THE TENTH ANGLO-ISRAEL COLLOQUIUM

ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

MISHKENOT SHA'ANANIM,
JERUSALEM, 14-16 NOVEMBER, 2013

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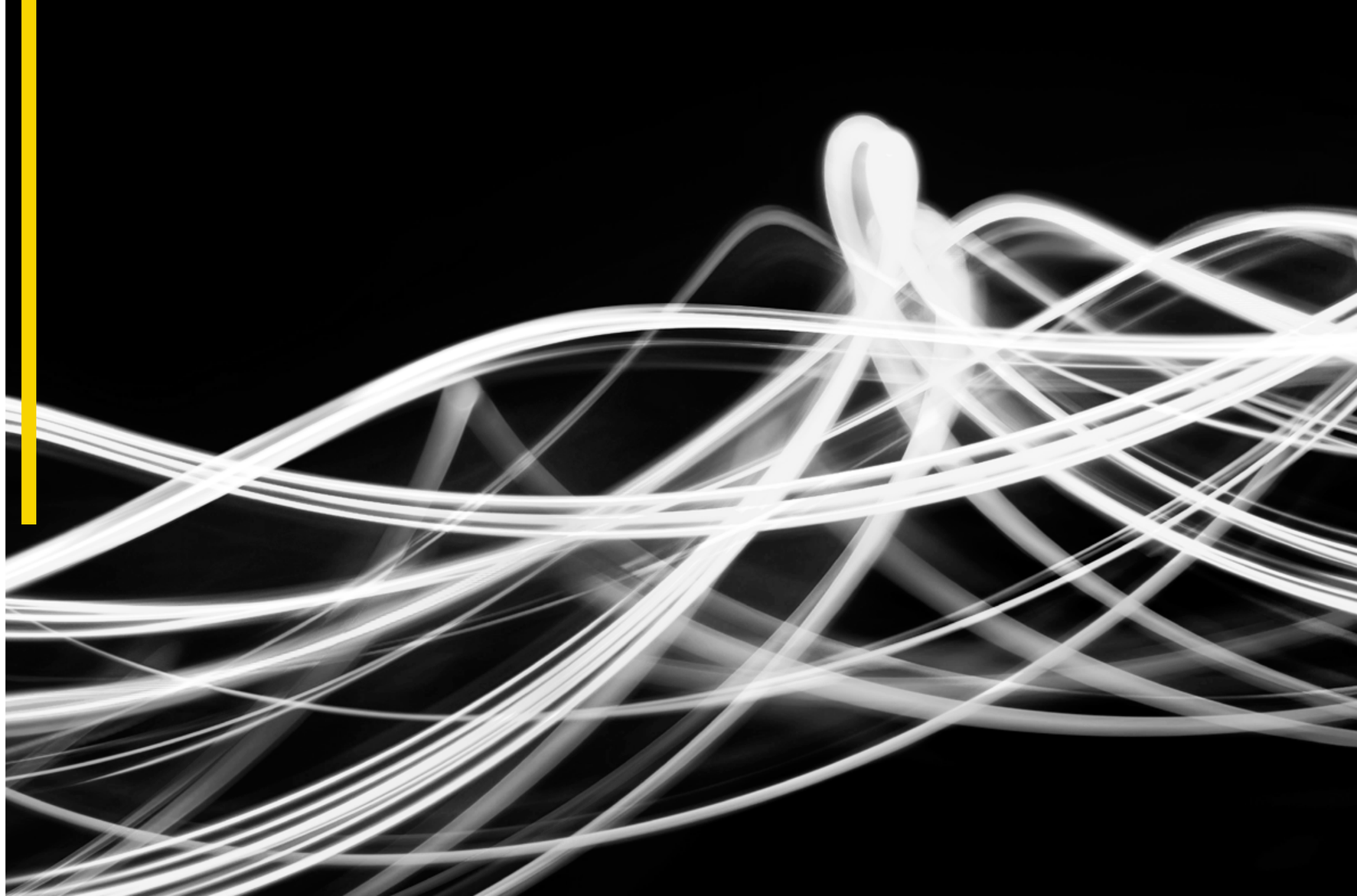

The Anglo-Israel Colloquium was launched in 1997 at the initiative of the Anglo-Israel Association in London, with the aim of bringing together every one or two years, a select number of people from Great Britain and Israel, to discuss a particular topic which varies from year to year. The hope is that the participants, drawn from many walks of life, some of them experts in the field under discussion, others having a wide general interest and breadth of experience, will be able to share ideas, thoughts and practical knowledge, in the hope that the results can be to the mutual benefit of both countries. Our discussions at past Colloquia have frequently led to continued contacts, joint activities and sharing of information.

The Colloquia are organized by two steering committees, one in London and one in Israel, under the auspices of the Anglo-Israel Association, in keeping with its objective of helping to develop wider understanding between the British and Israeli people. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to David Elliott, my opposite number in London as coordinator of the Colloquia and to Ms Ruth Saunders of the Anglo-Israel Association, for their ever-efficient help and cooperation throughout the planning period, and finally but by no means least, to Ms. Isabel Hardman who took upon herself to serve as Rapporteur for this Colloquium.

The following is a list of the nine Colloquia that preceded the present one:

1. 1997 Wiston House, Sussex: "The Politics of Heritage"
2. 1998 Beit Gabriel, Sea of Galilee: "The Arts and Culture: whose Responsibility?"
3. 2000 Kibbutz Ma'aleh Hahamisha, Judean Hills: "Power and Responsibility – the Role of the Media in the Information Age"
4. 2001 Balliol College, Oxford: "The Universities: What are They for and can we Afford Them?"
5. 2004 Mitzpe Ramon, Negev Desert: "Ensuring a Healthy Environment for Future Generations: is Development Sustainable?"
6. 2005 Kibbutz Ginosar, Sea of Galilee: "Multiculturalism – A Comparative Perspective"
7. 2007 Kibbutz Kfar Blum, Northern Galilee: "Wealth and Happiness: Quality of Life in Israel and the United Kingdom"
8. 2009 Kfar Maccabiah, Ramat Gan: "In Loco Parentis: Who Should Raise our Children?"
9. 2011 Neveh Ilan, Judean Hills: "Genetics and Society"

This year's Colloquium centered on one of the most topical - sometimes worrying, and always controversial - effects of the social media, such as Facebook, and Twitter and others, on the lives of each of us, on our freedom and our future, and on our children. While the internet has opened informational vistas that could not even have been imagined a generation ago, the increasing impact upon us of the social media is one that needs constant study and research.

We are very grateful for the support of several generous anonymous donors without whom the Colloquium could not have taken place.

Asher Weill

Convenor

Jerusalem, January, 2014

From the Israeli Chair of the Tenth Colloquium

Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli

Social networks, and their physical infrastructure of computers and channels, are said to be part of our globalizing era. They are a huge and growing phenomenon, present in all walks of individual and social life. There is a promise of shrinking distances, bridging over differences, and growth in communication from near and far. The actual experience of recent years, though, is that in computerized social networks distances still matter. Cultural heritage, predispositions and prior expectations are still very much present. For better or worse, technology has not (yet?) made us all equal and symmetrically connected members of a frictionless global village. The subject matter is, therefore, all the more interesting and intriguing.

For this reason it is so important and helpful to have face-to-face meetings of concerned parties from other countries. In Israel, where Hi-Tech and internet-related startups are so prominent, and in the United Kingdom, where the history of democracy, public discourse and debate are so deeply rooted, these discussion can be even more illuminating. Speaking on behalf of the Israeli participants at the AIA colloquium I would like to thank the Association for pulling us all together for this fantastic event. The organization was flawless, the friendships struck and revived are heartwarming, and the discussion was edifying and enriching.

We enjoyed very much the opportunity to discuss openly some of the deepest and furthest reaching issues developing in the context of social networks. While not all gaps were bridged here either, and while differences between and among us were discovered, I believe all the participants emerged very grateful for the opportunity to strike up conversations and relations. Through this event and its participants, the AIA formed another social network that will benefit its members and hopefully others. For Anglo-Israel relations, we believe this event did in fact shrink distances and build bridges over differences. The Colloquium was held in the inspiring, historical and symbolic environment of Mishkenot Sha'ananim. I hope the following report will help share some of the insights reached at our deliberations.

From the UK Chair of the Tenth Colloquium

David Aaronovitch

Sheizaf Rafaeli says, and it is the enduring truth, that despite the extraordinary capacity we have to contact each other over distance, speaking face to face, eye to eye has a value that cannot quite be replicated by the virtual world. Breaking bread together – Israeli and Briton - as we symbolically did on the Friday night of the Colloquium and with pleasure at other meal times, or standing in the break-time sun at Mishkenot Sha'ananim, gave us an awareness of the "other" that electronic contact couldn't. Not least because we, as Britons, could see how our Israeli counterparts talked and inter-acted with each other.

I add my compliments to Sheizaf's on the organization of the event and want to add a note about the spirit of that organization. Never didactic, never propagandistic, always allowing what would develop to develop, the Colloquium's organizers were far more notable for their warmth than for their political intention. I had unspoken fears before the Colloquium of an attempt to co-opt us and the discussion for the benefit of a stance on Israel. That never happened and my fears were unfounded.

And, as it happens, I also learned a lot from both my Israeli and British colleagues about probably the most hotly contested phenomena of the current era. In every way I felt enhanced by the experience. Thank you.

“ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD”

Colloquium Rapporteur: Isabel Hardman

THEME A

THEME A: The Social Media in Open and Closed Societies. The impact of social media on governments, communities, education, protest movements, etc., in the UK and Israel - and in controlled societies such as in the Middle East, the former Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Myanmar, et al; Does this impact tend to revolutionise politics and society or is its influence exaggerated?

SESSION 1 - The internet’s role in enabling new forms of democratic behaviour and how social media impacts or influences traditional media.

Chair: Claire Fox
Speakers: William Dutton, Niva Elkin-Koren
Respondents: Matthew Eltringham, Daphne Raban

SESSION 2 - What might be the result in closed societies following the increased penetration of social media?

Chair: Yoram Kalman
Speakers: Anne McElvoy, Oren Modai
Respondents: Isabel Hardman, Bob Rosenschein

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

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Claire Fox opened by asking the participants to consider the pros and cons of the democratisation of the internet. She pointed out that, thanks to the internet, we all have a voice, through blogs and twitter and other media, but asked what this meant for the way we make judgments, given that anyone can now, for instance, publish a film review. She raised the issue of mob rule and "witch hunts:" to what extent should we worry about the downsides of Twitter and other networks?

William Dutton said that since its very early days, everyone assumed that the internet would lead to improved democracy. He outlined his own work, in which he examined how an organisation can use these technologies to reinforce their existence and power structure. The technologies are becoming less controllable, because the internet is a global technology with a multiple array of actors. He said that it was increasingly impossible for any single actor to gain a monopoly of control.

Dutton said he had discovered that the internet is increasingly becoming the first place people go to for information, whether it be a medical diagnosis or a news item. They do not go to a specific site, but search and social networks are telling us where the news is and we are becoming more and more independent of institutional direction. The internet is becoming increasingly central: people view it as essential for their information and entertainment needs. He compared trust in the internet with trust in institutions: people who use the internet trust it about as much as they trust broadcast institutions, but trust it more than they trust print news. 70 percent of people go online to check a medical diagnosis, how it should be treated and so on.

He explained that all these factors contribute to an increasing ability to challenge institutions. The internet is now the fifth estate and the fourth estate still exists in the form of the press. There are many enemies of the fifth estate, he said. Some of the biggest threats stem from moral panic about the internet and consequent attempts to regulate it as though it were broadcast media. But he felt that a great deal of this panic was misplaced. The fifth estate is not the mob: the fifth estate is the people who independently source their own information and correct a great deal of misinformation as they go along.

Niva Elkin-Koren delineated some of the main concerns and risks presented by the internet from a legal point of view. She used an example of a social media protest about the price of cottage cheese in Israel which succeeded in bringing down the price. This illustrates how the internet can respond to phenomena, but also how its power can often pay scant regard to the long-term structural effects of some of the things for which people are campaigning. There was little interest paid to the effects of cheaper cottage cheese on the farmers involved in its production, she pointed out. Checks and balances are not yet fully developed in the internet world.

She also argued for greater study of online mobs: what turns a crowd into a mob, and is there a difference? What threats do mobs pose to liberal democracies? But there are other threats too. She pointed to the way in which discussions are already being manipulated, from people paid to write favourable Amazon reviews to the US government hiring people to hold certain conversations on social networks. Another threat is posed by PRISM, not just because the government is carrying out the surveillance, but that the scale of the surveillance creates a pressure to conform and we should worry about this from a democratic perspective.

Matthew Eltringham said that while he recognised Dutton's "utopian" view of the internet, he was more sceptical about what it could offer. He said that unlike Gutenberg, the web is controllable because it can be switched off, as it is in Iran, Myanmar and Egypt. And yet things still happen, even when the web is turned off. The internet may have a democratising force, but governments and organisations such as the BBC, spend a great deal of time trying to stay on top of SEO and social media so that they have a strong presence and authority. The leading news brands top the search engine results because of these efforts, not because of the democratisation of the internet.

He also contrasted the response to Nick Griffin's appearance on "Question Time" on various different platforms. The reaction on Twitter was a mob. Every time Griffin was made to look like an idiot, those tweeting cheered and supported the idea that he was being made to look a fool. But the response on the BBC's own chat room, "Have Your Say" was very different. Here, the response was that Nick Griffin had been lynched by the panel.

Daphne Raban spoke from an economic standpoint, arguing that social networks were developing as monopolies, with Twitter monopolising microblogging, YouTube monopolising video sharing and so on. Her own research had been disrupted by the constant changes to terms and conditions of the social networks on which she was working. She is not comfortable with the term "social," asking what is it that is so social about large numbers of corporations who are determining our agenda?

Discussion

The discussion quickly turned to technological determinism. One participant quoted Plato citing Socrates' opposition to writing, and fears in the 1920s about the effects of radio, arguing that this was rather similar to some of the fears voiced about technology today. Another agreed, arguing that discussions around the invention of the printing press would have concentrated on similar themes, including the threat to authority and what constituted authority. The main difference, was that things were moving much quicker now than in the period of the introduction of the printing press and therefore we have considerably less time before we face some of the problems and opportunities created by new technologies.

Another participant warned about turning the whole debate into utopians versus dystopians because, technological determinism exists on both sides of the argument. The terms of debate have to include which bits of society have really changed because of technology, and for which things technology is simply being blamed.

There was some discussion over the importance of a large proportion of a country's citizens being on social media. One participant argued that you do not need universal access for the fifth estate to play a powerful role in politics: you simply need a critical mass of effective users. Another participantoup felt that power was still flowing to small concentrations of people who know how to use the technology best for their own purposes, such as hackers, leaving many others at the mercy of technology.

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

SESSION 2 | CHAIR: Yoram Kalman

Speakers: Anne McElvoy, Oren Modai
Respondents: Isabel Hardman,
Bob Rosenschein

THEME A: The Social Media in Open and Closed Societies.

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Yoram Kalman posed three questions for discussion: 1. Is it a problem that public discourse around social media very quickly drifts to the utopia/dystopia dichotomy? Why? What can we do to tackle it? 2. What are the policy implications of what we are discussing? 3. How can we study society and technology in flux?
Oren Modai said that only two years ago, people expected democratic boundaries to be pushed by social networks and the internet, but that the Arab Spring showed that social media had failed miserably and the freedom of the world is in retreat. Closed societies have their own DNA, that cannot be changed through social media. But social media could improve things: now the reverse is true: evil forces are using social media for their own good. They are taking technology and are putting in their own content. This is not the major risk with social media, though. The real risk is the abuse of social media in closed and open societies.

In China, you are considered a public danger if your post attracts 5,000 hits. The authorities employ two million people to follow the people who may have 5,000 hits. But there are dangers in open societies, too. Modai turned to the United States and the PRISM programme. The most open society in the world is using and abusing social media. The KGB, the Gestapo and Stasi would have loved to be able to do this.

Anne McElvoy spoke from her own experience as a foreign affairs correspondent covering the fall of the Berlin Wall and contrasted it to the pre-social media reporting world as to how the event would have been portrayed. The disbelief over the initial reports only evaporated when people went to the Wall on foot to see what was happening for themselves, and it was people pressure, not media pressure, that sent them there.

She said there must be an element of truth in the idea that social media is a force shaping events as well as reflecting them. But she took issue with the idea that social media and the "citizen journalist"' replaced established news organisations. Journalists should still be proud enough to recognise that what they do is different to what citizen journalists do, and while the two can work together, they have distinctively different roles. Journalists are still required to fact-check and verify, while citizen journalists supply the raw information.

McElvoy suggested that the change wrought by social networks would be much more gradual than we might expect. Perhaps we might take a dose of humility rather than hubris from this.

Isabel Hardman explored the relationship between traditional media and social media, arguing that social media largely continues to feed off traditional media rather than gaining its own authority. People tend to gain followers on social media not purely based on their tweets but on the force behind them, whether it be their title or the organisation they work for. Journalists can often fall into the trap of believing a tweet without picking up the phone. And as for the effect social media can have in a revolution, there is some evidence to suggest that it is more important to those countries watching and supporting the revolution rather than those inside the country itself.

Bob Rosenschein focused on information overload. He said the human brain is not particularly adept at filtering large amounts of information. There is so much noise now that the only way you can rise above it is to be provocative, he said pointing to Miley Cyrus and other attention-seeking celebrities. He argued that it is in people's interests to have access to Facebook and Twitter.

Discussion

The debate opened with one participant arguing that the new platforms create an opportunity for people to have a voice where previously they did not. But the policy response is currently based on how to stop governments or corporations limiting those voices when the debate should be about how can we provide more people the opportunity to be heard?

One participant spoke about the ways Chinese students were able to circumvent censorship of networks in China. But they were also seeing the development of urban myths on social networks that most people in the West assume are reserved for discussion of revolution and politics: one such myth was that gangs of homosexual men roam around Liverpool at night beating up Chinese students. When told by a westerner that this was simply a myth, the students were more inclined to believe their social network rather than the westerner.

The discussion largely focused on closed societies, but some participants felt the recent clampdowns by the British police on hate speech on social media showed that the web is being policed in so-called "open societies" too.

“ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD”

Colloquium Rapporteur: Isabel Hardman

THEME B

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media. Pornography, enticing children, hate-speech, invasion of privacy, cyber-terrorism etc. Should we be panicking? Are we complacent?

SESSION 3 - Free speech versus protection of privacy

Chair: Bader Mansour
Speakers: Charlie Beckett, Haim Ravia
Respondents: Martyn Perks, Ina Blau

SESSION 4 - The Protection of Children and other Vulnerable Groups.

Chair: Ido Guy
Presentations: Lisa Harker, Asmaa Ganayem
Respondents: Alan Bookbinder, Ayelet Baram-Tsabari

SESSION 5 - Internet and the Threat of Extremism

Chair: Ben O’Loughlin
Presentations: Jamie Bartlett, Amit Schejter
Respondents: Maura Conway, Limor Shifman

SESSION 6 FINAL SESSION: Where will the Digital Age take us next? What are we doing about it? New technologies, future trends, users’ behaviour

Joint chairs: David Aaronovitch, Sheizaf Rafaeli

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

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THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media.

SESSION 3 - Free speech versus protection of privacy

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Bader Mansour set out some of his own thoughts on whether free speech was always a good thing to spark the discussion. He wondered whether free speech was always a positive, pointing to the furore around the Danish cartoons as an example. Perhaps, he suggested, it would be better not to publish things that would lead to such violent reactions.

Haim Ravia argued that the internet does offer the opportunity for people to speak and act freely in a way they could not previously do, for example a man speaking online as a woman. In 2011, the Israel Supreme court held that when one wants to maintain anonymity online, he has two fundamental rights: the right to free speech and the right to privacy. But online we are still leaving behind us a trail of information. It is possible to say that anonymity very much makes the internet what it is and without it, freedom in cyberspace will be lacking. But when it comes to tracking terrorists, agencies whose job it is will argue that the only way to track terrorists is to look for patterns of activity, which means monitoring normal activity in order to define what is abnormal activity.

Ravia referred to the Snowden revelations and explained that this kind of information gathering had been made possible by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Ravia reminded us that this was not the only type of monitoring that takes place: we are monitored as we move around the web by many organisations. Facebook is one example, collecting data about us in quite an obvious way. Others are less obvious: smartphone users' movements are being followed by a number of organisations. The kinds of trails that we leave behind include where we have been, who we have been with, how long we stayed there, what we said if we are using online chat. Soon it will include medical data about us, soon companies will be able to construe things about us in terms of typing patterns and mouse movements. He asked what adjustments if any, people are making to their behaviour due to this constant monitoring.

Charlie Beckett argued that free speech should not be seen as being mutually exclusive of privacy. While he was personally prejudicially in favour of free speech, experience tells us that it is conditional on our own ethics or our sense of responsibility. Similarly there is nothing absolute about privacy: it is a social, cultural construct that differs very much based on who you are or where you are. Beckett said people are happily and voluntarily sacrificing their privacy in all kinds of ways online and at the same time fear that they are losing control over their private lives to other people. This is a new phase in the political economy of the internet.

Beckett is very suspicious of calls to regulate this new battleground. He said the last thing that we need is a "Lord Leveson of the internet," but that he was in favour of policy interventions; for example governments ensuring that data they provide is in a way that people can make sense of and use. People should be given the tools to understand their environments and protect themselves. Journalists need to operate in a hybrid way, working across platforms like Twitter and Facebook as well as in traditional ways. The real threat to free speech is not openness, nor is it privacy: there are obvious threats out there like censorious governments (which means all governments to a degree); corporations doing what they do naturally - maximising their profits and seeking a monopoly; but by far the greatest threat would be a threat to the transparency of the internet itself. Without protection of net neutrality, the whole argument about freedom of speech becomes irrelevant.

Ina Blau posed two questions: do we have privacy at all, and are we changing our behaviour as a consequence? She said the answer to the first question is that we do not have any privacy. She added that we should make a distinction between the sense of anonymity and truly being anonymous. Her own opinion is that it is enough to feel anonymous to enable free speech. We cannot have free speech on a sensitive topic if all our data is recorded and stored.

Martyn Perks said the connection between privacy and free speech today was centered around the notion of adult autonomy. He argued that we need to understand the environment in which we live with regard to how Google, Facebook or Twitter are monitoring us, and realise that if you choose to engage on Facebook, there is a possibility that whatever you said today might be used or recorded and used later. That is just the way of the world. Our privacy through free speech is under attack through increasing interventions from the criminal justice system, for example people being sent to prison for making comments on Twitter. Twitter is becoming an overly-policed arena, he said, and this was problematic because many people argue that we are no longer as adults able to handle hate speech and are turning to authorities to regulate even our innermost thoughts.

Discussion

Some participants feared that politicians were treating websites such as YouTube as though they were broadcasters and requiring them to become editors of the content posted on their sites. Another pointed to the contradiction of internet users voluntarily giving up their information, sometimes naively, believing that this is an exercise of free speech, while simultaneously distrusting institutions such as the National Health Service with personal data. The real underlying problem, is that the private sphere was being eroded: there is now a notion in society that if you don't disclose you've got something to hide. The more we demand transparency, though, the more we erode the private sphere.

Another speaker remarked that it was very difficult to make a distinction between a serious threat on social media and one made in jest, citing the Robin Hood airport Twitter case as an example. But the problem for public trust in the intelligence agencies is that there is little understanding of how much has been prevented through social media monitoring: if people knew that PRISM had prevented 15 nuclear bombs going off around Europe, they would think it proportionate and necessary. What needs to happen is that the intelligences agencies become slightly more transparent about why they need certain powers. Another participant argued that it was the job of the press to guard against unreasonable legislation demanded by the intelligence agencies acting in panic.

The discussion also included the "right to be forgotten" and whether this was appropriate or not. There was also agreement that in some cases a bigger threat to privacy comes not from the agency monitoring your data, but the chances of someone else getting access to that data and using it for nefarious purposes.

One speaker responded to Bader Mansour's argument about the danger of free speech, telling the group that this illustrated the distinction between the limits of wisdom and the limits of the law.

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

SESSION 4 | CHAIR: Ido Guy

Presentations: Lisa Harker, Asmaa Ganayem
Respondents: Alan Bookbinder,
Ayelet Baram-Tsabari

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media.

SESSION 4 - The Protection of Children and other Vulnerable Groups.

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media. Pornography, enticing children, hate-speech, invasion of privacy, cyber-terrorism etc. Should we be panicking? Are we complacent?

Session 4 - The Protection of Children and other Vulnerable Groups.

Chair: Ido Guy
Presentations: Lisa Harker, Asmaa Ganayem
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Ido Guy set out the challenge of this discussion as the tension between not hurting the good while infiltrating the bad. The success of social networks and technology generally is partly because of laziness: people might not enjoy virtual social interaction as much as the real thing, but it is simply easier and so they will engage with Facebook and Twitter because they are naturally indolent. He then asked the speakers to address the efficacy of what already exists in terms of online protection and what are other vulnerable groups in addition to children.

Lisa Harker described the debate on children and the internet as often being too shrill and pious. The internet is also playing a role in protecting children, helping them speak out about abuse online rather than just relying on the telephone. But we need to be very concerned that children are being sexually exploited on the internet for the production of pornographic images. This is an illegal activity and yet we are seemingly unable to stop it growing. This is an industry operating in a global way and so it needs a global response. There is an important discussion about what is and isn't an indecent image, but we also need to get on with the task of removing these images from the internet.

The second problem is children witnessing hardcore pornography, something that is heavily debated in the United Kingdom and the concern here is the ease with which children can access porn. This issue was not about censorship, but how you put those kinds of images out of reach for children and young people. A third issue is protecting children from online bullying. Social networking sites do have a responsibility to make it easy for children to report abuse. The fourth problem is self-inflicted abuse, such as children taking sexually explicit photos of themselves that end up being shared across the internet. The ability of schools and parents to deal with this is very limited. Do we need to find ways of being able to take those images down?

Asmaa Ganayem said there is no digital divide between Arabs and Jews in Israel, in terms of using the internet in the younger generation, but the digital divide is between the ages. Before the age of 24, there is a high rate of internet use, but after that the internet use in Arab society in Israel is much lower. Another gap that exists in schools is how the technology is used in classrooms, a gap which exists both between Arab and Israeli pupils and the students and their teachers. The first answer to protecting children online is better education, but the problem with this is that there is a gulf between the digital activities of young people and the digital activities of the parents and teachers who need to educate them. How can parents and teachers educate the next generation when there is a continuous digital gap? Adults have less time to move through the different stages of technology as quickly as children. There is also the issue of language. Most of Arab society uses the internet in Arabic, 50 percent are reading it in Hebrew and 25 percent in English. The intervention programmes for helping children cannot remain just in English if they are to really help all children.

Alan Bookbinder argued that this is an area where we must suspend our libertarian instincts and where freedom of expression has to have limits. Children cannot make a considered decision about what they see on the internet, and just as we protect our children in the outside world, we should not give them complete freedom online. They are much less likely to know what's wise. One of the challenges is that children are ahead of their parents when it comes to technology. The best mechanism for coping with this cannot be national legislation because this is an international problem nor can it be just parental responsibility, because not all parents are responsible. He is sceptical about the extent to which teachers can assist with this issue. Internet service providers and other big sites such as Google ought to be regarding themselves as in loco parentis and should be taking a lead on these issues.

Ayelet Baram-Tsabari focused on how technology allows us to listen to children in a way we have not been able to do before. This includes looking at search terms to see what it is that people want to learn, for example, answering questions about science that are posed on the internet. Finding out what students want to know helps teachers make their lessons relevant.

Discussion

This was the most heated discussion of the entire Colloquium. It quickly became a debate about freedom of speech and the extent of abuse that children are exposed to on the internet. One participant argued that in some cases a bit of bullying as a child wasn't as bad as people might make out and that there was a danger of assuming that parents are being irresponsible when actually the real problem is that they are not being given enough autonomy to be parents. Every time they try to be parents, the state intervenes to take away their esponsibility.

A second speaker said this was far too fetishised a discussion and that libertarian thinking is very relevant in this sphere, rather than something to be disregarded. Social networks grew because parents were encouraging their children to use the internet, and because parents were limiting their children's exposure to risk. Children have retreated into social media because they have a need to experiment with their identity and learn about the world around them away from their parents. The real problem is that adults have now become just as narcissistic as children. We have ended up asking the state to take over as a responsible adult instead. We are inviting the state into our bedrooms and to mediate the fundamental relationship between adults and their children.

This discussion then led to a debate about whether protecting children was being used as a Trojan horse to erode civil liberties. Another participant argued that this is not just about parents guiding children: it is a symmetrical act. So when we discuss the internet and children, we need to think not about protection and guidance and rules flowing down the generational line, we also need to talk about things going upwards.

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

SESSION 5 | CHAIR: Ben O'Loughlin

Presentations: Jamie Bartlett, Amit Schejter
Respondents: Maura Conway, Limor Shifman

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media.

SESSION 5 - Internet and the Threat of Extremism

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media. Pornography, enticing children, hate-speech, invasion of privacy, cyber-terrorism etc. Should we be panicking? Are we complacent?

Ben O'Loughlin opened the discussion by examining not just the threat of extremism on the internet but the internet itself. Research he had carried out on this subject found people were being radicalised by what they saw on television and then moving onto the internet to do something about what they had seen on Newsnight, for example. He asked the participants to explore the interaction of different media and the things on the media, and how to regulate it without the regulation becoming a Trojan horse for the destruction of privacy or freedom of speech.

Jamie Bartlett argued that while the internet is good for extremists in the same way as it is good for Nike, it is especially good for extremists and terrorists. He explained that extremists and terrorists are on the internet because people are on the internet and they can therefore spread their message and recruit supporters. Anders Breivik described it as "the most efficient way to continue our work, to spread knowledge:" Breivik had used Facebook to collect the email addresses of fellow nationalists across Europe. He was not the first to use the internet in this way, though: there is the Stormfront bulletin board, and Hungary, where the best users of social media and the internet are on the far right. Similarly, there there would have been no EDL without Facebook, as the social network gave them the opportunity to connect and organise at practically no cost.

One of the reasons the internet is so useful for these groups is that they all feel the mainstream media ignores them. One survey found that the one thing that tied together all the supporters of extremist groups in Hungary was their lack of trust and confidence in the media, while 70-80 percent of them trust the internet.

As part of his theme that the internet is especially good for extremists, Bartlett explained that it serves to harden beliefs because it helps them surround themselves with the same sort of people on closed forums, where they keep convincing themselves that they are right, whereby they believe they are acting rationally based on the information they are receiving. But one big question is the impact on civil liberties is the need for the intelligence agencies to increase the amount of surveillance that they are engaged in.

Amit Schejter argued that extremism is an ideology considered to be far outside the mainstream. He looked back over his own career as General Counsel of the Israel Broadcasting Authority and the legal structures that tried to keep extremism outside the political debate, including a debate about whether a video of new members of an extremist organisation should have been broadcast. This was partly to show that the relationship between extremism and media existed long before the debate about extremism and social media emerged.

He explored the "talkback" political culture in Israel, describing the responses of many readers in the comments below a story as "violent." His concluding argument was that the debate about extremism and social media so often focused on the internet as the problem, when the problem is not the internet, the real problem is extremism, and it is on extremism where we must focus our attention.

Maura Conway pointed out the "significant intersection" between social and traditional media. She said that the social media remains heavily reliant on traditional broadcasting and that this reliance extends to violent organisations. She echoed Bartlett's argument about the use in forums of mainstream media articles, using the Daily Mail as an example of a mainstream outlet, whose content is drawn and then extrapolated by extremists. But social media also has a democratising role, as it means more followers are able to access extremist sites and material. For instance, in violent jihadi circles, a lot of the content is available only in Arabic, but social media means translations can be imposed, either using a ticker at the bottom of a video, or by dubbing over the audio.

Limor Shifman used a series of internet memes to illustrate her work on online humour. She argued that when we tell a joke, it conveys something about our beliefs, our fears, and our social structures. While the internet clearly did not invent ethnic humour, it invokes new ways of stereotyping and exacerbating stereotypes.

Discussion

The group discussed the best way to engage online with extremists. Is it to intervene in their closed forums and try to reason them out of their bounded reality, or will that make it worse? One participant argued that the work that had been done on this so far had not involved enough people to gauge whether or not that sort of intervention would work. Another pointed to poor techniques such as astroturfing, where a small number of people would adopt multiple personae in these forums. But others argued that it was far more productive to meet extremists offline, rather than trying to intervene. There was also a warning against thinking that the internet can solve a problem that is simply manifesting itself on the internet. One suggested that if the debate has to be conducted online, it is better to go under the argument and ask why someone thinks the way they do, rather than confronting the issue head on. Another participant was optimistic that extremism can fade away and be defeated, that many movements "will go away at the point when it becomes something naff (ed. uncool) that your uncle once did."

There was also a discussion about the benefits of such extremists congregating on the internet. Some felt that at least they were in a space where they could be watched relatively easily. The Woolwich murder was cited as an example of the need for social media monitoring, as without such monitoring it would have been impossible to understand the EDL's response to such an incident.

The similarities between the "below the line"' or "talkback" culture in both Israel and the UK were discussed. One participant pointed to studies showing that people grow more extreme in their reaction to an article if they read rude comments below the line. This led to a debate about the collateral damage from extremism, with certain issues such as immigration becoming taboo because of their links to extremist groups.

"Ethics and Responsibility in an Interconnected World"

SESSION 6 | JOINT CHAIRS: David Aaronovitch, Sheizaf Rafaeli

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media.

SESSION 6 FINAL SESSION - Where will the Digital Age take us next? What are we doing about it? New technologies, future trends, users' behaviour

THEME B: The Dark Side of Social Media. Pornography, enticing children, hate-speech, invasion of privacy, cyber-terrorism etc. Should we be panicking? Are we complacent?

Opening with a rather downbeat assessment of the internet, Norman Lewis said he was unsure that society was really making the best use of the potential of social media. 'We almost exclusively concentrate on what I would call the narcissistic tool through which we express ourselves to the world,' he told the Colloquium. He argued that adults have become infantilised by social media and are now doing what their children are doing: playing with their identities. He described Facebook as 'the most unproductive nation in the world'.

He then examined the transformative potential of the internet to flatten hierarchies and create collaborative environments for businesses. 'This is going to fundamentally transform work,' he said. He then returned to the negative effects of social media on society, warning that all the signs were that self-absorption was going to increase. He also criticised the loss of confidence that adults appear to be experiencing as a result of social media, both in terms of using the technology themselves and in terms of leading children in the right direction. He added that it was not about stopping playing on Facebook, but rather focusing research and development on more important things that the internet can change than social media.

Sheizaf Rafaeli set out 11 dimensions for a positive use of the internet.

They were:

1. Interactivity: how interactive systems should be, such as whether newspapers should allow comments or talkbacks, should students get online access to classes while they are taking place?
2. Hypertextuality: a recognition that a single linear order of content is not necessary God's given order.
3. Synchronicity and its elasticity: an ability to control the pace of networking.
4. Senses: We communicated up until recently by addressing just one or two senses at most. But now we are going to be challenged with more and more senses.
5. Hyperlinks. Children will need to be taught the art of linking as part of their lessons on writing.
6. An absence of centre: the network was built to thwart censorship and central control.
7. Infinite capacity of memory: this leads to concerns about the right to be forgotten.
8. Games: More gaming is appearing in teaching, and in a corporate context. Do we want our world to become more playful?
9. Networked typology: how we will measure it and whether we built the network correctly? One issue to consider here is business models.
10. Information overload: we are flooded with information now. How do we deal with this overload? What is better? a flood or a drought?
11. Maps: implications for our sense of where we are.

Discussion

Much of the debate was a reaction to Lewis' argument that the internet is rendering us unproductive. A number of participants argued that humans are unproductive in all spheres, not just online, and that sharing pictures of cats on Facebook doesn't necessarily mean the whole internet is a waste of space. One pointed out that most conversations are prosaic and banal, and that social media is simply a reflection of everyday conversation. But this did not necessarily mean that people do not also use the internet to think serious thoughts and do policy work, alongside the cat pictures. But any analysis that takes a dim view of the prosaic nature of online communication forgets that what will survive us is humanity and sociability, online and offline. One participant argued that the detailed discussion of cats undermined technological determinism, given the internet was originally invented to share computational resources.

This led to a discussion about how much freedom people can expect to have when conducting their everyday conversations online. One argument was that it was more important to find ways of leaving people alone when they interact online, rather than the quality of their interaction.

How can we curate the internet? asked one of the speakers. The importance of curation would grow as more and more of our information ends up online. This means young people will need to be taught about how to curate their information.

ISRAELI PARTICIPANTS

Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli (Israeli chair)
Haifa University, information technology

Dr. Ayelet Baram-Tsabari
Technion, Haifa, education, science

Dr. Ina Blau
Open University online behaviour

Prof. Niva Elkin-Koren
Haifa University, law

Dr. Asmaa Ganayem
Head of ICT, Al-Qasemi College, Baqa el-Garbia, Arab IT education

Ella Gera
Lawyer, active in political and cultural issues

Ido Guy
IBM, computer industry

Dr. Yoram Kalman
Open University, online behaviour, publishing

Brenda Katten
Past Chair IBCA, Guidance Councellor

Bader Mansour
Entrepreneur, founder of "Yafita" a portal gathering in one place content on the Arab world

Dr. Ed Mlavsky
Founder of Gemini, Hi-tech venture capitalist

Oren Modai
Independent investor. Founder of Net Democracy

Dr. Daphne Raban
Haifa University, faculty of management

Haim Ravia
Information law

Dr. Gilad Ravid
Ben Gurion University

Bob Rosenschein
Answers Co., industry

Prof. Amit Schejter
Ben Gurion University, sociology, legal

Dr. Limor Shifman
Hebrew University, Jerusalem, communications

Prof. Michael Turner
Architect and town planner; UNESCO commission on heritage sites in Israel

Asher Weill
Editor and Publisher, Convenor, Anglo-Israel Colloquium

Colloquium Secretary: Joy Bromley

BRITISH PARTICIPANTS

David Aaronovitch (British Chair)
Broadcaster and writer, The Times.

Jamie Bartlett
Director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media, at the think tank Demos.

Charlie Beckett
Director of Polis, the London School of Economics's media think tank.

Alan Bookbinder
Director, Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts.

Sir Andrew Burns
UK envoy for Post-Holocaust issues; past British ambassador to Israel

Maura Conway
Lecturer, terrorism and the internet, City University, Dublin.

Prof. William H. Dutton
Professor of Internet Studies, University of Oxford.

David Elliott
Former Director of the British Council in Israel; British Coordinator, Anglo-Israel Colloquium

Matthew Eltringham
Editor, BBC Academy media training centre.

Claire Fox
Broadcaster and founder of the meetings organization, Institute of Ideas.

Isabel Hardman
Editor, of Coffee House, the Spectator magazine's blog.

Lisa Harker
Head of Strategy, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Norman Lewis
Chief Innovations Officer of the consultancy group, Open-Knowledge.

Anne McElvoy
Broadcaster and Journalist, Economist and Evening Standard

Prof. Ben O'Loughlin
Professor of International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Martyn Perks
Director of thinking apart ltd, a management consultancy

Caron Sethill
Assistant Director, British Council, Israel

Guest Speaker
H.E. Matthew Gould, British Ambassador to Israel

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Norman Lewis: Now that we're back in the UK, back at work and safe in our resumed cat quests on Facebook, I just wanted to send a message of heartfelt thanks for what was for me at least, a really memorable and worthwhile experience. It was brilliantly organised and best of all it was great to meet you all. The exchange of ideas has certainly made me stop and think which is always refreshing and enlightening. I hope we continue to enlighten each other in the future.

Asmaa Ganayem: It was great to be a part of the Colloquium and I hope that it will be able to reflect the whole community's diversity in society.

Charlie Beckett: This was an excellent opportunity for healthy cross-disciplinary and inter-national dialogue. This was a wonderful antidote to all the despair about the Internet, social media and twitter in particular:

Bill Dutton: This was a wonderful escape from anyone's echo chamber.

Ayelet Baram-Tsabari: This was a useful, interesting and enjoyable experience both with regard to the content of the discussions as well as to the social dimension.

Lisa Harker: Very stimulating discussion, outstanding hospitality, amazing setting. My expectations were exceeded! It helped me to test my own arguments against others – learn new things about the internet and its impact – and learn about Israel from those living and working here. The Colloquium was food for the brain, sustenance to the soul, an eye-opening experience and the start of new relationships.

Matthew Eltringham: I wanted to thank you again for inviting me to the Colloquium; it was a unique and rather special experience. Almost every aspect of it – from the discussions to the cultural experience/ exchange - took me outside my comfort zone and into new areas. And that I can assure you is most certainly a good thing. The arrangements and practicalities were outstanding – the tour yesterday in particular was a real privilege. I have warned my two children to expect a long illustrated lecture very shortly.

Niva Elkin-Koren: I very much enjoyed the intellectual conversations and the diverse and very interesting group.

Ed Mlavsky: A one-of-a-kind gathering of professionals, not bashful about being characterised as intellectuals.

THE STEERING COMMITTEES

BRITISH

Lilian Hochhauser (chair)
Sir Andrew Burns
Baroness Ruth Deech
Claire Fox
Ram Gidoomal
Michael Knipe
John Levy

David Elliott, UK Coordinator
Ruth Saunders, Anglo-Israel Association

ISRAELI

Prof. Viscount David Samuel (chair)
Alan Gemmell, British Council
Ella Gera
Prof. David Greenberg
Brenda Katten
Dr Ed Mlavsky,
Amb. Moshe Raviv
Harry Sapir
Caron Sethill, British Council
Prof. Michael Turner
Alan Webber, Israel-British Commonwealth Association

Asher Weill, Israeli Coordinator, Colloquium Convenor

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THE ANGLO-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 47819, London NW11 7WD

T 020 8458 1284
F 020 8458 3484
E infor@angloisraelassociation.com

WWW ANGLOISRAEL ASSOCIATION.COM

THE ANGLO-ISRAEL COLLOQUIUM

P.O. Box 7705, Jerusalem, 91076

T +972 2 6432147
T +972 2 6437502
E debasher@netvision.net.il

Registered Charity no. 313523