

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO JOURNALISM?

International conference | December 5th-8th | Berlin

berlinergazette.de/whtj



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Concept

Today, in the age of (micro-)blogs and big data, the Fourth Estate is suspended between extremes. Radical fragmentation and monolithic centralization pose multiple threats to democracy. The conference “Whatever happened to journalism?” engages upon a critique of this development and explores alternatives. The opening panel addresses the problem of monolithic centralization in the digital sphere by looking from a variety of angles at “Mass Media in the Post-Snowden World”. The panel “Alternatives to Data-Silos” explores emerging tools for democratic aggregation against the backdrop of the new wealth of networks failing to realize its full potential. In an afternoon workshop the conference investigates models of complicity in new journalism networks.

Program

‘You Had Your Debate’: Mass Media in the Post-Snowden World

Date: December 6th, 7 p.m. | Format: Panel | Location: c-base, Rungestraße 20

Keynote: Konrad Becker (World-Information.net). Speakers: Sonya Yan Song (Mozilla Open News), Krystian Woznicki (berlinergazette.de), Stefan Candea (TheSponge.eu)

Moderation: Lili Masuhr (leidmedien.de)

Target group: Journalists, activists, researchers | Duration: 90 min.

Alternatives to Data-Silos: Tools for democratic aggregation

Date: December 7th, 6 p.m. | Format: Panel | Location: mindpirates, Schlesische Strasse 38

Speakers: Markus "fin" Hametner (onon.at), Magdalena Taube (berlinergazette.de, Berlin), Anwen Roberts (Eclipsing Binaries, Berlin)

Moderation: Lili Masuhr (leidmedien.de)

Target group: Hackers, bloggers, media producers | Duration: 70 min.

Journalism Networks: New Models of Complicity within the Fourth Estate

Date: Dec. 8th, 3 p.m. | Format: Workshop | Location: Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstr. 8

Input: Alex Ulmanu, Victor Nitu, Ioana Cristea, Monica Ulmanu, Stefan Candea (TheSponge.eu).

Respondents: Nicolas Kayser-Bril (jplusplus.org), Jaroslav Valuch (Standby Task Force)

Moderation: Chris Piallat & Magdalena Taube (berlinergazette.de)

Target group: Journalists, activists, media producers | Duration: 180 min.

The mission of the initiator

Does the internet foster a thinking „outside of the box“? This question motivates Berliner Gazette to analyze and test emerging cultural practices. As a nonprofit and nonpartisan association of journalists, researchers, artists and programmers we publish berlinergazette.de in German under a Creative Commons-License – with more than 800 contributors from all over the world. For 14 years now we also organize conferences, seminars, edit books, etc.

Credits

The conference "Whatever happened to journalism?" is curated and organized by berlinergazette.de in the context of the "Mobilize!" festival in cooperation with Heinrich Böll Foundation, Digitale Gesellschaft and nachtkritik.de. It is funded by the Culture Programme of the European Union and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. This conference is part of the initiative “Aesthetic Education Expanded”: a project curated by berlinergazette.de, Kuda.org, Kontrapunkt, Multimedia Institute and Mute – funded with support by the Culture Programme of the European Union. In this context berlinergazette.de already organized the conference "Digital Backyards", the workshop "bottom-up & open" as well as the conference "Complicity".

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‘You Had Your Debate’: Mass Media in the Post-Snowden World | Dec. 6th, 7 p.m.

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The interests of global web services and security services have given rise to new synergies. Both tend towards the collection of massive amounts of data, and for this purpose they also maintain ever-growing levels of data exchange with each other. A new partner on the horizon is the news industry. With its data-intensive advertising methods, it is trending in the same direction – an example being Europe's biggest media company Axel Springer, which is making the transition into a digital business¹. Because these inter-relationships are basically beyond control, the Fourth Estate is losing both its critical edge and the support function it serves for democracy.

This development is of particular concern when one takes into consideration the following historic event: Global web services conquer the field of journalism – ironically in the midst of scandals around web services and their illegal exploitations of user data for surveillance purposes.² In the post-Snowden-world we are familiar with the collaboration of major IT companies with the NSA. Against this background we witness Amazon's acquisition of The Washington Post as well as the fact that 250 Million US Dollar from ebay are the financial basis for a new media organisation initiated by Glenn Greenwald³. This has hard to grasp consequences for the Fourth Estate. One of them has already found a very clear expression: "You have had your debate."⁴ The British government's attempts at censoring the Guardian during the Snowden debate gives us an idea of how things could work in media companies, which are run by allies of the (shadow) government.

Those events are like windows to the future. A few years from now, we will look back and say, "We can better understand the present if we analyze those past events." So let us ask some questions today: What will future collaborations between US web service giants, the secret services like the NSA and news organisations look like? What kind of new forms of censorship are emerging? Which older forms of censorship are re-emerging? Is the news industry finally reduced to a dealer with data of those who are paying attention? What will be left of the news industry's function as a watch dog? Which reforms are necessary so news providers on their path into digital futures can build their own data ethics profile and distinguish themselves from mere web services?⁵ Which values and laws must become standards for web services to emerge from the Big Data era as guardians of democracy rather than as its grave diggers? How can such values and laws successfully be implemented? Which hacks can serve as best-practise cases to learn from?

This panel initiates to explore that wide range of questions. Krystian Woznicki provides an intro. Konrad Becker's keynote adopts a speculative bird's eye view on the topic. Two short lectures dig into cases of liberated as well as repressed news: Sonya Song excavates censored news in China and unlocks their hidden power, while Stefan Candea tells the story of an activist-run Belarusian high-visibility platform for money exchange which became a source for independent news.

1. <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/springer-und-funke-kartellrechtler-haben-keine-bedenken-a-913407.html>

2. This merits a reminder of something that came out of the WikiLeaks case: Amazon not only blocked the accounts of the leaker platform, later they handed over every piece of data that the government wanted, without protest.

3. Dominic Rushe: Pierre Omidyar - from eBay to crusading journalism? The Observer, 20 October 2013. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2013/oct/20/pierre-omidyar-observer-profile>

4. <http://www.carta.info/62803/guardian-affare-sie-bekampfen-information-und-transparenz/>

5. For some time now in the Berliner Gazette there has been an ongoing debate over traditional forms of journalism (publishing houses, etc.) in the context of Big Data. See Krystian Woznicki: "Totale Transparenz: Was ist die Zukunft der Zeitung?" URL: <http://berlinergazette.de/totale-transparenz-zukunft-der-zeitung>. See also Krystian Woznicki: "Wer weiß über uns Bescheid? Und wer zahlt dafür?" URL: <http://berlinergazette.de/verfassungsschutz-datenschutz-meldegesezt/>

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Moderation: Lili Masuhr (leidmedien.de) | Location: mindpirates, Schlesische Strasse 38

Journalism has entered into a digital era. More and more citizens from all over the world can publish their opinions, observations and news – but does anyone pay attention? Nowadays the 'filtering of relevance' makes us listen not to people who have something to say, but to people who shout the loudest, or who have the most supporters behind them. Social networks and search engines control these processes using strictly secret algorithms. They expand an economy of the most popular: more people are supposed to perceive what most of them have already noticed. How can we avoid to reinforce these mechanisms?

We suggest to take the ideas of networking, filtering, curating, aggregation and distribution of content one step further. Thus we are not just concerned with solutions for a single medium or an exclusive network of media. Our approach is rather concerned with the fourth estate and its potentially new wealth in the era of digital publishing. Against this background we ask: How can we make the richness and diversity of the fourth estate more accessible via 'democratic aggregation'? One starting point is the following question: How could innovative approaches be turned into a model, that is more meaningful, personalized, transparent, decentralized and democratic than current practices? The Panel presents emerging models and tools to the community of developers, coders, hackers and journalists.

The Panel presents results from a series of Berliner Gazette-workshops that started at the conference "Digital Backyards" (October 2012) and "Digital Backyards Japan" (January 2013) asking about Alternatives to Google and Facebook and then continued at the hackathon "bottom-up & open" (May 2013) and recently culminated at the conference "Complicity" (November 2013) once again bringing together Hackers and Journalists.

The workshop series addresses journalists who generate content as well as hackers/programmers who create the network architecture for content and all others who are also crucially involved in this process: platform operators, web designers, information designers, researchers, etc. With this hybrid group of actors the workshops explore new ideas of implementing new types of networking and aggregation. The aim of the workshops is to develop (ideas for) concrete tools. A special focus lies on journalistic content which is published under a free public license.

Behind all of this there is an observation that we are making for some time now: Instead of working together on the 'next big thing', journalists, hackers/programmers and sales managers get in each others ways because they know too little of each others work. They see the other only as an agent for their own vision – not as equal partner. However: The potential of cooperation can only be fully realized if all the actors develop a common vision on equal terms; more over it is important to learn to see problems and challenges through the eyes of your collaborator. Hence, the workshops place a major emphasis on developing and on exchanging ideas between the various disciplines and regions.

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Respondents: Nicolas Kayser-Bril (jplusplus.org), Jaroslav Valuch (Standby Task Force)

Moderation: Chris Piallat & Magdalena Taube (berlinergazette.de)

Location: Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstr. 8

The Fourth Estate and the Press – for quite some time now these two concepts cannot be said to be equivalent. In addition to the major media companies and newspapers, there are also many informal actors part of the Fourth Estate. And to an increasing extent they form a kind of a pillar, which is standing next to the pillars of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, albeit a pillar without the power to change policy or to punish abuses of power. They do, however, have the power to influence the political process by way of reporting and public debate. The informal representatives of the Fourth Estate are whistleblowers, information carriers, crisis mappers, messengers, cryptographers, technology experts, pro-bono public defenders, donors, online activists and non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, and bloggers. This also includes readers, whose contribution is to ensure that the work is divided up and well distributed. Dancing around amidst these loose groupings one also finds journalists who are open to new forms of collaboration. But they are also open to newly emerging networks – networks in which the news and top stories of tomorrow are researched, edited, and produced.

The upsurge of these networks is taking place parallel to the crisis that is being suffered by the traditional institutions. There are networks established by journalists, which deliberately seek out cooperation with the above-mentioned actors, like the International Center for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ). But then there are also networks, which are founded by activists and other engaged citizens, such as Edward Snowden, which actively seek cooperation with journalists. In both cases, the traditional media companies can “only” serve as high-visibility platforms for the content developed by this new-style network of journalism. In these networks, independent journalists are not only the crucial link; they also help the network to expand out beyond the traditional boundaries of the profession of journalism. Despite the moral debates surrounding the disappearance of jobs in the field of journalism and the sustainability of newspapers, new beginnings and new collaborations are taking place, which can be viewed as new challenges for journalists. First, how should a journalist position him- or herself to survive in a world in which the information organizations and surveillance organizations are all wrapped up into one? Is a new set of ethics required? Is a new set of skills needed? Does it call for an entirely new understanding of the journalist’s role as a citizen? Or is it all of the above, while at the same time working within the context of new forms of cooperation? Secondly, how can journalists weave new networks which are sustainable? What level of organization and what degree of openness should these networks have? What can these networks learn from other types of networks?

This workshop looks for answers by looking at a concrete case of a journalism network:

TheSponge.eu, which originated in Buchrast around a group of investigative journalists, coders and activists. The workshop presents as respondents keyfigures of similar organisations including the european network of data-journalists jplusplus.org and the global network of crisis mappers The Standby Taskforce. Their networking models can serve as best-practice cases for a discussion on current challenges in journalism and as an example of emergent forms of cooperation, as is reflected by the Berliner Gazette in its annual issue on complicity.⁶

⁶ <http://berlinergazette.de/feuilleton/jahresthemen/komplizen/>

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Speakers

Alex Ulmanu is a Bucharest-based journalist, online videographer, and journalism trainer. He strives to find new ways to tell stories, hence his interest in cooperating with coders and designers. Among other projects, he produces multimedia materials for TheBlackSea.eu, on which he works together with members of TheSponge.eu.

Ioana Cristea is a self-trained web platforms coder. She co-founded a free software developing company and got involved in various tech projects within The Sponge portfolio. The most recent projects include "The Black Sea" publishing platform (still in development) and a PHP framework (still in development / standardization / documentation process).

Jaroslav Valuch is co-founder and one of the coordinators of the Standby Task Force – Online Volunteer Community for Live Mapping. In the Czech Republic he is a manager at the program „New Media for Social Change“ for the international human rights documentary film festival „One World“. Recently he coorganized the Social Innovation Camp in Bosnia, he works as a consultant and trainer for numerous initiatives in CEE, Balkans and the Caucasus regions. In 2010 he participated in the Ushahidi crisis mapping platform deployment after the earthquake hit Haiti and later became the Ushahidi Haiti field representative in Port-au-Prince. In 2010 Jaroslav was a Fulbright Fellow on the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. He worked for Czech based international relief and development organization called People in Need, focusing on implementation of a media literacy program into the educational curriculum. He worked in Burma as a relief and capacity building projects coordinator and he was also involved in human rights programs on Thai-Burma border.

Konrad Becker is an artist and a net activist, researcher, producer and performer. Director of World-Information.Net, a cultural intelligence agency. As an interdisciplinary communication researcher he investigates the cultural and social implications of technology in information societies. He is associated with several projects of advanced cultural practice including Monotonprodukt, and Public Netbase (1994 to 2006). Authoring many international conferences and exhibitions on media, arts and culture he has published a large number of audiovisual productions, articles and books in several languages. As a pioneering hypermedia wizard, The Wire magazine singled out Konrad Becker's work among the 100 most important records of the 20th century. "Dictionary of Operations" published by Autonomedia/NY 2012.

Krystian Woznicki is the founder and publisher of berlinergazette.de Together with a nonprofit and nonpartisan association of journalists, researchers, artists and programmers he publishes berlinergazette.de in German under a Creative Commons-License – with more than 800 contributors from all over the world. For 14 years now he also organizes conferences, seminars, edits books, etc. He is author and (co-)editor of several books on globalization and digitalization.

Markus "fin" Hametner hacks journalism, government transparency and play. His projects include an experiment with new formats for reporting – @lflux, Austria's Freedom of Information Initiative "Forum Informationsfreiheit", a small volunteer-driven data- and EU-centric medium at onon.at and Play:Vienna, a festival for play in urban space. He's one of the initiators of the Vienna chapter of Hacks/Hackers. In the remaining time, he's working on a MSc in Media Informatics at Vienna University of Technology.

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Speakers

Monica Ulmanu is a freelance graphics journalist currently working from her home town, Bucharest, creating interactive infographics for media publications in the US, UK and Romania. Before returning to Romania, she worked for The Boston Globe and The New York Times. While she also produces print infographics, her focus and efforts go mainly into interactive and motion graphics. Her skills include motion graphics, 3D modelling and rendering, CSS/HTML/jQuery, mapping, illustration etc. She creates that type of graphics you would see on bostonglobe.com, washingtonpost.com, propublica.com, etc. She usually works with other journalists and editors in the process, but also does her own reporting. You can find her on Twitter as [@monicaulmanu](https://twitter.com/monicaulmanu) and see examples of her work at <http://monicaulma.nu>.

Nicolas Kayser-Bril is CEO and co-founder of Journalism++, a company that tells data-driven stories. Before founding Journalism++ in late 2011, Nicolas was in charge of datajournalism at OWNI, where he led several experiments in crowdsourced data gathering. A self-taught programmer and journalist, Nicolas holds a degree in Media Economics.

Sonya Song is a 2013 Knight-Mozilla OpenNews Fellow and a 2012 Google Policy Fellow. Meanwhile, she is a Ph.D. candidate in Media and Information Studies at Michigan State University. Prior to MSU, Sonya studied computer science at Tsinghua University in Beijing and journalism at the University of Hong Kong and worked in both industries. Sonya is also an avid photographer, a devotee of literature, and a film buff.

Stefan Candea is the co-founder of the Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism, The Black Sea magazine and Sponge media Lab. Between 2012 and mid 2013 Stefan coordinated on behalf of CRJI, the ICIJ Eastern Europe research and reporting Hub for the Offshore Leaks Project. "Secrecy for Sale: Inside the Global Offshore Money Maze" is probably the largest cross-border investigative reporting collaboration in history. Stefan teaches investigative journalism at Bucharest University and was the 2011 Carroll Binder Nieman Fellow at Harvard University.

Victor Nițu is a self-taught in the technology field, caught somewhere between hacking new bits of free software and UNIX systems administration and development. Since the involvement with Fundația Ceata, been trying to fill the gaps between various professions, using software as a glue and The Sponge as a place to meet the necessities of others. He and Ioana Cristea built the Open Media Challenge hackathon platform and the teams collaboration software. He currently is the CTO of Ceata and a volunteer in various free software projects.

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Moderators

Chris Piallat is based in Berlin. He studied political science and psychology at the University of Kassel, Rutgers University - Division of Global Affairs, USA and at the Free University of Berlin. Advisor for Internet Policy of the Parliamentary Group Alliance '90/ The Greens. Author, editor, curator and moderator in the fields of internet policy, net culture, cultural policy and intellectual property. Since 2010, associate editor of the Berliner Gazette.

Lilian Masuhr is based in Berlin. She is a journalist for online media and radio. Works at Leidmedien.de, an online platform for journalists who report on people with disabilities. Prior to that she was moderator at the Radio Fritz program "Trackback" reporting on trends in digital native cultures. She organizes media-training workshops and leads panel discussions on digital culture and social journalism.

Magdalena Taube is a Berlin based editor, journalist and researcher. Since 2010 she is the managing editor of berlinergazette.de. She is teaching theory and practice of (online-)journalism at various institutions, e.g. Humboldt-University Berlin. Her PhD-thesis is due in summer 2014 and deals with Digital Native Journalism.

Documentation

Andi Weiland is based in Berlin. He is a photographer, journalist and social media trainer. Coordinates public relations at the NGO Sozialhelden. Since 2010 he is active in the team of the Berliner Gazette.