimulate the academic self-reflexivity**. A number of theme activities were organized in order to reflect on our professional activities, partially by academics (as in keynote panel 2, which addressed the future of the book publishing industry and the importance of open access (journal) publishing), and partially through the dialogue with non-academics, such as entrepreneurs, media activists and film directors. Also the decision to organize an opening panel with only female academics was meant to stimulate reflexivity on the role of gender in academia. As this opening panel provoked quite a lot of debate – more than the choice for the two keynote speakers (both of them male) at the Dresden 2006 conference did – this objective was realized.

2. The keynote panels

The table below gives an overview of the four keynote panels. Out of 20 panelists, 10 are female and 10 are male. 13 out of 20 panelists are based in an American (US or Canadian) institution, 7 are based in European institutions. Apart from Bella Mody, the global South was (regretfully) virtually absent.

Panel name	Panelists
<u>Keynote 1:</u> Communication And Critique: Reflections On The Critical Role of Communication Scholarship	Angela McRobbie Robin Mansell Bella Mody Ellen Seiter Introduction: Sonia Livingstone Chair: Susan Douglas
<u>Keynote 2:</u> The Politics Of Publishing: The Future Of Academic (Book) Publishing	John B. Thompson Respondent: John Willinsky Respondent: Jayne Fagnoli Chair: Michael Schudson
<u>Keynote 3:</u> What's So Significant About Social Networking? Web 2.0 and its Critical Potential	Howard Rheingold Henry Jenkins Beth Noveck Tiziana Terranova Chair: Fred Turner
<u>Keynote 4:</u> News, Journalism And The Democratic Potential of Blogging: From Antagonism To Synergy?	Jay Rosen Geert Lovink Fausto Colombo Gaye Tuchman Chair: Nico Carpentier

3. The theme panels

35 panel proposals (out of which 2 were proposals for a round table) and 21 individual paper proposals were submitted to the conference theme. Out of a total group of 86 reviewers, 29 were selected for a double review of these 56 proposals.

13 panel proposals, and 16 individual papers (4 for the interactive paper session) were accepted. The table below gives an overview of the 16 theme panels, their timing, whether they were submitted to the theme as individual papers (and grouped into panels by me) or as panel proposals, the size of the audience and the number of panel participants that did not make it to the conference. In all of the no-show cases, the panel chair or I were warned beforehand.

Panel name	Time	Panel type	Audience size	Number of no-shows
The Creative 'Affordances' of Communication Technologies: A Discussion Panel	Fr0900	Panel proposal	42	1
Surveillance, Consent and Dissent	Fr1030	Individual papers	44	0
Content, Technology and the Self	Fr1330	Individual papers	8	1
User Rights in the UGC Era: Media Literacy, Copyright and Fair Use	Fr1500	Panel proposal	37	0

Youth and Digital Storytelling: Connecting Multimodal Composing and Multiliteracies	Fr1630	Panel proposal	55(**)	15(***)
Defining Global Media Studies: Content, Control and Critique	Sa0900	Panel proposal	70	0
Creating Communication: Media, Citizenship, and North American Young People	Sa1030	Panel proposal	47	0
Creating Communication in the Journalistic Field: New Developments and New Ways of Thinking about Them	Sa1200	Panel proposal	25	1(2*)
Is Reality a Scarce or Abundant Resource?	Sa1500	Panel proposal	69	0
Channels of Creativity: "Industry Lore" and Cultural Production in a Post-Network Era	Su0900	Panel proposal	11	1
Limits to Creating Critical Content Online	Su1030	Panel proposal	15(**)	1
Creating the Neoliberal Subject in Health Communication	Su1330	Panel proposal	11	2
Resisting Control: Reality Television as Critique	Su1500	Panel proposal	9	0
(Dis)connecting Communities	Mo0900	Individual papers	8	0
Creating Communication Rights: Perspectives on the Emergence of a Global Social Movement	Mo1030	Panel proposal	30	0
Creating Alternative Channels of Discourse on Iraq	Mo1200	Panel proposal	13	1

(*) The chair of this panel had arranged for one replacement.

(**) Estimated panel size, based on other people's reports.

(***) There were 9 kids, 2 instructors, 2 graduate students, and 2 other speakers on the panel, for a total of 15.

4. The grassroots discussion panels

Four grassroots panels were organized in collaboration with Seeta Peña Gangadharan (grassroots panels) and Gary Gumpert (the grassroots and local policy panel), which attracted a reasonably-sized (and interested) audience. The discussions in these panels were especially lively, turning the panels into platforms of dialogue and reflexivity on the societal role of academia. Moreover, the panelists were allowed to invite up to 5 friends (or colleagues), which turned these panels into semi-open access panels.

As these panel participants were also granted access to the rest of the conference, some of them did attend other (academic) panels, such as for instance the 'Creating Alternative Channels of Discourse on Iraq', which (not surprisingly) had a very lively discussion after the presentations.

Panel name	Time	Audience size
Participatory models and alternative content production	Sa1830	37
A Dialogue about Mobility: Wi-Fi Rollout and the San Francisco Model	Sa1830	10
Alternative journalisms	Su1830	17
Civil Society and Regulation	Su1830	20

5. The theme film program

Susana Kaiser and John Kim organized for the theme a one-day film program on Sunday. The table below gives an overview of the program and its attendance.

Film title	Time	Audience size
Queer women of color	Su0900	7
Cine Accion / Romantico	Su1030	16
Straight Outta Hunters point	Su1200	25
Maquilapolis	Su1330	18
Other Cinema	Su1500	11
Weather Underground	Su1630	10

6. The theme events

Organizing outside events turned out to be very difficult. During my two visits before the conference, I met with people from ZEUM, the Musée mécanique, the SF Art Institute, the Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD), and the SF Film Institute. Only the first two agreed to co-organise an activity. The main problems for the other organizations to decline the invitation were Memorial Day, and the expenses related to evening activities.

The number of registrations for the ZEUM was too small, which resulted in its cancellation (in mutual agreement). The visit to the Musée mécanique did take place. Unfortunately, one of the two speakers, John L. Sherry of the Games Studies Division had a back problem and could not make it. Dan Zelinsky, the owner of the museum, was present to guide the participants through his museum.

Activity	Time	Audience size
Media education: playfulness and critical citizens: an interactive tour @ ZEUM	Sa1830	Cancelled
Musée mécanique – in collaboration with the games studies Division	Su1830	9

7. The theme promotion

As the screenshots below indicate, a [theme] website, linked to the ICA website, was developed in order to inform conference participants about the theme activities but also to coordinate the activities of all those involved in the theme organization. This website contained pages about the theme, the keynote panels, the theme panels, the film program, the grassroots panels, the theme events, the theme organizing committee, and the theme book call.



Apart from the theme website, three flyers were produced and added to the delegates pack: one flyer for the three grassroots discussion panels, one flyer for the local policy and grassroots discussion panel, and one flyer for the film program. Additionally, a booklet for the film program was also produced, and distributed at the conference site itself.

ICA 2007
SAN FRANCISCO

**Local Policy and Grassroots Discussion Panel:
A Dialogue about Mobility: Wi-Fi Rollout and the
San Francisco Model**

Location: Yosemite Room A
Time: Saturday May 26; 18:30-20:00

In an effort to be forward thinking or at least to keep up, municipalities large and small are undertaking wireless initiatives as Wi-Fi and wi-max gain momentum. While wi-fi hotspots have been growing in availability for a number of years, the recent trend has been to deploy citywide or regional networks. Municipalities are looking to wireless internet access to enhance public services, boost economic development and provide internet access to citizens. Many wireless systems are being introduced in over 150 municipalities throughout the United States, in cities like San Francisco. Our host city, San Francisco, is being looked at as a model for using Wi-Fi in creative ways in order to meet the needs of global business and education while promoting the city as a hub of technology. Participatory partnerships are being explored such as the Google-EarthLink proposal. The mayor has discussed broadband and Wi-Fi rollout in terms of communication "rights."

This panel will bring together representatives of local government, community and academic worlds who will discuss the challenges and forward thinking policies of Wi-Fi today. This panel organized by the Urban Communication Foundation is an attempt to link activities of communication scholars with the current activities of the host city, an endeavor introduced at the 2006 ICA conference in Dresden.

John King (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Ariane Krebs (*Division Education & Technology Center*), Sterling Pratt (*Autonomous Mobile*), Heather E. Hudson (*University of San Francisco*), Vinca Vasquez (*Pacific Research Institute*), Christopher Watson (*House of Cards*), Harvey Jassam (*University of Hartford*), Susan Bracker (*Urban Communication Foundation*); Chair: Gary Garapport (*Urban Communication Foundation*)

Participatory Models and Alternative Content Production: Whether concerned with social movements, civic engagement, aesthetic production or personal expression, alternative content production is a core value as well as a practice of participatory design. This event examines attempts to develop new cultural and economic structures for the future. Discussion will focus on the role of social inclusion, economic development and technological literacy, by looking at the technological or political imperatives but also the social well-being. Key practitioners also address what is meant by participation, who participates and how, and what alternative content producers gain and lose from participatory design.

GRASSROOTS DISCUSSION PANELS

ICA 2007 San Francisco

Alternative Journalism: What are the many faces of alternative journalism today? This theme event explores the role of alternative journalists in speaking to power and creating social change and contemplates journalists' role in responding to new social, economic, political and technological practices in the field. The discussion will center on the practice of alternative journalism as it has existed in the past and in the present. Panelists will also treat alternative journalism's successes and failures and the challenges of working in a media- and information-saturated environment. The event will end by reflecting on ways to enhance alternative journalism's critical capacities. Civil Society and Regulation: As media, communications and information systems become more complex, civil society has become increasingly concerned with their just and ethical control and management. In this event, advocates working for change in regulatory regimes review current debates, illuminating the ways in which media, communications and information policy intersects with citizens, communities and constituencies at the grassroots level. Both practical and hypothetical intersections will be explored. Panelists will also discuss citizens' ability to inform decision-making about government and governance of media, communications and information as well as advocates' ability to monitor and contribute to policy debates.

Finally, both Sonia and I published short texts in the ICA newsletter on the keynote panels and on the theme events and panels.

8. The publications

Before the actual conference, in March 2007, a book call was launched to invite conference participants to submit 300-word abstracts for the theme book. This call was posted on the theme website, sent to all the theme and keynote panelists, and distributed via the ICA mailing list (and other mailing lists, such as the ECREA mailing list).

On May 1 (which was the deadline), 41 abstracts (or full papers) had been received. The actual selection for the 12 chapters to be included in the theme book will take place early June, but a first draft of the structure has already been made.

Currently, we are also investigating the possibility of collecting the presentations of three of the grassroots panels into an e-book.

9. Some concluding comments

Now that the 2007 conference has ended, it is safe to say that the organization of almost all events worked out extremely well. Only the outside theme events turned out to be too difficult to organize. I would nevertheless

like to stress the importance of organizing different forms of dialogue and reflection between academics and non-academics, by organizing outside events in collaboration with local institutions, but also by inviting the 'outside' world into the conference site. Here a wide range of options and formats is available, including evening discussion panels, separate flows (like the film program), (a limited number of) open panels that are publicly accessible, etc.

Also the notion of diversity – at all possible levels – remains crucial, and at the same time difficult to realize. For instance, in the case of the theme panels about 70% of the panelists was affiliated to an US or Canadian institute, which only shows the need to further the process of internationalization. Especially the absence of African scholars remains troublesome. But in a number of other areas, such as gender diversity but also academic-paradigmatic diversity, a reasonable balance has been achieved.

Finally, I wish to thank all who have contributed to making this a successful conference.