

Conversation Pieces: Public Media Projects and Their Publics.

Analytical Research Protocol.

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Questions

What are the emergent networked publics forming around public media projects? Do the public media projects initiate a conversation between the networked publics? What is the substance of their conversations?

General Approach: Methods and Techniques for Locating Emergent Networked Publics and the Substance of their Conversations.

a) Scrape Web for mentions of the public media project. One may scrape a search engine such as Google by using a tool, <http://tools.issuecrawler.net/scrapeGoogle>. One may scrape a sub-set of sites, e.g., the blogosphere, a sub-blogosphere (such as military bloggers), or a network. For the blogosphere one may scrape technorati, using <http://tools.issuecrawler.net/beta/technorati/>. For a sub-blogosphere, a list of sites is located, and the scrapeGoogle tool is used. A network of sites may be located by the Issuecrawler, the network location software at <http://www.issuecrawler.net>. For example, one enters the URLs associated with a project, and the network around them is found.

b) Once the results are returned, code actors by type and classify context of actor mention of public media project. The purpose of the classification exercise, generally, is to distinguish between project announcements, promotional work, and the more substantive conversation.

c) Perform key word discovery. One may gain a sense of the most significant key words associated with a project by querying the project name at the Clusty search engine, <http://clusty.com>. For key word discovery, generally, one performs content analysis by reading the substantive project associations.

d) Scrape the Web for associations between the public media project and the substantive key words, using the tools mentioned in a).

e) Perform relational analysis between actors and key words. Co-occurrence analysis is employed using ReseauLu, the analytical software by aguidel.com for the visualization of heterogeneous data, used at the Ecole des Mines, Paris (Bruno Latour and Michel Callon's group). Once the maps (or graphs) have been generated, identify clusters of actors and key words. Note breadth and type of conversation by interpreting clusters according to size as well as actor type. Note breadth of context of conversations by interpreting proximity of specific ties between clusters of actors and keywords.

Note: If key words are supplied in advance, steps a) and d) are combined, and c) is omitted.

Analysis of the Resonance of a Project within a Larger Issue Network

An optional undertaking.

- a) Identify actors.
- b) Crawl actors, fetch outlinks, and perform hyperlink (co-link) analysis to reveal network, using <http://www.issuecrawler.net>.
- c) Query network for project. Query top 50 or top 100 actors in the network for the name of the project, using <http://tools.issuecrawler.net/scrapeGoogle>.
- d) Show relative resonance of project in a network by color-coding issue network map.

Research Protocol per Case Study

Case Study: A Lion in the House

Watch film.

- a) Query Web for “A Lion in the House.” Strip URL returns leaving top-level domain only, thereby gaining sense of types of actors present. For “A Lion in the House,” note presence of .gov.
- b) Code the approximately 500 returns according to the following classification scheme: airing alert / recommendation (non-PBS), faith, festival, fund-raising, legislation, outreach, production, promotional, public broadcasting (announcement), review/listing, screening and panel discussion, other substantive. Here one eventually separates the promotional from the more substantive mention types. The sub-set is used in step e).
- c) Perform issue discovery through content analysis. The following issues were identified: “end of life”, survivorship, healthcare disparities, “professional caregivers”, “cancer act”, outreach.
- d) Query all 500 plus actors individually for “A Lion in the House” AND each issue, using <http://tools.issuecrawler.net/scrapeGoogle>.
- e) Perform relational analysis between issues and a subset, naming the sub-set ‘public settings.’ Note differences in conversation per setting.
- f) Introduce new setting, i.e., the Sundance Film Festival. Query the Web for “A Lion in the House” AND the issues AND Sundance. Compare conversations across settings.

Case Study: The War Tapes

Watch film.

- a) Identify possible publics (military blogs, army wives' blogs, veterans' blogs). Locate lists of blog types. Use the lists supplied by blackfive.net, a top milblogger.
- b) Query blog lists for "The War Tapes." Note the extent to which these publics discuss the film, and how the film is discussed.
- c) Since the military and associated blogger types discuss "The War Tapes" insignificantly, seek publics conversing about other Iraq war and war on terror films. Identify other films: Occupation Dreamland, Sir No Sir!, Fahrenheit 9/11, Uncovered: The War on Iraq, The Road to Guantanamo, The Ground Truth, Iraq for Sale. Query the Web for each film. Perform relational analysis between sources and films. Note significant presence of movie sites, and insignificant presence of non-movie sites. Continue search for substantive publics.
- d) Perform key word and issue discovery. The following issues were identified for "The War Tapes": pro-war, anti-war, real war, citizen soldier, home front, war reporting, KBR (Kellogg, Brown, and Root), the Halliburton subsidiary.
- e) Query the Web for "The War Tapes" AND the issues. Perform relational analysis between actors and issues. Note the distinctive conversation clusters as well as the relative sizes, where "citizen soldier" and "real war" are the most discussed.
- f) Introduce film festival, and inquire into whether the conversation changed. Query the Web for "The War Tapes" AND the issues AND Tribeca. Note the amplification of particular conversation topics ("citizen soldier" and "home front") and the quieting of pro-, anti- and real war talk.

Case Study: Global Voices Online

Note: Global Voices Online is a meta-source, a blog of blogs, thereby requiring a different approach than the general one above.

- a) Global Voices Online publishes "bridge blogs," which are "blogs designed to increase communication between people from different countries and cultures."¹ This claim provides the basis for the empirical study.
- b) Bloggers tag their postings according to issue as well as country. Multiple tags are used. To analyze the emergent publics around Global Voices Online as well as the substance of their conversations, the analysis concerns the extent to which Global Voices Online amplifies conversation about issues across different countries and cultures. Thus, relational

¹ Global Voices Online, "Frequently Asked Questions," <http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/top/about-global-voices>, accessed 20 September 2006.

analyses between issues-countries as well as between issues-countries-comments are performed. Is there substantive cross-country conversation (conversation analysis)? Is there substantive cross-country commentary (publics analysis)?

c) Scrape all Global Voices Online postings, 1 October 2005 – 1 October 2006, and create a database where the following is stored: item number, date, title, URL, posting (content), tags, blogger, comments. There are 1415 posts, 3038 comments, 1632 posts commented upon, 112 distinct bloggers and 2005 distinct commentators.

d) Write scripts to perform relational analysis. The scripts written are described below, and are available at <http://tools.issuecrawler.net/gvo>. Since Global Voices Online does not provide issues per country, the first step is to show issues per country in tag cloud form.

e) Perform geographical conversation analysis. The level of substance of conversations per issue also may be judged by their endurance. Those issues with five or more posts are retained for the analysis. Which issues have most sustained conversation over time, and related to which countries? The geographical conversation analysis concerns the extent to which multiple countries are tagged in a post. Zoom in on selected country clusters in order to show issues per country (e.g., 4 Africas case). Note that Global Voices Online does not organize a cross-country conversation, but rather regional ones.

f) Perform geographical publics analysis. Do the publics (understood here as commentators) cross countries, or do they also cluster regionally. Perform relational analysis between commentators and countries.

Appendix One: Global Voices Online – Analytical Scripts

<http://tools.issuecrawler.net/gvo>

tagCloud.php

This script performs relational tag analysis. One may choose to perform the analysis on all posts, or only on posts that have been commented upon. Global Voices Online has two sorts of tags: country tags and issues. Various combinations may be analyzed: 1) country-country, 2) country-tag, 3) tag-tag and 4) tag-country.

- 1) *Country-Country*: shows which countries are tagged together and how many times that occurs.
- 2) *Country-Tag*: shows which and how many times tags/issues are used in combination with a particular country.
- 3) *Tag-Tag*: shows which tags and how many tags are used together.
- 4) *Tag-Country*: shows which countries and how many times countries are used in combination with a particular tag/issue.

The different output options are: 1) a ranked list, 2) a table exportable to MS Excel, and 3) a sortable tag cloud where tags are scaled/resized relative to the number of times they are used.

We used the country-country tag analysis on posts (with the MS Excel exportable output as an input to ReseauL), to perform the geographical conversation analysis (see the map entitled Global Voices Online: a Conversation Geography). We used the same tool, focusing only on comments, to perform the geographical publics analysis (see the map entitled Global Voices Online: Local Voices, Local Issues, But Global Publics? A Renewed Regional Cluster).

tagCloudPeriod.php

This script is similar to tagCloud.php. One may select a particular issue or country to be queried for different time intervals. The interval can be specified. Depicted in a cloud, the outputs are tag movements over time for a particular issue/country. (See Appendix Two for an example of one possible output, showing significant increase in the use of the tag “freedom of speech” in relation to China).

postComments.php

This script analyzes the posts commented upon. It counts the number of comments and displays the tags used in the post. This analysis was used for the geographical publics analysis, where the relationships between commented posts and country mentions was mapped (see the map entitled Global Voices Online: Local Voices, Local Issues, But Global Publics? A Renewed Regional Cluster).

postLinks.php

This script fetches and displays all the links in the content of each post (not in the comments

of the post).

authors.php

This script displays the authors, the number of posts they have written and the tags (+quantity) they have used (not comments).

comments.php

This script displays the authors of comments, the number of posts and the post titles they have commented upon.

postTags.php

This script shows on each line the title and a tag name for all posts and all tags.

zoom.php

These scripts fetch all posts using specified tags, and display the posts, the date of the posts and the tags used in the posts.

zoomTags.php

For this script, one may enter multiple tags. The script will fetch all posts with these tags and display how many times other tags are used in combination with them.

We used this script to perform analysis of clusters of countries and their issues (see the map entitled Global Voices Online: a Conversation Geography, and the map entitled Global Voices Online: Local Voices, Local Issues?, for a zoom-in analysis of issues per country).

zoomTagsRankedTotals.php

This script is similar to zoomTags.php, but instead of showing individual tags, it counts the total amount of tags used in relation to the inputted tags. This script is used to obtain a ranked list of issues used by a cluster of countries (see the map entitled Global Voices Online: Local Voices, Local Issues?).