

Broadcasting Margins: The BBC Centennial from Afar

Call for Papers for an International Conference to be held in Haifa on 18-20 September 2022

The year 2022 marks the centennial of one of the most celebrated cultural institutions of the twentieth century—the British Broadcasting Corporation. From its early days, the BBC's aim to “Inform, Educate and Entertain,” exceeded national boundaries. In 1932, this expansionist tendency found an institution in the newly minted “Empire Service.” Over the next decades, the service added to its English-language broadcasts services in 40 languages. In the last century, the BBC has come to define state broadcasting, often emulated by newly independent states in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Its journalistic output, standards and values have been embraced as an ideal by broadcasters and listeners around the world. At the same time, it has also come to symbolize soft power diplomacy and has come under attack for being a tool of neo-imperialism.

Thus far, scholars have taken to tell the stories of the domestic and “overseas” services of the BBC as two separate histories, both told from the perspective of the metropole. In this conference, however, we will question both practices by looking at these broadcasts from the margins, and from a shared perspective. We are currently experiencing a transitional moment, when new technologies change the ways in which we define and consume media. As journalistic standards and norms are coming under fire from both conservative and liberal activists and organizations, it is especially important to look back at the institution that has been central to modern media production and consumption.

We call on scholars from diverse fields such as History, English, Communications, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, and Law to examine how the BBC has inflected local cultures, defined broadcasting ecosystems, and constituted publics. We welcome papers on one or more of the following:

- the diversity of actors, locations and audiences that have been marginalized in scholarship about the BBC, and how BBC broadcasts were perceived, consumed and used outside of Britain.
- the ways in which local audiences on the margins of the metropole shaped the service, challenging the very notions of marginality.
- the entanglement of broadcasting bodies in the creation of governmental systems and the harnessing of broadcasting for diplomatic ends.
- the impact of auditory culture on larger political processes such as war, civil conflicts, decolonization and the Cold War.
- the role of BBC broadcasting in moments of crises such as the 1948 war in mandatory Palestine, the Suez Crisis in 1956, India during Partition in 1947 and during the 1975-1977 Emergency.
- examining how BBC services have forged local and diasporic identities, networks, and collaborations.
- examine the ways in which metropolitan culture was translated to specific locations in the Global South, how the BBC English shaped local tastes, aspirations, and class divisions.
- mindful of changes in the relationships between Britain and former imperial and Commonwealth nations.



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Location

The Port Campus of the University of Haifa is situated in the historic port of Haifa, central port city and transport hub of the British Empire in the past, and a living web of ongoing colonial and postcolonial experiences in the present. Connecting the city to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, a specially tailored walking tour will spotlight the historic port of Haifa, one of the largest and most significant historical and architectural legacies of the British Mandate in Palestine, and a hub of culture and night-life.

We look forward to hosting this conference in Haifa, and will do our best to have it take place in person. However, keeping the pandemic and the concomitant restrictions on travel in mind, the conference may need to be conducted in the online or hybrid mode, with speakers joining us online via Zoom. Participants will be notified in advance about the selected format.

Proposal Submission

Please send proposals of no more than 250 words by 1 May 2022 to Dr. Tal Zalmanovich: tzalmanovich@gmail.com. Include your name, institution, email address, and proposal title in a cover email, and on the proposal. Papers should be between 15-20 minutes long.

Organizers

- Eitan Bar-Yosef, English, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Ayelet Ben-Yishai, English, University of Haifa
- Paul Frosh, Communications, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Zohar Kampf, Communications, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Oren Meyers, Communications, University of Haifa
- Zur Shalev, History, University of Haifa
- Netanel Slymovics, Communications, University of Haifa
- Tal Zalmanovich, English/History, University of Haifa

