Abstract:

In this paper, I interrogate the term ‘citizen journalism’ through analyzing the implications of its use to discuss practices involving new technologies. I seek to highlight the implicit ideology of the term, the political spaces it invokes, and the political assumptions it carries. I argue that the roots of the concept of citizen journalism lie in the anchoring of communication processes within a liberal political space centered on a sovereign nation-state and governed by a deliberative democratic system. In line with de-Westernizing approaches to communication studies, I problematize citizen journalism by using the Arab world as a case-study to highlight a rich history of journalism and generative conceptualizations of citizenship – in the absence of democracy. I conclude that the framing of new media in terms of citizen journalism, given its ability to disrupt state communication flow and to connect the local and the global, hinders its theorization.