

## Institutional Cultural Intermediation

Social media have broadly disrupted many aspects of communication and cultural production. This disruption is generally discussed with reference to the deteriorating economic models of legacy media—for example, the declining income of the newspaper industry or the loss of younger television audiences between 18 and 24 years of age. However, of greater significance is the disruption to platform governance and the consequences that this has for the online management of particular groups of individuals. Platform governance refers to the day-to-day management of social media platforms, and the groups of users that congregate around them, that enable users to democratically undertake activities afforded to them by these platforms. We have seen this disruption occur across several fields, including civil disobedience and the Arab Spring, hate speech and online vilification of users in the #gamergate scandal, and loss of control by editors on comment sections of various platforms and user groups.

Platform governance disruption became the norm in many cases of social media participation, cemented with the issues surrounding a particular event within the Reddit community. When Victoria Taylor, who was the then editor of the ‘Ask Me Anything’ forum, was sacked, volunteer-lead users, who are also sub-editors of the site’s sub-Reddits, began closing down their sections in protest. This systematic forum closure was a Reaction to a broader move from Reddit senior officials to close subreddits they believed were in breach of the rules of the site and that were encouraging harassment. This top-down governance measure attracted protest from users, who said the platform was inhibiting ideas and users

from freely expressing themselves—a sure-fire method to lose users of a developed social media platform.

This brief example is typical of the broader types of tensions that exist in platform governance. On the one hand, Reddit's top-down governance could be viewed as a way of protecting individual users from harassment and hate speech, but on the other hand, it could be seen as a way of inhibiting the free expression of users. This tension is most obvious at the level of platform governance that exists between the top layer of Internet governance, which manages protocol and the multiple jurisdictional operations of the Internet infrastructure, and the level of everyday social media use. It is very closely aligned with the level of Internet governance at the interface between users and the institutions that facilitate those groups of Internet users. This is the level of governance that is concerned with the day-to-day regulation of forums and online communities, the management of collaborative cultural production of cultural artefacts and enacting broader societal change between groups of online users and individuals in offline environments. This is an intersection point between traditional institutional power regimes and emerging disruptive power displays from online citizens that is often overlooked, and it provides unique insights into understanding how significant social media movement governance operates.

The tension around online governance is largely to do with a clash of cultural perspectives between groups of individuals. If we return to the Reddit example, one perspective sees the platform providers aiming to reduce vilification and potential harm by closing down problematic areas of the site. Another perspective is that of the online users, who see this as a political move by the institution to limit free speech and silence those who speak out. The third perspective is that of the users who are responsible for managing the site; they are located between the online user groups and the institutional management, and are concerned with providing a platform that a variety of users can use and enjoy. In between these three user groups are cultural intermediaries, who understand the perspectives of each user group and engage in translation roles that enable the exchange of knowledge and expertise between the groups to encourage the continuation of use—in this case, cultural production. Cultural intermediaries engage in cultural intermediation, which is a process of ensuring that calibration occurs between these stakeholder groups—for example, knowledge and expertise translation, allowing cultural activities to continue. In the Reddit example, it is conceivable

that the site would have ceased operation if it were not for the efforts of those who were positioned between the senior management and the sub-Redditors to negotiate a suitable outcome from the company's actions: in this case, toning down the abuse that was directed at the then chief executive, Ellen Pao.

At this point, it is also timely to note that the basis for this research of this book stems from within my embedded ethnographic research of ABC Pool. During 2010–2012, I was embedded as a researcher who was also filling the role of the ABC Pool community manager. During this time, I was able to collect rich ethnographic data that provided insights into both how the users of the site self-organized, along with how the ABC as an emblematic media organization approached user co-creation.

This chapter introduces the concept of cultural intermediaries and positions it within the arena of platform governance. By speaking to disruptive online governance more broadly, this chapter describes cultural intermediation as an emerging form of governance through a topology of three forms of cultural intermediation roles and then moves towards understanding cultural intermediaries as change agents who are central to the political processes of both making culture and creating a productive context for civil disobedience. This chapter foregrounds the several case studies that follow in this book and also highlights the implications of the agency of human cultural intermediaries who sit between several stakeholder groups.

## HIERARCHIES, HETERARCHIES AND MERITOCRACY

This section explores the process of media production within an organization as a way of understanding how user groups and institutions interact across and through the affordances of social media. In an unstable and unpredictable media environment (Cunningham and Turner 2010), media organizations have been encouraged to explore new production techniques that engage the audience in innovative and exciting ways while delivering content over multiple digital platforms (Debrett 2010). In a multiplatform media environment—described as one that intersects the single audience member with the mass audience (Enli 2008)—media organizations have had a history of hosting platforms that not only enable content to be published by the institution's professional media staff but also host content contributed by the audience. Multiplatform media environments also engage the characteristics of participatory cultures,

where users refuse ‘to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants’ (Jenkins 2006, p. 131).

With online audiences actively participating in the production of media, and in some cases engaging in co-creative practices with media professionals, complications arise in normative and editorial decisions surrounding content production. In the co-creative model, content contributed by users may be technically inadequate, editorially inappropriate or simply in bad taste. This has particular implications for public service media (PSM), which have a public mission based on the Reithian trinity of inform, educate and entertain. Any user-created content (UCC) must align with this existing public service remit. Governance models guide media producers to achieve the public remit of PSM, usually in the form of editorial policies. Similarly, UCC could be problematic for commercial organizations that engage their audiences to co-create content, as they could lose audience members if the content is of low quality or poor entertainment value. However, as Malaby (2009) notes, users of online platforms tend to reject top-down hierarchical governance models in favour of heterarchical governance that employs meritocracy. In other words, online platform participants engaging in cultural co-creation employ people in power on an ad hoc basis, based on their past performance and experience in such positions (Bruns 2008).

Online content-creation projects represent the decentralization of the production process outlined by Shirky (2008) and Benkler (2006). Shirky notes that production within organizations assists in solving the problems associated with group complexity, yet is expensive, exclusionary, requires management and is class-based. Benkler (2006, p. 60) highlights the benefits of decentralization as peer production that brings together disparate individuals who work on a similar project, ‘based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands’. Combining Benkler’s observations with Shirky’s provocations suggests that a decentralized production model includes all the benefits of user-led innovation and is inexpensive, democratic and egalitarian. The decentralized approach to co-creative cultural artefact production aligns with the public interest remit of PSM. However, there is still one challenge that remains: How does an organization manage such an arrangement?

while this section concentrates on the Australian PSM context, it is also reflective of media production in other PSM environments, and

online media environments more broadly. ABC Pool was an Australian PSM project that combined participatory cultures, ad hoc meritocracy and co-creative production of cultural artefacts (<http://www.abc.net.au/pool>). while this platform is explored in detail in Chap. 5, for the purposes of understanding cultural intermediation as a governance apparatus, it is explained briefly here. ABC Pool provided an opportunity for Australian online audiences to engage with the ABC by contributing their media in the form of audio, photography, video or text. The users had access to the cultural and media expertise of ABC staff, who exchanged knowledge between the users. The platform operated under a Creative Commons licensing regime, enabling the media to flow between platforms, including traditional terrestrial broadcasting mediums. A common activity for ABC Pool was to host co-creative projects facilitated by audio producers from *360documentaries*, a long-form documentary programme on the Radio National (RN) network (ABC 2014a, b). Typically, the producers would design a call-out to mobilize the ABC Pool community to produce thematically appropriate texts. The producers would collect and curate the UCC, and exchange expert advice on the user's production. The final stage of the co-creative project combined the UCC with the producer's work to broadcast the documentary on the *360documentaries* programme. The challenge for the ABC Pool team and the RN producers was to find a way to manage the participants effectively, insofar as encouraging user-led innovation during the production process while also aligning this activity with the public service remit of the ABC. The *ABC Pool* project closed in late 2013; however, many of its co-creative standards live on in legacy projects such as ABC Open and Triple J's *Unearthed* (ABC 2012, 2014c).

The process of managing the co-creative arrangement for cultural artefact production previously was understood to be the role of the community manager (Wilson et al. 2010). The community manager engages, encourages and supports the community members (Bacon 2009), and is the representative of the community towards the institution (Banks 2009). However, relying on one person as an intermediary between multiple stakeholders within the project is a slow and restrictive process (Hutchinson 2013). Rather, it is the coordinated efforts of multiple intermediaries operating simultaneously that enable this crisis of production to be negotiated seamlessly. The role of the community manager in managing the social behaviour of individuals engaging in cultural production with institutions is one aspect of

the negotiation process, whereas the combined intermediary activity functions as the underpinnings of cultural intermediation—a phenomenon that emerges from the cultural artefact production process within the PSM sector, connecting decentralized production behaviour with centralized institutional activity.

The ABC is the best place to conduct this research, as was demonstrated through its shift from public service broadcasting to public service media. This was a key experiment that shored up the ABC's innovative approach towards producing and distributing content across a number of new and emerging digital properties. Further, the semantic shift towards PSM indicates how the organization was experimenting with new digital audiences in formats that were not strictly content production and consumption. It is in this moment that my role as the community manager became incredibly important to ensure the engagement processes between the ABC and the new audiences were a smooth and productive process.

### THE COMPLICATION OF PARTICIPATION

In an attempt to outline why cultural intermediation is required, the concept of participation must first be addressed. Often participation is framed as an all-encompassing process that uses the affordances of information and communication technologies to shift the political, economical and societal domains. Especially in the political and societal arenas, user participation through social media is often framed in a hyperbolic fashion and is rarely studied in exacting detail. Indeed, there have been many criticisms of the impact of participation on social media as an exploitation of free labour (Terranova 2004), as cynical and narcissistic (Lovink 2008), as promoting users generally as more passive than as active creators (van Dijck 2009), and as manipulating and constructing social connections (van Dijck 2013). Nonetheless, the Internet has provided opportunities for users to participate in a range of social and political activities, arguably impacting on the role of democracy within the public sphere. I would argue that a contemporary concept of participation occupies a centralist position that acknowledges the affordances of increased participation through new media technologies, while also avoiding hyperbolic, exploitative and constructivist approaches.

Often participation is framed around the empowering affordances of social media—for example, Burgess and Green (2009, p. 77) note

that participation embraces the public sphere and the cultural sphere because ‘it is an enabler of encounters with cultural differences and the development of political “listening” across belief systems and identities’. A cultural sphere is one that provides access to and greater understanding of the broad spectrum of multiple approaches towards understanding the social fabric of society. More specifically, and in terms of the public sphere, Shirky (2011, p. 28) notes that ‘the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action’. He further points out that this participation has the ability to ‘loosely coordinate’ a public’s demand to change in the political arena. However, as Fuchs (2014, p. 57) astutely notes, these approaches ‘focus on political and cultural communication and ignore the public sphere’s materiality and political economy that Habermas stressed ... [they] do not ask the questions: Who owns the Internet platforms? Who owns social media?’ Given that the political economy of participation could be interrogated from this perspective, we might use Habermas’s concept of the ‘command of resources’—namely, property and intellectual skills—as a precursor to participation in the public and, in the context of this book, cultural spheres. One’s application of property and intellectual skills can be used as an indicator of which, and indeed how, users participate in cultural development through UCC projects.

The notion of a cultural sphere presents one way of understanding the who and how of participation. From this approach, it is useful to borrow from Carpentier (2009) to explore why people participate and how such participation can be facilitated in the context of PSM. Carpentier aptly notes that participation has ‘become trapped in its own reductionist discourse’ (p. 407). The reductionist discourse of participation presents a series of four problems. First, participation is not new: it is based on the pre-existing mass communication paradigm. There are examples of artisans collaborating with their public to produce pieces of wonderment, or even participation through talkback radio. Web 2.0 enabled users to move beyond simply creating web pages and towards using platforms to participate within the communication paradigm. This, of course, produces a bias towards technological determinism as the enabler of participation. Carpentier reminds us that participation ‘should not be blind to the participatory potential of both old and new media [technologies], nor to the increased diversity and intensity of these participatory practices’ (p. 410). Second, are these participatory opportunities indeed

participation or are they interactive? The means of understanding the quantifiable difference lies in how socially relevant the practice is. For example, producing a DVD that invites the audience to pause the programme while they perform another task fails to substantiate participation. Rather, this is an interactive piece of media where the social impact is relatively low. However, if participation is across a government website that improves the local bicycle path system, for example, this indicates an improvement of the social well-being of those participating by producing an increase in social capital. Carpentier refers to this as the difference between minimalist and maximalist participation. Third, it is often assumed that participation is all-encompassing, including all the public associated with the process. Carpentier reminds us that 'it is important to stress that the conflation of producer and audience is not total, and that participatory media products still have audiences that are not involved in the participatory process' (p. 411). Finally, as Carpentier suggests, 'The often-made (implicit) assumption is that participation is necessarily beneficial and that, if it is only enabled, it will also be appreciated by all those involved, who will do nothing but gain from it' (p. 411). The combination of these four participation issues indicates that there is a diverse magnitude of problems associated with user participation, from being exclusionary through to a contestation of the generative value.

Carpentier's (2009) critical examination of participation provides a rationale for mediation, especially within the PSM sector. He argues that for participation to be regarded as relevant, it requires two characteristics: professional quality and social relevance. This introduces the need for professional mediation, which in many commercial and non-commercial media organizations is in the form of media professionals collaborating with their audiences. While UCC created through participation may be of a high standard, professionally produced content from media experts is particularly important, as it easily communicates the media's meaning. For example, a participatory media practitioner may produce content that demonstrates high visual and audio quality, yet contains a weak message or fails to make that text accessible or readable. A professional media producer, however, is highly skilled in producing content with high production quality but can also easily transfer its meaning to a broad audience. In these instances, the content that is produced incorporates user-created media content, while adding the professional input and experience of those producing content for mass media audiences.



Further, beyond collaboratively producing content for content's sake, participation through co-creation requires some kind of social relevance. However, participatory media in this sense require a specific expertise in mediation that can be described as cultural intermediation: co-creating cultural goods between institutional online communities and professional media practitioners. The following section describes cultural intermediation as an emerging form of mediation that is closely aligned with the governance of participatory culture.

### MEDIATION: CULTURAL INTERMEDIATION TO RECONFIGURE PARTICIPATION

Given that mediation is required for effective participatory media, a particular type of mediation is required for institutional online communities. An institutional online community can be described as one that is under the auspices of its hosting institution, has a governance regime that is based on meritocracy and, due to its ad hoc nature, is not amenable to a free-for-all approach. An institutional online community is typically aligned with larger organizations and engages in the expertise of the experienced contributors and its professionals to facilitate participatory projects. The mediation experienced and performed within these spaces is not typical of participatory projects: it is built on experience and past performance of the tasks associated with the online community. Further, mediation of institutional online communities requires expertise beyond governance, including being able to identify the stakeholders involved, and to understand the interests of those stakeholders, and the ability to negotiate the differences between those stakeholders.

Using the notion of a cultural intermediary to indicate how cultural goods are produced, especially within co-creative UCC projects, differs from how the term has previously been associated with individuals. For example, Bourdieu (1984) first used the term 'cultural intermediary' to explain how individuals translated the differences in cultural understandings between social classes in France. This is a lens through which we may begin to understand a concept such as cultural capital and how we place value on the differing understandings of such a notion. As Bourdieu (1983) notes, cultural capital is a way of adding value or making something interesting within a society. By adding capital to culture, for example, we now have a way of distinguishing the value

between certain cultural artefacts, which can be converted into different forms of other capital—for example, social capital (connectedness) or economic capital, which can be institutionalized ‘in the form of nobility’ (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 16). For Bourdieu, cultural intermediaries are agents who act in between capital value systems primarily to translate forms of capital from one stakeholder group to another. A way to think about this is an art dealer who is able to translate the cultural capital of a piece of visual art to another stakeholder who will purchase the artefact for economic capital: an art agent within an art sale.

The idea of the cultural intermediary within the digital age is incredibly important. With the ease of access to publication platforms, especially through social media, we can all be considered tastemakers. In some sense, the increase of users through social media is its own problem because as the sheer number of tastemakers increases, so too does the noise within the conversations. While a cultural intermediary’s critical standpoint on cultural goods may have once contained a very clear sense of authority, this has now disappeared somewhat. Every industry now has online experts, making it difficult to distinguish critique from everyday discussion. This is the impetus to understand the development of the contemporary cultural intermediary within the digital communication environment.

There have been numerous developments on the cultural intermediary concept as it was described originally by Bourdieu. Negus (2002) adopted the term to explore the mediation/translation that occurred between cultural production and consumption, examining how record companies and their A&R agents sourced talent for their label that would be suitable for a mass media market. Cronin (2004) undertook research to extend our understanding of cultural intermediaries beyond the space between production and consumption, and argues that they are more likely to be located in multiple ‘regimes of mediation’. She notes that ‘these practitioners can be considered “cultural intermediaries” only when employing an expanded and nuanced definition of mediation that attends to their heterogeneous commercial practices’ (p. 352). Moor (2008) locates the role of cultural intermediaries within the advertising and branding environment to highlight these individuals with particular expertise to translate the value of brands into the material form. A number of other scholars have also produced work that explores the cultural intermediary adopted into a number of industries, including advertising, public relations, journalism, clothing, food and drink and fitness, to

name just a few (see Smith Maguire and Matthews 2014). More recently, Ohlsson et al. (2016) have placed the concept of cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1983) on the Swedish online news industry, suggesting that some news has more value than others. Their argument for different values across news media highlights the need for cultural intermediation if cultural distinction continues to be applied to journalism.

In each case, all scholars frame the cultural intermediary as an agent in between various forms of capital, most times in a positive or productive role. Many of their conclusions suggest that instead of bridging the gap between cultural production and consumption, cultural intermediaries further contribute to the space in between by introducing yet another cultural production role. This is true to some extent, yet these observations fall short of highlighting the more nuanced, enabling tasks of the cultural intermediary that become part of their tacit knowledge. If we take the core observations of these theorists with regard to capital—for example, the translation role of Bourdieu and Negus’s production alignment with mass media audiences—there is an emerging underpinning framework of how cultural intermediation might promote a facilitation role in the cultural production. More recent scholarship suggests that cultural intermediation can be understood as a cultural translation role, a market agent or a combination of both (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2014). Of more interest, as highlighted in Chap. 1, is that cultural intermediaries can be seen as part of the ‘third wave’ that has moral and civic motivation. These definitions become the basis for understanding how cultural intermediation is operationalized within media organizations. With cultural intermediation building on the concept of mediation as both a combination of human and non-human capacities, it is useful to revisit some of the fundamentals of mediation.

Cultural intermediation in an online environment, then, reconfigures how participation operates beyond the existing mediation frameworks that have been filed by roles such as social media producers, digital content managers and community managers. Cultural intermediation moves beyond the existing community manager role within online communities, for example, to specific individuals that facilitate the collaborative creation of cultural artefacts within institutional online communities. In this regard, institutional online communities are those that ‘fall within the over-arching governance models of the commercial and non-commercial institutions that host them’ (Hutchinson 2013). The primary tasks of cultural intermediaries, therefore, are to identify the key

stakeholders, understand their interests and concerns, recognize tacit norms and languages, and translate from one group to another. This is essentially cultural intermediation operationalizing the circuit of culture during the collaborative production of cultural goods. For example, the cultural intermediary first has to identify who is involved in the collaborative production, such as audience members, producers and technical and creative people. They are then required to interact with these people to understand their interests and investment in their participation. While interacting with the stakeholders, the cultural intermediary is able to assess their tacit knowledge and expertise, aligning them with specific tasks of the production. Finally, the cultural intermediary will engage in negotiations between the stakeholders to ensure that the interests of all the stakeholders are equally represented within the production and its consequential consumption of cultural artefacts.

The combination of technology and culture is at the foreground of cultural intermediation: it acknowledges the affordances of technologies that enable co-creation to occur while managing the cultural sensitivities of the involved stakeholders. Cultural intermediation is unachievable without both technology *and* culture, and it is the role of the cultural intermediary to acknowledge this while building on Carpentier's (2011) observation of participation, including professional quality and social relevance. It is crucial for the role to remain equally distant from each stakeholder group in order to maintain integrity with each of the groups. With this as the underpinning knowledge of cultural intermediation—that is, the combination of both technology and cultural constructivism, along with professional quality, social relevance and its concern with the circuit of culture—it is possible to contextualize cultural intermediation as a form of governance.

### CULTURAL INTERMEDIATION AS A TOPOLOGY: THREE FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

The location of the cultural intermediary in Fig. 2.1 is idealistic in that it fails to represent how cultural intermediation actually occurs within the media landscape. If cultural intermediation occurs in an institutional online community, there are overarching regulatory mechanisms that trump any type of heterarchical or meritocracy efforts. In these situations, cultural intermediation requires management to maintain



Fig. 2.1 Venn diagram of cultural intermediary between stakeholder groups

the integrity of the role while ensuring the representation, identities, interests, tacit knowledge and expertise of the stakeholders are represented adequately in the production process.

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that a cultural intermediation approach incorporates the problems of participation outlined by Carpentier (2011), while also incorporating the technological and cultural constructivism of communication. Cultural intermediation, however, does not necessarily align with existing models of digital media governance, prompting us to ask how heterarchical online community governance might align with hierarchical organizational governance.

Incorporating participation into online platforms is increasingly a default setting for organizations that build, facilitate or host contributory projects. Similarly, users participate for a variety of reasons, from generating and sustaining increased sociality through to increased social capital—or, as Wellman (2001) observes, networked individualism, where ‘people must actively network to thrive or even to survive comfortably’ (Wellman et al. 2005, p. 4). Yet Carpentier (2011) suggests that one way to keep participation appropriate is to ensure it has social relevance and is

of professional quality. These two characteristics distinguish participation in broadcast media from community media and ensure the outcome is relevant to a wider social context.

The management of cultural intermediation in the institutional environment is particularly delicate and requires constant negotiation of the regulatory framework. The regulatory mechanism provides a *modus operandi* for an online community and is usually a combination of the institution's rules and regulations along with the site-specific terms and conditions. However, online communities are evolving (Baym 2000; Rheingold 1994), dynamic (Banks 2002; Wellman and Gulia 1999) and operate at their optimum when the interest of the user is the primary focus (Bonniface et al. 2007; Papadakis 2003). There is also evidence of online communities providing social networks for information gathering (Williams et al. 2011), building trust for knowledge exchange and problem-solving (Itō et al. 2010) and producing a repository of niche and specific knowledge (Bruns 2008; Jenkins 2006). It could be argued that the decentralized affordances of an online community promote increased innovation (Benkler 2006; von Hippel et al. 1999), thereby increasing the value of the community to its hosting organization. However, the problem is how to incorporate the dismissal of top-down governance models provided by the organization (Malaby 2009) while not inhibiting the innovative potential of the online community.

Cunningham et al. (2015) refer to this kind of governance arrangement within institutions as frameworks within frameworks. They note that there are overarching institutional arrangements 'through which resources are allocated within particular organisations' (p. 81). Within this structure, there is the institutional environment, which is made of two further subsets, formal institutions and informal constraints. Formal institutions include 'rules, laws, constitutions, allocations of property rights and so on'. Informal constraints are 'norms of behaviour, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct'. It is the tension between the formal institutions and informal constraints that best describes the *habitus* of online communities within institutions, where Cunningham et al. argue the formal institutions often offer the most substantive change. In this context, it can be seen the embedded cultural practices of online communities are difficult to shift and can cause great tension with formal institutions. These environments require mediation to ensure the 'rules of the road' for both sides are maintained when necessary.

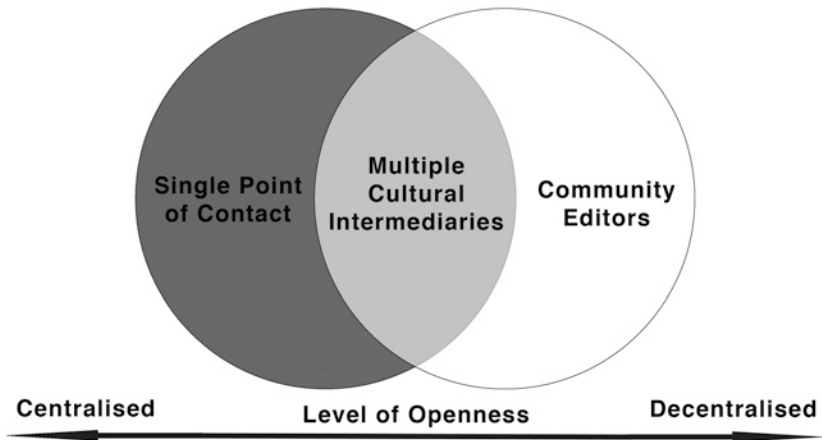


Fig. 2.2 The three models of platform governance across a span of openness

For user contributions to remain valuable to the hosting institution, they must align with the overarching regulatory practices of that organization. If we return to the talkback radio example, not every phone call is included in the programme; rather, the audience hears it a screened version after going through a rigorous editorial process. This is usually some combination of national and state communication legislation, combined with larger institutional regulation and a more localized version of terms and conditions or an end-user licence agreement. With this umbrella approach to facilitating the valuable—that is, professional and socially relevant—contributions of users, there are three models of cultural intermediation that align with social media governance. The three models of social media governance, while incorporating the existing regulatory frameworks, can be expressed across a span of decentralization, starting with one model that is closely aligned with the regulation of the organization through to a governance arrangement that is loosely representative of those same regulations (Fig. 2.2).

A *single point of contact* is the most closed model of social media governance. It simply maintains co-creative and UCC platforms hosted by institutions. This model typically is operated by one person or very few people, and the most obvious role they perform is to moderate all communication between the stakeholders. For example, if the online users

were contributing material to a platform as either comments or rich media, the cultural intermediary operating under the single point of contact model would vet every contribution before publishing it online. Similarly, if the institution developed new processes or mechanisms, it would be the role of the cultural intermediary to relay this information to the online users. Here, the community manager is a subset of the cultural intermediary—these two roles are not simply interchangeable. The purpose of this is to enable communication to occur that translates the tacit knowledge, languages and norms of each stakeholder while conveying the core message in an understandable and approachable manner. While restrictive, this form of online governance is the safest method of ensuring the activities of the online communities align with the core remit of the institution, and it represents a market approach that satisfies the users as consumers. The model is also slow, expensive and exclusionary, in that it only permits certain contributors to interact; it is also non-responsive to the changing dynamics of the online community. It is a model that can easily be replicated across a number of online projects, suggesting that a single point of contact governance model is a starting point for organizations to engage the potential of participatory culture.

However, users often develop a sense of pride and ownership over ‘their’ space. The interactions that occur on the platform will become more sophisticated—for example, users will become familiar with the types of contributions that are deemed valuable from the perspective of the institution. Similarly, institutional facilitators understand the topics of increased user interest and how users will participate. The development of the online space demonstrates a more nuanced understanding of the purpose of the platform and the ways in which users—both contributors and facilitators—are meant to function within the space. In this case, the *multiple cultural intermediaries* model is instigated, consisting of multiple intermediaries operating simultaneously to guide the production of cultural artefacts. This model of social media governance acknowledges the restrictive nature of any overarching regulatory framework, which in itself maintains the integrity of the institution’s brand, but incorporates the innovative and dynamic flora of the online community participants. The cultural intermediation role is at its highest level in this model, where the negotiation of regulation occurs frequently. There are many intermediaries engaging in negotiation, such as multiple community managers, content producers and social media producers, all collaborating to facilitate the production of cultural artefacts. The



two key characteristics of the multiple cultural intermediaries model are post-moderation and the attention economy. A post-moderation state indicates that both contributors and facilitators are relatively comfortable with the contributions to the platform—that is, they avoid a moderation queue and are published instantly on the site but still have to be reviewed by the cultural intermediaries. Post-moderation also indicates that there is a clearer understanding of what is expected on the site and, more importantly, of the content that is considered inappropriate.

This multiple cultural intermediary model also shifts its attention from the market focus towards human value with the introduction of the attention economy. In an online environment, an attention economy is ‘a system that revolves primarily around paying, receiving, and seeking what is most intrinsically limited and not replaceable by anything else, namely the attention of other human beings’ (Goldhaber 2006). The attention economy revolves around being noticed by other users, and especially by the professional producers facilitating the collaborative projects. The multiple cultural intermediaries model is, therefore, more fluid than the single point of contact model, but begins to place the focus on the significance of the content by acknowledging the increased ownership and sophistication of the participants. The model is semi-agile and responsive to the dynamics of its users, and attempts to be egalitarian. This social media governance model is used for semi-developed online participatory projects such as *The Guardian’s* Open Data project, or the BBC’s Voices project.

If the participatory project develops further, the cultural intermediaries may endeavour to promote the online users to intermediary roles, providing the third social media governance model: the *community editor*. For the community editor model to operate effectively, it requires an established online project that has developed an understanding of acceptable conditions between the participants, as outlined in the multiple cultural intermediaries model. In this model, users embrace their increased responsibility to facilitate the platform themselves—for example, the sub-editors of the sub-Reddits outlined in the opening paragraph of this chapter. This model is incredibly agile, inexpensive and responsive to the dynamics of the online community. It is egalitarian, in that it involves the efforts of most of the participants; however, it is often convoluted in its operation, as there are many members operating as cultural intermediaries with varying degrees of competency in the role. The two significant cultural practices of the community editor social media governance model are reactive moderation techniques and the introduction

of a gift economy beyond the contribution of content alone. As mentioned earlier, this governance model is aligned with developed online platforms, indicating an extraordinary understanding of suitable participation, and shifts the motivation to participate beyond an attention economy. Bergquist and Ljungberg (2001, p. 308) note that, 'Gift cultures are characterized by the creation and maintenance of social relationships based on the economy of gift exchange'. In itself, the establishment of a gifting culture within the online environment indicates that the online community has moved beyond the desire to be noticed and towards a social arrangement that values social relationships above all. Additionally, a moderation approach shifts towards reactive moderation, which means the content is free to be published on the institutional platform and only requires moderation if it is flagged as inappropriate by another user.

Cultural intermediation is the process of facilitating collaborative artefact production within the institutional online community environment, which moves beyond the previously established mediation roles—for example, community management or social media producer. In this capacity, cultural intermediaries embrace the perspective of socially relevant participation, manage the technological and cultural spheres of communication, and embody the agency of the five cultural processes associated with the circuit of culture. In this capacity, cultural intermediaries not only engage in 'authentic' participation activities; they are monitoring and negotiating the collaborative production environment constantly to ensure the production and consumption of cultural artefacts both represent the stakeholders appropriately and encapsulate their identities.

### CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES AS CHANGE AGENTS: COMMUNITY SOCIAL MEDIA

Cultural intermediaries engaging in social media governance understand the needs and perspective of citizens, and can translate them to those in positions of power with a high likelihood of instigating action based on those citizen motivations. In attempting to understand how cultural intermediation operates in media organizations and other institutions, it is useful to first explore how communication and power operate in all aspects of society, beginning with the community media sector. Community media concentrates like-minded people who are attracted

to similar goals as the purpose of the community group, but often the efforts of the group fail to change, alter or disrupt the traditional hierarchical systems they seek to challenge. In these circumstances, they can rely on the effort of their cultural intermediaries as change agents who operate between the multiple groups of stakeholders. In these arrangements, cultural intermediaries essentially operate as knowledge, expertise and language translators between individuals or groups of individuals. The translation role is crucial to understanding how the governance and power relations may operate.

Placing the cultural intermediary within the contemporary networked communication environment, they become significant economic agents that embody governance agency. For example, they ensure cultural artefacts maintain their value by interpreting and translating their cultural significance for larger audiences, often through collaborative co-creation. Similarly, they become political agents, crucial in constructing new forms of social media governance, as highlighted above. The dual role of the cultural intermediary that is concerned with economics and governance is of particular importance on the Internet, where we are currently experiencing a shift of power from the nation state and towards the global corporation. For example, Facebook is now one of the most accessed social media platforms globally. However, it is subject to different laws and regulations, depending on the jurisdiction in which it operates. In these instances, the line is heavily blurred between national and local laws, and those that govern Facebook: the regulation of governments versus the regulation of the corporation. If we focus on social media specifically, this governance tension is amplified with a particular emphasis on the USA, given the majority of social media platforms are physically located on the US west coast. Given this fundamental hegemonic component of social media, its governance has the tendency to enforce norms and cultures on users that are quite likely inappropriate for their jurisdiction. It is in this space that cultural intermediaries are crucial for understanding the cultural contexts within which governance and cultural production take place.

The tension that emerges within a governance environment with multiple demands places the cultural intermediary's allegiance into question. A cultural intermediary's allegiance is contextual—that is, it is determined by who the stakeholders are and what is at stake for them. In the example given above of the production of the cultural artefacts,

the cultural intermediary is employed by the hosting institution, which makes them accountable to that stakeholder. However, without the support of the contributing authors, there is no project. So while it would appear that their allegiance is to their employer, they equally share a concern with the other stakeholder group. If, for example, the cultural intermediary were considered a lead user within their online community, based on the topology described above, a community editor would likely have emerged from the group and demonstrated their allegiance to the online community.

Against this backdrop, I construct the term *community social media* as a means of understanding how cultural intermediation operates within international social media contexts. Community social media are activist media that incorporate the efforts of cultural intermediation to mobilize the input of marginalized groups within a power dynamic. Both cultural studies and the creative industries have explored the social aspects of community theory, yet these explorations have for the most part ignored the power relationships by too often focusing on actors as class or institutional-based workers. Cultural intermediation can address these issues when engaging in networking power techniques (Castells 2011). Chapter 5 provides three case studies that demonstrate how cultural intermediaries not only engage in social and cultural alignment between social media communities but also engage cultural intermediation as a governance model to operationalize their perspectives. These case studies demonstrate that the cultural intermediation framework is useful for understanding the communication ecology and, following the pioneering efforts of cultural policy studies, can inform and in some cases create new forms of policy, regulatory frameworks and governance models related to digital cultures.

## CULTURAL STUDIES AND COMMUNITY SOCIAL MEDIA

I define *community social media* as the combination of the collaborative and enabling practices of social media, with the political and critical engagement of DIY making. Social media tools and platforms, including social network sites, enable large groups of individuals to congregate, collaborate and produce media relative to their civil, political and social interests. However, through the critical-making lens associated with DIY making, users are contesting, and in some instances dismissing, the dominant cultural order embedded within social and cultural texts. This has

been most obvious with movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, which both demonstrated ‘new understandings of participatory democracy and [are] thus central to any updated conceptions of DIY citizenship’ (Boler and Ratto 2014, p. 24). It is also important to highlight that DIY citizenship (Hartley 1999) operates on a smaller scale through community movements built on the ethos of the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) movement and the hacker ethos.

To arrive at this definition of community social media, it is useful to explore a brief history of cultural studies towards an understanding of DIY maker culture. Cultural studies historically have examined media and communication to understand the meanings and directions of society (Williams 1965), often through the expansion of difference, societal power/meaning/identity, marginal media, displacement of the dominant discourse and intellectual politics (Hartley 2003). In this regard, cultural studies are useful to identify and understand the commonalities between groups of individuals who come together for a similar purpose. Cultural studies are also a baseline theory for cultural policy and, more recently, for the creative industries to explore new media technologies and the broader impact of ‘creativity’.

Digital media have provided users, especially online communities, with the opportunity to participate in the discussions and debates of their world, with the hint of greater democratization and empowerment. This approach towards new media is increasingly problematic for three reasons. First, there are questions surrounding individual capacity to participate in digital communication environments. Second, it is questionable whether organizations have accepted user empowerment against hegemony through digital communication technologies. And third, if users have accessed and increased democratization for resistance, we must ask whether socially constructed values developed through social media are sincere or simply the result of cultural populism. An understanding of these research problems relates to how social media is governed and regulated, embodied either through resistance or hegemony.

Both cultural studies and the creative industries have explored the resistance/hegemony dichotomy through social media, with compelling results. For example, cultural studies examine networked users and communities by what has *not* been included, while the creative industries tend to place futurist ‘enabling’ rhetoric to support participatory culture. Both approaches are useful, but tend to reduce the impact of the human and non-human social media actors to either class-based or institutionally

based workers. To research social media in the context of alternative, community and citizen media requires a new kind of thinking to understand not only the technology but also the techno-cultures that influence and are influenced by emerging digital media practices.

Cultural intermediation provides a socially constructivist approach to understanding empirical accounts of social media activities, beyond the hyperbolic rhetoric of participatory cultural production. Cultural intermediation can be viewed as exploring the new positions located between content production and creation as the relationship between creativity and the economy (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2014) or as a combination of both. Cultural intermediation explores the actors between the production and consumption of cultural goods by understanding the technologies, environments and agents beyond the hegemonic/resistance dichotomy.

In a contemporary society, social media can be seen as a set of tools to challenge and disrupt dominant discourses. Building on the shareable knowledge, the read/write culture and collaborative production approaches of the World Wide Web, and more recently Web 2.0 characteristics, social media arguably enable greater scale of citizen participation. However, scholars continue to debate the enabling and restrictive attributes of social media (Fuchs 2014; Herman 2014; Hunsinger 2014; Jones 2013; van Dijck 2011), while Hinton and Hjorth (2013, p. 3) observe that, 'social media is neither entirely empowering nor entirely controlling. In fact, it is often both'. Social media tools are often promoted as free, open and collaborative to entice users to engage in participatory activity with other individuals. While social media tools, including social network sites and the increasing ubiquity across mobile platforms, provide the opportunity for users to engage with each other anywhere and at any time, it is often on the terms of the corporations that provide them. Therefore, users experience a greater opportunity to participate under the constraints of the governments and organizations that enable them.

DIY citizenship (Hartley 1999) is useful as a framework to engage in this 'critical' space, which sees users engage beyond their existing civil, political and social rights. DIY citizens generate their right to self-empowerment by engaging with the concepts and ideas on offer in the media. Here there is a return to Hall's (1999) connotative codes, which see critically engaged citizens choose their civil area of interest by engaging through the creation, or 'making', and distribution of media. DIY

citizenship sees ‘making as a “critical” activity, one that provides both the possibility to intervene substantively in systems of authority and power and that offers an important site for reflecting on how such power is constituted by infrastructures, institutions, communities, and practice’ (Boler and Ratto 2014, p. 1). DIY citizenship and critical making are the activities that are undertaken collaboratively within groups of particular discourses, and that provide the basis for community social media.

However, while communities of makers, hackers and enthusiasts gain momentum among similar-minded folk by attracting large groups of users participating in collaborative and co-creative media practice, there remains a disjuncture between critical mass and political power. These groups of users unite in their cause and trajectory, but more often than not are ignored by traditional political power structures. Turner (2012) asks whether organizations, including governments, are actually listening to the efforts of mobilized political groups, let alone breaking down participatory democracy barriers. This is the precise location for cultural intermediation to be operationalized by political change agents, which draws on Castells’ (2011) network theory of power. The networked theory of power explains why a disjuncture occurs, and might be mitigated, between increased community participation and increased political impact. However, as Castells points out, there are similar participation issues arising in a network society that I argue require attention if community social media is to be authentic and effective in the political process.

## CULTURAL INTERMEDIATION IN A NETWORK THEORY OF POWER

Castells (2011) refers to four forms of connection between actors in a network, where the significance for cultural intermediation is in network-making power to enable the ‘new cultural intermediaries’ (Bourdieu 1984). Both roles are responsible for inhabiting the space between actors within a network, and as such become increasingly significant in community social media that are concerned with resistant political activities and DIY citizenship. Castells’ four forms within human actor networks are:

1. *networking power* as gatekeeping to include or exclude actors based on their potential to add value or jeopardize the network,
2. *network power* to coordinate the protocols of communication or the rules for participate within the network,

3. *networked power*, which consists of the collective and multiple forms of power, referred to by Castells as ‘states’, within the network, and
4. *network-making power*—critical, as it is ‘(a) the ability to constitute network(s) and to programme/reprogramme the network(s) in terms of the goals assigned to the network; and (b) the ability to connect and ensure the cooperation of different networks by sharing common goals and combining resources while fending off competition from other networks by setting up strategic cooperation’ (Castells 2011, p. 776).

Castells notes that the programmers of networks have common traits through ideas, visions, projects and frames, which guide how they construct their networks. Through these common cultural codes, network-making power is exercised through the construction of communication that supports the objectives of the network.

The second form of network-making power is what Castells refers to as ‘switchers’. Switchers ‘control the connecting points between various strategic networks’—for example, ‘the connection between the political networks and the media networks to produce and diffuse specific political-ideological discourses’ (Castells 2011, p. 777). In this approach, complex networks are created with limited contradiction and synergy to encourage strategic communication and connection with other similar networks. Switchers are dynamic interfaces that promote the connection, and therefore a dominant order, between similar groups of individuals operating within a networked society. Network-making power actors are likely to be among the most powerful and influential actors within the network, which would make them seemingly crucial for community social media. Therefore, cultural intermediaries align with switchers as network-making actors in their approach towards creating connective interfaces between stakeholder groups.

Cultural intermediation is also a framework for knowledge and expertise exchange between stakeholder groups that operate within environments of similar interest. In talking about collaborative co-creation, I have described previously how cultural intermediation operates at the ABC as both an enabling role but also as a constructor of



communication models (Hutchinson 2013). This work highlights specific sorts of expertise gathered through tacit knowledge achieved from participating in the online communities on which the research is conducted. As part of this, the research highlighted distinct groups of stakeholders who communicated in specific modes. The cultural intermediary's role was to identify how each stakeholder group communicated, which reflects their perspective and reason for participating in the online community in the first instance. The cultural intermediary would then engage in a process of negotiation between the stakeholder groups to ensure that moments of tension or disagreement were resolved in order to enable cultural artefacts to be produced collaboratively. At the same time, these interactions were also developing a new form of governance for the platform, the users and the hosting organization, the ABC.

Cultural intermediation becomes a framework to develop political processes through critical making, which was previously highlighted through DIY citizenship. In a networked environment that engages in community social media, the cultural intermediary operates in the same manner as the switcher in network-making power, in that they are both aware of the common ideas, visions, projects and frames that are attractive to multiple stakeholder groups. Cultural intermediaries engage in activities that seek to connect synergies, which in turn encourage communication between networks. In the example of the ABC, this was done not only through critical making and co-creative production but also through the mechanics of the governance of the platform. In this context, the focus of the remainder of the book is on the transition of public service broadcasting to public service media, with particular emphasis on the experimental role of these organizations. The case studies that involve cultural intermediation highlight the relationship of that semantic shift, especially the experimentation/innovation/failure processes. In these moments, the cultural intermediary would advise each stakeholder group on how to approach the governance of space to ensure that the other group was adequately approving of any course of action. Thus, the role of the cultural intermediary as a network-making power switcher is crucial in bridging the gap between community social media advocating for political change, and the institutions (potentially) forfeiting that power.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored how governance operates in online environments and highlighted some of its shortcomings in terms of how it fails to represent the broad collection of users adequately. Beyond being a creative role that enables content production between groups of online users and media organizations, the chapter has demonstrated how cultural intermediaries are key political agents that restructure how governance can take place on social media platforms, given the technological and cultural aspects of their operation. Cultural intermediation is, therefore, a process for shifting cultural knowledge around in environments that are politically predisposed to inhibiting such activities. Cultural intermediaries are the agents that operationalize cultural intermediation through creative roles that blur the boundaries between high and low cultural production, assist in the transfer of knowledge and expertise between producers and consumers, and enable productive and authentically participatory governance environments.

The second half of the chapter highlighted the elements that come together to help us understand how social media technologies control *and* how to challenge control. It argued that many of the DIY citizen campaigns remain amiss with traditional political power systems, even though there are critical masses of participants engaging with them. Instead, the combination of network-making power and cultural intermediation provides the potential to bridge resistant ideologies and movements with those traditional power structures. Through the combination of constructing platforms that aggregate networks of similar interests together with the communication construction of what issues are important, and how to discuss them, influential network actors can have and implement a greater impacting political conversation.

It is also worth highlighting that these enabling actors also take on a gatekeeping role—albeit from a more relaxed gatewatching position (Bruns 2005). That is, while they have been framed in this chapter as enabling actors, it should not be ignored that they are performing their role in a way that still privileges some contributions over others. This is the promise of cultural intermediation: to operate within the gatewatching sphere while performing an enabling and, in the network society, aggregating role. This also lays the foundation for how cultural intermediaries enable authentic audience participation within media organizations.

Thus, network-making as a form of cultural intermediation does enhance an individual's capacity to participate in digital communication environments by building accessible networks with low barriers to entry. Strategic cultural intermediation enhances online community communication protocols, where anti-hegemonic activity within these networks is more likely to be adopted in traditional power formations. Finally, social media communication that engages with cultural intermediation ensures the alignment of online community communication protocols with institutionally focused trajectories to avoid cultural populism. In these contexts, cultural intermediation becomes more than a conduit between cultural production and consumption; rather, it is an interface to align a number of mediated communication protocols.

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