Porn, Censorship, Classification and Free Speech: Global Paradoxes in the Governance of Media Content

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ABSTRACT

In this presentation, I reflect upon the global landscape surrounding the governance and classification of media content, at a time of rapid change in media platforms and services for content production and distribution, and contested cultural and social norms. I discuss the tensions and contradictions arising in the relationship between national, regional and global dimensions of media content distribution, as well as the changing relationships between state and non-state actors. These issues will be explored through consideration of issues such as: recent debates over film censorship; the review of the National Classification Scheme conducted by the Australian Law Reform Commission; online controversies such as the future of the Reddit social media site; and videos posted online by the militant group ISIS.

I would firstly like to thank the event organisers here at the University of Wollongong for inviting me to undertake such a prestigious keynote presentation at an event as exciting as this one, on "Academic Research, New Media Technologies and the Culture of Control". I would particularly like to thank Mark McLelland and Andrew Whelan as the event convenors. Mark and I know each other from back when he was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. I recall that Mark advised prospective post-docs to treat their status as a researcher as a full-time job i.e. be in at the office at 9am, and stay until 5pm, even if you could spend the day at home in your pyjamas. It has remained very good advice that I always follow when on a research sabbatical: set the alarm for when you would when at QUT, and think in terms of a full-time job.

The ALRC National Classification Scheme Review

One reason why I am here to present this evening was my appointment by the then Attorney-General of Australia, Robert McClelland MP (no relation to Mark), to chair a review of the Australian National Classification Scheme. My secondment to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) to undertaken this task commenced in May 2011, and the ALRC team delivered its Final Report, *Classification—Content Regulation and Convergent Media*, to the Federal Government in late February 2012. I will touch upon that report during this presentation, but will not go through the

process of the inquiry in detail (there are various published papers discussing the inquiry and its findings, in *Media International Australia* (May 2012) and elsewhere).

One point that I would make is that – given that it was commissioned by a Labor government and we now have a Liberal-National party Coalition government – a surprisingly large number of that Report's 43 recommendations have been implemented. It was said to me by a few well-placed sources at the time that such a review will probably get nowhere on any matters relating to porn or the Internet, but that progress could be made in some other areas. A general point was that appearing to be (1) sane, and (2) evidence-based would probably do no harm in winning key stakeholders over. The Senate Committee enquiring into classification at the same time as the ALRC, chaired by Tasmanian Liberal Senator Guy Barnett, was often cited as a point of contrast, with its calls for the mandatory classification of art woks and Senators tabling the lyrics of Cannibal Corpse songs onto Hansard in the public interest.

One area where progress was made was in games classification. We found that there was bipartisan support (in fact tri-partisan support, as the Greens' Scott Ludlum was very much on board) for the introduction of an 18+ classification for video and computer games. The call for such a classification for so-called 'adult" games (such as *Grand Theft Auto*) had been the source of a major campaign gathering over 50,000 signatures, and a very large number of the 2,500+ public submissions that the ALRC received with this Review. More generally, the call for greater industry self-classification of games has been supported by the Minister for Justice, Michael

Keenan MP, and we understand that an expansion of the role of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in classification decisions being across convergent media platforms is a possible outcome of the current review of the ACMA being conducted by the Department of Communication.

Given that the fate of other media enquiries of that period, such as the Convergence Review and the Finkelstein Review, was that they did not survive a change of government, this is something worth noting. In part it was about how recommendations were framed: the prospect of "reducing red tape" and "eliminating government bureaucracy" has some appeal to the new government. Indeed, it is hard to find anyone who favours more red tape and bureaucracy in the area of media content classification, particularly if they want less censorship by government of what individuals can read, write, watch or participate in. More generally, moves towards greater industry self-regulation, and the application of what is known as 'soft law', as distinct from command-and-control regulation by government agencies based on legislation passed through Parliament, is a wider trend in public policy across a range of fields in the 2000s. I will talk about that in more detail in my conference presentation tomorrow.

Censorship and Classification: The "Classic" Debates

I must admit to some false advertising in the promotional material for this lecture. In the title, it indicates the word "Porn". This may have suggested that was going to talk

about porn, and perhaps even show some. If that was what led you to come to the lecture this evening, rather than heading home for an early night, I offer my fulsome apologies. No porn will be featured in this talk.

My one point to make about porn was that everyone involved in classification considered porn, or sexually explicit content, to be the easiest content to deal with from a classification point of view. It is pretty obvious whether or not particular content is sexually explicit, whereas violence or "themes" have a number of thresholds. The trickier questions arise in Australia from the absence of an "X" classification that applies nationally. The categories of sexual activity that come under item 1(a) of the National Classification Code, as they 'offend against the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults' – also known as the six things you can't show in a picture or video (even though all are actually entirely legal to personally do) – are also an ongoing subject of debate and concern. [1]

The example I wanted to focus on as a case study in 'classic' censorship and classification debates is the French film *Love*, written and directed by Gaspar Noé. The film revolves around the lives of a cinema school student named Murphy, and his former girlfriend Electra, whom he dated for two years, before sleeping with another woman, Omi, who happened to get pregnant as a result of Murphy's infidelity; it first screened at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2015. The film is in 3D and depicts sex

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[1] See Zahra Stardust, (2014) '"Fisting is not permitted": criminal intimacies, queer sexualities and feminist porn in the Australian legal context', *Porn Studies* 1(3): 242-59.

acts in 3D – this appears to have been the basis of a controversy where the Minister of Culture and Communication, Fleur Pellerin, asked for its certification to be bumped up from a -16 (forbidden to under-16s) to a -18 (forbidden for under-18s), after lobbying from a conservative group called Promouvoir, who seek more restrictive film classifications. After protests from the French film directors' guild, the French ratings board chose to retain the -16 classification for the film. The guild argued for the classification, and criticised the minister Pellerin, in the following terms:

> We have nothing to gain from being in the game of conservatism and puritanism. The 'moralisation' of works, the intimate friend of censorship, is a dangerous game. The filmmakers of ARP remain convinced that poetry, sexual as it is, [from] filmmaker Gaspar Noé, will remain a better educational source than that of porn debauchery permanently available on the Internet. [2]

Aside from the issues with depicting sex in 3D, there are a number of features of this case that would be familiar to anyone who has followed censorship and classification issues since the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* case in Britain in 1960. One is the binary opposition between censorious moral conservatives on the one hand, and artists championing freedom of expression on the other (In the French context, this could be contrasted to the much more ambivalent set of responses on the left to the shooting of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists in January 2015 by radical Islamists). There is the film festival as the *event du jour* for such debates about personal and civil morality and

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[2] Benjamin Lee (2015) Gaspar Noé's 3D sex film Love gets a 16 rating in France amid controversy. *The Guardian*, 3 July. http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jul/03/gaspar-noes-3d-sex-film-love-gets-a-16-rating-in-france-amid-controversy.

artistic integrity to be played out. Finally, there is the explicit contrast made by the film directors' guild between the poetry and artistry of Noé's work, as compared to the 'porn debauchery' freely and ubiquitously available on the Internet.

Australian histories of censorship, such as Ina Bertrand's *Film Censorship in Australia* and Barbara Sullivan's *The Politics of Sex*, foreground the centrality of film festivals, and associated debates about the 'literary, artistic or educational merit' of particular films, to the introduction of the "R" classification in 1971, and to many subsequent debates about film censorship. [3] Bertrand noted that the first "R" rated film to be screened in Australia was the Robert Altman-produced western *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, starring Warren Beatty and Julie Christie, which screened in Melbourne on 18 November 1971, with the British drama *Deep End*, starring Jane Asher and John Moulder Brown. The somewhat more lowbrow sex comedy *Percy*, starring Hywel Bennett, screened on 19 November 1971, and more famous cases such as *Last Tango in Paris*, *The Devil in Miss Jones* and *Deep Throat* would come into play over the next 12-24 months. The invoking of artistic merit into contemporary debates about the availability of particular films reminds us of the ongoing significance of festivals to such debates, where claims can be made not only about particular films and other media products, but also about the nature of their audiences, which differentiate them as a space apart from the wider public sphere.

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[3] Ina Bertrand (1978) *Film Censorship in Australia*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press; Barbara Sullivan (1997) *The Politics of Sex: Prostitution and Pornography in Australia since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Bertrand noted that the first "R" rated film to be screened in Australia was the Robert Altman-produced western *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, starring Warren Beatty and Julie Christie, which screened in Melbourne on 18 November 1971, with the British drama *Deep End*, starring Jane Asher and John Moulder Brown.

'The Internet Treats Censorship as Damage': The Case of Reddit

When we look back on censorship debates, and even when we look at some of the most prominent public debates today, there can seem an anachronistic element to them. When the South Australian Attorney-General, John Rau, announced in August 2011 that he was banning the DVD release of *A Serbian Film* in that state, after its Refused Classification (RC) status was lifted by the Classification Review Board after certain scenes were removed, the anti-censorship activist Mark Newton made the point that, as a South Australian, he could simply drive across the border to Victoria and acquire the film legally, so it was far from clear –to him and many others – who was being protected by such a decision. [4] Indeed, the whole notion of even having to travel to Victoria is completely anachronistic: this film, and many others given an RC classification in Australia, can be readily downloaded from myriad online sites hosted in many different parts of the world.

One clear conclusion that could be drawn from this and many other cases is that the Internet, along with associated developments such as media globalisation, has killed off – or is killing off – state censorship. Internet activists in Australia made such observations in relation to the Australian Law Reform Commission's National Classification Scheme Review, as well as other reviews of the time such as the

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[4] Mark Newton (2011) Submission to ALRC Public Consultation blog, National Classification Scheme Review, 19 August. https://www.alrc.gov.au/public-forum/classification/1-australians-should-be-able-read-hear-see-and-participate-media-their-c. The Classification Review Board chose to give the film an RC classification again in September 2011.

Convergence Review and the Finkelstein Review into News Media. To quote Mark Newton again:

> The Convergence Review is suffering from the same problems as the ALRC's Classification Review, in that it's searching for local provincial regulatory responses to a global phenomenon. By casting "convergence" as an Australian media issue which requires an Australian regulatory response, it's easy to predict that the results of the review will be obsolete by the time they're published, overtaken by global developments which pay scant attention to Australian regulators.[5] (Newton, 2011).

In their submission to the National Classification Scheme Review, Chris Berg and Tim Wilson from the Institute for Public Affairs observed that:

> Australia's National Classification System is unsustainable in the medium to long term. Technological developments have already undermined the basis of classification in Australia, and that the trends which we are already seeing will increase exponentially. As a consequence, we recommend a radical rethink of

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[5] Mark Newton, 2011. Submission to the DBCDE Convergence Review. Available at: http://www.dbcde.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/143378/Mark_Newton.pdf. Accessed 28 October 2011.

the principles and justification for classification … It is our view that the classification is increasingly impossible in a digital age. [6]

Such thinking has a long history in communication studies. In his 1983 book, *Technologies of Freedom*, Ithiel de Sola Pool identified that the new networked systems that were emerging would challenge speech regulations premised upon the broadcast media paradigm, proposing that these new communication technologies would be seen as more akin to print media, and hence subject to First Amendment protections. A decade later, John Gilmore, a founder of the Electronic Frontiers foundation, would argue that 'The internet interprets censorship as damage and routes around it'. Giving legal form to such philosophical idealism, Judge Stewart Dalziel of the Philadelphia District Count, hearing the *ACLU v. Reno* case that saw the Communications Decency Amendment to the *Telecommunications Act 1995* struck down as unconstitutional, concluded in 1996 that 'It is no exaggeration to conclude that the Internet has achieved, and continues to achieve, the most participatory marketplace of mass speech that this country – and indeed the world – has seen', and that free speech on the Internet warranted more constitutional protection than that traditionally afforded to the press. [7]

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[6] Chris Berg and Tim Wilson, 2011. Submission to Australian Law Reform Commission National Classification Scheme Review, Institute for Public Affairs. Available at: https://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/ci_1737a_institute_of_public_affairs_.pdf. Accessed 22 September, 2015.

[7] Mike Godwin, 1998. *Cyber-Rights: Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age* (New York: Times Books), pp. 272-87.

Two decades on, it is important to reflect on where we now sit in relation to these debates on the Internet and free speech. In order to narrow down a potentially huge topic, I want to focus on recent developments at the online news, entertainment and social networking site Reddit, which bills itself as "The front page of the Internet". Founded in 2005 by University of Virginia roommates Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian, the site operates as an extended online bulletin board system, where users can register an account without requiring email verification, and where their submissions, comments, links etc. move up and down the various categories that users choose to post within ("subreddits") on the basis of whether they receive "upvotes" or "downvotes" from other users. This generates a highly interactive and participatory site, with the front page regularly changing on the basis of the votes cast by users on each subreddit of other users' contributions. Reddit is particularly known for its "IamA/AMA" (I am …/Ask Me Anything) subreddit, where a diverse array of politicians, celebrities, sportspeople etc. have engaged in an extended Q&A session with the community – Barack Obama conducted such a session in August 2012, prior to the November Presidential elections. The Reddit community also played a role in the "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear" undertaken by comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert at the Washington National Mall on October 30, 2010, responding to Fox News Channel's Glenn Beck's "Restoring Honor" rally held at the Lincoln Memorial two months earlier.

But the more recent history of Reddit has been a less happy one, and the issues relate to how to manage the circulation of potentially problematic content, and the proliferation of controversial Reddit communities, on a site where a commitment to free speech is a founding principle of its user communities. Reddit had traditionally

drawn a distinction between its front pages, where there has long been content moderation managed by the company itself, and the subreddits, where moderation is largely left to members of the user community itself. This bifurcation has been difficult to maintain in practice, as subreddits are clearly going to be associated with the Reddit site as a whole: while Reddit can claim to be just a facilitator of online conversations, it is the hosting of these conversations around the Reddit site that is what draws users to these subreddits (similar issues arise in the cases of AirBnB for accommodation, and Uber for taxi services). For a number of years, one of the most visited subreddits was /r/jailbait, which featured suggestive photos of teenagers. While the existence of the subreddit was defended by the Reddit Managing Director, Erik Martin, as the perhaps unsavoury consequence of a commitment to free speech, the site was subsequently closed down shortly after a critical report on the *Anderson Cooper 360* program on CNN in 2011. A subsequent subreddit /r/creepshots, which posted sexualized images of women without their knowledge or permission, was again closed down, and its operator, Texas computer programmer Michael Brutsch, was "outed" or "doxxed" by *Gawker* journalist Adrian Chen, losing his job and receiving death threats. Authors such as danah boyd have subsequently critiqued this circuit of public shaming or "doxxing" of so-called "Internet trolls", asking:

How do we as a society weigh the moral costs of shining a spotlight on someone, however "bad" their actions are? What happens when, as a result of social media, vigilantism takes on a new form? How do we guarantee justice and punishment that fits the crime when we can use visibility as a tool for massive public shaming? Is it always a good idea to regulate what different

arbiters consider bad behaviour through increasing someone's notoriety – or censoring their links? [8]

Since then, such problems have worsened at Reddit, while also becoming part of a wider public discourse. The 2013 Boston Marathon bombing saw a site emerge /r/findbostonbombers, where users circulated images of individuals they wrongly accused of being involved, including a 22-year-old Brown University student who was subsequently found to have committed suicide. Reddit General Manager Erik Martin issued an apology, criticising the 'online witch hunts and dangerous speculation' taking place on such sites. In August 2014, naked photographs of female celebrities such as Jennifer Lawrence, Kate Upton and McKayla Maroney were circulated on the /r/The Frappening subreddit, that were stolen from private iCloud accounts. This subreddit was closed, as was /r/SonyGOP, which was being sued to distribute Sony files that had been hacked earlier in 2014. There were continuing controversies over postings on other subreddits, most notably /r/mensrights.

By the end of 2014, Reddit was a company in crisis, and CEO Yishan Wong resigned in November, with Ellen Pao becoming the interim CEO. Recognising more clearly than her predecessors the extent to which the problems with Reddit had become gender-based – she had previously raised issues of gender discrimination in Silicon Valley law firms during her time at Kleiner Perkins – Pao set about systematically addressing issues of harassment on subreddits, with five subreddits closed in June

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[8] danah boyd, 2012. Truth, Lies and "Doxxing": The Real Moral of the Gawker/Reddit Story', *WIRED*, 29 October. http://www.wired.com/2012/10/truth-lies-doxxing-internet-vigilanteism/.

2015; during this time, the director of talent, Victoria Taylor, who founded the Ask Me Anything site, was also dismissed. These events triggered a backlash among Reddit users, who generated a petition calling for her removal that received over 200,000 signatures. Pao also received a large amount of hate emails, as well as hostile postings on Reddit and elsewhere. On July 10, Pao regisned as CEO of Reddit, to be replaced by co-founder Steve Hoffman. In a piece published in the *Washington Post* on July 16, Pao wrote:

> The Internet started as a bastion for free expression. It encouraged broad engagement and a diversity of ideas. Over time, however, that openness has enabled the harassment of people for their views, experiences, appearances or demographic backgrounds. Balancing free expression with privacy and the protection of participants has always been a challenge for open-content platforms on the Internet. But that balancing act is getting harder. The trolls are winning … The foundations of the Internet were laid on free expression, but the founders just did not understand how effective their creation would be for the coordination and amplification of harassing behaviour. Or that the users who were the biggest bullies would be rewarded with attention for their behaviour … Not surprisingly, women and minorities have it worst. [9]

The Reddit case clearly brought forward a number of issues surrounding the gender politics of online cultures. As might be expected, about 60% of Reddit users are male,

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[9] Ellen Pao, 2015. 'The trolls are winning the battle of the Internet', *Washington Post*, July 16. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-cannot-let-the-internet-trolls-win/2015/07/16/91b1a2d2-2b17-11e5-bd33-395c05608059_story.html.

with a Pew Internet Center study from 2013 finding that 15% of U.S. male Internet users aged 18-29 being regular users of the site.[10] It also bring to the fore a question that has long hovered over the Internet, which concerns its governance. Early assumptions that the Internet was both ungoverned and ungovernable have receded somewhat: Lawrence Lessig in *Code* clearly established that code and network architectrue were themselves tools of governance, and many of the largest Internet-using nations in the world clearly have controls over how platforms are being used. [11] But there continues to be an implicit understanding that, given the right circumstances and forms of community management and self-governance, a form of spontaneous ordering could emerge in online user communities, where conduct was regulated according to shared norms and values among user communities, and where rules could evolve that had a shared legitimacy and where adherence to them constituted a basis for ongoing engagement. [12]

The difficulties of achieving such spontaneous ordering in practice, particularly among large and growing communities, are well known to any theorist of political democracy or mass media. The other complication is that these are commercial sites. Ellen Pao discusses the various ways in which this was being approached at Reddit, including increasing the size of the community management team, and applying software to auto-apply certain standards – such as the infamous "war on nipples" at Facebook – and notes that all have their problems. But the problem is overlaid with

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[10] Maeve Duggan and Aaron Smith, 2013. "6% of Online Adults are Reddit Users", *Pew Research Centre* Report, July 3. Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/07/03/6-of-online-adults-are-reddit-users/.

[11] Lawrence Lessig, 1999. *Code, and other laws of cyberspace* (New York: Basic Books).

[12] Lawrence Solum, 2009. "Models of Internet Governance", in L. Bygrave and J. Bing (eds.), *Internet governance: Infrastructure and Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 48-91.

that of how to grow the user base of commercial sites, build brand identity, and increase revenues and shareholder value, while recognising tensions that exist between user niches and the much-vaunted mass audience:

> To understand the challenges facing today's Internet content platforms, layer onto that original balancing act a desire to grow audience and generate revenue. A large portion of the Internet audience enjoys edgy content and the behaviour of the more extreme users; it wants to see the bad with the good, so it becomes harder to get rid of the ugly. But to attract more mainstream audiences and bring in the big-budget advertisers, you must hide or remove the ugly. [13]

Content Regulation in an Age of ISIS

In June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS, also called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)) proclaimed its intention to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate through jihadist practice, modeled on its understanding of the Koran and a desire to return to the legal order of 7th century Islam. Subsequent actions undertaken by ISIS have shocked most of the world, including its recorded beheadings of those who it captured, the holding of Yazidi woman as sexual slaves, throwing homosexuals from buildings, the burning alive of Jordanian pilot Moas al-Kasasbeh while held in a cage, the desecration of

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[13] Pao *op. cit.*.

museum artefacts in Mosul going back centuries, and the destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra. But an important part of why these actions shocked people around the world was the attention given by ISIS to recording all of its actions and disseminating them through social media platforms, where they are invariably picked up by mainstream media outlets. ISIS is thus distinguished, not just by the brutality of its acts or by the nature of its ideology, but by the nature of its global media strategy.

One is struck when considering the media depictions of ISIS actions how many of the lines that have been crossed in terms of media content classification guidelines. In Australia, films can be Refused Classification (i.e. banned from consumption, distribution or sale) if they contain 'Gratuitous, exploitative or offensive depictions of: (i) violence with a very high degree of impact or which are excessively frequent, prolonged or detailed'.[14] So whereas films such as *A Serbian Film* and *The Human Centipede II* have gone through prolonged review and processes of banning, unbanning, re-editing and re-classification, depictions of real violence such as those circulated by ISIS readily circulate through the public domain. There is a sense in which many of the discussions we have had about free speech, censorship, content classification and media governance can feel redundant.

In considering the global circulation of such material, some points which can be noted include:

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[14] *Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012.* Available at: https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012L02541.

1. International differences in depictions of violence in news media around the world. For instance, Arabic satellite media channels have typically been more prepared to depict violent material in their news bulletins than their Western equivalents, partly in response to the strong history of state-censored broadcasting that they emerged in reaction to;

2. The extent to which news media around the world are increasingly reliant upon video content made available through *YouTube* and other social media platforms, as they reduce their own presence around the world in order to cut costs;

3. The role played by alternative media in making material available that is not being made available by mainstream media. For example, the video sharing website *LiveLeak* is dedicated to reality footage, politics, war, and other world events, combined with forms of citizen journalism, and is among the 100 most accessed online news sites in the world;

4. The philosophical question of whether it is wrong to censor war footage, as it is only through a full awareness of all dimensions of war that citizens can make conscious decisions as to the appropriateness of their country's involvement in such actions;

5. The emotionally disturbing image can also be a catalyst to action. The recent image of the drowned Syrian boy washed up on a beach in Greece, which was a factor in European nations deciding to accommodate more asylum seekers from Syria and other parts of Africa and the Middle East. Taking a historical perspective, Barbie Zelizer has written about how news images of impending

death, and the 'voice of the visual' more generally, have served to move public opinion towards action on particular matters;[15]

6. The extent to which ISIS themselves have been cognisant of broadcasting production values in how their videos are created (image quality, use of colour etc.)[16];

7. The particular double-bluff taking place between Western powers and ISIS around engagement in the Middle East conflict. Western governments face increasingly war-weary and skeptical populations in the wake of the Iraq War, and images of ISIS atrocities serve to give a new moral dimension to committing armed forces to the region. At the same time, ISIS have an interest in provoking greater Western involvement in the conflict, as this confirms that the war is between Muslims and "infidels", and not between ISIS and other Muslims.

From the point of view of media content decisions, the important issue is that are decisions about what to broadcast or not broadcast are being made on the fly in newsrooms and on online and social media sites around the world. It is important to note that news has historically been exempt from classification guidelines, although broadcasting standards have certainly been applicable to radio and television news services. But the case of ISIS propaganda videos reminds us that decisions about news media censorship and freedom of speech are no longer simple binaries, nor are

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[15] Barbie Zelizer, 2010, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[16] This was the subject of a presentation by Joe Khalil of Northwestern University in Qatar at the 2015 International Communications Association annual conference. Joe Khalil, 2015. "Turning Murders into Public Executions: Beheading Videos as Alternative Media", paper presented to the 65th Annual Conference of the International Communications Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 21-25, 2015.

they cases where state power and freedom of expression face off against one another as polar opposites. There is, instead, a complex web of norms, values, standards, competing moral and commercial imperatives, and ever changing technologies of media production and distribution shaping the governance of media content in the convergent digital landscape of 21st century media systems.