

EDITOR'S COLUMN: The new spectre –Mediatization

by OSCAR HEMER

When trying to assess our contemporary predicament, the once controversial G-word may be about to be replaced by another elusive concept: *Mediatization*. The second or third phase of the digital revolution, with its explosion of so-called social media, has made it adamantly clear to us how all sectors of culture and society are saturated with, and increasingly influenced by, mediated communication. Not only politics and the public sphere, but our private lives and everyday experiences are today inseparably entangled with the media.

This is not a “new” phenomenon. It can be traced back all the way to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, or at least to Marshall McLuhan’s media theory and catchy but obscure conception of *the medium as the message*... But whereas mediatization used to be largely confined to the global North, or the so-called developed world, and hence not a concern for the traditional field of Communication for Development, it is now truly a global phenomenon, as demonstrated by the ongoing so-called Arabic Spring.

Today’s media environments, in which “old” and “new” media converge in ever changing forms, are both radically transforming the arenas of public opinion and agency – redefining the very concept of a public sphere – and yielding new forms of expression that transgress former genre and media boundaries.

The popular political mobilization in the Arab world was largely enhanced by social media, and even if labels such as the Twitter or Facebook revolution are rightfully refuted, the ongoing spring, which in some places may have turned to summer, and in others to autumn, is a clear-cut example of the rising communication power. But so are the recent riots in London, by young men in hoods, seemingly without other purpose than the hell of it, and in any case spurring diametrically different reactions in the Western media.

Lately, we have also seen another manifestation of what might be called the dark side of mediatization: The concoction of anonymous hate-speech, racism and xenophobia on certain websites that fuels aggressive right-wing fundamentalism all over Europe, and instigated a Norwegian self-appointed Crusader to commit mass murder on politically active teenagers.

Agency in the Mediatized World is the over-arching theme of the first **Ørecomm Festival**, to take place on both sides of the Öresund strait (in Malmö, Sweden, and Copenhagen and Roskilde, Denmark) over five full days between September 9 and 13. The Festival will bring together Master and PhD students from four universities in the region physically (and virtually from all over the world) as a manifestation of the quite impressive body of knowledge that ComDev students have accumulated over the last decade. In the spirit of the **Ørecomm Festival**, this issue of *Glocal Times* is dedicated entirely to articles by recent graduates from the Malmö ComDev Master. Meanwhile, the webmag is on the verge of becoming an Open Journal and changing both appearance and functionality, with a special double issue in collaboration with Nordicom Review in the making. Stay tuned for more on that.