

EDITORIAL

YOUNG SCHOLARS AT THE 2010 EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE

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Under the overarching theme of *Transcultural Communication – Intercultural Comparisons*, the 2010 European Communication Conference (ECC 2010) organised by the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in Hamburg brought together more than 1,000 participants from a wide range of media and communication disciplines. Within 17 thematic sections, scholars from Europe and beyond presented their current research. Among them were many interesting presentations by young scholars. A selection of these papers is presented in this special issue of *PLATFORM* edited by the management team of the Young Scholars' Network of the European Communication Research and Education Association (YECREA).

As the Young Scholars' Network of ECREA, YECREA aims to provide a network specifically for the young generation of media and communication scholars working in Europe (*young* here refers to an early career stage rather than to age and includes—but is not limited to—doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers), and give them a voice within ECREA. The network's goals are to provide young scholars with relevant information, to organise and stimulate workshops and other initiatives aimed at PhD support, and to create forums where young scholars can share ideas, get peer support and peer review. In addition, YECREA aims to provide a bridge between the young generation and the senior members of ECREA in terms of stimulating both communication and collaboration between the two. A 'representation system' of YECREA's representatives in different ECREA thematic sections, temporary working groups and in different European countries is of crucial importance in achieving these goals. The YECREA network connects through the community portal—YECREA website (www.yecrea.eu), a mailing list, and a Facebook group. YECREA is also present at workshops and conferences that are organised by ECREA or its sections and where young scholars can meet each other as well as senior scholars in person. The biennial ECREA-organised European Communication Conference (ECC) is the largest

such event – and it is this event that represents the basis of this special issue.

This YECREA special issue of *PLATFORM* presents a collection of articles based on papers presented at the 2010 European Communication Conference (ECC 2010). The articles address the role of the media – traditional mass media, mainstream online (digital) media, and computer games – in contemporary society and can be divided into two main themes: (1) collective identity and identification; and (2) facilitating democratic involvement. From different theoretical and empirical points of view, the articles point to the interrelationships between the media, cultural identifications and democratic involvement. The articles explore the ways in which practices around the media, whether traditional mass media, mainstream online media or computer games, can come to influence and are influenced by cultural affinities and local contexts.

In relation to the theme of *the formation of collective identities and identification*, the first two articles address the role and social implications of new forms of digital and social media. In her article on e-sport, Maric argues that although competitive computer gaming as a new social form has a capacity to transcend national territorial boundaries as well as traditional gender roles, territorial belonging remains significant. However, it can be negotiated for pro-gaming contexts, practices and groups. Gender remains relevant in that it structures the world of e-sports. Kaprāns also explores territorially bounded formations in a transnational and transcultural context. In his analysis of transnational audiences'/users' comments on videos of the satirical character Borat on YouTube, Kaprāns identifies the character as a 'deterritorialized' media character, but finds that discourses of national identity play a central role in users' shared meaning-making.

In relation to the theme *facilitating democratic involvement*, the latter two articles explore political television program formatting and social class and online media. Focusing on public service broadcasting, De Smedt and Bouckaert explore how Dutch-speaking and French-speaking public broadcasters in Belgium have responded differently to the increasingly competitive context in which they operate. The authors reflect on how different formats relate to the role of a political journalist and the position of 'ordinary people' in television programs on elections, as well as on their potential and problematic implications for the democratic role of public broadcasters. While exploring the potential of the internet for reducing class inequality, Danielsson argues that the potential of digital media does not translate into bringing to an end the enduring inequalities of class among young men in Sweden. He concludes that young men from different socio-economic backgrounds understand the internet in different ways: 'middle class' young men use the internet as a resource for learning, networking and producing content, while 'working class' young men use it as a space for entertainment, seemingly without realising its potential as an (alternative) form of education.

In addition to the articles, this special issue presents a report of the YECREA workshop 'Planning an academic career: International perspectives' organised at the ECC 2010. At the workshop, organised and chaired by Ranjana Das and Julie Uldam, scholars from different countries and at different stages of their career (Uwe Hasebrink, Nico Carpentier, Saila Poutiainen, Elena Vartanova, Nuria Simelio, Michele Sorice, Roberto Suarez, Tomáš Trampota, and Tamara Witschge) discussed early academic career dilemmas, mobility, and planning while drawing on their personal experiences. The workshop created great interest and was attended by more than 100 participants, which is a solid indication that many young (but also more senior) scholars struggle with the issues of whether and how to plan an academic career, what balance to strike between publishing, teaching, and other activities, and how to find one's way in the European academic landscape and beyond during and

after the PhD.

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