

Polis – Media Futures:

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[Alexandra Palace](#) is part of the history of British broadcasting so it is a good place to have a [conference](#) (sponsored by the BBC) about the future. But why are people so reluctant to move on from the old questions?

Professor [Brian Winston](#) kicked off with a cracking speech about the limitations of new technology. He argues that society drives technology, not the other way around. Fair enough, up to a point. But he takes as his benchmark for impact as the political standard of marxist revolution. Unless something changes the ownership of the means of production than it ain't radical. So I guess Facebook doesn't quite match his hopes for profound societal change.

It's great to have a critical voice challenging some of the Internet evangelist rhetoric, but I don't honestly know any people who think that Web 2.0 is in itself a political revolution.

I thoroughly enjoyed my [panel discussion](#) with New Media sceptic [Andrew Keen](#) and cultural studies academic [Andrew Calcutt](#). Again, there seemed to be a few straw men being built. The idea that civilisation is endangered by the Internet seems to be a boring repetition of the "TV" or "cinema" or "electricity" is threatening civilisation argument.

During the debate New Media or Citizen Journalism was accused of commercialism, bias, untrustworthiness and stupidity. These charges were all levelled at the mass mainstream media over the last 20 years that I spent as an Old Media hack. Now the journalism that everyone used to say was cruel and crap is lauded as fine, upstanding and beyond reform.

[Persephone Miel](#) emailed me from Harvard University to say that she caught some of the debate thanks to [Robin Hamman's](#) live streaming of the panel on [Quik](#) – a terrific mobile phone video application. It allows you to broadcast live at very low cost. I used to spend tens of thousands of pounds to do the same thing for live mainstream TV news. That is progress. That is radical.

In her reply to my complaints about some of the sentiments voiced during the debate Persephone suggested that Online News Media needs to steal some of the fake gravitas accorded to its traditional form:

"Let's start a new movement to associate new media with "elite" "establishment" "boring" and "out of touch" instead. Then we can act on what [Larry Irving](#) said at [Beyond Broadcast](#): It's not "new" media any more. It's just media. And like all media, some of it is good, most of it is shite."

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