

EDITORIAL

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Rising mediation in contemporary realities foregrounds the development and articulation of media reflexivity in public discourse. The naturalisation of mediated worldviews paradoxically requires practical and ethical sophistication in media choices. In the context of rapidly transforming and transformative media and academic cultures, graduate student researchers of media and communications represent an emerging generation of media participants who not only routinely construct and perform diverse media potentials, but are also professionally called upon as media scholars to significantly sharpen critical frameworks for the analysis and commentary of new media ontologies and epistemologies.

One of the most significant 'quality indicators' of such academically specialist forms of media reflexivity is authorship of professionally recognised publications – which may, at present, be conceptualised as located in relation to two main discursive spheres. To contribute to the first sphere of top-quality, discipline-specific, international academic publications, graduate proposals may be subject to prohibitively competitive assessment alongside the work of far more advanced and eminent scholars. These high levels of competition, coupled with considerable time pressures in editorial and review processes, means that graduate submissions may more likely be rejected with minimal feedback given or face an extended time lag between submission and publication if accepted (usually helped by co-authorship with more senior academics). Although graduate perspectives may be more visible in the second sphere of school-based, interdisciplinary graduate publications, they may be reviewed by and disseminated to researchers who may not share their areas of expertise and interest, as these publications tend to cohere articles addressing vastly dissimilar topics.

PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication has been positioned in the space overlapping these two discursive spheres, having been started to nurture scholarly reflexive voices among media and communications graduate student researchers as well as to award international recognition to top-quality graduate contributions to the discipline from the early emergence of these expressions in academic discourse. As a consensual project of media and communications

graduate student researchers worldwide, *PLATFORM* is steered by a vision to grow and sustain an internationally networked community of graduate students who not only enthuse about their individual contributions to excellence in media research, but also passionately support one another to draw upon, develop, and discuss their expertise and interests through academic publication.

The aims of *PLATFORM* include:

- To provide a platform for media and communications graduate student researchers to showcase, share, and support the work of one another through publication, peer-review, and comments;
- To provide a platform for emerging media and communications scholars to build a publication record and to contribute subsequently to other academic publications;
- To increase scholarly appreciation of media and communications research across diverse theoretical, methodological, and empirical interests; and
- To encourage international awareness and collaboration through the discussion of issues associated with the rising significance of multiple media and communications platforms for societies and individuals in and across various globalised and localised environments.

As suggested above, *PLATFORM* will include theoretical, methodological, and/or empirical research which probes insightfully into the political, economic, and/or socio-cultural dimensions of media content, technologies, processes, philosophies, education, and research. Topics may draw from more established research traditions, such as those of political communication, journalism studies, as well as research on audiences and publics; to newer fields such as game studies and biomedica. *PLATFORM* welcomes both the contextualisation of these areas of study within particular paradigms and/or geographical locations, as well as the extension of ideas across sub-disciplines, schools of thought, and/or regional and global geographies.

THE *PLATFORM* REVIEW PROCESS

Graduate students may submit abstracts and/or full proposals for General or Thematic Articles; Essays; Reviews of books, websites, and/or multimedia; Interviews with established and/or emerging scholars; and Multimedia. Work may be submitted at any time, and will be reviewed upon submission. Coordinated by topic/area/section editors, the *PLATFORM* review process intends to be distinctly meticulous in balancing quest for quality and support of work-in-progress, refining submissions for publication through detailed feedback at the following review stages:

- If an abstract is submitted, it is reviewed by the editor responsible for that topic/area/section, who comments on how a suitable full paper may be developed. Proposals for essays, reviews, interviews and multimedia will also be reviewed by a relevant topic/area/section editor.

- Each full proposal for articles is delegated to a relevant topic/area/section editor, who coordinates the double-blind peer-review process. This editor is responsible for inviting existing reviewers and recruiting new reviewers among graduate student and more senior researchers whose areas of expertise and interest enable them to provide informed, (sub)disciplinary-specific review of the full paper. These reviewers will be requested to comment on the manuscript and submit a review summary form which assesses the paper according to the quality of its theoretical engagement, academic writing, and relevance to the field of media and communications, and recommends whether the paper be accepted, accepted with minor revisions, significantly revised and submitted for further review, or declined. The editor decides whether to accept or decline the paper after considering the marked-up manuscript and review summary form, and forwards these documents to authors together with the publication decision and further editorial suggestions for enhanced rigour and readability.
- All finally revised work is formatted, ordered and compiled with the editorial, for review by the international editorial board of established scholars and graduate student representatives at international, regional and local professional media and communications associations.

PLATFORM will be published biannually in January and July. Contributions of exceptional quality will be updated and thematically organised into an e-book anthology every three to five years.

THE PLATFORM WEBSITE

To better leverage on what new media technologies can offer, the *PLATFORM* website was specifically designed as an opportune space for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as for up-and-coming young academics to share research ideas and ultimately publish their first chapter. In addition to hosting scholarly works, *PLATFORM* has also included a Communities section, which aims to highlight events of interest and contains the biographies of published *PLATFORM* authors. Unlike the sidebar which encompasses *PLATFORM*'s various affiliates and support groups, it is hoped that the Links page will serve as a 'network node' for visitors to hyperlink to other sites of interest. Plans are also underway for the Gallery to showcase photos of *PLATFORM*'s key events and special occasions. Lastly, an interactive forum for discussion can be found on the drawing board.

Despite the emphasis *PLATFORM* places on the internet as a tool to draw students and emerging academics closer together, *PLATFORM* fully acknowledges the essential role that traditional media continues to play. This is reflected in the site's banner, which depicts the conventional library alongside one of the most common tools for instant connectivity – the computer. Undoubtedly, electronic and digital media technologies are taking us into a

networked world where ideas collide in real-time. But without the humble printing press, Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' might never have taken root. To build bridges between the 'old' and 'new' world, or indeed, to fuse both worlds together into a greater inter-connected 'networked globe', it is impossible not to discuss one without referring to the other.

THE *PLATFORM* OPEN-ACCESS POLICY

Questions surrounding the issue of content are vital in this new media age. Traditional understandings of the structures of information production and consumption are being increasingly contested. The new media environment is one defined by the convergence between producer and user as we see the emergence of user-generated content and collaborative media production. Traditionally, entry-level barriers into mass communications were incredibly high. To be a media producer was to be in a minority, privileged position. The publication of scholarly journals, for example, was traditionally dominated by corporate publishers and well-funded university departments. In many traditional scholarly journals, academics relinquish their copyrights over published articles. Networked media platforms, such as the internet, and more open and inclusive thought-paradigms, such as open-access, are introducing exciting new options for the dissemination of scholarly works. Scholars can make their work available to the world via the internet without the time-lags imposed by printing and distributing processes. In addition, open-access information lifts traditional restrictions such as subscription fees, making possible a much wider circulation of knowledge.

As an online publication, *PLATFORM* embraces these new opportunities to build upon changes in the ways in which information is distributed. Not only will our content reflect the changes that are upon us, but the way in which the journal functions will also be representative of our respect for open-access and the Creative Commons (CC) movement. *PLATFORM* offers free access to all its content, does not charge authors for the publication of their work, and respects authors' rights to retain copyright of published work.

At the forefront of this push for open access to information is Creative Commons. If copyright laws of the past were based on the idea of restriction and control, the CC movement is defined by openness, access, and freedom. Elliott Bledsoe, Jessica Coates and Brian Fitzgerald describe the CC movement as providing a point of difference to traditional copyright laws as they allow for 'generic, non-discriminatory and open-access materials' (2007: 6). Information that is free and open results in discussion, debate, and creativity and it is in this framework that *PLATFORM* hopes to position itself as part of a wider discussion.

VOL1: MEDIATED TEMPORALITIES, SPATIALITIES, AND OTHERS

In the tradition of quality peer-reviewed journals, all articles in Volume 1, including the guest article (see below), underwent a rigorous round of reviews and rewrites (described earlier) to ensure high scholarly standards at par with the stringent quality of international peer-review journals described earlier on in the introduction. As mentioned earlier, this commitment to high standards in scholarly publishing serves not only to meet *PLATFORM*'s commitment to general academic excellence, but also serves as a learning experience to our contributors in their journey towards becoming well-published academics.

In addition to submitted articles, *PLATFORM*'s inaugural volume also includes recognition of outstanding graduate students by inviting professors and supervisors to nominate guest authors from among their students. The criteria for nomination include an excellent track-record in journal publication and conference presentation as well as a demonstrated potential for future scholarly contribution. The inclusion of guest articles sets the stage for peer exposure, introducing guest authors to the international media and communications graduate student community, as well as exposing graduate students to emerging scholars in the field of media and communications.

This inaugural volume features four distinctive methodologies of academic inquiry, encompassing two theoretical reflections on technological mediation of space and time (Panayiota Tsatsou and Aleksandra Bida), a post-structuralist deconstruction of discourse (Fleur Gabriel), two empirically-based analyses of implications of media representations of the 'other' (Rut Sanz Sabino and guest author Agnes Schneeberger), and lastly an interview with Saskia Sassen.

Tsatsou negotiates a middle ground between David Harvey's 'time-space compression' thesis and Anthony Giddens's 'time-space distancing' view of globalisation. She argues for the retheorisation of time and space to account for new ways in which time and space remain relevant despite being 'compressed' or 'distanced' by technology. Critiquing entrenched views that suggest the 'meaninglessness' of time and space, Tsatsou confidently asserts her view that media and communications technologies mediate, re-mediate, define and restructure temporal and spatial dimensions.

Bida reflects upon communications technology's deterritorialisation of global and local cultures. Drawing upon John Tomlinson, she argues that his idea of 'complex connectivity', when applied to communication and culture (as opposed to the political) gives rise to 'direct connectivity' seen in global-scale interactions between individuals, and 'indirect connectivity' manifested in the global consumption of mass cultural products. She further proposes reterritorialisation as a way of exploring how global and local villages negotiate the influence of global cultural and communications influences.

In her post-structuralist Derridean deconstruction of the discourse around

'coming of age', Gabriel argues for the problematisation of media representation of youth sexuality against the supposedly 'natural' innocence and asexuality of pre-adolescent youth, and the 'cultural' norms defining this 'natural' state of children. Using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the discourses around incest as a taboo, she problematises the cultural depiction of pedophilia in the films *Lolita* (1997) and *Thirteen* (2003), as well as in public and political division over photographer Bill Henson's 2008 photo exhibition of child subjects.

Sanz Sabino explores the depiction of a 'good Nation' versus 'foreign' and 'evil' terrorists as a rhetorical technique adopted in British news representation of the 7/7 London bombings, arguing that these mediated discourses have the capacity to generate and support a 'clash of civilizations'. Arguing against Samuel Huntington's thesis of the inevitable clash between the Western and the Muslim worlds, she posits that mediated representations of terrorists as the 'other' far from merely recording instances of the clash between the West and Islam, in fact serve to justify the use of war as a means to counter terrorism. She concludes with a call for more objective mediated discourses that does not generate and support civilizational clashes.

Echoing Sanz Sabino's rhetorical analysis of media's technique of pitting a British 'us' against an Islamic 'them', guest author Agnes Schneeberger explores the British press' mediated 'othering' of Turkey and its European Union (EU) bid. Focusing on the theme of identity construction, Schneeberger illustrates that the historical definition of European identity as distinct from the Eastern 'other' continues in contemporary media narratives. However, her empirical analysis demonstrates that 'othering' of Turkey is centered not around its Muslim heritage but questions over its political stability and human rights record.

The articles described above were selected not only on the strength of their arguments and writing style but also with the belief that the concepts and issues raised are highly relevant to contemporary concerns in media and communications and can thus engender discussion, especially in an open-access scholarly environment as envisioned above.

The works published here should not be seen as the final definitive answer to the topics that are raised. They are works that can be accessed and drawn upon freely so that new debates may be started, and so that the open access information revolution can continue to give a voice to those who wish to be heard.

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For this inaugural volume, we thank all the supervisors who have nominated their graduate students for guest authorship, Agnes Schneeberger for her guest paper, and Saskia Sassen for generously sharing her insights in an interview. Importantly, we express our gratitude to all *PLATFORM* reviewers, who have created an efficient and useful review process through their willingness to review multiple submissions, their provision of detailed feedback, as well as their prompt reviewing. We also thank all contributors (whether or not their papers were accepted for Volume 1) for taking the time and effort to submit and revise their papers. Finally, we thank all who have involved themselves in *PLATFORM* by providing suggestions and encouraging others to participate in *PLATFORM*. We hope that you will enjoy Volume 1, and invite you to join in the future development of *PLATFORM*.

REFERENCE

Bledsoe, E., Coates, J., and Fitzgerald, B. (2007). *Unlocking the Potential through Creative Commons: An Industry Engagement & Action Agenda*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation.