

Editorial

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Since the first issue in 2004, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* (WPCC) has published a wide variety of international research employing diverse theoretical perspectives. Special Issues have addressed a range of topics from *The Media and Zimbabwe* and *Mediating Celebrity* to *Media and Phenomenology* and *Chinese Media: Culture, Autonomy and the State*. This current issue is, however, the first General Issue to be published. In keeping with the ethos of WPCC, it offers valuable space to relatively new scholars and to researchers from areas of the world often under-represented in international journals, alongside established names. Moreover, the papers presented in this issue are very diverse, both in terms of the topics they address and the approaches to research they adopt.

The first paper offers a rich and insightful contribution to some of the discussions raised in our most recent issue *Re-visiting Latin American Cultural and Media Studies* (June 2011). In 'Media and transition in Latin America', Professor Colin Sparks considers political and social change in Latin America during the latter part of the Twentieth Century, focusing in particular on the characteristics of the dominant media companies in Brazil and Mexico. This review recognises the continuities of media ownership and control beyond the collapse of the authoritarian regimes and enables Sparks to critically assess the acuity of 'transitology' perspectives for analysing the consequences of revolution in Latin America countries.

The second article also considers the role of media institutions during periods of significant social and political change – this time in South Africa. Through two case studies, Brilliant Mhlanga examines the ideology and purpose of ethnic radio stations in relation to post-Apartheid government policies. It is argued that ethnic pluralism is seen as a stabilising, rather than divisive, force by policy-makers and that ethnic radio stations are viewed by them as powerful mediators of multi-culturalism in the 'Rainbow Nation'. And in considering the reconfigurations of ethnicity implicit in the changing political and media landscape, Mhlanga urges us to re-evaluate theoretical approaches to the study of ethnic minority media.

The role of media in invoking and facilitating collective cultural identity is an issue also implicated in the third study presented here. Mohamed Ben Moussa considers the use of the internet by the Islamic organisation Justice and Charity, which is Morocco's largest political opposition group. His analysis of the Justice and Charity website is used to illustrate the potential for social movement organisations to create an antagonistic public sphere online. But it also illustrates the potential problems, as this particular group fails to fully exploit the potential of the website to advance its cause. Based on a study conducted before the recent uprising in

Morocco, the research demonstrates the importance of further studies into social movement organisations and the use of digital media for political activism.

Whilst also exploring mediated representations of Islam, Eric Repphun's paper offers an original and striking contribution to this field by focusing on the American science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica*. This is not, of course, a media text that has been used to galvanise Islamic collectivity. However, Repphun argues that it can be seen as a valuable space for complex narratives about 'the West' and 'the East', that actually subverts the 'clash of civilizations' thesis often found in other media texts (not least American television news). More specifically, he claims that *Battlestar Galactica* (which was broadcast from 2003-2009) offers a subversive narrative about the United States Government's 'war on terror' since 2001.

As observers of media communication and culture, we are all acutely aware of changes occurring in the production and use of media technologies and texts. But, as Gabrielle Balbi's paper demonstrates, we are also confronted by 'a turning point in the way our culture is stored, recorded and preserved'. How should archivists make decisions about digitalizing analogue data? Which parts of the born digital data should be preserved? How can digital archives be used and maintained? Similar questions have always been pertinent to analogue archives (including those of media texts) but these issues have become more complex and more urgent as the quantity of digital texts in existence exponentially increases beyond our imaginations and many of those texts are continually updated, potentially by multiple authors.

An additional paper included in the online edition of this issue, reports on a study of election campaign coverage in Bahrain. May Al Otaibi and Amos Owen Thomas's findings are specifically concerned with the representations of female candidates in local newspapers. This research (which is part of a larger study), was conducted before the events of the Arab Spring, during a particularly interesting time of change. During the period of study, women were allowed to stand in elections for the first time in a society that continues to be characterised, as the authors say, by religious conservatism.

Finally, Carlos Berreneche provides us with a review of Richard Grusin's book *Premediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11* (2010). This book will be of particular interest to researchers interested in American media representations of the 2001 terrorist attacks in America and the Bush Administration's 'war on terror'. However, it also offers a broader argument about the use of 'remediation' and 'premediation' as concepts for analyzing the relationship between media texts and the 'real' events they discuss.