

Only three years ago, exactly at this time – in late June, on the eve of Croatia's joining the European Union, our work on *Media Studies'* thematic issue 7 – *Croatia and the EU: The Public, Media and National Identity* was drawing close to completion. Back then I wrote in the editor's note that it was difficult to describe the atmosphere in the country and that uncertainty appeared to be the best expression to capture that mixture of hope and fear that pervaded Croatian citizens. Three years later, UK citizens voted in a referendum whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. The first reaction of our colleagues from British universities was the following question: how will this decision reflect on future scientific and research projects and cooperation in the academic world? In the first half of 2016 Europe encountered at least two major closures – the first one being the closure of the borders of European countries for refugees and migrants from the Middle East and from North African countries, and the second one being the aforementioned closure of Great Britain.

I have been in the capacity of *Media Studies'* Editor-in-Chief for well seven years now and so I watched a scientific discipline in Croatia opening up to critical thinking – first in relation to the neighbouring countries, then to Europe and, although tentatively, on a global scale. This sense of openness and exposure amounted to the possibility of development and progress – of new cooperation projects, networking, joint projects and research.

While reasoning about the concepts of openness and closure at a symbolic level, I am delighted to note that our journal, right from its beginnings, has never considered closure as an option. Even if openness entails exposure to plenty of criticism as well as discontent of those who are reluctant to take it, we knew that this was the only way for the journal to become internationally relevant. We have achieved the situation in which the editorial board of *Media Studies* receives new texts on a weekly basis, mainly from European countries, but some of them from other continents too. The interest for our journal exceeds our editorial board's volunteering capacities and we are grappling with this pressure. Nevertheless, we are still holding out. We are stimulated by the most important thing – the fact that we have been witnessing the process in which media and communication studies are developing as a discipline and that interdisciplinarity is becoming researchers' choice more and more frequently. Moreover, it is interesting to watch the discipline taking form and developing through its research dimension in an increasingly articulate manner.

Following the two thematic issues published in 2015, this general issue contains eight texts divided into three thematic units: *Media Audiences: Knowledge, Entertainment and Regulation*; *The Power of Image* and *Gender Representation in the Media*.

I am taking this opportunity to announce the December thematic issue entitled *Communication, Democracy and Digital Technology* and edited by the members of IPSA (*International Political Science Association*) Domagoj Bebić, Marijana Grbeša, Darren Lilleker, Oscar Luengo, Norbert Kersting and Marianne Kneuer.

Following the principles of *Media Studies'* academic discourse, we will always be in favour of openness. Follow us on our website www.mediastudies.fpzg.hr and on *Media Studies* Facebook page.

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Editor-in-Chief