*International Seminar on*

**Media Technologies and Accessibility: Politics, Representations and Paradigms**

**December 13-14, 2019**

**Call for papers**

Access is increasingly woven into the textures and cultural practices of everyday lives. Media access alters the socio-political landscapes of a society thus changing the entire knowledge system within a society. To understand ‘access’ in its entirety, we need to break away from the common notions of the arguments of digital divide and analyze it in a larger social, historical and cultural context. There is an undeniable association between access and technology that is quite paradoxical. There has been a rise in the usage of modern technological devices as they get cheaper, smaller and faster which is in turn changing the knowledge systems of societies. This forces us to look at access from a whole new set of lenses. Technology would need to be understood from a complete social context that focuses more on social inclusion rather than social exclusion.

Dimensions of access and media accessibility have been on a continuum with scholarship that seeks to see accessibility as an afterthought to address concerns of the excluded and at the same time engaging with it as a critical project for all. However, access and diversity cannot be understood without predicating them on power, inequity, exclusionist agenda and the political economy of media. While the older notion of access referred to exposure to media technologies, the term ‘access’ has now a reconfigured import with the interchangeable relationship between readers, text and producers dominating content production, consumption and distribution. This has contributed to diversity of and plurality of information. But, access is never insulated from grand political and economic imperatives. For instance, access to the Internet is *de jure* right but it is controlled by a country/countries, corporate and the State. Access is thus implicated in control and network society inheres in control society, what Deleuze (year) writes about lucidly in his *Postscript on Control Society*. The rise of digital technologies informs how perceptions of control are overshadowed by perceptions of access, resulting in the notion of participatory surveillance or, put in other words, consenting to be surveilled.

Further, on the one hand, access merely constitutes exposure to spectacles (Debord, year), whereas Benjamin (year) argues for technological reproducibility, an indicator of increased access, as a possibility for political ramifications. If access to excess content has resulted in producing media spectacles thereby denying us subjectivity, the meanings of access needs to be engaged with more critically than reifying it. Access leading to empowerment is also caught in a structural and linguistic dialectic between abundance and alienation, abundance of media, technologies and content on the one hand and alienation and deprivation of people from access to media and its ensemble.

Access has also received impetus from another perspective wherein media technologies designed and developed are more amenable to normal citizens as well as men (Oudshoorn, year). As a result, the disabled and women are excluded from access to technologies. While W3C proposes guidelines to make internet user-friendly to all, the design of technologies enables normal users, characterised by ableism, to produce public spheres that further create and reproduce disability as a deprived category. How can technologies be used for articulations of the subaltern and not merely that of the normative populations? It is quite interesting to engage with questions of hegemonic arrangement of uses of technologies accomplished through their intended user positions, mostly predefined and preconfigured. Does that mean that there is a wilful attempt not to be inclusive because disability can possibly destabilise the intended potential of the medium? Likewise, spatial production in terms of women having access to public spaces with wifi zones underlie productions of discourses of gendered inaccessibility.

Another outcome of the advancements in digital technologies is the shift from industrial to post-industrial society, marked by ‘knowledge economy’ and the emergence of the concept of open access. Making knowledge available to everyone became the central tenet of open access. But the politics of open access as we see it in the forms of corporate dominating the market or the State muffling the voices emanating from open access and collaborative tools registers a new flashpoint in accessibility. Techno-imperialism has providers of access to content, not dictated by nation-states, such as Julian Assange at their peril.

Access is also linked to aspirations (Appadurai, year); lack of access can lead to a failure of aspirations. Access is an enabler of aspirations and therefore individual preferences and collective capabilities. Media access in the context of social media does strengthen the potential of users to aspire, aspiration that is not linked to material benefits but knowledge, critical inquiry and reflection on future possibilities.

This conference seeks to discover several dimensions of media access and related concepts from multiple perspectives. This year's conference aims at probing into the realms of access and how access has evolved to include the growing derivatives of technology.

Abstracts are invited from interested academicians, research scholars and media practitioners as well as activists.

**Topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:**

* LGBTQ / Queer visibilities in and through social media
* Body positivity in media / social media
* Access, Poverty and Media
* Political economy of start-up digital firms: Have they refashioned the discourse of media access?
* Understanding media ownership in digital ecosystem
* Access Denied or Enabled: Injustice to women and media reportage
* Technologies, inclusivism and differently abled
* (de)legitimising media: how is access configured?
* Connected Activism or Fragmented connectivism: Social media offerings for citizens
* Political participation and local people: speaking loudly about social issues
* Droning and Surveillance: Access society or control society?
* Invasive data gathering and Privacy rights
* Access to information: Symmetry or Asymmetry
* Understanding media access from feminist perspectives
* Media literacy on what to access than access per se
* Gendered labour and women’s political participation
* Free Software and Open Access
* Platform Politics
* Internet: A site for potential discrimination or equality
* Privacy and Data Protection Policy
* Media, disability and the politics of participation
* Access to excess content: Spectacles of screened reality and imageries
* Reality and truth in access-driven mediatised society
* Data as Cargo
* Digital media accessibility and identities
* Histories of images in/through archives (photographs, films, engravings, paintings, videos, games etc.)
* Politics of images in contemporary cultures
* Accessibility in E-content courseware
* Accessibility, conflicting forms of knowledge and social reality
* Accessing science through media
* Communicating environment through Media
* Accessibility, technologies and health

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