

# Editorial

---

## Technology, politics and identity

*Chris Hudson, Editor*

I need not remind readers that the revolution in communications technology has radically altered the scope of approaches to communication in its intersection with politics and culture. A glance at a wide range of academic publications tells us that contemporary research now seeks to answer questions about the role of technology in structuring human relations and about their political manifestations, amongst other issues. Profound social changes of the last decades, including the proliferating use of social media accompanied by the rise of the mediated self, globalisation, and the increasing power of neo-liberal ideology, have precipitated changes and transformed studies of communication. One significant shift in focus that would be wholly expected in a journal dealing with contemporary issues in communication, politics and culture has been the number of submissions dealing with digital communication technologies. The articles in Volume 49, Issue 2 are all generally located in the context of technology, politics and identity.

Angela Ragusa and Olivia Ward's article, 'Caught in the web: Male Goths using online ICTs to transcend rural reality' explores issues of sub-culture identities and how online activities may influence expressions of identity in rural Australian settings. In the context of rural living and its tendencies towards conservative social views, digitisation can have a profound effect on the wellbeing and identity security of male Goths. Ragusa and Ward's extensive interviews with self-described Goths and other marginalised groups shows that digital environments can offer a space for social interaction that minimises harmful exposure to adverse responses to their personal presentation, lifestyle, self-expression, and gender performance and orientation.

Issues surrounding visual representation of same-sex marriages in New Zealand are the focus of Linda-Jean Kenix's article, 'A straight gay wedding? News images of same-sex marriage in the mainstream and alternative New Zealand press'. In the context of the vote in the New Zealand parliament in 2013 which saw the legalisation of same-sex marriage, Kenix investigates whether an 'image' of gay marriage emerged, and whether that image, or set of images, might precipitate shifts in visual codes of reference as they

migrate from mainstream media to alternative communicative spaces. She challenges previous research which has argued that homonormativity is anchored in mainstream heteronormative assumptions by situating her research on homonormativity within the politics of diversity, rather than assimilation.

The influence of social media during election campaigns has been an ongoing source of interest for media analysts and academics. The US and other advanced democracies have been the most common preoccupations of research into the role of social media. David Holmes and Sulistyanto's article, 'Understanding the Indonesian mediapolis: The role of social media during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election' seeks to broaden this focus by examining the 2014 Indonesian presidential election as an example of how social media has been mainstreamed in electoral contests. In the context of a dynamic mediapolis characterised by the interdependence of social and legacy media, they investigate the relative power of social media as it is used by candidates and their exploitation of celebrity for political campaigns.

Giovanni Navarria's article, 'To censor or not to censor: Roots, current trends and the long-term consequences of the Chinese Communist Party's fear of the internet' also considers the role of new media in social and political change. While the Chinese Communist Party still maintains strict control of the media and the transformative effects that social media applications have brought about continue to generate paranoia, this has not been without limited but significant changes in policy. China, it seems is not an unproblematic example of a culture of censorship. While investigating the use of various forms of censorship, this article also highlights the regime's shift in attitudes to social media, and what this might mean for future uses.

Finally, turning to a historical example of the role of rhetoric in the construction of nation, Eloise Florence's article, 'The July 20 plot: Reading news as myth in the imagining of the British nation' examines news content from British newspapers in 1944. As a country in the midst of a bitter war, Britain partly relied on newspapers to create and maintain the myths of national identity. The July 20 assassination attempt on Hitler, as it was reported in Britain, provided an imagined version of Nazi Germany as an 'Other World' in relation to which, Britain could imagine itself. Florence's article demonstrates the value of a rhetorical approach in the pursuit of understandings about the ways in which nations can invent and maintain themselves as 'imagined communities'.