Amy Burnage

Doctoral researcher, School of Social Policy

Contact

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Year started: 2011
F/T or P/T: Full time
Supervisor(s): Pete Alcock (/staff/profiles/social-policy/alcock-pete.aspx) and Stuart Connor (/staff/profiles/social-policy/connor-stuart.aspx)

Research topic

'Social movements in digital spaces: experiencing digitalisation in civil society'

Qualifications

- MA International Development
- BA Sociology and Politics

Background and professional experience

With an interest in third sector activity and social change, my doctoral research centres around experiences of digitalisation in civil society. This interest has grown through a fairly broad academic career in the social sciences, as well as professional and voluntary experience in youth marketing and campaigning.

Alongside my PhD, I am additionally engaged in teaching at the School of Social Policy, and as a researcher for the Third Sector Research Centre (http://www.tsrc.ac.uk). I have worked for a range of clients in this capacity, on both statistical and descriptive research streams, and contributed to a number of working papers.

Teaching/training experience

- Tutor for Social Issues and Social Policy (First year Social Policy Module, University of Birmingham)
- Certificate in Social Research (completed June 2011)

Research Overview

Digitalisation is becoming increasingly pertinent for organisations who seek to campaign, organise and mobilise on a large scale. The goal of my research is to learn more about the processes and experiences of non-profit organisations when working to achieve social change using digital spaces.

There are standard assumptions and trends in the sector over what works and what does not, but there is very little known about how organisations handle the process of digitalisation itself. As academics, I believe we need to take a more detailed look at the digital aims, strategies and challenges of such organisations, to better understand how digital space is used as a platform for social change. My research questions are as follows:

- How is digital space adopted and used as a platform for social change?
- What are the organisational aims of digitalisation?
- What are the strategic implications of adopting a digital policy?
- What challenges are faced when engaging with digital space?

To address these questions, the research is taking a case study approach, through partnering with a national organisation that specialises in social justice campaigning at both national and local levels. Social justice campaigning has been selected over other types of non-profit activity for the digital relevance of its transformative goals and collective strategies. The aim of partnering with a campaign organisation is to use their everyday experiences to offer a practical example of a complex social phenomenon, and then explore that example within existing social movement and digital civil society literatures. The expectation of the work is to contribute experiential knowledge to the field, to encourage debate over best practice and expand the theoretical discussion on digitalisation in civil society.

(http://twitter.com/#!/amyburnage)

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