Global Digital Media: Interventions from Intersectional, Queerfeminist and Postcolonial Perspectives

Anna Antonakis & Ricarda Drüeke

Author information:
Dr. Anna Antonakis is a post-doctoral researcher based at Freie Universität Berlin: As an interdisciplinary scholar, she explores questions around networked media representations and technologies, social mobilization and security/ies from an intersectional and postcolonial perspective. She is the author of the book *Renegotiating Gender and the State in Tunisia: Power, Positionality and the Public Sphere* (VS Springer 2019). For more information: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6164-2862
Email: anna.antonakis@fu-berlin.de and contact@antonakis.in

Dr. Ricarda Drüeke is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Salzburg, Austria. Her research interests are political communication and digital publics, digital activism and networked feminism. Among others, she is co-author of *Spaces of Identity in the Context of Media Images and Artistic Representations of Refugees and Migration in Austria* (European Journal of Cultural Studies 2021). For more information: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3600-4874
Email: ricarda.drueeke@plus.ac.at

In communication and media studies, especially those in German-speaking countries, queer and postcolonial perspectives are rather marginally represented. At the same time, theoretical discussions of global issues from postcolonial, queer, and intersectional approaches have challenged empirical research. In fact, such theoretical approaches can provide new research perspectives for disciplines that see themselves as interdisciplinary, such as media and communication studies. They can lend impetus for theory formulation and they may also unsettle normalized standards in knowledge production itself.

In this issue we address the following questions:
- How and where should global norms be formulated addressing global inequalities in the development, distribution and use of information and communication technologies?
- How do social movements, protests and activist media practices support emancipatory politics? How do they lead to polarizations and transnational radicalization processes? How can they intervene in power relations and hegemonic structures? Where do media practices of solidarity become visible and what kind of publics may emerge?

This special issue hereby aims at strengthening critical perspectives in Global Media Studies as well as International Communication in order to expand and challenge the hegemonic canon of media studies. Drawing from our own research, we observed that the representation of post- and neocolonial, intersectional and queer perspectives in the field does not do justice to their rich histories, transgression and contributions, as they are often sidelined or washed into the canon, where they frequently lose their potential of critique of power. While being very aware of the differentiated trajectories of epistemologies, methodologies and backgrounds of these perspectives, we think that they all draw attention to blind spots in communication studies, mark and question global norms and expose Eurocentric standards, and finally productively use ambiguities in analyses of media and communication processes.

In this way, critical approaches to media and communication can engage with current complexities of media societies and offer important perspectives with regards to global dynamics: On the one hand, they are caused by the rapid technological developments and changes in our global communication infrastructures and at the same time, they are anchored in socio-economic, cultural, and political power relations. We argue that postcolonial perspectives can also help to dismantle and contextualize them in centuries of systemic racism and show how technologies have helped to co-create interlocking hierarchies of oppression drawing from a modernisation paradigm benefiting the powerful.

The academic literature already offers important references addressing regulations and the political economy of global media, social movements and protest as well as media practices and negotiation of gender, class and race. However, disciplinary

boundaries in classical academia very often exacerbate and circumvent critical studies of socio-technological systems. Therefore, methodologies centering individual experiences "behind the screen" and queering the quantitative canon in the field are needed, but also new forms of collaboration bringing together social science and IT studies shedding light on powerful developments in the field. The description and analysis of socio-technological systems require inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to describe and assess current developments and understand reproductions of sexist, racist and classist power relations. Scholars with backgrounds in IT and social science or information science such as Zeynep Tufekci or Safya Noble are pushing the boundaries of disciplines. In the field, we also witness the creation of interdisciplinary and independent research institutes such as the Ada Lovelace Institute.

The pandemic and the different measures taken by states has affected academic productivity unequally and – among other – gender, parenthood and race can be associated with "the ability to submit manuscripts and to meet deadlines during the pandemic period" (see study for the Brazilian context: Staniscuaski F. et al., 2021). These inequalities in knowledge production must be recognized in current and future scholarship. We are therefore even more grateful to have put together this special issue in these challenging times and thank the authors for their contributions:

The peer reviewed section starts with Yener Bayramoğlu's article, who proposes a triangular approach between queer theory, digital media, and diaspora studies. Drawing on queer methodology the article looks at the festival *Madi Ancestors*, analyzing how a diasporic queer project had to retrieve from an urban theatre space to the online space due to *Covid 19*. The study shows how queer diasporic belonging can be manifested and negotiated through media practices locally and translocally and hereby complicates notions of nation, and migration status, religion and language.

Feminist scholarship and activists still struggle with the recognition of online violence as a form of violence that needs to be understood, persecuted and deserves time and concepts for healing. Nazlı Bülay Doğan looks at digital violence through the intersectional lens. In her study, she focuses on humor in particular as one dimension to broaden the scope of online harassment and the range of experiences.

The following contribution from Julia Trzcińska focuses on digital networks and networked feminism. The author uses a case study about the contentious abortion issue on Polish *Twitter*. Taking into consideration also the historical context, the study shows that the public sphere in Poland is consistently polarized and highly politicized. Furthermore, the author shows that it is crucial to not only analyze the frames prevailing in the discourse, but also see the platforms used as discursive spaces with specific platform vernaculars.

This ties in with the use of "parody accounts" of celebrities that seem to support emancipatory protest movements by activists, even though the celebrities in question might not even know about the mobilizations, as described by Trust Matsilele, Shepherd Mpofu, Mbongeni Msimanga and Lungile Tshuma in their article on transnational hashtag protest movements and emancipatory politics. In their comparative study of the Zimbabwe's #ZimbabweanLivesMatter, eSwatini's #eSwatiniLivesMatter and Nigeria's #EndSARS hashtags, they draw on the concept of hashtag activism and show how dictatorial regimes respond to mobilizations by either piecemeal concessions or counter propaganda online.

Anouk Madörin's essay takes the postcolonial condition of the European border regime as imperative starting point and brings into play refugees' smartphone practices, including digital (self-)representations and their representation in the broader media landscape of the European border regime. The author argues that these representations rehearse colonial and slavocratic tropes that were distinctly engrained in historical contexts often excised from canonical narratives of Fortress Europe, namely the fungibility of the other's body and self.

Katharina Mosene and Matthias Ketteman's essay addresses where global norms *should* be formulated in a networked world addressing global inequalities in the development, distribution and use of information and communication technologies. They call for an inclusive platform governance to address inequalities in content moderation practices and elsewhere to tackle deepening discrimination in times of data capitalism.

The contributions of the special issue certainly address a variety of issues that could all further be explored:
We found that media practices and negotiations of solidarities in transnational and transcultural settings need to be analysed within their local scriptures of power and resistance and the developments in global media ecology (see Antonakis, 2018) co-constituting each other. The later one is characterized by monopolization and automatization processes, which in turn reflect on possibilities to give and take visibility, processes of social mobilizations, and re-manifest post-colonial dependencies.

For instance, when the uprisings in Tunisia - later on called the *Arab spring* - triggered a whole new scholarship around social mobilization and new social media, the focus was brought to democratic movements and embraced the many-to-many forms of technology as a new force for change. Here, discussion around the ecology and politics of these new media monopolies situated in the US or China was ignored at first. Now, we are witnessing a "techlash" (Owen, 2019) investigating the power of private companies offering critical information and communication infrastructure, where the monitoring of these companies is at the center of platform governance discourses.

At the same time, postcolonial and queer approaches of communication show that migration movements and diaspora as well as the related cultural processes cannot be analysed properly by focusing exclusively on nation states or insular media systems. Media spaces and practices appear to be polysemic rather than homogeneous and they are part of processes of belonging. Diverse forms of participatory practices are increasingly found in digital publics. These practices thus encompass various cultural expressions, which also include affective and performative dimensions. With these new constellations of publics, as well as protest and social movements, various participatory practices have also come to the forefront of the theoretical discourse.

With regards to ambiguities, the contributions exhibit how humor and parody can be used as both: a form of online violence excluding marginalized positions, hereby contributing to the scholarship on digital violence, but also a factor in social mobilization, for instance by faked support of (western) celebrities to legitimize anti-authoritarian protests.

Furthermore, queer theoretical and postcolonial approaches are very productive for methodological discussions in communication studies. They criticize categories, fixed definitions, and identities and thus radically question traditional empirical research that is based on recognizing patterns and similarities in order to formulate categories and definitions based upon them. Within a global perspective, the researchers' own privileges and positioning as well as processes of inclusion and exclusion in existing knowledge production become visible.

The global pandemic does not only pinpoint our dependence on digital infrastructures but also sheds light on increasing inequalities. We are therefore also deeply indebted to the authors, who responded to our call, the peer reviewers and colleagues who contributed to this special issue.

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