



Programme
MeCCSA Postgraduate Conference

**DIVERSE
VOICES**

2023



Welcome to the MeCCSA Postgraduate Conference - 2023. The theme this year was Diverse Voices.

We are delighted to welcome you both in person and virtually to the campus of Staffordshire University - proud hosts of this years PGN Conference.

Focussing on the sharing of knowledge and experience the theme of the conference has offered a great range of submissions and we have curated a really diverse programme.

Mixing theoretical and practice based presentations/works we hope to give a platform to a diverse collection of work and approaches on a diverse range of topics.

We were fortunate to secure a wonderful keynote speaker - Catherine Gough-Brady who has some insights into the ways in which we can research and importantly share that knowledge.

Many people helped with this project, and although we cannot name them all here, we are very grateful for all the help and support we have received.

We do hope you enjoy this event, the opportunities to network and encounter new works and approaches

Dr Sharon Coleclough and Dr Agata Lulkowska.

Schedule

09:45	Registration Coffee and Welcome from the event organisers
10:00	Carlton Reeve - Staffs Welcome (Staffordshire University) Millicent Lovelock (Introducing MeCCSA Post Graduate Network)
10:10	Keynote - Catherine Gough-Brady
11:00	Professor Martin Jones (Vice Chancellor, Staffordshire University) Formal welcome to the PGN community

Break

Panel 1		Chair Nicolette Badderley
11:20	Naomi Smith	Al Primo, Trudy Haynes, and the Quest for Racial Diversity in the American News Media
11:40	Ridwa Horrah	Black Women and Perceptions of Self-(re)presentation and Identity Formation on Social-Media
12:00	Sudip Sen	"The White Chat Circle"
12:20	Mahsa Makki-Alamdari	Floating Roots
12:40	Discussion	

Lunch

Schedule

Panel 2		Chair Millicent Lovelock
14:00	Ali Ramsey	Re-visioning Menopause Through Archive Appropriation Filmmaking
14:20	Yuzhu Sun	Metaverse: Transforming the Art and Culture World towards Decolonization
14:40	Sejal Yadav	Understanding the 'Alternative' in Contemporary Spaces of Performances and Culture in Urban India.
15:00	Tim Anderson	Insecurities
15:20	Discussion	
15:40	Coffee, Cake and Networking	
Panel 3		Chair Stephen Griffiths
16:00	Francisco Mazza	Listening as Strategy: Understanding Peckham Through Sound and Community Engagement
16:20	Sana Batool	Media inequality and marginalized voices – Shias of Pakistan
16:40	Isilda Ameida	Critical reflections on ethics in research with older adults living with dementia
17:00	Shanshan Wu	The Breath of Memory: Transcultural Remembrance of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Chinese Screen Media

Schedule

Panel 3 Continued

17:20	Faith Kirigha	Freedom of Speech: Regulation, the Balance of Power, and digital sovereignty
17:40	Discussion	
18:00	AGM	Drinks and Networking
18:15	Screening - Menopause: The Movie - Ali Ramsey	
19:00	Event Ends	



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#diversevoices23

Keynote

10:15

Catherine Gough-Brady



Catherine Gough-Brady is a documentary maker. Her documentaries can be about a variety of subjects and for a variety of media, but the core issue that binds them all, is the social critique that is contained in them.

Catherine's early documentaries were influenced by Feminism and these films focused on the experiences of ordinary women. She then moved to Melbourne to study at VCA and began making documentaries on industrial disputes.

Catherine established and co-edited an online international journal, *Documenter*, that looked critically at the issues of documentary filmmaking.

Panel 1

11:20

Naomi Smith (Birkbeck, University of London)

Al Primo, Trudy Haynes, and the Quest for Racial Diversity in the American News Media

In 1965, Al Primo, a Philadelphia-based news director, broadcast the first episode of *Eyewitness News*, a new kind of local news that would change the way Americans received the day's headlines and even the typical content of the news itself. Primo's broadcast replaced what were typically staid, nationally-focused broadcasts with banter-heavy local "infotainment", a format that was popular with viewers and was rapidly adopted across the United States, changing broadcast news forever. This new, fast-paced and sensationalised brand of reporting came with a focus on crime stories, however, which were both entertaining and attractive to viewers via a familiar storyline that tended to reinforce negative racial stereotypes.

In search of a solution to this issue, which was beginning to have a negative impact on communities in diverse cities, Primo eventually hired Trudy Haynes, who had made history as Detroit's first African American weatherperson. Haynes found there was little coverage of the Black community at the network and that when Black folks did make the news, it was typically negative coverage, centred around accidents and murders. A task force later convened by President Johnson came to the same conclusion, arguing that the news media had contributed to racial division in American, and called on newsrooms to "do better".

This paper looks at the impact of *Eyewitness News* on communities of colour, and the continuing implications for racial diversity and the depiction of marginalised communities in American broadcast journalism, and asks whether the subsequent drive towards newsroom diversity has created real change.

11:40

Ridwa Horreh (Nottingham University)

Black Women and Perceptions of Self-(re)presentation and Identity Formation on Social-Media

Many contemporary media and public discourses about Black people are couched in the language, experiences and perceptions dating back to white domination during colonialism. A case in point is the fetishization of Black female bodies and the stereotyping of Black women. The resultant representations of Black women as hypersexual beings to justify the exploitation, objectification, racialisation and ridicule of their bodies have been widely circulated via mainstream media, including social media platforms. As a result, according to intersectional theory, Black women find themselves experiencing sexism and racism.

Drawing on a number of key theoretical frameworks coupled with early-stage field research, this abstract proposes to explore how a selected sample of Black female social media influencers navigates the aforementioned hypersexualised and racialised representations of Black women and their bodies online. This is important because the oversaturation of such representations renders them difficult to counter. A key part of the exploration here will cover the strategies adopted to challenge fetishizing and racializing normalisations of the Black female body and alternative narratives of the self and identity.

Existing research has found that the perpetuation of the said stereotypes and related representations via dominant media outlets can shape how Black women understand, perform and identify with their self. However, lesser known are the processes and work Black women undergo to arrive at a critical understanding of their self, to craft their own self(re)presentation, and to form their identity particularly in virtual spaces.

12:00

Sudip Sen (University of Portsmouth)

“The White Chat Circle”

“The White Chat Circle is (currently) a spoken word prose piece built around the media coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests of June 2020, and the ensuing media storm.

It is focused on the way in which the denial of racism can serve to function as the racist noise itself – a world in which people never quite say what they think, but find other ways of, for example, defending the greatness of imperial Britain (and statues).

It is about the spiralling demand for time in the attention economy, and the circulation of an ‘idea’ of censorship (Alana Lentin, *Why Race Matters*, 2020). Have you heard people speak for 10 minutes in front of a million listeners, about how they have no voice, and cannot say anything anymore?

The radio is filmed, clipped up, labelled using the format ‘X destroys Y’, and posted on Twitter. So this story watches us watching the media in the summer of 2020 – and we may not always like what we see.”

12:20

Mahsa Makki Alamdari (University of South Australia)

Floating Roots

This submission is part of an ongoing PhD research project, entitled: “(Re)construction of Cultural Identity through Everyday Life: A Practice-Based Acculturation Journey”. By analytic autoethnography and reflective practice as my overarching methodologies, I am trying to explore 1- how I, as an Iranian temporary migrant in Adelaide, (re)construct my place-based cultural identity through my everyday life; 2- how the state of temporariness affects my acculturation; and 3- what are the influences of reflective practice on my journey.

The submission includes some sample outputs of my primary methods namely illustration and multimedia journal. Three sets of artefacts and three journal entries are selected for this submission. The artefacts and journal entries capture the qualities of the acculturation journey within a sojourner’s lived experience through themes and patterns like self, home, mobility, connection, nostalgia, longing and belonging which are experienced in the fleeting moments of wonder and punctuate the everyday life of migrants. The paradoxical title of Floating Roots came from a motif in Farsi poetic literature; root is a symbol of connection and belonging while floating implies the state of having little or no attachment to a particular place.

Based on the current research design, I circularly and constantly (re)construct new me (s) by the reflective practice narrating and illustrating my everyday journeys of discovery through time (memory, nostalgia, nomadic ancestors, hope and sorrow, planning, postponing, extending, ...), place (home, suburb, city, nature, multiple origins, ...), and time-place (dreams and nightmares, ecstatic moments of menstruation, telepathy, misplacement, epiphanies, déjà vu, fantasy, ...).

12:40

Discussion

Lunch - 13:00

Panel 2

14:00

Ali Ramsey (University of Sussex)

Re-visioning Menopause Through Archive Appropriation Filmmaking

There has been an increased visibility of menopausal life and politics in mainstream and social media in recent years, typified by Davina McCall’s recent TV documentaries and high-profile grassroots activist campaigns such as #MakeMenopauseMatter. This presentation explores issues arising from my PhD research project, which aims to act as a commentary on the mediation of menopause. It considers what we should make of its new visibility in public life, whose interests this reflects, and the relationship it bears to the marginalisation of older women and feminist struggles for equal healthcare and bodily recognition.

14:20**Yuzhu Sun** (Singapore - National Institute of Technology)

Metaverse: Transforming the Art and Culture World towards Decolonization

The emergence of new media has accelerated the dissemination and reception of information, but cultural prejudices and divisions still exist. The new business and communication platforms of the new media era have widened cultural inequalities, exacerbating regional differences between the rich and poor. Due to geographical location and low levels of electronic technology development, the culture of many regions is not well recognized worldwide. Meanwhile, advancements in AI and immersive technology have brought the interaction between virtual and physical worlds into the spotlight. Metaverse technology has the potential to generalize this interaction in the near future, making it crucial to explore its impact on society, particularly its effect on regional imbalances and cultural barriers.

This article will examine how metaverse technology can influence the decolonization process in art and culture. It will explore how metaverse experiences in art, culture, new media, as well as museum and gallery education can embrace the multi-culture globe to foster cross-cultural exchange and challenge mainstream values and attitudes towards minority and non-western cultures. It will discuss how metaverse technology may connect Eastern and Western philosophical thought to create a more balanced and stable concept of the human community. Furthermore, this paper will delve deeper into the potential changes and challenges associated with Metaverse technology in the decolonization process and its implications for global heritage and cultural sustainability. It will present a current and developing picture of the Metaverse to promote cultural equity, diversity, and sustainability.

14:40**Sejal Yadav** (MIT-World Peace University)

Understanding the 'Alternative' in Contemporary Spaces of Performances and Culture in Urban India.

During my PhD research on the "Politics of Performances: An Ethnographic Study of Alternative Cultural Institutions in Mumbai and Delhi", I had to conduct extensive qualitative interviews of artists, performers, scholars, owners, managers and curators of contemporary cultural institutions/spaces that work within the domain of art/culture and performances. Through my ethnography, I observed that most of the contemporary urban cultural spaces in Mumbai and Delhi have been articulating and fashioning themselves as 'experimental, alternative, non-mainstream, diverse and a hybrid' in nature, while juxtaposing themselves against big media production houses, popular television channels, Bollywood, and government-funded institutions established in post-colonial India. This research paper critically engages with the dialogues and conversations that I conducted with all of them while emphasizing the design of these 'alternative' physical spaces, in which performances are imagined, written, rehearsed, executed and performed.

It's interesting to note how their grammar of what constitutes the 'alternative', stems from their understanding of the complex activities of negotiations happening on the multiple fronts of funding, patronage, and architectural design, and its directly proportional relationship with the variables of autonomy in decision making, art production, curation, and programming. Operating in the background of a politically tensed nation of India in contemporary times. In this paper, I shall be mapping the epistemologies of what constitutes the 'alternative' and the 'main-stream' within the contemporary spaces of art, performances and culture with due emphasis on the design of these spaces.

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15:00

Tim Anderson (Staffordshire University)

Insecurities

The poem "Insecurities" contains a list of sixty-four personal descriptors which we can use to judge ourselves. The thoughts and ideas included in the poem range from the childish and simple, such as "good" and "clever" to more difficult issues like "transgression" and "being ungendered". Tim Anderson iterates some of the obstacles and insecurities experienced in the time journey from being a fully-functional, self-confident adult to a bus-pass "senior" dependent on pensions, the goodwill of doctors' receptionists and the bemused tolerance of the young.

For my generation, these concepts were unrelated to everyday life. In the early 1950s, when Anderson started school, the disabled were kept tidied away in special workplaces and homes; there were lunatic asylums for the neurodiverse and the mentally ill. Before Windrush, British people of colour were actually few and far between and homosexuality was illegal, furtively enjoyed, or consummated "underground". But in the context of the modern world, identities that were once problematic are now celebrated, and we are required to confront the dead-weight of our accumulated prejudices and biases.

Following the reading, gaps and exclusions will have appeared. The text becomes visible on the screen - and this can be used as a former for discussion, as to why certain problematic ideas were ignored - and why others made the list. The format of "Insecurities" follows the example of American electronic composer Daria Semegen's "Art-Tickle" (1994), which focusses on art and complexity, producing meaning from a list of words and ideas.

Panel 3

16:00

Francisco Mazza (Staffordshire University)

Listening as Strategy: Understanding Peckham Through Sound and Community Engagement

Through my sonic journey as a Peckham resident, practitioner, and researcher, this audio paper explores the 'acoustic territory' (Labelle, 2010) of Peckham's Rye Lane. My relationship with this place has expanded throughout my studies, allowing me to move beyond the simple notion of documentation or representation from the outside. Instead, as a resident, I have been able to apprehend my methodologies of listening and representing sound through my everyday life, living in Peckham, and involvement with different community groups.

But why sound? And why now?

"With the urgent necessity of communicating places and sounds" (Wright, 2022), here, on the edge of gentrification, displacement and disappearance, the acoustic territory of Peckham Town Centre resonates beyond my 'idiosyncratic' position (Schulze, 2018); expanding outwards from my own experience of listening and into broader social-political dimensions. Peckham is one of the few areas in London that, in some ways, has maintained some resistance against continuous "regeneration", or, from the local community's perspective, gentrification, programmes, that are rapidly spreading throughout the city (Eileen, 2022, interview).

As a Peckham resident and researcher beginning my PhD and a documentary film project, I was intrigued about who was driving this community engagement and activism and how they were striving to defend the place and its identity from community displacement and demolitions.

In this context, 'amplifying ambience' has become a methodological tool and critical framework of my research for infusing 'sonic sensibilities' (Voegelin, 2021) into discussions around urban spaces and community engagement, as a response to the most recent round of regeneration plans spreading across London. The questions that arise from this exploration are: How can listening be incorporated into community activism as a reflective strategy? And how can the agency of the acoustic environment be articulated in those reflections?

16:20

Sana Batool (Falmouth University)

Media inequality and marginalized voices – Shias of Pakistan

More than 4000 Shias have been killed because of religious extremism and faith-based violence in Pakistan over the past nine years. Despite the violence the Shia community continues to face for having a different faith than the majority of Sunni Muslims, Pakistani media coverage has remained minimal to nonexistent, leaving a significant knowledge gap for the masses in the present and future. Through this study I, therefore, have tried to find out why the media underreports Shias, what is the role journalists play when they are asked to cover the issue from a specific angle and what are the editorial policies/factors that hinder reporting. Keeping journalism study as the primary discipline, the study is more reliant on autoethnographic strategies derived from my lived experience as a journalist and reporter in the newsroom, as well as interviews with journalists and Shia community member. This study elaborates in part on the writings of Abbas Zaidi, Syed Zubair Hussain Shah et al, who examine the role of media using textual analysis of news looking at the semantics of news on Shias and examine the media framing of news related to Sunni-Shia tensions in Pakistan. The conclusion of the analysis is based on a pilot content analysis of news and the patterns that emerged from the news presented to the society, which turned out to be controlled, pacified, and censored. This study could provide an empirical foundation for future discussions and research on Pakistan.

16:40

Isilda Ameida (University of Brighton)

Critical reflections on ethics in research with older adults living with dementia

My doctoral project researches the use of drone technology to empower underserved audiences to connect with heritage. It focuses on the South East, in Sussex, and is supported by a partnership with the National Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority.

The literature review highlighted both organisations aim to reach underserved communities, such as disabled people and people experiencing health inequalities (The National Trust, 2021). When considering the opportunities of drone technology to engage underserved audiences, access emerges as one of the key themes. Specifically, in the context of those who live with limited mobility, are housebound or can't visit independently. This perspective has been informed by COVID -19. The pandemic forced social isolations (Yan, 2020), and put a spotlight on exclusion and health disparities. Older adults in residential settings or care users were particularly affected. It is in the context of the literature review and the qualitative data, that I am conducting focus groups with people living with dementia.

In this paper, I propose to present a critical reflection on the ethical approval considerations to undertake five weeks of focus group sessions with people living dementia, in a day centre setting. Here, I examine researcher positionality, effective relationships with gatekeepers, balancing individual and group requirements, discuss the tensions between the specific needs of

older adults living with dementia, and the established academic protocols to conduct research with a vulnerable group of older participants with cognitive impairment.

I conclude with recommendations for researchers involving aging population in their work.

17:00

Shanshan Wu (Birkbeck - University of London)

The Breath of Memory: Transcultural Remembrance of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Chinese Screen Media

Although pandemic broke out in January 2020, its economic, political and social impacts continue to be felt. As we continue wrestling with the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences, we also begin to grapple with the collective memories it has sparked and left behind. This practice-led research project will investigate the transcultural remembrance of the COVID-19 pandemic through screen media in China, examining how pandemic memories are articulated and conveyed in a transcultural context. Screen media artefacts participate in various ways in the transcultural communication of pandemic memories. They constitute an archive of personal and collective memories, perform acts of remembrance and commemoration, and structure various modes of resistance to national and hegemonic discourses of forgetting. These three dimensions form the core of my proposed project.

This practice-based PhD will produce, alongside a written dissertation, an essay film that explores the transcultural transmission of pandemic memories incorporating first-hand experiences from China. I have chosen film as the practical component because filmmaking itself is a mnemonic practice in keeping with the object of study. I will work with screen media archives, such as news footage and social media videos, as well as my personal memories to remediate the memories of the incident. I will also interview people from China about their memories of the pandemic and transcultural experiences of dealing with pandemic-related media. As part of the PhD, I will organise screenings of this film once it is produced and build an analysis of the subsequent responses and discussions into the thesis itself.

17:20

Faith Kirigha (Falmouth University)

Freedom of Speech: Regulation, the Balance of Power, and digital sovereignty

Social media platforms have become increasingly prevalent for organising, activism and critique. From the Arab Spring uprising to the most recent Movement-dubbed #STOPLoaningKENYA, social media has become very vital. This shows media freedom in Kenya, but governments' regulatory silos limit it. Kenya is recognised internationally for digital innovation, and media freedom is guaranteed in Kenya's 2010 Constitution. However, in practice, the media is governed by regulations muddled within various sections of civil and criminal law, which limit the freedom of critics and protestors. Furthermore, the impact and influence of Kenya's legacy media have steadily declined over the last decade as social media has become a primary source of news for most Kenyans. With heavy advertisement dependency, the media's commercial viability has decreased as advertisers shift their attention away from conventional media. The government has since become the most significant single advertiser in all the media houses. With this dominance, the government threatens to pull or withdraw its advertisements if a particular media house or journalist fails to report news in favour of government interests.

While the governments cannot completely control the media or shut it down as they need it for legitimacy and to publicise and enact their policies, they have strategies to manage it, including bribery, leaking messages, and shutdowns. This research reports on a series of interviews with political bloggers, activists, human rights, and media organisations to assess the effects of Kenya's Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act (CMCA, 2018) on free speech and media management in Kenya.

Contributor Biographies

Tim Anderson

Trent Vale teacher, parent and grandparent, local student, Thames Valley bus conductor, laboratory technician, pottery labourer, socialist, poet and performer, composer (acousmatic and orchestral), amateur bricklayer, house painter and tree surgeon, conceptual and digital artist, therapist, carer, computer programmer, refugee/immigrant, tourist, researcher, guitarist, bricoleur, currently living and working in Staffordshire.

Isilda Almeida

Isilda Almeida has a Master of Arts in Museum Studies by the University of Leicester and has worked at the Museum of London Docklands, The Museum of Childhood at the Victoria and Albert, and currently is a Heritage and Culture Equity Consultant for Museum Development UK and other regions.

Sana Batool

Sana is an experienced freelance journalist and reporter based in Pakistan, currently studying a PhD at Falmouth's School of Communication. Sana's professional practice focuses in the often-underreported issues in Pakistan. Through her PhD project, she is examining why media in Pakistan may underreport violence against the Shia Muslim population.

Ridwa Horreh

Ridwa Horreh is currently a PhD student from the Cultural, Media and Visual Studies Department at University of Nottingham. She has a bachelor's and master's degree in Psychology from Manchester Metropolitan University. Ridwa works as a photographer alongside her studies, and this artistic interest led her to work with social media influencers and inspired her research topic.

Faith Kirigha

Faith Kirigha is a third-year PhD student at Falmouth University. Her research on Digital Authoritarianism aims to investigate the impact and implications of regulating digital media content on freedom of speech in Kenya. Faith enjoys doing research, travelling, and meeting new people. After completing her PhD, she hopes to remain in academia.

Mahsa Makki Alamdari

Mahsa Makki Alamdari is a visual practitioner-researcher currently based in Adelaide. Her research interests and backgrounds are mainly focused on the interconnections between design and humanities, place-based identities, everyday life, and migration. Her autoethnographic PhD project aims to investigate her acculturation journey through illustration practice and keeping a multimedia journal.

Francisco Mazza

Francisco Mazza is a London-based sound artist and researcher working on a range of projects. His focus lies at the intersection of modern composition, installation, sound for film and radio art to explore aspects of our listening and the environment around us. He has often collaborated with communities and other artists to investigate how listening experiences influence both our individual and collective experiences. He is currently a PhD candidate at Staffordshire University, exploring the sonic landscape of documentary form.

Ali Ramsey

I am a third year PhD student at the University of Sussex, using critical-creative filmmaking methods to explore media representations of menopause. With a professional background in documentary making at the BBC, I direct and produce films, audio, installations and plays for award-winning multimedia production company Digital Drama.

Sudip Sen

Sudip Sen is an ESRC funded PhD Candidate at the University of Portsmouth researching the ways in which racist ideologies circulate in the media. He uses a race critical lens to analyse the ways in which racism is reproduced through its denial, but also the particular ways that racism is deployed as a debateable commodity. After over 30 years of consuming the media in both Australia and the UK, he wants to find better and more creative ways to communicate ideas about racism.

Naomi Smith

Naomi Smith (she/they) is a postgraduate research student at Birkbeck, University of London. Her current research is concerned with intersectionality and gatekeeping in American broadcast news. She graduated from Durham University with a BA (Hons) in Archaeology and Ancient History, and has an MA in Investigative Reporting from Birkbeck.

Yuzhu Sun

Yuzhu Sun is a PhD student in Visual and Performing Arts at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. She disseminates research concerning art education, technology and art history, and in 2016 was awarded the Chinese National Academic Scholarship. She has edited and authored several publications in Chinese concerning art education and art history.

Shanshan Wu

Shanshan has studied in film and screen media from the University of Sydney and Birkbeck, University of London. She is an independent filmmaker and has worked for commercial agencies as a writer, director, and producer in Beijing. She will be starting her PhD in October 2023 at University of Liverpool.

Sejal Yadav

Sejal Yadav is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at MIT-WPU University, Pune, India, and a PhD Scholar from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.



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