

Introduction

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Media and Global Divides is a particularly apt focus for an organization such as IAMCR. For over 50 years we have functioned as a transnational organization with members stretched around the world. We endured the schisms of the Cold War, our activities have been interrupted by other wars and at different times gender or religion has appeared as a key line of difference to be negotiated and embraced in our work. We have to deal with our own global divides. The contributors to this volume stem from many different countries and approach the topic from a variety of theoretical vantage points.

The Stockholm conference took place in the summer of 2008, just as the global credit crunch was rolling in. It has revealed the extent to which we are all inextricably connected but has also shown how unbalanced our world is. How extraordinary it is that capital markets were more ready to lose possibly as much as \$4 trillion gambled in the market than governments were to support one per cent of development aid to the global south. Inequality, both material and inequality of opportunity, remains a glaring divide, between regions and within countries. Many of the contributions in this volume explore the complex and varied skeins of connectivity and inequality that both bind and divide us.

While we need better theorization of the processes of globalization, we are coming to understand that it is through grounded local knowledge that this is best achieved; that the detailed case study tells us a great deal while a false universalism obscures the real differences in power, wealth and influence at work in the world. Media remain the channels through which most of us receive our knowledge of the world and they articulate the lines of difference by which we inhabit that world. Assessments of the media's role in mobilising sympathy for others or aggressive impulses or consumerist illusions remains at the heart of much of our work and this volume offers some interesting new thoughts on these old issues.

In short, it is exactly the kind of book and the kind of work that IAMCR should produce. I want to thank the organising committee once again for making Stockholm such a memorable conference, I want to congratulate Ulla Carlson for her energy in pulling this volume together so quickly and I want to celebrate the diverse and agonistic space that is IAMCR.

