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What is the role of social media? Self-Mediation, Banksy and the resistance

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What is the role of social media?

Self-Mediation, Banksy and the resistance

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Abstract:

This paper underlines social media enterprise graffiti arts, through self-mediation to transform the meaning of popular culture. Methodology applied together semiology and literature review. In order to understand the logic of social media that the mediation opportunity structure, methodology is focused on the way of analysing images by Roland Barthes. The project includes Banksy's graffiti that represents anti-war. The result shows that the graffiti represents the meaning of popular culture, it has to be involved in social system (e.g. the formation of graffiti, political concepts, and anti-war) through self-mediation representing popular culture, and the importance of social media on the role of discursive public sphere. We cannot ignore the logic of self-mediation where it creates a field of opportunities for discursive identity. At the same time, pro and cons for social media should also be taken into account.

Keywords: self-mediation, social media, semiology

Introduction

Banksy, the British graffiti artist who drew nine images on the concrete walls where between Israeli and Palestinians in 2007, the art works depict the blue sky, a beach, a ladder, and especially, the girl with balloons, window on the West Bank (cf. Figure 1). Attention has been drawn by the press worldwide and the channel of social media visibility is achieved. The art works which depict the political thought of graffiti. The representation of image online transits the meaning of antiwar, the representation of the image online, and the boundary through which mediation shift real life into virtue space.

Figure1: window on the West Bank



Sources: by Banksy

In this article, I seek to outline the processes of self-mediation in the field of social media in the context of naturalized identity. The affordance of social media, I argue, self-mediation where it creates opportunities for discursive identity that social media is a platform where the identity naturalized. In addition, through self-mediation technology are highly culturally embedded. Social procession should also take into account that a set of nodes in the social media are able to establish new social field.

The approach of the study

Everyday life, we are surrounded by elements of graffiti in our everyday life, graffiti can be found at university at NCCU. In the online space, surfing on the google, the result of graffiti. Online shows what Mario Diani called “the logic of numbers”. On social media, the logic of numbers can be understood as a toolbox that expresses the vital role of the message. The mediation can be seen as a set of nodes that reconsider opportunities and constrains in the social media and in the sense of resistance discursive.

Works of Banksy represent the concept of anti-war and critique capitalism, through visual representation of political resistance. This paper is organized into three segments. The first concerns the issue of the relationship between social media and the concept of mediation. This is the question of when mediation enterprise technology has shaped dynamic political platform and represents theoretical space to speak for resistance. The second focuses on the collective identity of how social media describes political discursive. The third introduces the symbolic power in regard to graffiti in

social media, for example, the difference between image and the image on the Facebook that represent main line analyzing the system of society that should also be taken into account.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first concerns the issue of the relationship between social media and the concept of mediation. The second, focusing on social media discussion, I will explore the public sphere. The third, the graffiti and political resistance will be introduced. The field of graffiti studies mainly focuses on the arts, public space, however, there is a very small research depict of social media practice. While there is important to understand the role of social media in presenting political resistance, research is still lacking. This study attempts to fill the gap between social media studies and graffiti.

Social media and mediation

Couldry (2008) in the section of “digital storytelling as mediation” notes that:

If, as suggested earlier, we can understand mediation as the resultant of flows of production, circulation, interpretation and recirculation...we might approach ‘digital storytelling’ as mediation, by studying: how digital storytelling’s contexts and processes of production are becoming associated with certain practices and styles of interpretation (stabilities in the immediate and direct context of storytelling).

(Couldry,2008)

Couldry and Kallinikos (2018) open the volume, argues that “there is no space here for a comprehensive review of the literature on social media.” After the rise of social media played an important role, it has been increasingly relied on social media to communicate. It is from “Blogger (1999), Wikipedia (2001), Myspace (2003), Facebook (2004), Flickr (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006)”, Google+ (2011) that spring old and new online communication tactics (van Dijck, 2013: 6). Social media allowed citizen to express political opinion. It is argued that “social media as sites where social networks are produced and sometimes generated (boyed and Ellison,2008: 211 in Couldry and Kallinikos)”. Other thought considers that “social media as a wider social space, suggest that, under many conditions, the result was to

foster the emergence of ‘networked publics’. (boyd, 2011 in Couldry and Kallinikos, 2018).

The interface which social media platforms present to a particular user is an array composed of various streams of content and activity-tokens: that array is not a display of everything and anything relevant to that user’s use of that platform, but a particular composed selection produced on the basis of the platforms own criteria of importance (Van Dijck, 2013). “As social media platforms expand and become active forces in contemporary societies, the highly selective and large artificial ways (liking, tagging, following, sharing, positing) by which they orchestrate human activity become habitual and begin to congeal into a sort of self-evident or naturalized sociality”. (Couldry and Kallinikos, 2018).

With this new influence on social media, the influence of the online social network is important to discuss. It is argued that the value of openness and connectedness are quintessentially reflected in the word favored most by Facebook’s executives: *sharing* (van Dijck, 2013: 46). Through sharing and exchanging information, is able to link a group of people who have similar interests. It is noted by Van Dijck (ibid) that ‘Facebook’s executives: *sharing* has valued on openness and connectedness. It leads to many possibilities for connect people, things and ideas, thus, ‘Like button, a feature that lets users express their instant approval of a specific idea or item and share it’ (van Dijck, 2013: 49). It is not only sharing but embedded with like mind of participants and their personal interests. Along the line as van Dijck (2013: 52) argues ‘The majority of Facebook users comply with the site’s protocols for online socializing, which after all benefits their self-interests’. In other world, within the social network, ‘the meaning of “friending” as inscribed in the interface is thus not simply accepted but also appropriated and contested by users (ibid).

Mediation

It is vital to understand how possible the practice of self-mediation is. Begin with examines the concept of mediation. Arguably, as Silverstone explains that “mediation, in the sense in which I am using the term, describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalised media of communication are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life. That circulation no longer requires face to face communication, though it does not exclude it (Silverstone, 2002)”. In addition,

Silverstone (2002) illustrated that “mediation is dialectical because while it is perfectly possible to privilege those mass media as defining and perhaps even determining social meanings, such privileging would miss the continuous and often creative engagement that listeners and viewers have with the products of mass communication. And it is uneven, precisely because the power to work with, or against, the dominant or deeply entrenched meanings that the media provide is unevenly distributed across and within societies. In other words, “mediation, in this sense of the term, is both technological and social”. In the as Mark Deuze’s media life propose ‘we may think of our lives as lived in rather than with media’(Deuze, 2011). Sonia Livingstone (2009) proposed that “everything is mediated”.

Couldy (2008) discusses the important concept of mediation notes that, “within media research, the term ‘mediation’ can be used to refer simply to the act of transmitting something through the media.... One crude definition of ‘mediation’ – in this substantive sense – is: the overall effect of media institutions existing in contemporary societies, the overall difference that media make by being there in our social world....Thompson’s (1995) term ‘mediation’: as it happens, he avoids the term ‘mediation’ because of its broader usage in sociology. Thompson notes that:

By virtue of a series of technical innovations associated with printing and, subsequently, with the electrical codification of information, symbolic forms were produced, reproduced and circulated on a scale that was unprecedented. Patterns of communication and interaction began to change in profound and irreversible ways. These changes, which comprise what can loosely be called the ‘*mediation of culture*’, had a clear institutional basis: namely, the development of media organizations, which first appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century and have expanded their activities ever since. (Thompson’s 1995, in Couldry,2008)”.

With the Web 2.0 atmosphere, mediation provides an opportunity for change as it has offered people a chance to build their identity through a variety of media. It is not new but there has been little discussion about the self-mediation practice regarding ideology aspect, while it is important.

Driessens et al. (2013) note that “studies the mediatization of criminal and deviant subcultures by analyzing the media-related practices of graffiti writers and skaters in Ghent, Belgium. e ethnographic analysis shows how these subcultures orient themselves toward media and how media become an essential part of and change their

everyday practices”. The result shows that “By embedding media in their then underground practices, skaters and graffiti writers have come to the surface of society and mainstream culture. The pervasiveness of media-related practices in these partly illicit worlds has broadened the possibilities for self-expression beyond acts of resistance and rebellion”.

The notion of Cammaerts’ (2012) ‘self-mediation’ provides a direction in understanding how media is used by activists to represent resistance through technology, to frame action, legitimising as well as mapping movement spillovers. It is argued that “Networked technologies introduce new affordances for amplifying recording, and spreading information and social acts” (Boyd, 2011, in Couldry and Kallinikos, 2018).

Graffiti and Public Sphere online

Graffiti, the definition of the Cambridge Dictionary means that “words or drawings, especially humorous, rude, or political, on walls, doors, etc. in public places”. Graffiti, from the public realm to online space. Social media allowed people to discourse its subculture and to achieve the graffiti. There are a variety of graffiti’s research. For example, the community graffiti, political graffiti, and street graffiti.

Political resistance online, “Every social configuration is meaningful” and “the object is socially construct”. In regard to graffiti express resistance through social media. We can look at the diversity of ways “in our terminology, every identity or discursive object is constituted in the context of an action” (Laclau and Mouff, 1990 in Hall ed.)

Public Sphere and graffiti, according to Banksy (2005) “I have a much more direct communication with the public.” Graffiti as a public concept, Thompson noted “Habermas’s early path-breaking work, *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas argues that the development of mercantile capitalism in the sixteenth century together with the changing institution forms of political power, created the conditions for the emergence of a new kind of public sphere” (Thompson, 1995). Public sphere shift to online space, the space was linking to a broader theory of democracy. Habermas in *Further Reflections on the public Sphere* note that “political public sphere is appropriate as the quintessential concept denote all those conditions of communication under which there can come into being a discursive formation of opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state (Habermas, 1992).”

Political, like experience, can no longer even be thought outside a media frame. Whereas once the media were believed to be a guarantor of liberty and democracy. (Silverstone, 2005).

Silverstone (2005) argues in the public and private mediation, “in a recent review of the complex and increasing frustrating relationship between democratic and media theory James Curran (2000) proposes a set of criteria for the reinvention of a democratic media system as follows:

It should empower people by enabling them to explore where their interest lies: it should foster sectional solidarities and assist the functioning of organizations necessary for the effective representation of collective interests; it should sustain vigilant scrutiny of government and centers of power: it should provide a source of protection and redress for weak and unorganized interests: and it should create the conditions for real societal agreement or compromise based on an open working through of difference rather than a contrived consensus based on elite dominance. (2000:148)”

“Jurgen Habermas’s Both initial and reformulated account of the public sphere (1989, 1992)”. Silverstone noted that “critics are concerned not just about the media’s vulnerability to influence, but their general contribution to political apathy, and their distortion of the relationship between public and private lives and spaces (Eliasson, 1998: Putnam, 2000: Thompson, 2000)”. Through self-mediation, citizen can search online to note the graffiti (Figure2).

Figure2: Banks’s google map that audience could through self-mediation access graffiti.

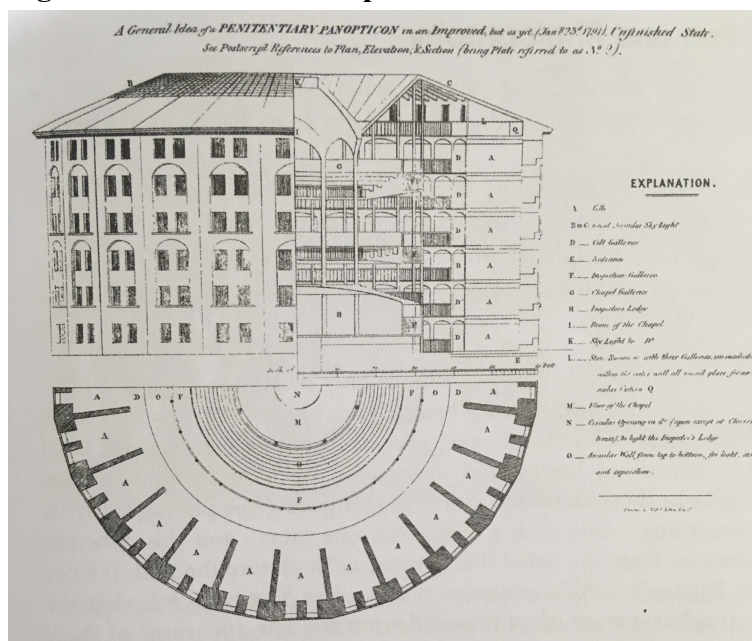


Graffiti and the political resistance

Political discourse, can be seen as online visibility. in the work of *Visual Methodologies* “In *discipline and punish* Foucault describes the emergence of a new

set of professions which defined who needed punishment.” (Gillian, 2016). It has been a topic of consider visibility. “Foucault demonstrates the importance of Jeremy Bentham in 1971. Bentham called this building a panopticon, and suggested it could be used as the plan for all sorts of discipline institution”. The “panopticon” was a tall tower, surrounded by an annular building. The latter consisted of cell, one for each inmate with windows, blinds, doors and corridors, the inmates in their cells could never be certain that they were under observation from the tower at any particular moment. This sort of visually, in which one subject is seen without ever seeing and the other sees without ever being seen, Foucault called surveillance”. In social media, the larger number of online citizens, as ‘Mathiesen (1997) calls the synopticon, the inverse of Foucault’s panopticon, i.e. The many watch the few’ (Cammaerts, Mattoni, eds 2013: 13).

Figure3: The Bentham Papers.



Sources: Discourse analysis in Visual methodologies: an introduction to researching with visual materials.

Social media on everyday life has shown that public opinion are formed not only in real realm, but also in cyberspace. The rise of the Network Society, Castells (1996) argues that “a self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organized around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself. Such communities may be relatively formalized, as in the case of hosted conferences or bulletin board systems, or be spontaneously formed by social networks, which keep logging into the network to send and retrieve messages in a chosen time

pattern (either delayed or in real life) ” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier et al. eds. ,2008).

Methodology: Semiology as a toolbox

The main methodology will be applied semiology as a toolbox. Image- CIVILIAN DRONE STRIKE- is the field of research. Method will be focused on the way of Roland Barthes

“The sign, for Saussure, was a physical object with a meaning; or, to use his terms, a sign consisted of a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the sign’s image as we perceive it- the marks on the paper or the sounds in the air; the signified is the mental concept to which it refers” (Fiske,1990: 41). It is important to remember that “Saussure’s theories on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations of the sign take us only so far towards understanding how signs work...in other words, he did not reality envisage meaning as being a process of negotiation be between writer/ reader and text.” (Fiske, 1990:81). In regard to “Roland Barthes, who first set up a systematic model by which this negotiation, interactive idea of meaning could be analysed. At the the hear of Barthes’ theory is the idea of two orders of signification” (ibit).

Roland Barthes

As the explains in Mythologies, ‘I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there (Storey, 1999).

Denotation

The concept of “Denotation” describe the relationship between the signifier and signified within the sign, and of the sign with its referent in external reality. Barthes refers to this order as denotation. This refers to the common-sense, obvious meaning of the sign (Fiske, 1990:81).

Connotation

The basic concept of connotation is that “connotation is the term Barthes uses to describe one of the three ways in which signs work in the second order of signification. It describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the feelings or emptions of the users and the values of their culture. This is when meanings move towards the

subjective, or at least the intersubjective: it is when the interpret is influenced as much by the interpreter as by the object or the sign”(Fiske, 1990).

For Barthes, the critical factor in connotation is the signifier in the first order. The first-order signifier is the sign if the connotation.

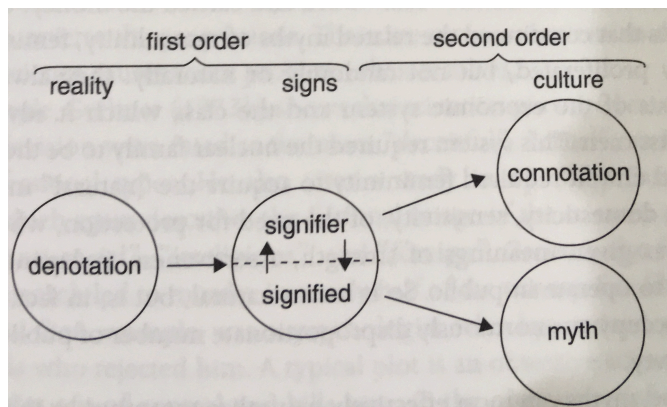
Myth

“The second of Barthes’s three ways in which signs work in the second order is through myth. A myth, for Barthes, is a culture’s way of thinking about something, a way of conceptualizing or understanding it. Barthes thinks of a myth as a chain of related concepts (Fiske, 1990)”.

Symbols

“But Barthes (1977) does refer to a third way of signifying in this order. This he terms the symbolic. An object becomes a symbol when it acquires through convention and use a meaning that enables it to stand for something else”(Fiske, 1990:82-86).

Figure4: Barthes’s two orders of signification. In the second order, the sign system of the first is inserted into the value system of the culture.



Sources: *Introduction to Communication Studies*

Literacy and images

The linguistic message, can be understood through Roland Barthes’s *Image music text*. Barthes illustrate the functions of linguistic appear to be two: anchorage and relay. The anchorage intends to fix the floating chain of signified. (Barthes,1977). Another way is that “The denominative function corresponds exactly to an anchorage of all the possible denoted meanings of the object by recourse to a nomenclature” (Barthes,1977).

Furthermore, the relationship between images and linguistic can be inspired through René Magritte, 's painting -*This is not a pipe*, that depict the philosophic though about linguistic and the image.

Figure5:



Sources: René Magritte, *the treachery of images (This is not a pipe)* (1948). Image: WikiArt.

Foucault' s *The Order of Things* (1970), he read Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*, reproduced by courtesy of the Museo del Prado (Figure 2). "The painting itself does raise certain questions about the nature of representation, and Foucault himself uses it to talk about these wider issues of the subject. It is these arguments, which interest us here, not the question of whether Foucault's is the 'true', correct or even the definitive reading of the painting's meaning. That the painting has no one, fixed or final meaning is, indeed, one of Foucault's most powerful argument" (Hall, 2009, p. 58). Underline objects between different relationships in terms of this core concept, I would like to imply media representation and its relationships between different objects of social media.

Figure 6: *Las Meninas*, reproduced by courtesy of the Museo del Prado.



Source: *The order of things*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“A system of sign” for Jean Baudrillard, it can be understood by transmitting the social identity in the field of virtual space. The graffiti create by Banksy, the image through symbol on social media to represent the first meaning- political resistance, anti-war, and care about humanity. The image constituted the common basis of denotation.

The first meaning: Graffiti. In the context of the denotation



Analysis image 1: “CIVILIAN DRONE STRIKE” Photograph: www.banksy.co.uk

Description :

The first image of the graffiti is: in 2017, Banksy created an image to represent the anti-war concerns 「 CIVILIAN DRONE STRIKE 」 . The funds raised will be donated to the largest anti-war art fair- “Art the Arms Fair” — which is primarily a disapproving response to the “Defense and Security Equipment International 2017”.

Denotation

The graffiti is the stance that implies an anti-war meaning. Look at the image carefully. In the frame, there is a girl and a painting; behind the painting is a god, and a house exploding. In addition, outside the frame, there are cut-outs of three drones.

The piece of work represents an anti-war sentiment. A sign with a simple denoted message is linked to the second stage, the image also signifies the children who suffer because of wars. This image reflects a reconsideration of the war, and seeks to express the political discourse and its resistance.

Applying Roland Barthes's approach, the system of myth analysis, this graffiti is not only about little girl, a house exploding, etc., but is also a response to the social system and the term 'culture'. It naturalised a history, where Banksy tries to draw attention to both the public space in the gallery and the outside world. The image criticizes capitalism, war and hegemony.

Analysis image 2:

The second layer: social media



Channel 4 News 9月12日 · 🌐

This is Banksy's latest artwork – a protest against one of the world's biggest arms fairs.

The Defence and Security International exhibition is about to start in London.

THIS IS BANKSY'S LATEST ARTWORK.

👍❤️😬 你和其他 1,653 人 59則留言 1,474則分享 13 萬次觀看

👍 讚 留言 分享

A starting point for the analysis is to understand the signification. We are surrounded in the media and in life by embedded technology, and through mediation, the perceived meaning is often different from the original. Couldry suggests media and communication, and the term 'mediation', as the field of action. In addition, Thompson (1995) argues that "the development of communication media creates new forms of action". On social media, the message of Banksy's graffiti has been reposted to different platforms. This can be seen from the language and the images,

looking at the BBC4 platform, the 'Like' and the comments. It shows that the image has been shared 1,474 times and has been viewed 130,000 times. The receivers will reconstruct the image, while the process of media transmission of the message enhances the concept of visibility. In addition, the numbers successfully represent the media logic: with the large number of views of this image through endless of nodes, the anti-war sentiment is widely expressed, underline the myth of anti-war message.

Through mediation, the graffiti moves toward a political discourse of diversity. The social media platform naturalises awareness of the anti-war sentiment and empowers the graffiti. In addition, through social media, citizens can share images. In the process of sharing, the banksy's graffiti has been shifted to the online space: in other words, the public sphere shifts to the virtual. Mediation, as Silverstone (2005) argues, is "fundamentally dialectical" (p. 189): it is possible to understand how communication changes with embedded technology. In the processed of mediation, the concept of Banksy's art is fruitful to understand-anti-war meaning. Works of Banksy represent the anti-war concept and critique capitalism through the visual representation of political resistance.

Through Facebook, the image transmits a natural identity. Furthermore, the naturalised image can be understood according to Barthes's myth. The function of linguistics is to fix the meaning. Both the BBC logo and the layout of Facebook support the mediation opportunity. On the online platform, social media's endless nodes extend according to Eco & Peirce' semiosis. That extends the meaning on social media, the image changing to different symbolic forms.

Conclusions

"To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."

(Wittgenstein, 1953).

The results indicate that the system of signification establishes a piece of a message. The message naturalises the concept of a specific identity (e.g., the formation of graffiti, political concepts, and anti-war setiment). In addition, within the social media space, the message can be spread instantly. The graffiti is able to express a political contribution. It allows people to resist hegemony. Social media become a toolbox to enhance visibility, as Mathiesen (1997) calls the synopticon, the inverse of Foucault's panopticon, i.e. The many watch the few' (Cammaerts, Mattoni, eds 2013: 13).

Banksy argues that citizens should have the courage to express the ideals of democracy – for example, peace, justice and liberty (Banksy, 2005). Social media provide mediation opportunities to generate democracy through the multiple transmission of the message to represent people's identity and the political discourse. The graffiti on social media is sociologically equivalent to anti-war protestation, and is the voice in the public space, the message depicting the myth in society. The public sphere is shifted to the online space. In this condition, self-mediation provides an opportunity for citizen to empower their identity.

To conclude, we revisiting the McLuhan (1964) ideal of the medium being the message. Providing a new aspect, and the diversity of online platforms, it represents a new spectacle for reproducing the meaning of resistance. The result is that the graffiti represents the meaning of popular culture: it is necessarily involved in a social system (e.g. the formation of graffiti, political concepts, an anti-war stance) through self-mediation representing the popular culture, and the importance of social media's role as a discursive public sphere. We cannot ignore the logic of self-mediation where it creates a field of opportunities for a discursive identity. At the same time, the pro and cons of social media should also be taken into account.

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