# Table of Contents

1. **ANZCA Editorial**  
   Diana Bossio – President, Australian and New Zealand Communications Association

2. **Performing professionalism | Validating artistness**  
   Kim Barbour – Deakin University

3. **Co-creating stories in social learning systems: The role of community media and cultural organisations in disseminating knowledge**  
   Elizabeth Heck – Queensland University of Technology

4. **There’s nothing like Australia: From social advocacy to social media populism**  
   Juan Sanin – Monash University

5. **Tracing The Age’s editorial culture from 1966-97: an oral history approach**  
   Brad Buller – The University of Melbourne

6. **Blackout: The mediated silencing of Aboriginal public opinion about the Australian Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response 2007**  
   Michelle Dunne Breen – University of Canberra
ANZCA Editorial

Diana Bossio – President, Australian and New Zealand Communications Association
dbossio@swin.edu.au

When I wrote the editorial for the first ANZCA-themed issue of Platform in 2010, I was the Association’s postgraduate representative. I wrote about helping to initiate both a special post-graduate pre-conference event at the 2009 ANZCA conference and a relationship with the editors of Platform to ensure that the fantastic research presented by postgraduates at the ANZCA conference were disseminated and discussed as widely as possible.

Five years later, some things have changed. I am writing this editorial having taken up the position of President of the Association after a highly successful conference held in Melbourne in July. The conference was also the first time ANZCA was able to announce that we are publishing a new journal. Communication Research & Practice aims to publish research that contributes to international scholarship and practice in the broadly defined field of communication. The journal is owned by the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA), and will be published four times a year by Taylor & Francis, with the first issue to be published in May 2015. I strongly encourage all ANZCA members to contribute to this new journal as a place to showcase innovative research from our region to the rest of the world.

While there are many exciting changes in store, some things have remained the same. I was happy to see that the initiative I had begun as an ANZCA postgraduate representative with Lucy Morieson in 2009, the pre-conference postgraduate event, has become a very important part of the ANZCA conference and this year was no exception. The event was completely booked out, with almost 50 postgraduates in conversation with four academic mentors about how to use social media in research. I thank the postgraduate representatives Emily van der Nagel and Robbie Fordyce for their assistance and planning of the day, and the four mentors for giving up their time.

As usual, prizes were also awarded to the some inspiring and important papers presented by postgraduate delegates at the 2014 conference. The Grant Noble Prize for Best Student Paper was awarded to Kim Barbour, Deakin University, for her fascinating paper: “Performing Professionalism: Validating Artistness” and has been published in this special collection of postgraduate papers from the ANZCA conference.

The collection of five papers in this special issue represent some of the innovative research and critical examination of digital and social media technologies and the complexity of communicating for inclusion and exchange. These papers encapsulate the conference theme, “The digital and the social: communication for inclusion and exchange”, which provided an opportunity for discussion of social media and the paradoxical nature of our ubiquitous communications environment. The conference theme recognised that while the promise of digital and social media was inclusion and exchange, the development of these platforms has become increasingly complex.

Kim Barbour’s award-winning paper “Performing Professionalism | Validating Artistness” takes up the challenge set by the conference theme in a particularly interesting way. Barbour investigates the experience of online persona creation of artists, asking what it is like to create an artist’s persona online. She argues that defining an online persona as the presentation of the self on and through digitally networked spaces, the artist reflects a “self” as a reflection, extension and distillation of a particular individual and their professional outputs.

Elizabeth Heck’s paper “Co-creating stories in social learning systems: The role of community media and cultural organisations in disseminating knowledge” also explores creative practice, through the production of programs in community based media organisations. Using the example of community broadcaster “CitizenJ”, Heck explores how community media organisations disseminate knowledge met community and public interest and create quality programs with ethical practices in social learning systems.

From the dissemination of creative products, we move on to the corporatisation of user-generated creative content in Juan Sanin’s paper “There’s nothing like Australia: From social advocacy to social media populism” explores Australian tourism campaigns from 2003 to 2012. Sanin focuses on the adoption of
social media by Tourism Australia, using a case study of the “There’s nothing like Australia” campaign, which crowd sourced holiday experiences of Australian people. Sanin suggests that while social media networks can be used for opening spaces for social inclusion, the corporatization of these platforms can also lead to a kind of populism disguised by claims of empowerment, democratic participation and authenticity.

The two final papers in this collection take an innovative approach to exploration of different aspects of news media history and representation. Bradley Buller’s paper “Tracing the Age’s editorial culture from 1966-97: an oral history approach” explores the oral histories conducted with journalists at The Age newspaper since Graham Perkin’s editorship. The research is based on a historical approach, using archival research and oral history interviews and illustrates that The Age’s culture and identity is influenced by the ways in which particular editors shape their editorial products.

Finally, Michelle Dunne Breen’s article “Blackout: The mediated silencing of Aboriginal public opinion about the Australian Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response 2007” also focusses on news media, through the representation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), forwarded by the Federal government in 2007. Dunne Breen explores the alternative intervention strategy document presented by opponents of the government’s intervention and how this was mediated by the press.

In presenting this collection of articles I extend my gratitude to the editors and editorial team at Platform for their support of this initiative and the hard work that they put into producing the journal and maintaining the relationship with ANZCA. The ANZCA Executive team values its relationship with Platform because we recognise the importance of maintaining this relationship in order to support the important and innovative research that postgraduates produce.

It gives me great pleasure to be a small part of facilitating this opportunity for ANZCA postgraduate members and conference attendees to share their research with their colleagues and peers. The Association will continue the tradition of supporting discussion and sharing of research in 2015 during our conference to be held in Queenstown, New Zealand from July 8-10. The call for papers and registration can be accessed at the conference website: https://anzca2015.wordpress.com. Of course, membership of ANZCA would enable you to access reduced conference rates, but more importantly a network of scholars and mentors that support and facilitate the dissemination of high-quality research from the region. If you are not yet a member of ANZCA, I would encourage you to access the website (www.anzca.net) or our social media sites on Facebook and Twitter for information on the benefits of membership. These benefits include entry to special ANZCA-sponsored events and workshops, reduced conference fees and importantly, access to ANZCA’s newest journal, Communication Research & Practice.
Performing professionalism | Validating artistness

Kim Barbour – Deakin University
kim.barbour@deakin.edu.au

As the professional online persona becomes ever more ubiquitous, those who create them must negotiate increasingly diverse audiences and purposes. For artists, whose role is (in Schiebe’s terms) as much granted by their audience as attained by the individual, whose work is often solitary, and who do not require specific training or accreditation to claim the title, presenting a “professional artist” persona is particularly complex. By adapting the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology, I have investigated the experience of online persona creation, asking what it is like to create an artist’s persona online, defining an online persona as the presentation of the self on and through digitally networked spaces, where the self that is presented is a reflection, extension and distillation of a particular individual.

This paper will explore the experiences of online persona creation by eight artists from four art forms that sit outside the boundaries of the traditional art world: tattoo, street art, craftivism and performance poetry. These eight artists use a variety of strategies and tactics to both present themselves as “professionals” in unregulated (and often unpaid) work environments, and validate their status as “artist”. Drawing from (and oftentimes opposing) “the artist” as it has been defined socio-culturally, these artists have created online persona that balance strategy and happenstance, specialisation and diversification, visibility and self-protection, the self and the collective, and work and play. Understanding how these individuals experience this process of persona creation gives insight into the wider issues of presenting the self in public.

As a professional online persona becomes ever more ubiquitous, those who create them must negotiate increasingly diverse audiences and purposes. For artists, whose role is, in Schiebe’s (1998) terms, as much granted by their audience as attained by the individual, whose work is often solitary, and who do not require specific training or accreditation to claim the title, presenting a “professional artist” persona is particularly complex. In order to examine the experience of this persona creation process, I have used persona studies as a theoretical framework. Persona studies is developed from cultural studies and celebrity studies, and has a focus on the individual as the locus of meaning in contemporary prestige economies (Barbour and Marshall, 2012; Marshall, 2013, 2010a).

Although conceptually similar to a brand, for my purpose a persona links to a specific individual rather than to a product or service, and does not commodify the individual or their work. Persona’s may be multiple or singular, may exist offline, on only one online space or across a number of digitally networked platforms, and may be simple or complex representations of an individual’s sense of self. In 2010, David Marshall stated that through the development of presentational media “Individuals are encouraged, invoked, and seduced into more elaborate constructions of public presentation”, and are “drawn into a performativity that operates as a continuous marketing of the self’s value” (Marshall, 2010b). These elaborate constructions are the core of this research into the artist’s persona. I therefore define an online persona as the presentation of the self on and through digitally networked spaces, where the self that is presented is a reflection, extension, and distillation of a particular individual (Barbour, 2014).

Just as the creation of persona online becomes more ubiquitous, so too does the study of identity creation online. These studies can be found through multiple disciples in the academic community, including psychology (Waltner et al., 2011), Media and Communication studies (Buckingham, 2008), education (Koschoreck, 2011), cultural studies (Hine, 2000), philosophy (Ellis, 1993), and marketing (Brown et al., 2007). This multi-disciplinary interest in online identity from within acade me suggests that any study of online identity or persona must draw on a range of disciplinary approaches, and therefore an interdisciplinary approach has been adopted in this research.

Persona studies utilises concepts familiar to a range of disciplinary areas within the humanities, such as performance and performativity (Butler, 1988; Goffman, 1959), subjectivity and agency (Barthes, 1977; Foucault, 1991), presentation and representation (Hall 1990), mediation and identification. In structur-
ing my use of these concepts, I have placed at the centre Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy as laid out in the seminal *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). A persona can be understood as a form of role play (Goffman, 1972), where the role is one that draws on existing systems of representation. In a recent study of the use of images on Facebook, Farquhar (2013) identified the use of “identity pegs” – visual shortcuts that give cues to a person’s likes and dislikes, social position, and identity type. In this research, I conceptualise an online persona as made up of a wide range of potential acts or identity pegs that make up the performance of a particular social role. These acts are diverse enough that an individual may pick and choose the aspects of the role that best suits their intended performance. This performance allows for a demonstration of a social role or construct – that of the professional artist – that is both sincere (Goffman, 1959) and allows for individuality. The individual is adopting a social front, a “collective representation” which has become institutionalised in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks that a particular social role may require (Goffman, 1959, p. 37).

This paper explores the ways that artists working on the fringes of the traditional art world – specifically street artists, performance poets, tattoo artists, and craftivists – perform elements of the collective representation of the professional artist in order to validate their own position as an artist through their online personas. By drawing on identity pegs that have become associated with ‘artistness’ – the quality of being an artist – the eight participants in this project work to validate their self-identification as professional artists despite their marginalised status.

**Understanding “artistness”**

In order to identify how these tattoo and street artists, performance poets and craftivists perform artistness through their online personas, the artist as abstract social role needs explication. The varied elements that make up this role constitute artistness, the institutionalised “collective representation” referred to by Goffman. The “artist” is a social role that exists outside of any particular individual creative practitioner; it is a trope, a descriptor, a construct. Griselda Pollock (1980, p. 59) sees the artist as a discursive subject, stating that:

> The construction of an artistic subject for art is accomplished through current discursive structures – the biographic, which focuses exclusively on the individual, and the narrative, which produces coherent, linear, causal sequences through which an artistic subject is realised.

Pollock has identified the construction of the artist (both specific and general) through writing, and the artist’s online persona as created in digitally networked spaces is similarly constructed through status updates, images, likes, friends, favourites, retweets, and comments. Similarly, Codell (2003) outlines a typology of artistic subjects that were either enacted by or imposed onto artists through writing in her analysis of the “lifewriting” (biographies, autobiographies, personal journals, and reviews) of British artists in Victorian England. These constructs of artistness – Prelapsarian, Clubby Bohemian, Degenerate, Professional – draw from and react against a rich history of narratives of artists lives, from which the “myth of the artist” has developed.

The myth of the artist is the most pervasive of descriptions of artistness. This myth includes, in Alison Bain’s words, a tendency to rebel against established norms – to repeatedly question, challenge, and defy the limits of acceptability – [which] may have become the defining feature of what it means to be an artist in contemporary society (Bain, 2005, p. 30).
Bain posits that working artists play into the artists’ myth, as it allows them a way to define themselves as professional in an unregulated, unlicensed work environment that may exist for the majority of the time as a solo endeavour. She comments that many contemporary artists have consciously or unconsciously sought to preserve their symbolic marginalization (social, economic or cultural) and their mythologized alienation (Bain, 2005, p. 29).

The psychological characteristics of artistness which Steptoe (cited in Bain, 2005, p. 30) identifies, such as hypersensitivity, preoccupation with work, intolerance of order, and emotional intensity, are still ascribed to artists living and working today, as are behavioural and presentational characteristics associated with bohemianism and deviancy. The characterisation of the artist seen in the artist myth is what makes up artistness as a social and cultural collective representation, and it is from these characteristics that working artists start to draw in order to create their personas.

Although the myth of the artist still forms the basis of artistness, the creative industries discourse adds other defining characteristics. In this discourse, artistic identity is defined through a relationship with the labour market. Frey and Pommerehne (1989) outlined a list of criteria for use in determining whether someone could identify themselves as an artist. These criteria include how much time is spent on artistic work, income generation from artistic work, reputation and recognition as an artist by either the public or other artists (or both), quality of artistic work, membership of professional groups or organisations, art qualifications, and self-identification as an artist. Despite including both objective and subjective criteria, the combination of elements that make up Frey and Pommerehne’s definition of the artist shows a distinct shift from the highly subjective, historically grounded understandings of the artist’s myth. Gone are behavioural and presentational expectations of artistness, and in their place appear the economic and labour motivations that fed into the creative industries policies which developed at the end of the 20th century. These policies began with the definition of a creative worker by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in the United Kingdom (Flew, 2012, p. 9), and spread through North America, Australasia, and parts of Europe in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Flew, 2012, p. 34). Despite this “official” definition of artistness through government policy and census taking, characteristics of both the artist as heroic-genius-madman as constructed by the myth of the artist, and of the artist as a creative labourer contributing to economic development as in the creative industries discourse, can be identified in the performance of professional artistness described below.

Methodology
In order to investigate persona creation and the performance of artistness, this project uses an adapted form of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Briefly, IPA is a phenomenological research methodology developed within psychology, which aims, in Hinds’ words, to “understand an individual’s personal perceptions of their experiences” (2011: 193). Researchers using IPA come to understand their participants perceptions through structured interpretative analysis of narratives of experience (Smith et al., 2009). The IPA methodology and method – which is detailed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin – is particularly well suited to the phenomenological study of persona as it makes clear that the role of the researcher is interpretative rather than experiential. Additionally, IPA specifies the process of analysis and interpretation in a step-by-step fashion that allows comparable studies to be conducted with different participant groups.

Data was collected two ways. Each purposively sampled artist was interviewed once in a face-to-face setting of their choice, with the unstructured conversations lasting between 40 and 90 minutes. Interviews were transcribed and sent back to the participant for approval. Additionally, the period between January 2012 and December 2013 was spent engaging in online listening (Crawford, 2009) on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and the participants’ blogs. The online listening consisted of following each participant’s online persona across these platforms recording examples of experience with screen shots.

The data analysis process took the form of repeated close readings of each interview transcript. Through these readings, emergent patterns were identified and thematically coded into complementary pairs. These
Performing the professional artist

The self-presentation by the artist as a professional, a working artist whether paid or not, I am calling a performance in the Professional Register. The term professional here is used as a synonym for occupation, but as can be seen in the discussion that follows, the working artist may also see their role as vocational. In choosing the term “professional” to describe this register of performance, the contested nature of what counts as professional in an unlicensed, unregulated work environment is acknowledged. Indeed, as Smeby et al. outline, even outside of the arts the definition and use of the term is disputed: in everyday terms professional can be a synonym for occupation, as with a “professional hairdresser” or “professional chef”; it can be used descriptively to indicate people who use expert knowledge in their work, such as doctors or lawyers; or ‘professional’ can indicate the adoption of normative models of quality and ethics, such as in journalism or public relations (2011, pp. 1–2). Codell (2003) identifies a professional category in her typology of Victorian artists, where professionalism was judged on the basis of membership to specific clubs or societies, or inclusion in shows and events. More recent creative industries discourse of artist identification as professional includes these Victorian elements along with a requirement for income generation for the artist, self-identification as an artist, and art-making is the individuals primary role (Frey and Pommerene, 1989).

For the purpose of this study, I am identifying a performance register based on the artist representing themselves as an artist; their performance is directly that of artistness. In terms of behaviour, the participants speak about their work, their process, and their struggles and successes in relation to their role of artist; experientially, the participants recount what it is like to be a working artist. Therefore, my use of the term professional is closest to that of the everyday understanding of an occupation, with the caveat that an artist does not need to be drawing income from their professional practice in order to meet the definition of professional artist.

What follows is an exploration of the experiences of the eight artists in performing professional artistness. Presented through the five thematic pairings that emerged through data analysis, the professional personas of the craftivists, performance poets, street and tattoo artists provide insight into how the socially constructed artist role is adopted in order to validate an individual’s self-identification as an artist.

Strategy | Happenstance

Performance poets Maxine and Ben make strategic decisions about the types of material they share online when developing their online personas. Although Maxine has been running her poetry blog since 2008, she made a decision early on to post only the text of her poems, rather than posting audio recordings or videos from her live performances. She argues “it’s been a wise decision, just because I feel like so much of spoken word is actually being there, and actually being in the room and experiencing it, rather than through a screen”. Maxine’s strategic choice forces people to attend her live performances to see and hear her poetry the way she wishes it to be experienced, and although she began including audio recordings of some of her poems on her blog a few months after we spoke, the vast majority of the material she shares online remains text only.

By contrast, it is possible to not only hear audio of Ben’s spoken word performances online, but also view video clips posted to Vimeo or YouTube. This is a good example of the artist mixing happenstance with strategy: Ben has not recorded or uploaded any clips himself, but takes advantage of others’ labour by collating a “top ten” list of recordings on his website. Of his use of the web, Ben comments “I think I use the web quite haphazardly at the moment. I’m trying to be a bit more organised about how I do things”.
The role of strategy in an artist's performance in the professional register can also be seen in the way that digital networks are used for the maintenance of both personal and professional relationships. Amanda describes the three main platforms she uses (Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook) as "a good source of inspiration and also networking". She connects with other artists via digital networked spaces to keep up to date with the work they are doing, but also to keep track of the physical location of people whose work she admires. Tattoo artists travel between countries and studios frequently, and this online network allows Amanda to set up guest spots in international studios before leaving home. Additionally, as a tattoo collector herself, Amanda travels to places where particular artists are based in order to get tattooed by them. She commented that whenever she plans a trip "usually I have a hidden agenda to get tattooed". The strategic use of digital networking platforms allows her to mix the professional and personal, as she does while travelling in physical space.

Visibility | Self-protection
All eight artists spoke about the need to have an online persona of some kind in order to ensure visibility, whether with audiences or other artists. However, this is balanced by the need to protect themselves, whether by denying the connection between the artist identity and the legal identity as with street artists (Barbour, 2013), or by trying to maintain some level of control over the spread of images and other material. The need for public visibility of a professional identity is related to the conceptualisation of the artist as a creative labourer: in order to demonstrate that you are an artist, you must be seen to be engaging in artistic labour and connected to other artistic people. The sharing of evidence of art making, along with the final art work, is perhaps the core of the experience of the creation of the persona for these artists. Where there were images or descriptions of the artist at work, the role play shifted from performance to performative: the artist does not just make art, but is an artist because they are making art. Within this participant group, however, impression management strategies for the most part made invisible the labouring elements of the art making process by showcasing only the final outcome, or focused on the process as a part of the work itself, so that the performative labour becomes the art more than the thing being made. In either case, the visibility and self-protection thematic pairing give insight into how the artists experience the performance of their artistness, along with the decisions taken on where and how that performance might be seen.

Casey's focus on the reclamation of the word "cunt" from its use as a particularly negative insult, to reflect "its rightful place in our lexicon as a descriptor of things warm and lovable" (Jenkins, 2013), both aids and hinders her visibility. On the one hand, the word itself gains a lot of attention when it is used, but the restrictions placed on the use of "offensive" words by the corporately owned social media sites she uses (Facebook, Twitter, Blogger and iTunes) make it difficult to keep the public presence she desires. Although she has set up pages on Facebook with the word cunt in the title, other users have reported them as offensive, and they have been shut down. Similarly, the queer feminist podcast she started with two friends, titled Cunts in Space, cannot be linked to from Facebook or listed on iTunes for distribution. Casey comments that "there's so many restrictions on the internet […] and I'm starting to compromise", although she does so unwillingly. One way of getting around the restrictions involves Casey's use of the Craft Cartel profile to promote and distribute other parts of her craftivist practice. Originally conceived as a collaborative project between Casey and Rayna, the Craft Cartel built a substantial presence on Facebook. Casey has taken primary responsibility for the group, and she describes using the site to organise protests against the incarceration of Russian punk band Pussy Riot. The visibility that Craft Cartel offered provided the justification for its use: "I did it under Craft Cartel, because Craft Cartel has all the followers, and we've done workshops before, and it was the easiest thing I could think of". By capitalising on the existing visibility of the Craft Cartel name, Casey was able to organise craftivist activities with a sympathetic audience, while protecting her personal identity from potential repercussions.

Specialisation | Diversification
The desire to create a strong professional artist's persona was reported as leading to two contradictory experiences: the need to specialise in order to present a consistent persona, and the need to diversify in order
to appeal to a range of potential audiences. This reflects the conflict inherent in the two core representations of the artist outlined earlier – the artist as heroic genius driven by inspiration (specialisation) and the artist as the creative labourer who responds to market demands (diversification). Some of the artists described the experience of needing to balance both ends of this spectrum, while others located themselves firmly in one camp or the other. Although the size of this sample makes generalisation problematic, I noted that even within these fringe art forms, the more socially acceptable and financially viable the art form, the greater the focus on specialisation. For the participants working in art practices that generate little income but do attract criticism from those outside the art world, such as illegal street art or craftivism, diversification was most common. When, in Mike’s case, the illegal street art leads to commissions and gallery shows, a shift towards specialisation occurs.

Tattoo art, with its diversity of styles and imagery, and as a commission-based, highly commercially focused industry, would seem to run counter to the trend described above. Interestingly, however, both tattoo artists participating in this project describe themselves as specialists. Benjamin’s desire to work solely in realistic and portrait tattoos leads him to turn down other types of tattoos, and he comments that “portrait is sort of like the hardest thing to do. I just like rendering 3D shapes rather than flat”. Amanda states that she does “about 95% custom work”, and that this is a welcome change from her earlier experience in the industry: “when I first started tattooing people were really set on one thing. […] They'd looked at all the flash, that was the one that they wanted. You could not talk them out of it, right down to the colours having to be exactly the same as the ones on the wall”. Now however, “most of the time people are really open to changing their ideas in order for it to work better”. Likewise, Benjamin comments that it was “pretty easy” to convince a recent customer to go from a single, mid-size tattoo on a forearm to a full themed sleeve, demonstrating that the specialist tattoo artist can maintain a sense of control over the types of work they produce. One potential problem with this type of specialisation is that the artists cannot deviate from the style for which they are known. Amanda gives an example of this in relation to her painting practice: “[clients] don’t understand that you can do other art that’s not based on tattoos. And if you put something like that up in the same kind of realm as your tattooing work, they just don’t get it”. This means that Amanda is not able to include artwork outside of her tattooing style, even if the medium itself is different, in conjunction with her tattoo artist persona without confusing her audience of potential and current clients.

Self | Collective

The artist has historically been conceptualised as a solitary figure, and it is this heroic genius, working (and starving) alone that drives the myth of the artist as described above. The individuality of creative practice can also be seen in Codell's (2003) typology of Victorian artists, is the basis of Foucault's (1991) development of a corpus of work, and is at the centre of discussion of Pollock's (1980) “artistic subject”. However, the experiences described in this research demonstrate that, at least for these artists, their practice oscillates between the self and the collective. When performing in a professional register, the artists online persona must adapt to the requirements of both self and audience, self and client, self and network, self and community.

The community focus of craftivism is one example where collaboration is the norm rather than the exception, with Rayna focusing on connecting with others and building networks and relationships through her practice. For Rayna, this extends to the way she writes online, and she comments that “a lot of the language is about ‘us’ and ‘we’. It’s really community based language, it’s sort of speaking as a member of the community rather than ‘hi, I’m and expert on this stuff, so you should do what I say because I’m cool’”. Discussing her early efforts, Rayna states “I used Facebook and then Twitter and then things like Etsy and communities and Flickr to find people mostly, not necessarily to organise them, but certainly finding them and getting people involved and finding their work and finding ways to promote one another”. This collaborative focus took advantage of Rayna’s visibility to build an international network of craftivists.

Work | Play
The final thematic pairing of work/play describes the relationship of the artists to their professional identities, and the ways that they see themselves reflected back from their clients, audience or fans. Amanda describes the tension inherent in tattooing, where she may not be seen as an artist at all: “I think that a lot of people still see us as just another tradesperson, you know? ‘You give me a quote, I’m giving you the money, and you’ll get the job done’”. The upside for tattoo artists is that they do, at least, get paid for their work. For street artist Mike Maka, getting to the point where he can get paid for his work has been “a slow kind of process”, while poet Ben comments “I haven’t really figured out how to do that, how to finance this work, how to get people to pay for something that is ostensibly kind of free”. Ticketed performances, whether as part of a festival or standalone events, are too rare to support a performance poet, and the sale of books or CDs is equally problematic. For those trying to make a living from a creative practice that exists outside of the traditional economic system of the art world, monetising ones art is a complex practice.

The alternative approach, where financial gain is not the aim, can be seen in Casey’s practice. Casey stated outright that continuing the craft market run by Craft Cartel wasn’t of interest to her “because it was based around the commerce of it, making and selling stuff, and the stuff that we were making wasn’t very saleable”. Rayna agrees that craftivism isn’t a self-supporting career option: “If I was trying to pay my rent, I wouldn’t be selling radical cross stitch patterns!”

Whether through the influence of post-modern thinking in artistic practice, or as a way to alleviate some of the less desirable aspects of being an artist (particularly an artist on the fringes of the traditional art world such as those involved in this research) there is also a consistent theme of art as play or as a source of fun. The closest anyone came to openly identifying this point was Ben, who, in discussing the way that he mixes traditional poetry forms with his own performance elements drawn from music and comedy, says “You get to indulge your baser instincts while at the same time congratulate yourself on being clever. And so it’s enjoyable on different levels”. This sense of enjoyment, of play, of not taking yourself, your practice or your self-presentation too seriously ran as underneath discussions with Rayna, Casey, Maxine, Ben, Mike, and GHOSTZz. It could be this struggle to find a way to continue to work, or to support themselves financially, drives this playful approach; unlike for tattoo artists Amanda and Benjamin, there is no guaranteed income from each art work created so alternative forms of reward are required.

Implications
Performing in the professional register of artistness is, as seen above, experienced as a balancing act. The participants primarily enacted the creative labourer through their online personas. This was achieved through the strategic selection of imagery to build online portfolios as with the tattoo and street artists to demonstrate skill, productivity, and an understanding of what their market wants. Likewise, the collation of performance recordings uploaded by others by poet Ben, or the celebration of awards won by tattoo artist Benjamin, can be connected to the need to demonstrate professionalism through external validation. Through these presentational practices, the artists mark themselves as skilled, hard working, prolific, and recognised in their field both by other artists and by the cultural gatekeepers more usually associated with the traditional (such as award committees and reviewers).

The other side of the balancing act required an engagement with the behavioural and representational expectations associated with artistiness through the artists myth. The artist as provocative, as challenging to established norms, is performed through the choice of creative practice as with the craftivists. By creating an online persona that contains characteristics of both the artists myth and the creative labourer, the participants demonstrate sufficient artistness to validate their self-identification as artists, despite their position on the fringes of the traditional art world.

Bibliography


Co-creating stories in social learning systems: The role of community media and cultural organisations in disseminating knowledge

Elizabeth Heck – Queensland University of Technology
e.heck@hdr.qut.edu.au

This paper investigates how community based media organisations are co-creative storytelling institutions, and how they learn to disseminate knowledge in a social learning system. Organisations involved in story co-creation are learning to create in fluid environments. They are project based, with a constant turnover of volunteers or staff. These organisations have to meet the needs of their funding bodies and their communities to remain sustainable. Learning is seen as dialogical, and this is also reflected in the nature of storytelling itself. These organisations must learn to meet the needs of their communities, who in turn learn from the organisation’s expertise in a facilitated setting. This learning is participatory and collaborative, and is often a mix of virtual and offline interaction.

Such community-based organisations sit in the realm of a hybrid-learning environment; they are neither a formal educational institution like a college, nor do their volunteers produce outcomes in a professional capacity. Yet, they must maintain a certain level of quality outcomes from their contributors to be of continued value in their communities. Drawing from a larger research study, one particular example is that of the CitizenJ project. CitizenJ is hosted by a state cultural centre, and partnered with publishing partners in the community broadcasting sector. This paper explores how this project is a Community of Practice, and how it promotes ethical and best practice, meets contributors’ needs, emphasises the importance of facilitation in achieving quality outcomes, and the creation of projects for wider community and public interest.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in story based community participation media projects in the public broadcasting, community media, arts and cultural sectors. Whilst the Internet has afforded the ease and accessibility of media production technology and platforms in which to disseminate creative media work, such as personal stories, it is through community-based organisations that the practice of grass roots media is going through an important resurgence. No longer solely a stepping-stone to professional media practice for aspiring media producers, many projects are emerging as independent and innovative in their own right, to amplify marginalised voices from diverse communities and provide project participants with the means and skills to continue to do so. Despite the hype that we live in a new media world, and that everyone can have a voice, there are still concerns of a “digital divide” and “participation gap” (Jenkins 2006). In reality, digital technology is not accessible for all, whether than be a matter of circumstance, location, skills, knowledge and general affordability. And, as a result, such grass roots media practice and projects sit in an interesting hybrid learning space.

Community-based media organisations have long been at the forefront of participatory and grassroots culture and are important agencies of storytelling. Such organisations have developed considerable capacity and expertise in bridging this gap with co-creative media practices, and increasing opportunities for self-representation to geographically and socially isolated groups and individuals. Community media is generally defined “as media that allows for access and participation” (Rennie, 2006, p. 22). One could suggest that community media is the first sort of participatory media prior to Web 2.0. However, as Ellie Rennie and other community media scholars further suggest, it is difficult to define easily, particularly in this era of new media culture and the nature of user-generated content (Howley, 2009; Milioni, 2009; Rennie, 2006, 2011). Aspects that make community media distinct, according to Howley (2009) is that it offers opportunities for civil society to “talk back” to the larger institutions of public life.
Public service media (PSM) organisations, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), are also engaging in community based storytelling media practices to engage with their audience and amplify stories from local communities through broadcasting with initiatives such as ABC Pool (2003-2013), and more recently ABC Open (2010-), to invite the general public in regional Australia to contribute stories and photographs or attend workshops to share their personal stories with the wider community. In addition to this, the cultural sector is also engaging in community media and co-creative storytelling, through libraries and museums. Although such co-creative storytelling has been common in this sector before, via various digital storytelling projects in library and related cultural centre settings (Burgess et al. 2006; Burgess et al. 2010; Hartley and McWilliam, 2009; Spurgeon et al. 2009), it is the CitizenJ project, hosted by the Queensland digital cultural centre, The Edge, that engages with citizen journalism and other related storytelling projects, that is of further interest. Not only as a community participation project in citizen journalism, and related community based storytelling, but because of the evolving and experimental nature of its host organisation, and partnership with existing community radio broadcasters, and training organisations.

What is the CitizenJ project?

“Citizen Journalism” is a term often met with debate. Particularly in the era of user generated content, and user-friendly audio video recording technology. The democratisation of the media has created many fascinating challenges in regard to stories that come from the community, in relation to ethical practice, validity and authenticity. The CitizenJ project is one such initiative exploring the role and the definition of citizen journalism.

CitizenJ is hosted by a state cultural centre, known as The Edge, attached to the State Library Queensland (SLQ), in Brisbane, Australia. In addition to this, it has community broadcasting partnerships and a style of community based storytelling that is worthwhile investigating; particularly in regard to learning, defining, and articulating how “ordinary people” (i.e. those that are not typically media producers) (Thu-mim, 2009) can access media production skills for dissemination of community based stories. CitizenJ also explores the emerging category of content creation that is arising in library spaces, as libraries adapt to meet the growing needs of their customers in the evolving media and information landscape. It is not predominantly writers of traditional texts such as books, journals and magazines that are of interest for the library sector, but new and digital media producers. An example of such emerging community media and learning practices in the library space can be observed in the United States with projects such as YOUMedia, a youth orientated community media program run by the Chicago Public Library and the Digital Youth Network between 2009-2013. What makes CitizenJ distinct is its partnerships with existing community broadcasting networks to further propagate the content created in this space and create multiplatform opportunities for story creation and sharing. It is also facilitated, and allows participants to learn to produce publishable stories and become “credible citizen journalists”.

CitizenJ experiments with diverse genres of storytelling, from journalistic news articles to personal narratives, and that is what makes it of great interest. Given the Project’s larger cultural context, and that it is hosted by a state digital cultural centre, it is also a place of innovation and experimentation:

CitizenJ is a pioneering new-media journalism project aimed at giving everyday people the platform to tell their stories and equipping citizen journalists with the credibility to make sure these stories are told well (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au).

CitizenJ is a project that allows its contributors to explore new and innovative story ideas, and for the coordinators and facilitators to experiment with the flexible multiplatform opportunities that the project offers. This project also aligns with the exploration of community co-creation, which is informed by:

- Critiques of mass media representation;
- Critical pedagogy;
- Curiosity about the possibilities for creative excellence in media self-representation; and
- Perceptions of the importance of personal storytelling to social change, knowledge, and
humanistic endeavour (Spurgeon, 2013, p. 7).

The fluid and hybrid-learning opportunities of the project allow for credible co-created stories to be produced in a facilitated and accessible environment.

CitizenJ originated in 2012 as a program with the State Library of Queensland's (SLQ) digital culture centre “The Edge”, and received philanthropic funding from Tim Fairfax AM. Publishing partners include local community radio stations 4ZZZ and 4EB and training partnerships with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO) and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) Open program. As summarised on CitizenJ’s main website:

The program also aims to recognise libraries as a key part in the information services industry and to explore their potential for generating, supporting and preserving commentary on issues of significance to society.

The program is broadly grouped into three streams; a newsroom, an experimentation fund and a public program. (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au)

The project also publishes on its own website, and experiments with a variety of free publically available publishing platforms including Twitter and Facebook. This provides many accessible options for contributors and facilitators to publish, promote and disseminate stories, and other related information pertaining to the program.

When the project was in its first funding phase, CitizenJ had a staff of one newsroom coordinator, Ursula Skjonnemand (the second co-ordinator since the Project’s inception), and at various iterations of the project, varying combinations of two newsroom facilitators. The most recent facilitators also contributed in the community broadcasting sector and were associated with CitizenJ’s publishing partners. Project staff were assigned a newsroom space located on the mezzanine level of The Edge.

Communities of practice and social learning systems

Social learning can be an extensive and complex term, as it covers many and varied schools of thought (Bandura, 1969; Banks and Potts, 2010; Hartley, 2013; Reed et al., 2010). However, it is theories of Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991, 1998; Wenger, 2000; Wenger, 2010) that I draw from for this specific research study. Particularly given the evolving and dialogical community based learning that is observed within the CitizenJ project and the nature of learning between the project’s diverse participants and facilitators. Additionally, that practices such as collaborative storytelling invite opportunities for learning outside of traditional educational institutions in community based settings and from the media itself (Hartley, 2008, 2010; Hartley and McWilliam, 2009). Cultural centres such as The Edge provide these opportunities.

Mark Bilandzic and Marcus Foth (2013) describe The Edge as a community centre created for peer collaboration and creativity centred around digital technology. It is a place for flexible learning and experimentation. It is a centre for people to meet, explore, create, share and discuss topics that are of interest to them, and provides the spaces to do so. Although Bilandzic and Foth’s research has focused on aspects of The Edge’s physical design, and how the centre encourages learning, it is the workshops and projects within this pioneering community space that are also of great significance to social learning and The Edge’s place in the wider community; in particular, as a centre for community based media practice. My research focuses on experimentation and related projects within this cultural space, with particular reference to the CitizenJ project.

Etienne Wenger (1998, 2000, 2010) and earlier Jean Lave and Wenger’s (1991), research into social learning has been influential, in specific reference to the concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and social learning for organisations. Drawing on research in the community media sector, Ellie Rennie (2006, 2011) suggests that participants gain various skills as part of their involvement in community media, and as a result, contribute to and participate in the knowledge economy. Wenger’s notion of social learning is of relevance, as co-creative media is taught in a workshop environment within a community media, cul-
tural or arts organisational setting. Wenger (2000) suggests that the success of an organisation depends on their ability to design themselves as social learning systems and to participate in broader learning systems. He suggests that communities are established over time and that learning is defined as interplay between social competence and experience. This is particularly applicable when investigating the fluid learning in the community media, arts and cultural sectors. Volunteer contributors learn from the community project’s facilitators, who in turn learn from the diverse experience of these contributors to meet their needs, and evolve the project through such experimentation. The learning is dialogical.

In the current era of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) there is also the opportunity for digital and related collaborative stories (that is workshop based 2-3 minute stories created in a facilitated context to share life narratives) to take advantage of the unique affordances of every digital platform it uses (Alexander 2011, p. 43). At a macro level, social learning allows the opportunity to observe potential social change from the workshop process to the amplification process, and this is particularly interesting with new online platforms and affordances. Participatory culture (Jenkins 2006, 2009) has arisen in social media environments with low barriers of artistic expression and civic engagement, and is encouraged through strong support for creating and sharing such creations with others. It develops a type of informal mentorship where knowledge is passed from the experienced to novices, and in such a way that members are confident that their contributions matter and that they have some sort of social connection with one another. Every member need not contribute, but they must feel that when they do, it will be valued. Jenkins further asserts “participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from individual expression to community involvement” (Jenkins 2009, p. 6). An important aspect of new media is that it has developed as a social activity. Furthermore, learning in an era of participatory culture closely aligns to the nature of a community of practice and social learning systems outlined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) and explored further by Wenger (Snyder and Wenger, 2010; Wenger, 2000; Wenger, 2010, 2011), and the nature of social learning in general. Communities of practice is particularly relevant in this context, as it relates to organisational learning in an era of participatory culture with such a new media project.

There is an abundance of online participatory media and notable examples include YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. The latter two examples, as well as online blogs and forums, are often referred to as Social Media as they are used for social interaction and allow the democratization of information and convert content consumers into content producers. Bruns (2008) refers to this phenomenon as the audience member as a “produser”, as users are also content makers. Media is no longer a spectator’s domain, but one that involves participation and involvement from the audience and operates on a grass roots level (Jenkins, 2006).

Rennie (2011, pp. 42-43) suggests, we (the general public) were excluded from mass media production because it was too “capital intensive” and as a result, professionalised. Now, with the Internet, everyday people can participate in the production and wider distribution of information. The telling and sharing of stories is now in the hands of the everyday population and our learning through these platforms can provide more diverse and enriched learning experiences in our communities. These new technologies provide a valuable opportunity to amplify the sharing of stories and provide a bottom up approach to storytelling. In reference to “social learning”, Hartley (2013) and Banks and Potts (2010) suggest that the process is evolutionary, and sharing and telling stories contributes to the acquisition of knowledge through an evolving process of social interaction. Furthermore, when investigating the nature of a centre such as The Edge as a space for the community to learn, Bilandzic and Foth (2013, p. 255) describe social learning as simply “a result of interaction and shared encounters with other people”. CitizenJ’s contributors have opportunities to learn from several access points within The Edge: that is the physical space, and a dedicated online learning space via the project’s online Facebook Editorial Group. Further to this, the project’s coordinators learn how best to provide these opportunities in these varying contexts.

Learning with collaborative community based story projects occurs at three distinct junctures. Figure 1 illustrates the potential layers of the broader social learning system where people are learning with collaborative community based storytelling media practices. At this first layer, the storyteller is an individual who engages with a facilitator to co-create their story. At the second juncture, the facilitator is engaged with an organisation who in turn learns from and with that organisation by way of fulfilling the mission and purpose of the organisation in question. The third layer is how the organisation, and the stories they produce,
appeal to particular publics: intimate publics (Berlant, 2008, 1997) – such as family and friends; counter publics (Warner 2002) – alternative audiences; and the general broader public, to educate others with stories from their communities via spreadable media online and on broadcast platforms.

Figure 1 – The broader social learning of community uses of co-creative media practices

My research focuses specifically on the middle layers of this larger system; the dialogical learning of the facilitators in response to their contributors needs to amplify stories created in these projects to wider publics. Additionally, where CitizenJ as a CoP sits in a broader learning system, such as the one described in Figure 1.

The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In a sense, practice is always a social practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

Making media in a facilitated hybrid learning environment is part of a social practice, and as media has the opportunity to be amplified, it goes beyond the immediate practice to the wider community.

Methodology

Through regular participant observation of CitizenJ’s public website, online editorial Facebook group, various field trips, and in-depth interviews with a key project co-ordinator and a facilitator, I have investigated the objectives that describe this project over the course of 18 months. In particular, how the project enables learning and how the learning of its facilitators also evolves with this process to meet the project’s contributors’ needs. This is one of four field sites contained in a larger study, and I have employed a case study methodology. For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to discuss a selection of emerging themes, as they are common across the diverse range of case studies contained in my larger PhD research study.

The emergence of community participation projects
The term “community participation project” is becoming commonplace in larger public broadcasting projects throughout the ABC. Two examples of inviting the general public to participate in initiatives hosted by the ABC include Open and “community correspondents” on the ABC’s local radio stations such as 612 (AM Radio) in Brisbane, Queensland. ABC Open invites community participants with the following:

ABC Open is a community participation project, where the ABC will be helping people to create and help them distribute their work and ideas. It’s about a two-way exchange, so we’re not asking people who have nothing to gain to get involved. We always want people to feel that they come away with something – a new skill, an audience for their ideas, stories and work, and to feel that the collaboration has been fruitful. (open.abc.net.au/faq)

CitizenJ sits in a similar space, although it is hosted in a different organisational context, but like the ABC’s initiatives, it is about imparting skills and knowledge to the wider community to share their stories, and provide these contributors with the sustainable skills to do so. The ABC appears to be a key influencer with the CitizenJ project, and that is why it is of relevance to explore further. ABC Open and CitizenJ do share some similarities, but the CitizenJ project does this on a smaller scale. Furthermore, the two projects connect informally via the existing professional network of the co-ordinator. CitizenJ invites contributors with the following statement:

Journalism is a critical community forum for keeping governments, development, business, the community sector and democracy in check. We all know what the power of the media can do. As a citizen journalist, that power is in your hands. If you don’t tell the stories that you think should be told, who will? (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/about/)

And, like the ABC, it too would be classified as a community participation project.

The emergence of community participation projects through larger public institutions demonstrates the further evolution of community media practices. As mentioned earlier, the definition of community media is already slippery. But in a nutshell, it is allowing opportunities for those, who are not typically media producers, to amplify previously unheard voices and tell stories not shown in mainstream media, and the nature of providing training allows the general public the opportunity to do this well and with credibility. Such projects also sit in a hybrid-learning space, as they are independent of tertiary media publications and courses, and in the case of CitizenJ, attract contributors from diverse backgrounds.

**Story co-creation and facilitation**

One aspect that makes such a community participation project of value is the facilitation, as it is a large component of filling the participation gap by teaching participants digital literacy and competent storytelling skills. Thus, with a CoP, there is the concept of mentorship. New people come into a project, and learn from experts (the co-ordinators and facilitators in this context), but they also bring other skills with them from their own professional and cultural backgrounds and this learning then occurs as part of a social practice – learning by doing and co-creating with a community in the process. ‘Co-creation’ is also a term with many definitions (Cornelio and Cruz, 2014), but in this context, and in a CoP, contributors bring to the Project diverse and interesting story ideas that they want to share, and the newsroom co-ordinator and facilitators assist in the creation of these stories through mutual engagement, by offering advice in story composition, ethical guidelines, and to provide a publication platform in which to amplify that story. Stories told by the people at the coalface of an event or a personal experience is also of interest to the wider community. As Ursula Skjonnemand (2013), CitizenJ Newsroom Co-ordinator says:

By the time mainstream news reaches the public it has been filtered through a framework that includes (but is not limited to) news values, style guides, commercial value, editorial pressures, time and/or space constraints, and perceived social norms; and all of this creates a professional distance between the story and the audience. There are many barriers that mainstream media consumers have to negoti-
ate and those who do not possess the prerequisite knowledge are denied full understanding. Whereas citizen journalism is free from industry filters, allowing it to be authentic. It's really valuable because of the authenticity.

The “authentic voice” is something that makes such grassroots story co-creation different to that produced in a mainstream media context, and indeed, attempt at filling the participation gap (Mackay and Heck, 2013). The richness of such a project gives people in the community a chance to infuse history with a more personal point of view, rather than what is reported in mainstream media, and considered newsworthy on the day. Furthermore, authentic stories are created in places where there is trust and a safe environment.

Facilitators and co-ordinators must have a good rapport with volunteers, and be able to gently guide in the direction of the project. The project must be a safe place; “the CitizenJ newsroom and website are safe places and free from personal attack. Play your part to keep it that way” (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/contributors-set-our-rules-to-music-and-animation/). This has also been observed in earlier research into co-creative and digital storytelling by Donna Hancox (2012) who agrees that trust must be established from the outset, and is this is very important in facilitation. This feeling of trust and safety, I have observed, extend beyond the facilitation aspect, and can also be observed on the project’s Facebook Editorial Group as part of the wider CitizenJ community. Not only is that trust and safety established between facilitators and contributors, but amongst the entire project community itself. Parameters for respectful discussion are also on clear display, and this is an important element in the moderation of the Facebook Group.

There is a sense of belonging and this adds to the identity, not only of the citizen journalist, but to be part of a larger community. This also creates further opportunities for story collaboration amongst contributors, and a sense of camaradie. One example of a collaborative community story produced in the CitizenJ community was Brisbane Celebrates Pride Day (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/brisbane-celebrates-pride-day) that involved four contributors, and was CitizenJ’s first live cross on 4ZZZ. This also marked CitizenJ’s 200th story published since its inception in 2012.

Despite the excitement of facilitating stories from the community, there are a few issues that the project has to manage, particularly as the contributors participate out of interest or as a stepping-stone to paid employment. One key learning experience is managing volunteers and it is an aspect where project facilitators are aiming to achieve the best possible outcomes and sustainability, but where the need to remain flexible is paramount. Volunteers, or contributors, are usually in other paid employment, tertiary students, retired or have other commitments. Therefore, co-ordinators need to drive the passion and interest. Heavy structure does not necessarily encourage participation, but the opportunities need to be available when it is. CitizenJ has considered itself a “service” and to be there when contributors need it. There had been some experimentation with structuring the project in the first iteration of CitizenJ with story ideas and themes, but it was discovered that this was not the most ideal way that contributors wanted to participate. Expertise in managing volunteers was of value from the two facilitators in the community broadcasting sector who had particular knowledge in this area, and assisted the co-ordinator in managing contributor participation. Additionally, it was learnt early on that whilst some contributors embraced the story ideas, others did not participate at all, but have been happier approaching the newsroom co-ordinator with their own story ideas, or posting ideas on the Project’s Editorial Facebook group. This editorial group, according to co-ordinator, Ursula, is where a lot of the CitizenJ community learns. In a sense, projects like CitizenJ have to embrace the fluid nature of their program, and how best to harness this fluidity to remain sustainable. Sustainability comes in the ability to change and evolve to meet contributors’ interests and needs, whilst still remaining an active publication.

Developing identity is another key component of sustainability, and belonging to a community. During an observation of a CitizenJ intensive short course, the subject of identity, in regard to citizen journalism, was discussed. A notable agreement between the co-ordinator and participants in this discussion was that the citizen journalist is about “community”. Thus, journalism, and in particular citizen journalism is about: collaboration, community, information, and curation. The curator is also a storyteller, and in this era of user-friendly and accessible online digital media, it was also emphasised that “curation” is king. No-
tably, that journalism is a “conversation” and creates dialogical learning in the wider community (Heck, 2014).

_Ethics and story ownership_

Ethical and best practice must be established from the outset with such story co-creation, and this is why such facilitation is important. Knowledge of media law is particularly important for project co-ordinators to disseminate this knowledge to contributors to make stories credible and publishable. This is also what differentiates such a project from typical unfacilitated user generated content that can be found on public platforms such as YouTube. CitizenJ have a “Contributor’s Toolbox” that is available on the public website. The CitizenJ rules were co-created between facilitators and contributors, thus allowing community ownership in ethical practice. Another important asset in the discussion of media ethics and story co-creation is the Contributor’s Rules video found on the main page, and the emphasis that this project follows the “Media Alliance (MEAA) Code of Ethics” and CitizenJ’s core values, “trust, transparency, respect and accountability” (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/contributors-set-our-rules-to-music-and-animation/). The video on the public website that accompanies these rules was co-created by two CitizenJ contributors and used animation and music to entertain as well as inform. This makes the guidelines highly accessible. This video was originally placed further into the site, but the learning generated in the project and a subsequent redesign of the website moved this to the main page, further emphasising the importance of these rules from the outset.

Ethical practice in such community-based storytelling is fundamental as part of this story co-creation and part of the aims of training “credible citizen journalists”. The newsroom co-ordinator’s role is vital in making these stories ethically sound, and to filter unnecessary and inappropriate content before it reaches publication. The co-ordinator’s role is to work with contributors to make these stories as credible and publishable as possible, and for the contributors to understand how to produce ethical stories, whilst still keeping the story authentic. Contributors are often referred to the Contributor’s Toolbox for best ethical practice, and the editing available from the newsroom co-ordinator and facilitators also provides important guidance. More recently, Ursula Skjonnemand (2014a), the newsroom co-ordinator, established a section called “Editor’s Pick” and the contributor stories were chosen as exemplars under the following criteria:

a) The story has an element of timelessness (will still hold interest months or even years after it was published); b) The story displays excellence of craft; c) The story provides a rare or unique insight about life in this time and place; d) The story has an element of innovation.

These stories were published in a corresponding article on the website for current and future contributors to access for further reference. Furthermore, contributors “are welcome to publish their content to another media outlet at the same time as CitizenJ, but not before” (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/contributors-set-our-rules-to-music-and-animation/). This has been successful, and two examples include *Immeasurable*, syndicated with _The Argus_ (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/immeasurable/) and _Brisbane Celebrates Pride Day_, republished in Q News (citizenj.edgeqld.org.au/brisbane-celebrates-pride-day/).

_Conclusion_

CitizenJ is an experiment, but it has clear foundations in best and ethical practice, story ownership, facilitation, and it works in ways which best meet contributors’ needs. It evolved and gained considerable traction in the wider community. Since its inception in 2012, the project has had two newsroom co-ordinators. This is a result of the nature of community media practice, and such a turnover is a result of the fluid nature of this sector as staff move to other areas of media employment. However, foundations that have been established during each co-ordinators tenure have allowed the project to further thrive. Each co-ordinator has their own take on CitizenJ and a particular rapport with its contributors and facilitators. CitizenJ is part of a wider social learning system with its associated networks in community broadcasting and
training. This paper has discussed some of the themes emerging as a result of a larger PhD study, and how CitizenJ is a community of practice, evolving in a community and experimental cultural context.

**Bibliography**


There’s nothing like Australia: From social advocacy to social media populism

Juan Sanin – Monash University
juan.things@gmail.com

The advent and popularization of social media networks in the last decade have produced considerable changes in Australia’s tourism advertising, supposedly opening spaces for social advocacy in the promotion of the country. Based on a historical revision of the campaigns created by the brand Australia from 2003 to 2012, this paper analyses the adoption of social media by Tourism Australia in campaigns to promote the country. In particular, it outlines some of the changes that this adoption has generated in the production of tourism advertising. It focuses on “There’s nothing like Australia”, a crowdsourcing campaign based on promotional materials that use the holiday experiences of Australian people. Launched in 2012, the campaign was presented to citizens as an invitation to “change stereotypes” about the country and to “show the real Australia to the world” by sharing their holiday pictures on social media networks.

The paper finds that the incorporation of social media technologies in the promotional strategies of brand Australia has generated a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on memorable jingles and starred by celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user generated content. This transition has been applauded in marketing spheres for its empowering of audiences, commended in the news media for democratizing tourism promotion, and celebrated by Tourism Australia for rediscovering the “real Australia”. The paper, however, questions the democratic character of the campaign, the supposed empowerment of citizens to change stereotypes, and the “realness” of the holiday pictures chosen to advertise the country. While it is true that social media networks can be used for opening spaces for social inclusion and civic engagement, the corporatization of these platforms can also lead to “social media populism” under the guise of empowerment, democratic participation and authenticity.

In the last two decades, nation-states around the world have developed commercial forms of nationalism creating a “brand-image” for their countries. This has been done using branding and design principles to improve the reputation and economic performance of their countries, for example, by inviting tourists, attracting investors and increasing exports (Aronczyk, 2013). It has been argued that nation-branding has brought previous ignored countries increasingly into the spotlight (e.g. Anholt, 2005), by creating colourful logos and catchy slogans that reinvigorate the national pride of citizens and reposition these countries on the global economic map. However, despite economic success, nation-branding campaigns are criticised for being top-down initiatives in which governments and marketers fabricate commoditised versions of national identity that are then imposed onto the population and used to sell the nation to international audiences (e.g. Aronczyk, 2008; Jansen, 2008; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011). Recently, however, nation-branding campaigns have started to incorporate social media networks and user-generated-content in their development, claiming that this movement to the internet is making their initiatives more inclusive. By integrating digital technologies these new campaigns promise to be different to the earlier ones, in particular, to empower citizens by creating spaces for democratic participation in the construction of more real images of national identity.

This paper looks at these new forms of commercial nationalism that engage with the internet. It aims to investigate the impact of social media in the commercial construction of nations, analysing the incorporation of these networks in the kinds of nation-branding campaigns that call citizens to “crowdsource” the promotional materials that represent their national identities. As its examples this paper takes the first phase of “There’s nothing like Australia” (TNLA hereafter) a nation-branding campaign aimed at promoting tourism. The first phase of this campaign, was developed through the co-creation of an interactive map of Australia using 30000 holiday pictures shared by citizens on social media (see: www.nothinglikeaustralia.com).
The TNLA campaign is relevant when assessing the claims that nation-branding campaigns developed in social media are socially inclusive for different reasons. To begin with, the first phase of TNLA attracted more than 30000 entries, being considered at that time as the most successful user generated promotion developed in the country. Since then, the strategy behind TNLA has moved across to Web 2.0, where every day millions of brand Australia's advocates co-create promotional materials by sharing their holiday pictures. From this perspective, a study of TNLA makes a good case for demonstrating some of the critiques made by media scholars about the corporatization of social media and more exactly about the transformation of social interactions into monetary value. Apart from that, TNLA represents an interesting case for expanding the scope of critical studies on nation-branding. Generally, scholars interested in this matter have looked at campaigns based on television and printed materials (e.g. Aronczyk, 2013; Kaneva, 2011) and little attention has been paid to campaigns developed in the internet (though see: Volcic, 2008). In this sense, this paper aims to contribute to this field, analysing a nation-branding campaign developed on the internet and based on the participation of citizens through social media networks.

Drawing on the analysis of TNLA, the paper finds that the incorporation of social media in the promotional strategies of brand Australia has generated a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on memorable slogans and starring celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user-generated-content. This transition has been celebrated by the government, in marketing spheres and news media, as “real”, empowering, and democratic. The paper argues that these claims should not be taken for granted as they presuppose optimistic outcomes of digital technologies and reproduce the suspicious logic of “market populism” according to which markets are democratic systems where citizens can vote with their dollar (Frank, 2000a).

The paper is divided into two parts. The first section examines the background of tourism promotion in Australia, analysing the marketing formula used since the 1980s until today. This background explains some of the changes that the incorporation of social media has brought to this strategy. In particular, this will include the new “social media advocacy” label that is claimed to be more inclusive than previous forms of promotion. The second part of this paper situates these claims about inclusivity in current discussions about social participation in the marketplace and the internet, and from there it assesses the development and results of TNLA. Overall, the paper finds that while it is true that social media networks can be used to open spaces for social inclusion and civic engagement, the corporatization of these platforms can also lead to “social media populism” under the guise of empowerment, democratic participation and authenticity.

Brand Australia: From television celebrities to social media advocacy

Since it was created in 1996 by the Australian government, “Brand Australia” has helped to attract millions of tourists to the country, representing an important contribution to national economy. As a brand, Australia has an outstanding reputation in the global market, and the country is usually ranked in the top positions of the so-called nation or country brand indexes created each year by think tanks and marketing agencies. The success of Brand Australia can be partially explained as the result of an advertising formula that has been in use for about three decades. Its origins can be traced back to the iconic television advertisements created by the Australian Tourism Commission in the mid-1980s. In these advertisements, Paul Hogan uses expressions such as “Throw another shrimp on the barbie” or “Come and say G’day” to convince Americans to visit the country (David, 2004). These advertisements developed a marketing formula that was grounded in televised advertising campaigns based on catchy slogans and celebrities.

In 2004, when Brand Australia was revamped and Tourism Australia replaced the Tourism Australia Commission, this formula of television campaigns with celebrities and catchy slogans started to be replicated in all the global marketing campaigns of the new brand. The first of these campaigns, See Australia in a different light, was released in 2005. Its central unit was a television commercial starring Delta Goodrem singing I can sing a rainbow. In 2006, Tourism Australia launched A uniquely Australian Invitation, a controversial campaign that became best known by the tagline of its centrepiece, a television commercial that closed with Lara Bingle asking “So where the bloody hell are you?”. In 2008, two advertisements were created by Baz Luhrmann for the campaign Walkabout which starred Brandon
Walters – the Indigenous Australian child who is best known for his performance with Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman in Luhrmann’s film Australia. Every year since the first of these campaigns was released Tourism Australia has reported increases in numbers of visitors to Australia and these visitors’ spending. Simultaneously, Australia was frequently ranked in the top position of the Country Brand Index.

Despite the economic success of the celebrity, slogan and TV formula all these tourism campaigns have been criticised for the stereotypes they have both created and reinforced, and for the simplistic image of the country they portray. For example, in 2010, when acclaimed nation branding consultant Simon Anholt was asked for his opinion about Brand Australia, he criticized the country for being too reliant on logos and slogans and asserted that Australia had an “unbalanced” image as a country that was “attractive but shallow and unintelligent” (Harrison, 2010). The same year, Brand Australia took a new approach in its campaign TNLA. “Tourism Australia’s latest consumer campaign” – said the presentation of the new initiative – “involves the participation of the whole country” (Tourism Australia, 2010a: 2). This time, instead of television commercials with idealised images of Australia and starring well-known personalities, the campaign would take place on the internet, where using social media technologies citizens would be allowed to share their own holiday pictures to show the “real Australia” to the world. Using the notion of “digital advocacy” to define the new strategy, Tourism Australia argued they were giving a voice to the people in the construction and promotion of the brand image of their country.

Through its so-called “digital advocacy”, Tourism Australia draws on “crowdsourcing”, a strategy based around engaging social media users in the creation of content for a particular enterprise. The term was coined by Jeff Howe in Wired Magazine in 2006, defining a co-creative strategy facilitated by digital technologies in which “a company or institution [takes] a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call”, breaking down the barriers that have traditionally separated amateurs from professionals (Howe, 2006a). The first stage of “TNLA” was developed in three phases: “inspire”, “invite”, “engage”. First, Tourism Australia invited citizens to participate uploading photos of their holidays and a description of 25 words to the website www.nothinglikeaustralia.com. “Over 28 days – Tourism Australia reported – nearly 30,000 photos and inspiring personal stories were uploaded, making it one of Australia’s most successful consumer-generated promotions ever” (Tourism Australia, 2010a: 3). Afterwards, these pictures were used to build an interactive map of Australia that classified all the entries using 1000 keywords. Then, Tourism Australia expanded its “digital advocacy” across their corporate social media networks. Today, the brand has almost 6 million fans on Facebook, 100 thousand followers in Twitter and 650 thousand on Instagram. Quoting these figures Tourism Australia claims to have a brand that is democratic because it is constructed by its “advocates”, and authentic because through social media networks such as “Facebook [they] can get real stories about what people are currently thinking about Australia” (Tourism Australia, 2012).

The campaign TNLA marked the introduction of social media networks in the promotional strategies of Brand Australia. The integration of social media through crowdsourcing is creating a new formula of tourism promotion. This new formula is characterized by a transition from traditional advertising campaigns broadcasted on television, based on catchy slogans and starring celebrities, to new ones publicized in digital media and based on user-generated content. Although Australia is still publicised using advertisements that are broadcasted in traditional media, a significant component of tourism promotion is now based on crowdsourcing, more exactly on the use of photographs and scripts shared by people in social media. The use of crowdsourcing – or “social media advocacy”, as the strategy has been recently relabelled – has been applauded in marketing spheres for its empowerment of audiences, commended in the news media for democratizing tourism promotion, and celebrated with fanfare by Tourism Australia for rediscovering the “real Australia”.

How should such claims be analysed when they come from a marketing campaign aimed at branding the nation? To what extent can marketing campaigns developed in social media be more socially inclusive?

From social media advocacy to social media populism

Assertions of empowerment, democracy and authenticity implied in the notion of “social media advocacy” should not be taken for granted. It is prudent to be suspicious of these claims because they reproduce the
dubious optimism surrounding the emergence of digital technologies that has claimed both the internet and now social media networks as a solution to many problems in society, including the increasing corporatization of public goods and the commoditisation of social relations. Apart from that, the claims of “authenticity” made as part of the campaign, should not be taken for granted, since “realness” and “authenticity” are some of the most powerful narratives used in the tourism industry to persuade travellers to visit a place (Schnell, 2011). I propose to question these claims and the whole idea of “social media advocacy”, arguing that they replicate the logics of what Thomas Frank (2000a) calls “market populism”, but in the new realm of Web 2.0.

During the late 1990s Frank wrote a series of pieces analysing what he defined as the takeover of culture by the world of business (Frank, 1997) and the rise of market populism (Frank, 2000a, 2000b). According to Frank, market populism is a belief that emerged during the 1990s, according to which markets are a far more democratic form of organization than democratically elected governments. Market populism insists that citizens and consumers are equivalent categories and that the rights and duties of the citizenry are best exercised through shopping. As Frank explains, listening to “the people” became a premise of political leaders and businesses. And the best way for knowing and understanding the popular will was through market research in the form of polls, focus groups and the internet (Frank, 2000a: 29). The formula of “one dollar = one vote” became equalled to universal suffrage (Frank, 2000a: 86), and shopping a democratic act.

Similarly, I would argue that TNLA, and other emergent forms of participation based on crowdsourcing, are evidence of the ongoing takeover of Web 2.0 by the world of business and the emergence of something that I call “social media populism”: the conviction that social media networks are democratic sites where people can exercise their rights as citizens through the generation of content. According to this view, digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or blogs, are able to express – in the form of likes, tweets, tags or pictures – the popular will of the people. Citizenship is being equated to the generation of content by internet users, and the best form to exercise cultural citizenship and social participation. Moreover, this belief is progressively transforming “thumbs up” into political action, establishing the suspicious logic “one like = one vote”. This takeover is not new; it can be traced back to the origins of the Web 2.0 revolution in the mid-2000s. In 2006, when Time Magazine chose “You” as person of the year some articles claimed that Web 2.0 was empowering people and enabling them to create content (Grossman, 2006). Simultaneously, in the same issue Jeff Howe (the same author who coined the term crowdsourcing) expressed surprised delight at the fact that “[b]ig businesses [were] embracing this new world … tapping the expertise of everyone out there to enhance their products” (Howe, 2006b).

Beyond Frank’s cultural critique the concept of “social media populism” echoes the critical positions of some prominent media scholars who are questioning the supposed democratic character of the internet and social media, pointing out that it is practically impossible to think about democratic social participation in platforms controlled by corporate interests. Curran (2012) refutes the optimism surrounding digital technologies, arguing that the commercialization and privatization of these platforms, and the censorship of social interactions according to market and state interests, impedes the possibility of social change, including democratic participation (see also: McChesney, 2013). More recently, and in the specific context of social media, Christian Fuchs has critically analysed the extent to which claims of democratic participation in these networks is real. Drawing on neo-Marxist critique (as Thomas Frank does), Fuchs demonstrates that forms of participation in social media are based on unequal relations of power between producers and consumers. In particular, he shows how not only the ownership of these platforms, but also the generation of contents are governed by corporations, while the ownership of citizens is minimal.

Several key critics agree with these criticisms of the democratic potential of Web 2.0, practices of co-creation and the emancipatory figure of the prosumer. Dijck and Nieborg (2009) have shown that most of the claims made in Web 2.0 manifestos combine principles of grass roots collectivism with mainstream capitalism. They have stressed the need for a critical analysis of the socioeconomic implications of this paradoxical convergence able to uncover the interests of the key players. Scholars have also been critical of the practices of co-creation, associating them with forms of consumer exploitation and free-labour
(Humphreys and Grayson, 2008). Critics have demonstrated that since the co-creation of contents is always regulated according to market interests (Zwick, et al, 2008) and commoditised (Freedman, 2012). These strategies have been useful for market institutions in that it helps them to develop new business models based on collaborative or participatory media. The figure of the fantastic prosumer has also been questioned by research showing that the co-creators of content are just an "elite" set of internet users, and that the claims that prosumption is empowering people are just strategies for the commoditisation of social relations (Comor, 2011).

In the context of nation-branding campaigns social media populism can be associated with the incorporation of “wikinomics” (see: Dijck and Nieborg 2009) and other business models based on grassroots collaboration in the cultural economy of commercial nationalism. As in other fields, this incorporation is characterized by a populist discourse that promises change and a new beginning. For nation-branding campaigns this discourse revolves around promising a more inclusive version of "the nation". The majority of criticisms of nation-branding are that this practice allows marketers and designers to transform national culture into an economic asset, and that national identity becomes a commercial construction through this process. But according to the discourses of social media populism, however, this process is changing for the better as Web 2.0 and crowdsourcing initiatives such as TNLA will empower citizens as prosumers of the images used to represent their national identities. Nevertheless, as the case study below examining TNLA shows, it is actually just business as usual.

**Thumbs up! From marketing strategy to civic project**

TNLA was presented to the public through a populist discourse that transformed the marketing campaign into a civic project whereby citizens were to be empowered by social media to fight the national stereotypes created by previous tourism campaigns. A television and internet advertisement announcing the initiative explained the image of Australia in other countries in this way:

> Everybody knows Australia is a rugged country where blokes in stubbies and cork hats get beer out of oil cans, wrestle crocs with their bare hands and say things like 'bonza', and 'sheila' and blonde-haired surfer types hang out at the beach all day and shrimp on the barbie with their koala, kangaroo and cockatoo friends – right?

Immediately after this provocation, the advertisement explained that TNLA was “your chance to set the history straight” and change the national image by sharing holiday pictures on the internet. The supposed civic character of the campaign was reinforced by a marketing discourse that depicted TNLA as separated from state and corporate interests and instead described it as in hands of “the people”. The Minister for Tourism, for example, explained in a radio interview that TNLA “is not about the Australian Government in partnership with Tourism Australia and state and territory organizations nor with the private sector actually picking winners. It is about us as a nation giving the Australian community and opportunity to actually promote their local regions”\(^1\).

Sticking to the populist conviction that opinion polls and surveys are the best ways to find the will of “the people” (Frank, 2000a); the civic character of the campaign was justified saying that market research suggested it would be the best strategy. According to Tourism Australia (2010b), research carried out by Roy Morgan Research found that Australians wanted to get involved in the promotion of the country. These findings were rapidly incorporated in the marketing discourse of the campaign through statements claiming that the campaign will empower ordinary Australians. The script used to present it in the media explained that Australians are “very passionate about how [their] country is promoted overseas”, and that 80% would like to participate in the promotion of the country. Quoting the research, the Minister for Tourism explained that "Australians want to tell the world passionately and proudly about our great country", and that for this reason Tourism Australia was inviting them to share their pictures and testimonials; “now is their chance to get involved” (Canning and Saurine 2010).

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\(^1\) Podcast available at: [http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2010/s2861241.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2010/s2861241.htm)
The news media celebrated the development of the initiative using the same populist tone. Newspaper articles discussed the innovative use of social media for citizen participation in tourism promotion with admiration and saw the movement from traditional marketing to social media as highly democratic. The Australian examined Tourism Australia’s decision to move away from traditional advertising and was enthusiastic about the use of the “latest social media techniques to collect the opinions of the nation” (Canning, 2010). “For the first time” – celebrated the newspaper – “Australia’s $89 billion tourism industry will not hang on the impact of a 30-second TV commercial, but will rely on the phenomenon of social networking”. The campaign, it concluded, “has been created to allow people to express their pride in their country” and “unlike the Bingle campaign and its polarising message, TNLA “has been created to allow people to express their pride in their country” (Canning and Saurine, 2010). Another article in The Age optimistically commented that “rather than impose a view of Australia from above” the Federal organization “has explicitly asked Australians to get behind a new advertising campaign”, tapping “into what they see as an innate quality in Australians – their willingness to shout about why Australia is unique” (Lee, 2010a).

The claims of empowerment and democratic intention of TNLA, and other co-creative campaigns, are overstated. Firstly, these claims do not take into account the digital divides that exist in the country in terms of age, income and location (Ewing and Thomas, 2012), which would keep elderly and rural Australians almost out of the campaign. Secondly, as Dijck and Niegboor clarify, studies mapping internet activity have shown that majority of internet users are consumers of content and looking for entertainment, while a small percentage are creators of content (2009: 861-862). Further, the claims that TNLA is both empowering and democratic are overstated because it is in essence a marketing strategy and any form of participation is regulated according to market interests. Although practices of co-creation might seem relatively spontaneous, Zwick et al. explain that they are controlled and channelled in ways desired by marketers (2008: 165), who implement all kind of strategies to “ensure that consumer freedom evolves in the “right” way (2008: 184). For instance, the tourist minister “acknowledged there was only so much control he was prepared to secede to social media”, and emphasised that “First and foremost [Tourism Australia was a] marketing organisation and [wanted] to put the best possible image of Australia forward...” and for that reason, they were “absolutely ... controlling that”. To ensure “photos and text [were] not profane, do not contain nudity or are politically incorrect” each entry was vetted three times and Tourism Australia reserved “the right to take [entries] down as and when it sees fit” (Lee, 2010b).

Picture this! Putting citizens to work
Far from being civic projects, nation-branding campaigns based on co-creation are complex marketing strategies in which citizens are “put to work” in the production of tourism-friendly images to sell the nation. Crowdsourcing can be associated with a shift from the factory to society, defined by Terranova (2000) as representative of free-labour in the digital economy. Indeed, when Jeff Howe coined the term “crowdsourcing” he claimed to have found a new source of “cheap labour” that was not in India or China, but in “everyday people”, who were using their spare time to create contents solve problems and even do corporate R&D (Howe, 2006a: 177). An article published in Advertising Age during the same year the term was coined praised the idea as one “where businesses faced with tough challenges don’t try to come up with all of the answers themselves. They tap into the collective wisdom of millions of amateurs around the world to come up with a solution” (Rubel, 2006). In this sense, TNLA is a clear example of how tourism promotion has moved from the factory of Tourism Australia to Australian society. Further, this move was celebrated in the media as costing much less than the extremely expensive former campaigns as the first phase of TNLA was going to cost taxpayers just 4 million dollars (Canning and Saurine, 2010).

A key characteristic of the co-creative economy is “the expropriation of free cultural, technological, social, and affective labor of the consumer masses” (Zwick, et al, 2008: 166). In digital economies it occurs when user-generated websites such as Facebook, YouTube or Second Life, “each in their own specific way”, “expropriate the cultural labor of the masses and convert it into monetary value” (Zwick, et al, 2008: 180). In crowdsourcing campaigns prosumers are expropriated of their creative work through terms and conditions they agree to in order to participate. The same day that TNLA was announced, clauses of its “Terms and Conditions” unleashed a debate in which bloggers and photographers
denounced Tourism Australia for insisting on being granted copyright for all entries (Redman, 2010; Walls, 2010a). Some days later the ACMP (Australian Commercial Media and Photographers) published a media statement expressing concern and announcing that they had contacted Tourism Australia about this issue (Watt, 2010). In response to questioning, Tourism Australia changed the wording style of one of the clauses but the meaning remained the same, something considered abusive by the community of professional photographers (Walls, 2010b).

Web 2.0 is not only a social space, as Freedman (2012) explains, it is also the platform for a new economy. In this new economy of abundance, co-creative initiatives are the new digital factories where user-generated content (and also other forms of social interaction) are transformed into new sources of monetary value. TNLA is not an exception, and it is clear that the campaign is focused on transforming holiday pictures into promotional materials in order to sell Australia. Since the late 1990s the global economy has moved from traditional commodities to “experiences”, and brands are focusing on providing consumers with “memorable moments” in which they can engage in either contemplative or active performances (Pine and Gilmore, 1999a, 1999b). This is exactly the type of immaterial commodity that Brand Australia has offered since 2006, when it created the “Australian Experience Framework” – a set of seven topics created to sell Australia as a holiday experience in international and domestic markets (Tourism Australia, 2007, 2008). In fact, the more than 30000 pictures shared by Australian citizens during the first phase of the campaign were rapidly used to create a vast catalogue of holiday experiences in the form of an interactive map of Australia. It becomes clear then, that TNLA’s objective was to sell “holiday experiences”.

One week before the end of the first phase, Tourism Australia declared TNLA a success and the organization announced its target had been met beyond its expectations: “It is terrific to see these levels of support from communities across the country” (Tourism Australia, 2010c). Tourism Australia also celebrated the fact the entries received were able to show the “real Australia”. Tourism Australia commented that the pictures captured “the essence of Australia – both the people and the places – and the diversity of the country from the well-known icons and big cities to the hidden gems that only locals know about” (Tourism Australia, 2010c). The results of the campaign, however, are far from an accurate representation of Australia. This is not only because social participation was manipulated according to market interests, but because studies on tourism have shown that “tourist praxis” is a contingent process, in which the creative consumption of tourists – including the taking of pictures – is framed by scripts that have been set up by the industry in order to create an anticipation for the places that are consumed (c.f. Edensor, 2000; Larsen, 2005; Urry and Larsen, 2012). Apart from that, “authenticity” has come to be a problematic concept when studying cultural representations, and especially, in the context of the tourism industry. Steven Schnell, for example, argues that social constructs revolving around the idea of “realness” and “authenticity” have come to be one of the major attractions sold to tourists. He explains how these concepts are used in tourism promotion to convince visitors that the places they visit have a true essence, which can be experienced getting engaged with particular consumption rituals (Schnell, 2011). Therefore, what the interactive map resulted from TNLA shows, are the ahistorical and depoliticised geographies of Brand Australia, still inhabited by Aussie “blokes on stubbies and cork hats” and “blonde-haired surfers hanging out in the beach the whole day”. As one of the pictures sent explained it “[C]an’t get any better than beers and a bbq at the beach :-) [it is] the lucky country”.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the incorporation of social media in Australia’s tourism promotion has generated interesting changes to the way the country is advertised. These new strategies are seen to be making tourist promotion more inclusive: empowering citizens in the construction of a more democratic and authentic image of their country. Such alterations are evident in the production of promotional materials and the topics used to represent Australia. For more than three decades tourism promotion has been focused on television advertisements starring celebrities and presenting idealized images of Australia. But the progressive incorporation of social media has changed this strategy, and although these television commercials are still common, a considerable portion of promotional efforts has moved to social media with its focus on user-generated content employed to present the “real” Australia.
This new strategy, however, cannot be considered as more inclusive. The claims that user-generated content results in empowerment, democracy and authenticity are overstated and can be understood as manifestations of what I call social media populism. As this paper has argued, such claims reproduce the discourse of “market populism” and the belief that social media is a democratic system, where citizens can “vote” through the generation of content. In addition, such strategies employ the logic of wikinomics, applied to commercial nationalism, to transform the collective construction of national identities by internet users into a business. This paper has shown how social media populism is used to present campaigns based on crowdsourcing as forms of citizen empowerment, when actually forms of social participation are regulated according to marketing agendas. It has also proved that claims of democracy are complicated, because they do not take into account the digital divides, practices and motivations of internet users and the censorship imposed by state and corporate interests. Rather, the discourse of social media populism is part of complex marketing strategies in which citizens are literally “put to work”, in this case in the co-creation of tourist-friendly images of Australia. Although these images are co-created by citizens, they cannot be regarded as more authentic than those produced by Tourism Australia itself. Indeed, such images only reproduce the national stereotypes created by traditional media; they simply do so in new digital environments.

Bibliography


Tracing *The Age’s* editorial culture from 1966-97: an oral history approach

Brad Buller – The University of Melbourne
bradley.buller@unimelb.edu.au

This paper examines oral histories of *The Age’s* editorial culture/identity, conducted with former Age journalists since Graham Perkin’s editorship. While Australian media research focuses on Murdoch owned newspapers and their editorial positioning, *The Age* tends to be neglected as a subject for scholarly research. Moreover, as this paper argues, *The Age’s* culture is more nuanced than its mere editorial position. The research is based on a historical approach, consisting of archival research and oral history interviews. It argues that *The Age’s* culture and identity is intrinsic to the ways in which particular editors shape their editorial products. As applied to *The Age*, editorial culture manifests a fourth estate conception of journalism, an inclusive approach to reporting Melbourne and a commitment to giving The Age a “public face”. Moreover, this paper illustrates how under successive editors and executives, *The Age* is perceived to have shifted from an aggressively engaged voice to a much weakened tabloid.

On the 4th of March, 2013, *The Age*, which had been a quality broadsheet since its inception in 1854, shifted to a compact/tabloid size. This was a change made within the context of the changing nature of newspapers in general, including changing business models, declining circulation and readership as well as the financial situation of the Fairfax company itself (Simons 2012).

This historical event provides significant context for this research. Attempting to investigate *The Age’s* culture at a time of radical change for a historical Melbourne institution is particularly timely. Despite the recent publication of Colleen Ryan’s *Fairfax: The Rise and Fall* (Ryan, 2013) and Pamela Williams’ *Killing Fairfax* (Williams, 2013), little is known about *The Age’s* history and culture. *The Age’s* history has only been partly told by journalists and often through a “Golden Age”, congratulatory, or heroic lens (see Pratt, 1908; Sayers, 1965; Hutton and Tanner, 1979; Hills 2010). Much research has focused on David Syme, the impact of his editorship and ownership of *The Age*, and the history of Syme family ownership more generally (see Morrison, 2011, 2013 and 2014; Nolan, 2001a, 2003 and 2013).

Moreover, *The Age* is comparatively a unique, and traditionally “Melbourne”, publication. It is one of only three generalist broadsheet (or “broadsheet style”) newspapers available in Australia not owned by News Limited (*Age, Sydney Morning Herald* and *Canberra Times*). It is often considered important as an alternative to the right wing Murdoch press (see Manne, 2005 and 2011) and continues as the only “broadsheet style” alternative to the tabloid *Herald Sun*. In addition, as Sybil Nolan argues, *The Age* is thought to have a very specific identity and one in which “key virtues of the Western journalism tradition reside” (2001a, p. 1). Patricia Edgar (1979) elucidates this further, suggesting this is based upon *The Age’s* serious, independent and probing style.

This paper argues that engaging with this notion necessitates a closer examination of *The Age’s* editorial identity/culture. While the concept of culture may be multifaceted (see Hanitzsch, 2007 & Hanusch, 2008), as applied to *The Age*, editorial culture/identity is arguably underpinned by *The Age’s* role in the public/political sphere. In this way, and as this paper illustrates, the approach of successive editors, the style of reportage and writing, *The Age’s* connection to Melbourne and its investigative unit, equate with an understanding of editorial culture and identity. It is, however, out of the scope of this paper to provide a full analysis of culture and identity under each editor. This paper limits its analysis to Graham Perkin’s, Michael Davie’s and Bruce Guthrie’s editorship. These represent key periods in *The Age’s* history and elucidate significant aspects of *The Age’s* culture/identity.

This paper examines the issues noted above in detail by seeking answers to the research questions below:
• How do oral history interviews with former *Age* journalists illuminate the culture and identity of *The Age*?

• How has *The Age*’s editorial direction shifted under successive editors?

Before examining these questions, the author briefly discusses previous research surrounding *The Age*’s history as a traditionally influential, liberal and campaigning publication.

**Literature review**

*The Age* has been an influential and campaigning publication since 1860, the year David Syme became sole owner and editor-in-chief, with the intervention of owner and editor-in-chief David Syme. Established in 1854 by John and Henry Cooke, *The Age* under the Cooke brothers had a smaller profile, low circulation, and a precarious business model (Macintyre, 1991; Sayers, 1965). *The Age*’s liberal, even radical tradition was set by Ebenezer Syme (Tidey, 1997), however it was not until David Syme took over the running of *The Age* in 1860 that it was established as a significant political player.

As John Tidey has written, *The Age*’s “status as a radical journal was confirmed within weeks of its launch” (Tidey, 1997, p. 1). It reached “a pinnacle of influence” at the start of the twentieth century, retaining influence that did not exist among other newspapers (Hutton and Tanner, p. x). According to Geoffrey Blainey, not only did *The Age* increase circulation among readers in Victoria, it also established a significant political impact (cited in Hutton and Tanner, p. x).

A strong example of this political impact is exemplified in what became known as *The Age* Tapes affair in the 1980s. As journalist Bob Bottom argues, *The Age* Tapes Affair is the closest that the Australian press has come to a Watergate legend in Australia (Bottom, 1984, p. 134). *The Age* Tapes was one of the most controversial stories of the 1980s. Expanding on work published earlier by the now defunct *National Times*, the affair was a series of stories which exposed “networks of influence and links between organised crime and public administration in New South Wales”, becoming the basis for investigation of corruption involving the High Court Judge, Justice Lionel Murphy (Minchin, 2000, p. 80). Earlier under Graham Perkin’s editorship, stories such as the campaign for the Little Dessert, the Minus Children series and the Victorian Housing Commission land scandals, among others, also created for *The Age*, significant political influence (see Hills, 2010).

The publication of the Housing Commission land deals under Perkin and *The Age* Tapes during Creighton Burns’ editorship, epitomised themselves as the fourth estate stories of their era and marked the increasing willingness of editors and journalists to act in the public interest (Schultz, 1998, pp. 214–215). More importantly, according to Schultz, “the publication of *The Age* tapes marked the beginning of the third phase of investigative reporting in Australia in the 1980s” (Schultz, 1998, pp. 215). It was during this period that prominent individuals were beginning to be implicated in improper or unethical practice and the news media pursued them in traditional fourth estate style (Schultz, 1998, pp. 215). As Schultz argues, *The Age* Tapes Affair distinguished this era of fourth estate investigative reporting. The implications shook the political agenda and continued to play out in Parliament and the court for some time (Schultz, 1998). Today, *The Age* continues to promote fourth estate style journalism through its investigative team, albeit with far less impact.

In contrast to *The Age*’s influence in the 1970s and 1980s, in the fifty year period between David Syme and Graham Perkin, Sybil Nolan (2001a) has shown that *The Age* became obscure and irrelevant, in terms of its political influence, circulation, design and appearance. According to Nolan (2001a), the failure of *The Age* to introduce technological changes in production, layout and editorial technique led to the ability of its competitors to gain much of *The Age*’s lost ground. Accounts of the paper during these years, argue the paper was “second rate; out-dated in both outlook and appearance” (Nolan, 2001a, p. 2).

This was in addition to its political conservatism. Interestingly, *The Age* has often been criticised by political opponents as a left wing and radical publication (see Hills, 2010). In 1982, however, Martin Walker described a newspaper which had “fallen asleep in the embrace of the Liberal Party” (Walker, 1982, p. 293). Nonetheless, it was not just political conservatism that defined *The Age* during this period. Terms “querulous”, “doddery” and “turgid” were used by journalist Desmond Zwar (1980, p. 68). *The
Age’s conservatism in this era and the view that it had over zealously pursued the distinction of being Robert Menzies’ favourite paper (Griffen-Foley, 2003, p. 179), led to the appointment of a new editor in 1966. Graham Perkin was appointed at a time when the Syme board decided to shift from the problems of the past, and establish itself as “an independent, liberal paper” (Griffen-Foley, 2003, p. 179). Perkin edited The Age from 1966 until 1975, the year he died of a heart attack, aged only 45. Perkin had a significant impact on The Age during his tenure, revitalising and refocusing its reportage (Nolan, 2001a and 2008; Hills, 2010). The years under Perkin have commonly been called by Perkin’s staff, the “Golden Age” of The Age (Hills, 2010).

Clearly this material provides significant context for this research. However clear insights into The Age’s culture are not apparent. According to Patricia Edgar, “analysing The Age means dealing with an explicitly political process” (Edgar, 1979, p. 141). Elucidating her claim further, Edgar argues “The Age wrestles publicly [with matters of public importance], and speaks to its readers about its own intentions with regard to [political] coverage” (Edgar, 1979, p. 141). Here, Edgar gives only a slight insight into The Age’s identity. Given the comparative lack of literature examining The Age, and the recent shift from broadsheet to compact size, the issue of The Age’s editorial culture and identity makes for an interesting and important investigation. Before examining in detail the findings of this research, below I provide a brief discussion of the methods utilised to bring about these results.

Research methods

To answer the research questions presented above, the author utilised a historical approach. According to Bruce L. Berg, historical research is an attempt to “recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events and ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present” (2009, p. 297). Previous research on The Age has tended to overlook historical approaches, with a few exceptions. Sybil Nolan (2001b) utilised archival research with interviews to illustrate a partial disconnect between the memory of journalists who worked under Perkin and the actual record in Graham Perkin’s personal papers. The majority of journalistic histories of The Age have tended to rely on interviews, given that this is the journalistic method, to investigate aspects of the newspaper’s past, ignoring other methods of investigation (see Tidey, 2012; Hills, 2010). In particular, Ben Hills’s biography of Perkin provided no analysis or obvious use of Perkin’s papers. Hence, utilising historical research which has tended to be ignored by much literature as a method provides significant potential to reveal hidden insights.

To attempt to reveal these hidden insights, archival research into the personal papers of Graham Perkin, held at the National Library of Australia, was conducted over a five day period in March 2013. The archive is unique, illustrating many aspects of the Perkin editorship, including his relationship with prominent Melbournians, his commitment to the public role of journalism through lecture notes and transcripts, as well as the internal politics of The Age during the 1972 and 1975 federal elections. This was a time during which newspapers were having significant influence on the political process (see Griffen-Foley, 2003). The Perkin papers are a fundamental source for any historical investigation into The Age’s history. They are one of the few archives available to researchers which provide primary source material on The Age (other archives available include the Fairfax archives at the State Library of NSW). Moreover, Perkin’s papers are particularly important given the ambiguity over the existence of The Age archives. The papers are extensive, hence the author’s interest was limited to Perkin’s lecture notes and transcripts and the correspondence and board memoranda which illustrate the paper’s internal politics and editorial policies around the 1972, 1974 and 1975 federal elections.

In addition to archival research, I conducted a total of ten oral history interviews with the former staff of The Age. According to Valerie J. Janesick, oral history is the “collection of stories and reminiscences of those who have first-hand knowledge of particular experiences” (2013, p. 152). At the core of oral history according to Janesick, “we find the testimony of someone telling a story” (Janesick, 2013, p. 152). The interviews conducted were essential to fully elucidate an understanding of The Age’s editorial culture and identity. The interviews were unstructured, in line with the principles of oral history. These principles are built around asking open ended questions and allowing the participant the freedom to speak without interruption or interrogation (see Parks and Thomson, 2003; Curthoys and McGrath, 2009). Interview
questions were not pre-fixed so that I was able to encourage interviewees to speak freely and openly about their experiences working under successive editors and their understandings of *The Age’s* culture. Interview questions tended to evolve as the research evolved.

By utilising this historical approach, a more nuanced understanding of editorial culture/identity is elucidated. Much previous research has tended to focus on one method of investigation. In this research an attempt is made to combine stories of *The Age’s* past with rigorous analysis of these stories to illuminate *The Age’s* culture and illustrate how the approach of editors has shifted over time. The application of this approach has revealed insightful results as illustrated below.

**Graham Perkin, Insight and editorial identity**

Graham Perkin, editor from 1966 until 1975, established *The Age* Insight investigative unit in 1973 (Perkin, 1973). According to interviewees, Insight’s establishment was an important development in Australia, establishing *The Age* as a political force. Russell Skelton, Cameron Forbes, Corrie Perkin and Sally White argued Insight’s establishment brought about the formation of *The Age’s* editorial identity. As Russell Skelton suggested, under Perkin’s editorship, *The Age*, in large part due to Insight, “went from being a fairly passive, non-reactive newspaper of record, to being a very aggressively engaged newspaper within the community and with the politicians” (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 15 July).

As Cameron Forbes proposed, *The Age’s* Insight investigations became “the tough edge to the paper’s voice” (C Forbes, 2013, pers. comm., 25 June). The improvement of *The Age’s* coverage and Insight’s founding were deliberate acts intended to establish *The Age’s* editorial identity as Russell Skelton expresses below:

Perkin set out to establish its [identity]. Um before that it had a very tiny readership; it was mainly an upper class sort of newspaper. It was very conservative, probably conservative to middle of the road liberal. Perkin first of all radicalised the news coverage. He started putting big pictures on page one as a regular thing, he ah gave by-lines to reporters so suddenly everyone had a visible "face" in the paper, he established an Insight team to do investigations, and then he sort of systematically targeted a number of issues which gave the paper an enormous following and big clout (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 15 July).

This was an important development in *The Age’s* future commercial success. As Graham Perkin’s personal papers illustrate, the development of an identity for *The Age* was a key factor in obtaining new and younger readers. In a speech to the Public Relations Institute of Victoria, Perkin stated:

*The Age* more than most papers, has been a paper with a settled and established readership... But we do want to extend our appeal to a wider range of Australians and to serve these people in a more effective, more interesting and more challenging way. There is a popular myth *The Age* is not interested in selling newspapers. It *is* a myth. We are vitally interested in new readers and we will actively seek them by attempting to produce a better newspaper (Perkin, date unknown).

According to Russell Skelton, Perkin developed a large audience for *The Age* by developing its reportage and establishing *The Age* as a political player (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm. 15 July). Perkin deeply believed in the role of newspapers as a watchdog on power of all kinds, and was particularly critical of newspapers which “ignored discomfort, disregarded injustice, and lived with administrative incompetence and governmental dishonesty” (Schultz, 1998, p. 182).

*The Age* was more than its investigative journalism however. As Sally White put to the author, “one of the things that Perkin did extremely well was being the public face of *The Age* and talking on television and radio about the state of the media” (S White, 2013, pers. comm., 16 July). Perkin’s papers, however, show that Perkin delivered public speeches on topics as broad as the Vietnam War and the role of public institutions within society, as well as a range of speeches on the role and importance of a press in the democracy (Perkin, date unknown). This was a first for Australian newspapers which had traditionally
been non-reactive journals of record. The pure act of Perkin as the editor, delivering speeches in public helped to develop *The Age*’s public profile and hence a very unique editorial identity.

The discussion above has focused on the establishment of *The Age*’s editorial identity through Perkin’s establishment and development of Insight and and Perkin’s commitment to developing a kind of “public face” for *The Age*. The results from the interviews appear to confirm the point made earlier that editorial culture and identity are underpinned by *The Age*’s role in the public/political sphere. Interestingly, there exists little dissent in the views of *Age* journalists on the issue of Perkin’s improvement of the paper. The senior journalists who worked under him have a fond and nostalgic memory of the times spent under his editorship. Below, the discussion moves from the Perkin editorship to Michael Davie’s editorship, illustrating oral histories of *The Age*’s editorial culture.

**Michael Davie and *The Age*’s editorial culture**

In contrast to Perkin’s editorship, *The Age* under Davie’s editorship moved beyond a focus on political coverage and hard news stories to bring broader Melbourne perspectives into the paper. Davie, an Englishman was brought to *The Age* from the *Observer* in London and edited *The Age* from 1979 until 1981. As Russell Skelton explained, *The Age* under Perkin had developed a very strong “news breaking culture” (R Davie, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). This culture was focused on the enormous political change occurring in the early 1970s (R Davie, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). However, according to Skelton, Davie was far more interested in the big personalities which were influencing Melbourne and its culture (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). Davie was astonished that top artists such as Fred Williams, constitutional thinkers such as Colin Howards and intellectuals and academics weren’t part of *The Age* domain and Davie set about bringing these kind of voices into the paper (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). According to Skelton, Davie hired very good accomplished writers and *The Age* developed a significant writing element under Davie’s editorship (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). This combined with the kind of reportage *The Age* published (which was based on the city of Melbourne and the key thinkers influencing it) resulted in a real sophistication according to Skelton. When asked what Davie’s contribution to *The Age* was Skelton replied:

*Sophistication I think. And um it was more nuanced and was a bit more complex and as a result it made it a bit more appealing and – I mean the independence was firmly established by previous editors so I mean he of course didn’t touch that but I think he broadened the paper out, made it less of a political beast and more of a social/political beast, made it far more sort of culturally aware. The Perkin paper was really very intensely political…although it ran big social justice campaigns and Davie did too… but it was Davie who took the broader view (R Skelton, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August).*

Arguably, under Davie, *The Age* developed a sophisticated culture, particularly with regards to its writing and reportage. Interestingly though, Corrie Perkin, daughter of Graham Perkin, criticises *The Age*’s writing culture under Davie:

*When I first started at The Age and I looked to people who were sort of middle rung and senior journalists and they referred to themselves as, you know, writers of The Age. And I thought god my dad would have rolled around in his grave with hearing that because what you actually were – you were reporters and there was nothing particularly special about that. You were supposed to be the anonymous voice that reported accurately and independently and without fear or favour on news stories. You weren’t a celebrity and you weren’t a writer (C Perkin, 2013, pers. comm., 5 August).*

Perkin’s perspective is interesting, especially because one of the first things Graham Perkin did was give his reporters by-lines, thus giving them a public face. As the microfiche copies of *The Age* show, by the end of Perkin’s editorship, all the most significant political stories were labelled with the author’s by-line. Moreover, as *The Age*’s circulation levels show (see Tidey, 1997), the style of Davie’s approach in his broadening of *The Age*’s journalism to writing as well as reportage and giving influential Melbournians a
voice in the paper, gave it a large following. It seems as if Perkin’s criticism above is a criticism of *The Age*’s culture under Michael Davie. Her point that journalists were the anonymous voice that reported accurately and independently seems to connect with journal of record notions (on journal of record see Simons and Buller, 2013). Interestingly, this tends to be anathema to the kind of editorial identity that Graham Perkin so passionately set out to develop. Moreover, Sybil Nolan (2001a) illustrates the way in which *The Age* was obscure when it was a journal of record. Below, the author examines the impact of structural changes occurring at *The Age* in the 1980s and 1990s. These changes were antithetical to the kind of editorial culture and identity developed during Perkin and Davie’s editorships.

**The Age’s editorial culture/identity in the 1980s and 1990s**

As illustrated above, *The Age* under Perkin and Davie developed a culture that was politically influential and deeply connected to Melbourne and the key thinkers influencing it. In contrast, as former *Age* journalists argue, *The Age’s* takeover by Fairfax in 1983 (see Souter, 1992) signalled the beginning of the end of *The Age’s* Melbourne identity. As Corrie Perkin suggested in interviews, this takeover led to a significant disjuncture between *The Age* and the community it represents:

> The Sydney ownership of David Syme and Company really, I believe, signalled the beginning of the end of *The Age* as a Melbourne brand. And we see that today with journalists interviewing people and you know, referring to themselves as from Fairfax Media, rather than *The Age*… I don’t think Sydney has really understood the place that [*The Age*] has in the hearts of its citizens and they have over many years systematically just chipped away at that confidence that we’ve had in our newspaper (C. Perkin, 2013, pers. comm., 5 August).

Perkin’s perspective is interesting, particularly in contrast the relationship between the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*. The current financial situation surrounding Fairfax and the increasing integration of *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* underlines the issue of editorial culture. As John Tidey suggests the financial problems with the Fairfax company and the amalgamation of content between *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* underlines issues of culture and identity “in the sense that the word amorphous comes to mind” (J. Tidey, 2013, pers. comm., 17 June). From Tidey’s perspective, *The Age* is no longer a bold, proud, independent, Melbourne institution, rather a “curious tabloid filled up with journalism by people who are just a likely to be on the *Sydney Morning Herald* as *The Age*” (J Tidey, 2013, pers. comm., 17 June). Hence Tidey illustrates a key fracture line in *The Age’s* unique history. More importantly, Perkin’s and Tidey’s perspectives illustrate the importance of Melbourne based management. As interviewees revealed, the centralisation of *Age* management in Sydney following the departure of Ranald Macdonald (managing director between 1964 until 1983) also contributed to a key fracture line in *The Age*’s traditions. Up until this point, *The Age* not only had a Melbourne owner, but a management that was deeply entrenched into the paper.

This disjuncture between a Melbourne based newspaper owned by a Sydney based company was a common theme emerging from interviews. Another key theme communicated by interviewees was the Bruce Guthrie’s editorship (1995-1997). Interestingly, in interviews, Guthrie took the concept of editorial culture in a different direction. According to Guthrie, *The Age* was at its best when it was questioning authority, holding institutions to account and acting as a fourth estate (B. Guthrie, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August). As Guthrie maintained in interviews, *The Age* campaigned aggressively on political issues, including the size of the Melbourne casino and aspects of the Kennett government, including education and health policy, thus fulfilling its fourth estate role (B. Guthrie, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August).

What is most interesting about Guthrie’s editorship however, in terms of editorial culture, is the way in which the structural changes occurring during his editorship appear to represent key departures from fourth estate principles. Guthrie gives some insight into this below:

> There was this constant tension to get on with politicians [during my editorship] which I think really, you know, you talk about the [culture of *The Age*]. . That was a fundamental misunderstanding of
The [culture and identity] of *The Age*. The [culture] of *The Age* was to hold those people to account whether they be Premiers, Prime Ministers, backbenchers, ministers, heads of industry. *The Age*’s proper role was to say we’re going to hold you accountable. And here I was in a board meeting being told that the most important thing was to get on with these people (B Guthrie, 2013, pers. comm., 7 August).

Hence, while Guthrie clearly articulated a fourth estate manifestation of editorial culture and identity in interviews, the approach of Fairfax management to *The Age*’s traditions appears to have undermined *The Age* and its role in the public/political sphere.

**Conclusion**

Previous research has tended to neglect *The Age* as a subject for scholarly research. Much current research focuses on David Syme and tends to epitomise a “Golden Age” perspective. Australian literature tends to be limited to studies written by journalists, with the exception of some scholarly research (Morrison, 2013; Nolan, 2001a, 2008 and 2013). The contribution of the research presented earlier to an understanding of editorial culture/identity is limited, tends to emphasise its liberal and independent traditions, while focusing on the 1980s. As this paper illustrates, *The Age*’s history is far more nuanced than the picture painted by much of the literature.

Moreover, this paper illustrates the following definitive shifts in *The Age*’s editorial direction. Under Graham Perkin, *The Age* was developed as a very aggressively engaged political news breaker. This was given expression especially through *The Age* Insight unit. In addition, Perkin developed a “public face” for *The Age* by regularly giving public lectures and appearing on radio and television. Michael Davie’s approach developed *The Age* beyond political coverage with sophisticated thinking and sophisticated writing. The editorships of Perkin and Davie were *The Age*’s high point, in terms of political influence, intelligence/sophistication and circulation. Under Bruce Guthrie *The Age* interrogated political power and developed itself along strong fourth estate lines.

In conclusion, this paper illustrates how oral history interviews illuminate interesting aspects of *The Age*’s editorial culture and identity. As this paper reveals, former *Age* journalists understand editorial culture/identity in the following ways: as a commitment to the public role of journalism (as exemplified by Perkin above); in relation to investigative reportage, particularly with regards to Insight; as a commitment to reporting Melbourne and the key thinkers influencing it; and holding powerful people and powerful institutions to account. Interestingly, the contemporary discussion surrounding the weakening of Fairfax and its flagship newspapers links this weakening to the influence of the internet and the breakdown of the business model. As former *Age* journalists argue however, the original decline in *The Age* relates to Fairfax’s encroachment on a manifestly Melbourne institution.

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Blackout: The mediated silencing of Aboriginal public opinion about the Australian Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response 2007

Michelle Dunne Breen – University of Canberra
Michelle.Dunne.Breen@canberra.edu.au

In June 2007, the Australian Federal Government declared a crisis of child sexual abuse in remote Northern Territory (NT) Aboriginal communities and launched the unprecedented and far-reaching Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), which was enacted by Parliament two months later. Within days of its announcement, soldiers began entering the communities followed by teams of doctors and bureaucrats. The Race Discrimination Act was suspended, and residents were subject to welfare quarantining, whereby half their welfare payments were only accessible via a store card to ensure money was spent on food and other necessities. The haste and some of the elements of the NTER’s roll-out was questioned by many Aboriginal people and their supporters. In an attempt to engage in the mainstream debate, 140 groups – Aboriginal bodies, social justice organisations, churches – came together to publish an open letter to the Prime Minister and the Indigenous Affairs Minister, expressing concerns about aspects of the intervention policy. Furthermore, representatives of more than forty NT Aboriginal groups gathered together to produce an alternative intervention strategy document.

This paper explores how this opposition was mediated by the press – what voices were heard, and indeed listened to, and how they were represented. Employing the critical discourse analysis methodology of Norman Fairclough’s dialectical-relational approach, this paper explores the role of mediated communication in the presentation of public opinion, specifically that of NT Aboriginal people and their supporters, in the discussion regarding how to cope with this declared national crisis. It explores the social context of journalistic discursive practices, and the cultural context of journalists’ and governments’ handling of Aboriginal affairs and the NTER, as analytical contexts to the textual analysis of news reports. It finds that organised oppositional voices were largely absent from the Australian print media’s news reports considering the NTER. This paper contributes to the literature on the representation of Aboriginal Australians’ public opinion in the Australian media, provides evidence of silencing, exclusion and misrepresentation, and identifies the particular discursive practices that enable this.

This paper points to practices that are common in the newsroom but indiscernible from the examination of online news sites. These discursive practices have been captured from analysis of the print editions of newspapers. The methodology to adequately excavate them from online newspaper sites has not yet been developed (for example, the retrospective examination of a news story’s development across edition changes over time). This paper argues that analysis and discussion of these practices is vital to our understanding of how news is shaped. Our discussion of social inclusion is incomplete without an understanding of routine journalism discursive practices that serve to exclude and their implication for communication and media.

In June 2007, following the publication of the Little Children Are Sacred report of a year-long inquiry (Anderson and Wild, 2007), the Australian Federal Government declared a crisis of child sexual abuse in remote Northern Territory (NT) Aboriginal communities and launched the unprecedented and far-reaching Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), which was enacted by parliament two months later. Within days of its announcement, soldiers began to enter the Northern Territory’s remote Aboriginal communities followed by teams of doctors and bureaucrats. The Racial Discrimination Act was suspended, and the permit system – whereby outsiders needed community permission to access Aboriginal land – was scrapped. Residents of the communities were subject to welfare quarantining, whereby half their welfare payments were only accessible via a store card to ensure money was spent on food and other necessities. The haste and some of the elements of the NTER’s roll-out were questioned by many Aboriginal people and their supporters. In an attempt to engage in the mainstream debate, some 140 groups – Aboriginal bodies, social justice organisations and churches – came together to publish an open letter (referred
to in this paper as the Open Letter) to the Prime Minister and the Indigenous Affairs Minister, expressing concerns about aspects of the intervention policy. (This policy is variously referred to in the news reports and in this paper as the policy, the NTER and the Intervention.) During the fortnight following the Open Letter's publication, representatives of more than forty NT Aboriginal groups got together to produce an alternative intervention strategy document, referred to in this paper as the Alternative Plan. (The producers of both the Open Letter and the Alternative Plan are at times referred to as oppositional voices in this paper.)

This paper explores how this opposition to the NTER policy was mediated by the Australian press, in terms of what voices were heard and indeed listened to, and how they were represented in the newspaper news reports. Employing the critical discourse analysis methodology of Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach, this paper explores the role of mediated communication in the representation of public opinion, specifically that of NT Aboriginal people and their supporters, in the public sphere discussion regarding how to counter this declared national crisis. This paper explores the social context of journalistic discursive practices and politicians' discursive practices. It also explores the cultural context of Australian journalists' and governments' handling of Aboriginal affairs in general and the NTER policy in particular, to provide, as per Fairclough's CDA methodology, analytical contexts to the critical textual analysis of the news reports.

The treatment by Australian newspapers of both the Open Letter and the Alternative Plan is illustrated through exemplars taken from two very different newspapers. The first, an exemplar set, explores the treatment of the Open Letter in Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph*. The second, a single exemplar, is from Melbourne's *The Age*. *The Daily Telegraph* is a daily tabloid published by News Corp Australia, or News Ltd as it was known in 2007, the dominant newspaper publisher in the Australian market. News Corp Australia, the local branch of Rupert Murdoch's international News Corporation, accounts for 65% of Australia's metropolitan and national newspaper circulation (Flew, 2013). Being a tabloid newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph* is aimed at a working-class readership: its tone is populist, its news story treatment brief, with typically 300-word page leads. Its editorial values are generally conservative and it serves the Sydney market. By contrast, Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper is a daily broadsheet published by Fairfax, the second-largest publisher in Australia's essentially duopolistic newspaper market (which accounts for 25% of the metropolitan and national newspaper circulation: Flew, 2013). Fairfax is a private company owned by shareholders. *The Age*, a broadsheet, is aimed at a middle-class readership: its tone is factual, its news story treatment ranges from 800-word page leads. Its editorial values are generally centrist. It serves the Melbourne market. Sydney and Melbourne are Australia's two largest cities, each having a population of roughly 4.5 million residents.

This paper (in line with findings from the wider research project from which it is drawn) finds that organised oppositional voices were largely absent from the Australian print media's news reports considering the Open Letter and the Alternative Plan. Indeed, this paper finds that the Alternative Plan was only covered by two news reports – one in *The Age* and one in its sister newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald*. All other Australian metropolitan newspapers ignored it. This paper contributes to the literature on the representation of Aboriginal Australians' public opinion in the Australian media, particularly at a time of crisis, and provides evidence of the enduring themes of silencing, exclusion and misrepresentation. It also explores how a more reflective journalistic practice could be more inclusive.

**Literature review**

The literature pertaining to journalism's democratic watchdog role and its relationship with democratic participation is most pertinent here. The Habermasian concept of the public sphere, central to the notion of democracy, is a social realm in which citizens can gather to discuss and debate issues of importance in order to reach an agreement on how they would like society to be organised (Habermas, 1989). Also central to the notion of democracy is the concept of the Fourth Estate, whereby the press both acts as the watchdog on government and enables – some would argue now embodies – the public sphere. The result would be an informed citizenry and an accountable government (Economou and Tanner, 2008). Private opinions need to be subjected to the public sphere public opinion formation process, through reasoned
discussion and debate, before something approaching public opinion can be reached. Increasingly, the media is seen as providing this space, and increasingly, the mediatised public sphere is seen as excluding people themselves from this deliberation process: Hartley and McKee (2000) argue that the conversation is now between the media and the government — that is, that the media has replaced the people as the site of the public sphere. There is some evidence emerging that the online realm in general and social media in particular are providing an alternative public sphere, wherein people are able to deliberate amongst themselves, circumventing mediatisation, but this paper is concerned with a series of events that occurred in mid-2007, before, for example, Facebook and Twitter became widely available.

The literature about the Australian media’s representation of Indigenous issues and sources is also of central importance here. The Australian media has been shown to deal with Aboriginal issues in a consistently unsatisfactory, often clearly racist, way (Jakubowicz 1994; Meadows 2001; Bacon 2005; Waller, 2013). Indigenous issues are rarely given attention outside “crisis” situations (McCallum, 2011, 2013; Waller, 2013). Simmons and Lecouteur (2008) have shown through a CDA study that similar problems in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities are reported in very different ways — the former as intractable and attributable to the community as a whole, the latter as the responsibility of a small group of trouble-makers and holding out the possibility of change.

Aboriginal voices themselves have been found to be largely left out of news reports about issues that concern them, with reporters tending to go first and often only to official sources, such as police spokespeople and politicians: Jakubowicz (1994) found that, in news reports, “The exclusion of Aboriginal voices as authoritative is persistent” (Jakubowicz, 1994, p. 85). Indigenous voices are routinely omitted from reports on even contentious issues, which Aboriginal people themselves have said is worse than misrepresentation (Meadows, 2001, p. 7); and Bacon (2005) found that when Aboriginal sources are included in stories about an Aboriginal death in custody, they tend to be the only voice in the news report with no context provided and no one in authority called to account.

On collusion
Teun van Dijk, in writing about critics of CDA’s preoccupation with exposing power imbalances, asserts that the scholars who “discredit such partisanship... show how partisan they are in the first place, e.g. by ignoring, mitigating, excluding or denying inequality” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). Van Dijk goes on to say that it “is this collusion that is one of the major topics of critical discourse analysis” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). This concept of collusion provides a departure point to make a similar case regarding journalists and the journalistic practice of questing after “objectivity”: as examined in this paper, in allowing asymmetrical “balance” in their news reports — for example, by allowing government ministers to reject criticism with an irrelevant and/or hypothetical anecdote — the journalist is essentially colluding discursively with the minister to exclude the oppositional voice from the news report. They are not allowing the oppositional voice to be heard. They are smothering it. They are not listening.

On listening
The discussion around whose voice is heard can be and has been extended to explore the issue of “listening” (Dreher, 2009; Bickford, 1996). Listening puts the onus on the powerful to truly hear what the marginalised are saying:

If oppression happens partly through not hearing certain kinds of expressions from certain kinds of people — then perhaps the reverse is true as well: a particular kind of listening can serve to break up linguistic conventions and create a public realm where a plurality of voices... can be heard... (Bickford, 1996, p. 129).

This concept of listening can be applied productively to “consider the ways in which conventions of media and public debate serve to silence or to mute a whole array of differences” (Dreher, 2009, p. 445). This concept of listening provides a departure point for this paper: the journalists’ and the Prime Minister John Howard’s listening, as evidenced in their discursive practices, is explored via the conceptualisation of “asymmetrical rebuttal” which this paper offers.
Methodology

Fairclough devises a framework for discourse analysis that has three levels of analysis – text, discourse practice and sociocultural context. The analysis on each level involves description, interpretation and explanation – with description and interpretation being at times indistinct (Fairclough 1992, p. 198). Fairclough recommends a data selection strategy which focuses on moments of crisis: “These are moments in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong.” He recommends this because, “Such moments of crisis make visible aspects of practices which might normally be naturalized” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 230). Wodak (2001) wrote that “texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance.” (Wodak, 2001, p. 11) These moments of crisis that Fairclough recommends focussing on are themselves sites of struggle.

The PhD project from which this paper arose is exploring how the Australian print media dealt with the NTER from when it was announced to when it was enacted by Parliament two months later. The Factiva database was used to identify newspaper stories on the NTER, also known as the Intervention into Aboriginal communities, between 15 June 2007 and 18 August 2007, generating a data set of some 1750 items. The line of inquiry for this particular paper was inspired by Olga Havnen, variously NT Indigenous activist, politician and bureaucrat, who said at the Media & Indigenous Policy Symposium at the University of Canberra on November 21, 2012 (the research team for which included this paper’s author, see McCallum et al, 2012), that in July 2007 a group of some forty Aboriginal organisations had devised an Alternative Plan to the Intervention, and that this plan – A proposed Emergency Response and Development Plan to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory: a preliminary response to the Australian Government’s proposals (Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, 2007) – received no media coverage. So in order to explore this, to find any newspaper coverage of the Alternative Plan in the data set, a search was carried out within the full data set using a number of search terms.

That search revealed that not only was there almost no coverage (see below) of the Alternative Plan’s launch on July 10 but that prior to the Alternative Plan’s launch, there was a press conference on June 26 announcing the publication of an Open Letter, signed by more than 140 groups – Indigenous, church, legal, housing – objecting to central aspects of the NTER policy. At this press conference, the Alternative Plan was foreshadowed. It was then developed in a deliberative process over the intervening fortnight by representatives of more than 40 Northern Territory Indigenous organisations. They referred to themselves collectively as the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory.

The data set text search revealed that the Open Letter was the subject (not always overtly) of a couple of dozen newspaper reports. The Alternative Plan was the subject of only two. This data subset was then read as a whole. In an inductive, iterative process, the texts were examined on a lexical and sentence level, including noting evidence of discursive practices as they arose. To illustrate, one discursive practice that was in evidence was the routine journalistic practice of striving for balance, whereby for example a criticism is put to the target of that criticism for the target’s comment on that criticism. In this case, when the oppositional voices raised a criticism of the NTER policy, and where the journalists did elicit comment (which was something rare in the reports) from the Indigenous Affairs minister or Prime Minister, this paper looks at what form that comment took – for example, did the comment answer the substance of the criticism, or was it saying something else entirely. This paper finds the latter to be the case, and conceptualises it as “asymmetrical rebuttal”.

The sociocultural context was then examined to further illuminate what was observed in the text, as per Fairclough’s CDA methodology. The themes that emerged are explored in detail via exemplars in the Findings & Discussion section below. For example, how the discursive practices of journalists and ministers in effect worked together to silence, exclude or misrepresent the oppositional voices in the news reports when the oppositional voices sought to present to the public, the press and the government the Open Letter and the Alternative Plan as embodiments of Indigenous public opinion on the policy.

The Open Letter

When the Open Letter was published on June 26, a couple of dozen newspaper news reports the next day referred to it, not all overtly with some just alluding to it. The Open Letter was signed by Professor Mick
Dodson, a well-known Indigenous academic, and 140 organisations dealing variously with housing, social welfare, legal aid, social justice and other issues, representing doctors, lawyers, youth workers and other health professionals, church groups and women's shelters. (The news reports, however, varied in the number of signatories reported: “more than 60”, “about 100”, etc., suggesting that the reporters had not paid close attention to the Open Letter.) About a third of those signatory organisations were exclusively Indigenous-focussed.

The Open Letter, addressed to Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough, called for three things: “greater investment in the services that support Indigenous families and communities, the active involvement of these communities in finding solutions to these problems and greater Federal Government engagement in delivering basic health, housing and education services to remote communities” (Dodson et al., 2007). The Open Letter said that the signatories “welcome your commitment to tackling violence and abuse in certain Indigenous communities” and that they “endorse the call in the Little Children Are Sacred report for the Australian and Territory Government to work together urgently to fill these gaps in services”. It said that the problems required “sustainable solutions, which must be worked out with the communities, not prescribed from Canberra [the seat of the Australian Parliament].”

The Open Letter goes on to warn that the NTER proposals “go well beyond an ‘emergency response’, and will have profound effects on people’s incomes, land ownership, and their ability to decide the kind of medical treatment they receive. Some of the measures will weaken communities and families by taking from them the ability to make basic decisions about their lives, thus removing responsibility instead of empowering them.” It expresses the concern that an “over-reliance on top-down and punitive measures” and “insufficient indication that additional resources will be mobilised where they are urgently needed, to improve housing, child protection and domestic violence supports, schools, health services, alcohol and drug rehab programs”, issues which have been “raised by many Indigenous leaders over many years”, mean that “[i]n their present form the proposals miss the mark and are unlikely to be effective”.

The Open Letter ends with an offer: “We offer our support to Indigenous communities and the Government in: developing programs that will strengthen families and communities to empower them to confront the problems they face; consulting adequately with the communities and the NT Government, and community services, health and education providers; developing a long-term plan to address and resolve the causes of child abuse including joblessness, poor housing, education and commit the necessary resources to this.”

For the most part, the newspaper reports about the Open Letter give a very scant overview of its content, paraphrasing very briefly some of the content quoted above, providing no context to it and not asking anyone, including the Indigenous Affairs Minister or Prime Minister, for comment on the concerns expressed. Where comment was sought from anyone other than a signatory to the Open Letter, the tone was discernibly hostile. The most overtly hostile reporting on the Open Letter was seen in Sydney’s tabloid newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, exemplars from which are discussed below.

The Open Letter in The Daily Telegraph

On June 27, the day following the publication of the Open Letter, Sydney News Ltd tabloid The Daily Telegraph ran four articles about the NTER policy: two opinion pieces, an editorial/leader (“What nonsense”), and a news report (Rehn, 2007). Of the two opinion pieces about opposition to the NTER (Quigley, 2007; Farr, 2007), neither mentioned the Open Letter nor the proposed Alternative Plan directly.

The first opinion piece

Under the headline “This is no place for the grubby hand of politics”, among a piece largely based on issues that came before UK courts and not pertaining to Indigenous Australia, the opinion writer, staff journalist Anita Quigley, in defence of Howard’s “radical blueprint to rid Aboriginal communities of the rampant sexual abuse of children” (“radical”, “blueprint” and “rampant” all being terms used in other media, most notably News Ltd. national stable-mate The Australian), in a blatant belittling of concerns writes that the “detractors”, “are, as my grandmother used to say, just being contrary – disagreeing purely because they can and because it is a [PM John] Howard initiative” (Quigley, 2007). The use of folksy sayings, such
as the grandmother anecdote above, can serve to silence debate (Tolton, 2013). In this extract, Quigley is maintaining that critics are complaining just for the sake of it (“purely because they can”) and therefore have no argument to make.

And in a less equivocal attempt at silencing the Oppositional Voices, Quigley finishes up by writing that “[c]ritics of Howard’s attempt to fix it [the NT] need to shut up, at least for the time being” (Quigley, 2007). Quigley does not elaborate what “the time being” might be, that is, how long the “critics” “need to shut up” for. This vague caveat can be seen as an insurance against her being criticised for the silencing. She was only saying that they should shut up just for “the time being”.

The second opinion piece
In the same edition, another Daily Telegraph staff opinion writer, Malcolm Farr (under the headline “Not invaders: army are known and trusted friends”) without mentioning the Open Letter, rails against the “outraged fretting” of critics who are concerned about the military having a role in the Intervention. He writes that the army already has a role in remote communities, and that,

That means little to commentators who have looked through the reaction options and quickly punched the button marked ‘Over’.

These people include Pat Turner, an Aborigine and former senior federal bureaucrat who saw something worrying about the fact Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough has an army background – and step forward Anglicare chairman Dr Ray Cleary who said: “I’m yet to be convinced sending the police or the military into a community to tell them to behave is going to solve the problem.”

The military, as has been made clear, will be there for communications, logistics and health services, but Cleary seems to think they will be setting up stockades (Farr, 2007).

The reduction of Pat Turner to “an Aborigine” is problematic. This nominalising terminology is considered to be offensive in general to Indigenous Australians (Queensland Health, 2011; Flinders University, n.d.). Furthermore, Turner’s reduction to a “former senior federal bureaucrat” is noteworthy. She was the CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission – the Indigenous representative body – from 1994-98, and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1991-92, among many other very senior public positions. Her legitimacy as a spokesperson is minimised here.

Regarding Dr Ray Cleary’s concern, the context to it is that military and police involvement in remote Indigenous communities has a very sad and traumatic history and an extremely sensitive legacy in Australia. The Stolen Generations as they are now known, the legacy of a policy whereby over a number of decades all mixed-race Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their parents and communities, to be raised in government-run homes in the “hope” that their Indigeneity could be bred out of them, is still very much an open wound today – so much so that there was a formal apology to the Stolen Generations in 2009 from the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, which is seen as a watershed moment in the Australian national journey to reconciliation. Cleary’s concern is decontextualised and ridiculed.

The editorial/leader
Also in the Daily Telegraph on June 27, page 24, is a leader (or editorial) on the issue, which yet again does not explicitly mention the Open Letter or the Alternative Plan. Under the headline “What nonsense”, it reads, in total:

Prime Minister John Howard’s strong intervention to tackle the appalling problem of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory was never going to achieve unanimous endorsement.

But yesterday the criticism sprang from a somewhat surprising source – from the Australian Council of Social Services and from church groups meeting in Canberra to oppose the Howard plan on the basis that it was too “hard-line”.
Asked for their own alternative course of action, the so-called “activists” were obliged to concede – they had no plan. So, they have no constructive plan of their own yet they are constrained to attack the Government’s attempt to combat the sickening problem of Aboriginal child abuse. How helpful.

Then the most extraordinary claim – from former ATSIC commissioner Pat Turner who said the Government plan was a “Trojan Horse” to take over Aboriginal lands. What dreadful nonsense.

As a genre, a newspaper’s editorial or leader is the de facto voice of the newspaper, which reflects its organisational values and its editorial stance on issues. A close look at this editorial is very revealing about The Daily Telegraph’s stance on the Intervention and those who criticise it. The policy’s target is described as “appalling” and “sickening”. Some critics are described as somewhat surprising (the “somewhat” mitigating the surprising, with the meaning conveyed that it is not entirely surprising that these critics are unhappy). Some criticism is characterised as extraordinary. Sarcastic, rhetorical put-downs are employed, such as “how helpful”, “what dreadful nonsense”, “so-called ‘activists’” (with the label “activists” deliberately in inverted commas to indicate it as questionable in the writer’s eyes). The juxtaposition of the critics’ apparently extraordinary, nonsensical concerns with the revelation that they have “no plan of their own” serves to undermine the critics’ concerns. Crucially, the groups had declared that day that they were about to put a plan together – one that they went on to publish a fortnight later on July 10 – but the Telegraph does not mention this anywhere in its coverage on this day or subsequent days. This plan makes an opaque appearance in the news story (discussed below), but is in effect excised from it and the rest of the Daily Telegraph’s coverage.

The news story
Also in the Telegraph on June 27 is a news story on page 15, which does mention the Open Letter. The introductory paragraph reads:

A group of Indigenous leaders, churches and other community groups slammed John Howard’s radical plan to combat rampant sexual abuse in indigenous communities as “unworkable” – but have no alternative plan themselves (Rehn, 2007).

Not only does this news report repeat the “radical” and “rampant” characterisations of the policy and its target problem, but it immediately silences the critics, indeed smothers them, by telling us that they have nothing constructive to offer in its place. (This echoes, or is echoed by, the leader on page 24 and also accords with the opinion piece on page 25, the page opposite the leader, that the critics “need to shut up”.) The news report goes on to say:

Yesterday, the former head of the now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Pat Turner said the Government was “using child sexual abuse as the Trojan horse to resume total control of our lands”.

“What the Prime Minister and his Minister Mal Brough are proposing is, in the view of the combined Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs, is totally unworkable,” she said. But when asked what the groups’ alternative plan was, she replied, “We’re working on that” (Rehn, 2007).

The abrupt transition “But when asked” here signifies the reporter’s skepticism of the claim. Most notable, however, is that when asked for a plan, Turner said “We’re working on that”. This is interpreted by the news reporter and the leader writer as the group not having a plan, and this apparent lack of a plan is used to undermine the oppositional voices – it is used to ridicule and silence them. However, the group was devising a plan. The NTER had only just been announced, so it could be seen as somewhat unfair to expect the group to have come up with a plan of their own immediately. It is most definitely unfair to represent, “we’re working on it” as meaning the group does not have plans for a plan. What it is “working on”
is not explored by the newspaper, although other media reporting suggests that the CAO NT made known that day that they were planning on producing an Alternative Plan within days. “We’re working on it” means just that: that the group is working on a plan—the Alternative Plan that they produced a fortnight later.

Taken together, the four Daily Telegraph articles in the June 27 edition leave the reader in no doubt to what the Telegraph thinks of the oppositional voices: that they are talking nonsense, have nothing useful to add, and should just “shut up”. When the Alternative Plan was published a fortnight later, The Daily Telegraph did not report it.

The Alternative Plan

On July 10, the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory published A proposed Emergency Response and Development Plan to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory: a preliminary response to the Australian Government’s proposals (Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, 2007). It is referred to in this paper as the Alternative Plan. The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory (CAONT) represented Aboriginal organisations in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. It developed the plan with “community sector organisations from across the country” (CAONT, p. 3).

In short, the Alternative Plan, puts forward a set of practical immediate measures and long-term reform proposals to address the problem. These draw upon the experience of Aboriginal communities and service providers on the ground, and some of the many reports detailing problems in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, including the Little Children Are Sacred report and reports from organisations such as the Secretariat of National Aboriginal Island Child Care (SNAICC), the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) (CAONT, p. 7).

The Alternative Plan, a 30-page document, agreed with and engaged with the need for an intervention to protect children in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities and proposed a two-stage response (CAONT: 3): Firstly, “An emergency response over the next 3-6 months on which agreement can be reached quickly between Governments and community leaders” and secondly,

A more comprehensive and costed… [plan] that addresses the underlying issues within specific time-frames… This would also involve thorough planning and negotiation to ensure that the correct strategies are adopted, the substantial resources required are efficiently used, and funding is stable and predictable… This plan should be developed and negotiated under a partnership approach with the targeted communities during the current emergency response phase and be implemented as soon as is practicable (CAONT, p. 3).

It said that,

The response must be informed and led by local Aboriginal communities. It is only by strengthening the capacity of families and communities to protect and nurture children that the problems will be resolved. Aboriginal ownership and control of land and access to communities are important in this regard (CAONT, p. 3).

It referred the Government back to the recommendations of the Little Children Are Sacred report (Anderson and Wild, 2007), which bear little resemblance to the NTER policy it inspired, as well as suggested 68 “Proposed actions”.
The Alternative Plan in *The Age* newspaper

*The Age* in a 558-word report on page 8 of the July 11 edition written by senior journalist Michelle Grat- tan, reported on the Alternative Plan’s launch with the headline “Aboriginal group lashes PM’s plan”, and the subhead “Land and permit measures under fire in report”. *The Age’s* report on the Alternative Plan of July 11 will hereafter be referred to as “the news report”. The intro or lead paragraph of the news report reads:

The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory group has blasted key parts of the Federal Government’s intervention plans to protect children (Grattan, 2007).

The second paragraph of the news report reads:

But Prime Minister John Howard says the offers of support from the general community are overwhelming (Grattan, 2007).

*The NTER policy’s representation*

The NTER policy is represented as “to protect children” and the recipient of “overwhelming” support from the “general community”. This is reinforced later on in the report when the results of a Newspoll public opinion poll are reported as showing “more than 6 in 10 Australians approve of the Intervention”.

*The government’s representation*

The Prime Minister is given immediate rebuttal, in the second paragraph. The rebuttal is introduced with “But” which overtly signifies a shift in perspective from the criticism to its rebuttal. The rebuttal is asymmetrical. The substance of the Prime Minister’s rebuttal – “overwhelming” public support – does not address the substance of the criticism: that the policy is fundamentally flawed. There is asymmetry in the assumedly objectivity-oriented balance-seeking journalistic practice. This asymmetry – in that the two voices, the Oppositional and the Prime Minister’s, are not aligned in substance – in effect serves to deny balance and obscure the actual lack of objectivity afforded the subject matter.

*The plan’s representation*

The plan is referred to throughout the news report as a/the “report”. However, it is much more than that. In the news report, there is no indication of the plan’s comprehensiveness. Its content is not detailed. The news report, however, does report that the CAONT has concerns, contained in the Alternative Plan, that “the dismantling of the permit system… would make it easier for ‘grog runners [alcohol peddlers] and shonky [dodgy] art dealers’”. (The explanations in square brackets are to clarify some Australian English terms for those not familiar with them.) Indigenous art is a lucrative market and an important source of income for many communities. It is an ongoing battle to protect Indigenous artists from being ripped off by unscrupulous art dealers. Similarly, it is an ongoing battle to keep alcohol out of the predominantly “dry” communities. Two targets of the NTER were alcohol abuse and welfare dependency, so these concerns are very much pertinent to the official debate.

The news report also mentions other concerns that,

The [CAONT] report warns that if the Government’s emergency measures are implemented without community consent and ownership, there is a risk that problems such as alcohol addiction “will be driven underground and that initiatives to help prevent child sexual abuse and family violence will be resisted” (Grattan, 2007).

However, although the news report mentions these concerns of the CAONT’s, The Prime Minister is allowed in the news report (enabled by the journalistic discursive practice of seeking comment) to deflect these concerns by his discursive practice of asymmetrical rebuttal: he deflects the criticism by invoking an irrelevant claim of public support for the policy as a whole. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that “offers of support from the general community” was the substance of the Open Letter. It is as if the Open
Letter and the Alternative Plan are being played off against one another in this 'discourse chain' (Fairclough, 1992).

**The oppositional voices' representation**

In the news report, the CAONT is represented as “blasting” the Government's plans, and is – via the Prime Minister's immediate rebuttal – implicated as being other than/not part of and out of step with “the general community”. Olga Havnen “A co-ordinator for the group” is quoted as saying,

the Government's approach “is not sustainable or effective. It doesn't show a commitment to the long term.” What was needed was a well-thought-out, costed plan with a timetable, she said.

However, the CAONT’s Alternative Plan is not given oxygen here. Instead, the news report moves on to the Government policy coming “under fire” from “veteran Aboriginal leader Pat Dodson, who told the ABC…” that removing abusers from communities could be counterproductive. The Alternative Plan has been pushed aside in the news report by the reporting of another media outlet's interview with a different oppositional voice talking about a hypothetical effect of the policy. The two oppositional voices – that of the CAONT and that of Pat Dodson – are conflated and, arguably, diluted by that conflation. Certainly, the Alternative Plan is diluted as there is no more space given in the news report to its discussion. The news report gives equal coverage to two different interventions by two different oppositional voices.

The news report, however, does go on to identify the following commonality (then goes back to Howard and finally refers to an opinion poll):

The organisation’s [CAONT] report and Mr Dodson both stressed the importance of dialogue and working with communities as well as the need for more resources.

But Mr Howard said yesterday: ‘We are very satisfied with the progress that is being made. The Government's determination was receiving widespread support. Newspoll yesterday showed that more than six in 10 Australian approve of the intervention.

Again, immediately after this oppositional voices' representation, the Prime Minister is given instant – and again, asymmetrical – rebuttal. The Prime Minister John Howard does not answer the criticism that is made about the manner of implementation and resourcing of the policy. The Oppositional Voices are diluted, then smothered. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's stance is immediately legitimated with poll statistics. This poll's reporting lacks several nuances: that it has not polled – discretely or perhaps at all – Indigenous Australians; that it does not include the questions that were asked of respondents to gauge what “approve” means; and that it fails to foreground that nearly 40% of Australians do not approve of the Intervention – or at least, of those polled: as Crikey reported on this poll, 16-17% of those polled answered “don’t know” to the question (Saulwick and Muller, 2007).

In any case, opinion polls are a contentious reflection of public opinion. For example, Blumer (1948) held that public opinion cannot be discerned by the polling and aggregating of private opinions. Those private opinions need to be subjected to the public sphere public opinion formation process, through reasoned discussion and debate, before something approaching public opinion can be reached. The large number of “don't know” replies would point to the NTER policy being under-discussed in the public sphere. A large number of people felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge upon which to base a judgement of the policy. The inclusion of this poll, which was commissioned by a rival media company (News Ltd), is further evidence of the collusion between the journalistic and Prime Ministerial discursive practices.

**The journalistic voice**

The journalistic voice in the news report serves as a consistent cohesive bind to the narrative. For example, in the militaristic language employed: The CAONT “has blasted” key parts of the NTER. Dodson is a “veteran” from whom the NTER comes “under fire”; in the portrayal of the policy and the Government's action as mandated and decisive: The Government receives “overwhelming” “offers of support” from the
“general community”, the Government’s “determination” was “receiving widespread support”, “Canberra would go ahead with its tougher measures.” The haste of the policy’s implementation was defended in terms of actions versus bureaucratic inaction:

Mr Howard said that getting the intervention plan into action was not being delayed by the complexities of drafting legislation…

The journalistic voice, whether it is independently produced or utilising paraphrasing and indirect quotes, echoes the Prime Ministerial voice. The journalistic discursive practice of enabling the Prime Minister’s immediate rebuttal – at two points in the news report – with the linking phrases of “But” and “However” disguises the asymmetrical nature of the rebuttals. “But” and “However” suggest that what is to follow addresses that preceding in the news report. It does not. The Prime Minister’s discursive practice of offering rebuttals that do not rebut the criticism raised, but co-opt generalised widespread support from a nebulous “elsewhere” in the NTER discourse, is enabled by the journalistic discursive practice. There is collusion between the two which serves to silence, exclude and misrepresent oppositional voices to the NTER policy.

Conclusion
The exemplars from *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Age* demonstrate that the newspapers silenced, excluded and misrepresented oppositional voices in general and Indigenous dissent in particular. Concerted, substantial and unified Indigenous public sphere activities were ignored or ridiculed, and concerns were silenced or smothered.

This outcome was in part arrived at when the journalists’ routine discursive practices colluded with the Prime Minister’s discursive practices. It is not argued nor demonstrable that this was deliberate: regardless, a more reflective journalistic practice, whereby journalists look for asymmetrical rebuttal and address it, would go some way to addressing this problem in representation. This paper offers the conceptualisation of asymmetrical rebuttal as an insight into the potential for this collusion and as a signal that an oppositional voice is not being listened to.

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Editorial team

Guest editor
Diana Bossio

Editors-in-Chief
Thomas Sutherland
Scott Wark

Editorial assistant
Thao Phan

Copyediting and typesetting
Thomas Sutherland

Publisher
School of Culture and Communication,
The University of Melbourne, Australia