

The SoME Seminar Series is jointly organised by the Centre for Global Media and Democracy at Goldsmiths University of London and COSMOS based at the European University Institute and the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence. The aim of the series, which takes place in 2015 and 2016 for a total of six seminars, is to tackle and critically understand one of the crucial societal changes of our times: the relationship between political participation and media technologies.

The first seminar of our series took place on the 14th and 15th of May, 2015. Titled *Mobilisations: Changing Protest Cultures and Web 2.0 Technologies* the seminar explored how Web 2.0 technologies are re-shaping protest cultures as well as movements' organisations and networking dynamics. In the second seminar we turned our attention to the complex relationship between social conflict, mainstream media and the issue of visibility. Our seminar *Visibilities: Social Protest, 'The Media', and the Shaping of Public Opinion* engaged with critical questions about the extent to which social movements are able to achieve visibility for their political messages and on the continuing role mainstream media play in the shaping of public opinion.

In the third seminar our aim is to take a step back and to reflect on the often under-investigated relationship between academic knowledge, activist practice and digital technologies.

The Activist, the Academic and Digital Media: Challenging Research, Re-thinking Theory

Academics researching social movements and media technologies often find themselves either working in close contact with social movement actors and becoming advocates of specific causes, or they find themselves dealing with a dual identity: the one of the academic and the one of the activist. This seminar aims to create a space where this dual identity can surface with its complexity and contradictions through the exploration of the relationship between theoretical involvement, activist practice and digital media. Invited speakers will focus on three dimensions of this relationship a) **the disconnection between academic theory and political activism** b) **the dual identities of activist academics** c) **participatory research projects**.

We believe that the blurring of the boundary between political and research practices, is of fundamental importance in the analysis of the relationship between social movements and media technologies and in the development of new possibilities for social research. This is particularly true if we consider the fact that much of contemporary research in the field seems to be constrained by an excessive reliance on theoretical frameworks that are developed without a careful consideration of the lived experience on the ground.

DAY 1 - 14th December 2015

10:30 – 13:00 PANEL ONE

The Disconnection between Academic Theory and Activist Practice

Chair: Veronica Barassi (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Research on digital activism has often focused on the importance of 'connection'. In this panel activists and academics are invited to reflect not only on the potential disconnection between academic knowledge and activist practice and on the ways in which they have tried to tackle this disconnection.

Brett Scott (London School of Financial Arts) – Dark side anthropology & the Art of Financial Culturehacking

Sandra Jeppesen (Lakehead University) – Anarchy in the Academy: Direct Action Research with Anti-Authoritarian Media Activists

Sam Halvorsen (Sheffield University) - Critical Reflections on Doing Militant Research with Occupy London

Todd Wolfonson (Rutgers University) - Capitalism, Technology and Contemporary Social Movements: A Methodology of Research and Change

13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00- 15:30 SCREENING OF THE FILM PRE-EMPTING DISSENT

Followed by Q&A with Professor Greg Elmer (Ryerson University)

Chair Ganaele Langlois (York University, Canada)

The creative commons documentary *Preempting Dissent* (2014) builds upon *the book of the same name* written by Greg Elmer and Andy Opel. The film is a culmination of a collaborative process of soliciting, collecting and editing video, still images, and creative commons music files from people around the world. *Preempting Dissent* interrogates the expansion of the so-called "Miami-Model" of protest policing, a set of strategies developed in the wake of 9/11 to preempt forms of mass protest at major events in the US and worldwide. The film tracks the development of the Miami model after the WTO protests in Seattle 1999, through the post-9/11 years, FTAA & G8/20 summits, and most recently the Occupy Wall St movements. The film exposes the political, social, and economic roots of preemptive forms of protest policing and their manifestations in spatial tactics, the deployment of so-called 'less-lethal' weapons, and surveillance regimes. The film notes however that new social movements have themselves begun to adopt pre-emptive tactics so as not to fall into the trap set for them by police agencies worldwide.

15:00 – 15:30 COFFEE BREAK

15:30 – 18:00 PANEL TWO

Dual Identities: The Academic, the Activist and the Challenge of the Politically Engaged Individual

Chair: Anastasia Kavada (University of Westminster, London)

In this panel we invite participants to discuss the meaning of a politically engaged academic. What happens when academics who consider themselves activists, become effective political agents through the gathering and processing of data? What is the impact of these individually centred processes on the everyday life of social movements? How can individual academics promote social change? What technologies and communication channels do they use?

Jerome Roos (European University Institute and RoarMag.org) – There Is No Dual Identity: Reflections on the Politically Engaged Academic

Charlotte Ryan (University of Massachusetts Lowell) - What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate: Movement-Relevant Research in a Neoliberal Academy

Hilary Wainwright (Transnational Institute/Red Pepper) – Committed Scholarship, Political journalism: What Role for Techno-Political Tools?

Finn McKay (University of West England) – Mud on Your Hands: Research and Activism in your own Field

DAY 2 – 15TH December 2015

10:00 -10:30 – COFFEE BREAK

10:30 -13:00 PANEL THREE

Activist Academics and Participatory Action Research: A Possible Solution?

Chair: Gholam Khiabany (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Participatory action research has proven to be a fundamental way to challenge the disconnection between academic theory and activist practice and to build the dual identity of the activist/academic. Yet there are many ways in which we can imagine, design and structure PAR projects. In this panel we invite scholars who have been engaged in different projects share their experience and critically reflect on the promises and challenges of participatory research designs.

Dan McQuillan (Goldsmiths University of London) – Action Science in Kosovo: The Power of a Partial Perspective

Kate Coyer (Central European University) – Launching a Communication Access Initiative for Refugees and the Role University Communities can play in a Humanitarian Crisis

Doug Specht (University of Westminster) – Walking the Tightrope: Local Voices in Activism and Research

Margaret Gillan (Independent Researcher/Community Media Network Ireland) – Participatory Action Research for community television in Ireland (2001-2009)

13:00 -13:30 ROUND UP DISCUSSION

13:30 – 14:30 LUNCH BREAK

14:30 – 17:00 RESEARCH PRACTICE SESSION: POLITICALLY ENGAGED THEORY AND ACTIVIST BOOKLETS