

## **Building bridges**



## INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays are part of the reflection of Working Group 2 (WG2 – focussing on audience interactivity and participation) of the Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies (TATS) Cost Action. TATS is a large network financed by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) framework. The main objective of this network is to advance state-of-the-art knowledge of the key transformations of European audiences within a changing media and communication environment, identifying their interrelationships with the social, cultural and political areas of European societies. As part of this Cost Action, WG2 has been working on the possibilities and constraints of mediated public participation; the roles that old and new media institutions and professionals (including journalists) play in facilitating public participation and in building citizenship; the interlocking of mainstream media and non-mainstream media and their production of new hybrid organisational structures and audience practices.

The TATS Cost Action set out five tasks for itself, as described in the Action's Memorandum of Understanding<sup>1</sup>. First, relevant initiatives would be reviewed (task 1), followed by the definition of a concerted research agenda (task 2). Task 3, entitled "scoping audience and society transformations", consisted in accumulating and integrating research results. Grounded in this reflection, task 4 drew theoretical and methodological lessons from their concerted works and progressively built new approaches that revitalised audience research and paved the way for further developments. Finally, task 5, consisted of a reflection on the significance of these research results for civil society, industry and policy players in the field. Although the title of recommendations was sometimes used for task 5, this task was in the end more aimed at stimulating a dialogue about the research findings with non-academics. For this reason, the "building bridges" metaphor was sometimes used.

In order to organize this dialogue, the four working groups of the TATS Cost Action (including WG2) followed a specific trajectory, in which first all members of the TATS Cost Action were invited to write short individual reports about their perspectives on the social relevance of their work. These individual reports were then analysed by the Task Force leaders of the working groups. In the case of WG2, each of its four Task Forces<sup>2</sup> participated in this process, and analysed the 26 individual reports of the TATS-WG2 members using a specific angle (see below). Provisional analyses were presented at the TATS Cost Action meeting in Tampere (Finland) on 18 April 2013. Then the four Task Forces produced the articles that can be found in this section.

<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.cost.eu/domains\\_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906](http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS0906).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/node/6>.

During the TATS Cost Action held in Belgrade (Serbia) on 18 September 2013, a number of key representatives of the political field, civil society and business reflected upon these four articles. A report of the discussion can be found in the WG2 Newsletter November 2013<sup>3</sup>.

*Maria Francesca Murru - Nico Carpentier*

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu/system/files/newsletter-cost-23-10-13.pdf>.