

**Abstract**  
**Drowning or Waving? New Media, Journalism and Democracy.**

The production and circulation of independent, quality news is a hallmark of democratic societies with a complex history of commercial practices, regulatory controls and technological innovation. The demise of the existing business model of the local and regional press and of broadcast news in the regions together with the struggle for survival of many national newspapers demands a critical consideration of what we want news for and how it can be delivered in the digital age. The internet brings with it new ways of collecting and reporting information heralding a 'new journalism' that is open to novices, lacks editorial control, can stem from anywhere (not just the newsroom), involves new writing techniques, functions in a network with fragmented audiences, is delivered at great speed, and is open and deliberative – a democratic model for our times. But an extensive UK study undertaken in the Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre provides empirical evidence that challenges utopian visions of the internet as a brave new world with everyone connected to everyone else, a non-hierarchical network of voices with equal, open and global access. Our analysis reveals that this latest 'new world of 'new' media has not greatly expanded the news that we read or hear or changed mainstream news values and traditional news formats; neither has it connected a legion of bloggers to a mass audience. Rather, as the economic model for traditional news production stumbles and falls in the digital age, professional journalism has become the first casualty, the second, if we're not careful, will be the health of our democracy. Using interviews, ethnography and qualitative content analysis to investigate news production processes in a representative sample of news media, the research combined macro-social critique with micro-organizational analysis to gain a complex, critical understanding of the nature of news and news journalism in a digital age. This talk will present some of the key findings of this study.