

## **Media and Social Identities in India and Beyond**

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*Guest Editors*

In recent years, there has been a growing journalistic and academic interest in the increasing influence technical communication and media exert over widely different areas of society and culture in South Asia. This interest has increased significantly thanks to highly medialised events such as Indian political activist Anna Hazare's fight against corruption in a public fasting in 2011. New developments in communication technology, such as the explosion in the mobile telephone market or the launch of numerous new satellite programmes and internet applications, seem to play a major role in the rapid changes within the countries of South Asia. However, if we want to attain the same level of quality as has long been standard in media-related research on European and North American societies, a stronger and more systematic commitment towards in-depth research on medialisation with regard to Asian societies is necessary. In addition, a high level of area-related knowledge is an important prerequisite when researching the distribution, appropriation, and effects of media in Asian societies, including the formative contexts in which "old" and "new" media alike are appropriated and used in local contexts.

When we speak of regions today, especially in the disciplinary framework of Asia-related Area Studies, we certainly have to acknowledge the fact that, along with the physical mobility of individuals as well as businesses and the rapid circulation of global communication flows, the boundaries of regions are rapidly becoming blurred. Regions can no longer be regarded as geographically or culturally fixed entities. Accordingly, a strong commitment towards a transregional comparative research and interdisciplinary collaboration seems mandatory today if we want to fully understand the social processes simultaneously shaped by global and local dynamics. This is particularly true for the growing field of media- or communication-related research in non-European countries. In this regard, it is only fitting that the focus of this special section "Media and Social Identities in India –

and beyond” is, on the one hand, the largest country of South Asia, and, on the other hand, goes beyond this specific geographical context. We believe that the study of the Indian diaspora and its transnational networks is a valuable contribution to a transregional perspective and should thus be an integral part of the emerging field of India-related media and communication research.

The four articles presented in this special issue are only a small section of what is in the focus of this specific area of research at the moment. However, they hopefully serve to illustrate the broad spectrum of new research possibilities and necessities in order to fully grasp social processes in contemporary India. At the same time, new and, so we believe, socially relevant research perspectives are illuminated, especially in Jamila Adeli’s article on India’s contemporary art world and in Fritzi-Marie Titzmann’s analysis of the online matrimonial market in India.

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