MATERIALITIES

MEDIA AND PLACE

NEW THINKING #3

2019/20

MATERIALITIES AT BCMCR

Over the course of the 2019/20 academic year, researchers in the BCMCR have been producing work in response to the research theme of 'Materialities'. With this theme, we were interested in exploring the ways in which our theoretical work and practice interact with and exist within the material world.

Led by Dr Iain Taylor, the theme has produced a breadth and depth of exciting work across each of our research clusters. This pamphlet has been produced as part of a series, which aims to capture a snapshot of the ideas and discussions which have emerged from the theme over the course of the year, and to provide a resource for colleagues and students who are keen to consider notions of materiality from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives.

For more information on Materialities at BCMCR, or on the work of the Centre generally, please visit our website:

www.BCMCR.org

BCMCR | Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research

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INTRODUCTION
DAVE HARTE

Dave Harte is an Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Birmingham Institute of Media and English. He has published widely on hyperlocal news, focusing on how professional and amateurs represent place through journalism. He has also worked on projects focused on supporting the development of the creative and cultural industries in the UK and Europe.

The Media and Place cluster within the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research brings together researchers at different career stages to explore the relations between media, culture and the geopolitics of place. We're a relatively newly formed cluster, coming together in mid 2019 in recognition of our shared interest in 'place' as a geographical location through which to focus on the role the media plays in cultural, social, political and representational processes. Our work is international in scope with members undertaking research and project work in the Middle East and North Africa region, in Africa, in the Caribbean, as well as in Europe and the UK. We're interested in spaces as well as places and our work has considered marginal, hyperlocal and alternative online and offline spaces, looking at the role of the media in current debates of local identity, borders and migration. We look too at the persistence of colonial and imperial legacies and the Western-centric blindness/amnesia towards politics outside the West.

The writings gathered here explore some of these themes, inevitably filtered through our experiences of being under lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in early to mid 2020. Having spent time talking amongst ourselves as we came together as a cluster, 2020 was to be the point at which we introduced ourselves to the world through hosting or attending research seminars and conferences. Instead, we found ourselves confined and, as you will read, in somewhat of a reflective mood. Therefore, while this pamphlet does act as an introduction to our work, it also considers the value of that work in light of the inequalities exposed by the pandemic and institutional and media reactions to it. In some ways, we find ourselves asking collectively: how does the materiality of lockdown make us rethink our research and our position as researchers?

These personal reflections thus hint at new directions and critical questions to be asked (as Kirsten Forkert does as she cycles through Birmingham; likewise, Jerome Turner as he curates and shapes his online hyperlocal space). The disconnect from others is personally felt by Dima Saber as she seeks to connect the digital and material 'traces' of her own and others' very different lockdown experiences. Yemisi Akinbobola and Rachel-Ann Charles-Hatt explores issues of identity in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement and ask critical questions about belonging and agency. Both Sam Coley and Pedro Cravinho reconnect to the materiality of audio, through tuning the radio and re-discovering old vinyl. Here too, traces – or rather 'fragments' – of media connect people and places, be it Pedro to family memories and research colleagues or Sam to voices of 'Hope' in the outer Suburbs of Birmingham.

We intend this collection to act as an entry point both to the cluster's research themes and concerns, and to the researchers themselves. We hope you enjoy the reflexive approach we have taken and we welcome proposals for future collaborations.

Media and Place

Materialities

July 2020

Slightly different versions of some of these articles can be found on the BCMCR website through the QR code below.

"OH, THE HUMANITY": UK RADIO IN LOCKDOWN

SAM COLEY

Dr. Sam Coley is an Associate Professor in Radio Production at Birmingham City University in the UK, where he teaches a range of undergraduate and postgraduate radio production modules for the School of Media.

Before joining BCU he worked in the New Zealand and UK commercial radio industries. Since 2012 he has been a Grand Jury member of the New York Radio Festival and continues to produce freelance documentaries for both commercial and public service broadcasters. Sam completed a PhD at Birmingham City University in 2018, which explored music documentary production for commercial radio

Last month I took the radio from its home in the bathroom and stood in the backyard, trying to tune it to 87.9 FM. The reception was a little fuzzy at first as the signal is quite close to Birmingham's BBC Radio 2's frequency, but after a bit of fiddling I was able to hear Hope Radio beaming in from its small transmitter in Druids Heath. The station had just started broadcasting thanks to a 'Temporary Covid-19 Short-term restricted service licence' (SRSL) swiftly granted by Ofcom in response to the crisis. The entire station was imagined and set up in a matter of weeks by Peni Wheelan, a radio graduate from Birmingham City University's MA Media Production course. The station wears its DIY ethic proudly. The eclectic programming and homemade production style are a long way from the super-slick sound of contemporary corporate radio – which is a good thing. The station was designed as community building project for over 50s in South Birmingham without internet access, and aims to "share experiences, to send messages to friends and family, to show their support for essential workers, to feel that they are not alone". Hope Radio is emblematic of how the industry has responded quickly and sympathetically to the pandemic.

At the start of the year I found myself thinking about radio in times of crisis; specifically, in my old hometown of Christchurch New Zealand. In January I replied to a tweet about Australian radio's bush fires coverage with a link to a journal article by Ruth Zanker titled 'Heroic Radio'. In this piece Zanker, an associate researcher at the New Zealand Broadcasting School, examined radio's response to the 2010 Christchurch earthquake. Sadly, the city had a more recent opportunity to demonstrate radio's ability to cope under pressure. In April 2020, Radio New Zealand received gold and bronze awards in the New York Radio Festivals for their gripping live coverage of the Christchurch terror attacks. These events started with relatively short, violent incidents, which demanded on the spot, descriptive coverage. Yet the coronavirus pandemic crept up on radio and required a different kind of response. The companionship provided by radio is nothing new. But in a long-form emergency like the COVID-19 crisis, the sense of bond between a presenter and a listener has never been more important. The communal experience offered by radio has been especially valued by an audience locked down in isolation. I've been genuinely impressed by the comradery and opportunities for interaction provided across all sectors of the UK radio industry. It's perhaps unsurprising that the algorithms of streaming music apps have lost listeners during the pandemic, while audience figures for live radio stations (and podcasts) have shown tremendous growth. People want to hear people.

The British Red Cross still recommends you should have a "battery-operated radio and spare batteries" in an emergency response kit, to help "cope with a crisis" (ahead of a first aid kit and essential medication). The medium's response to COVID-19 reminds us that radio is at its strongest in times of trouble.

"FREEDOM DANCE": JAZZ AT LOCKDOWN TIMES

PEDRO CRAVINHO

Dr Pedro Cravinho, researches and writes about Jazz, Media, and Archives. Currently, he is the Keeper of the Archives at the Faculty of Arts, Design & Media, and a Senior Research Fellow at Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. His research interests include the twentieth-century jazz diaspora social, political and musical history.

He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Jazz-Hitz*, a Trustee for the National Jazz Archive, a board member of the Duke Ellington Society UK, a member of Jazz Promotion Network, and co-founder and board member of Portugal Jazz (Portuguese Jazz Network).

Living behind Birmingham city centre, after weeks self-isolated, and taking the last flight back to my home country before the borders closed was bizarre. I was the only one going through security and one of very few at Birmingham's International airport that day. Apart from three security guys, two duty-free shop employees playing tennis in the corridors of the empty airport lobby, and four guys from the ground-force playing cards. Not forgetting a small group of friends enjoying their pints at 6:00 am while waiting for their flight to Malta. I felt being taking part in a distant dystopian sci-fi movie. Regarding my trip, all passengers in silence wearing masks and gloves, seated separately, in a flight with no service on board.

Since my arrival, I've been in quarantine. The city of Braga gradually became a small red dot on the contagion map. Yet, outside, everything looked and sounded very peaceful and quiet. My sense of time gradually changed. Not in terms of work. The pace of work has intensified, mostly with virtual meetings. Work invaded each of my waking hours, as jazz did as well! With the lockdown, I had the opportunity to (re)listen to many of my 'old' jazz records I've meant to hear for years. Music – recorded music – and photographs allow me to travel. Before I start writing these lines, my mind was someplace around Europe in the mid-1970s. I was watching to black and white television footage of Shirley Scott performing "Don't Look Back" (by Harold Vick): Shirley Scott (Hammond organ), Harold Vick (tenor saxophone), and Arthur Taylor (drums). The tune is part of Scott's album, *One for me* (1974). Watching those images led me to revisit what I believe to be, one of my early jazz experiences. I was in Oporto, with about five years old, listening to my late father Shirley's album, *For Members Only* (Impulse, 1964). I recalled its pink cover and Shirley's picture by Bob Ghiraldini.

Scott's television clip was shared by a dear colleague of mine that lives on the other side of the Atlantic – currently based in Long Island –, writing a book about four female jazz musicians. Watching the 1970s television clip "Don't Look Back" was my reencounter with Scott's music. Those images, its liveness led me to (re)visit Scott's *For Members Only* again. Looking to the album cover, touching and smelling that vinyl took me back to a particular time and place. At first instance, one might consider that as an artefact – the vinyl –, exists as a static object. Its presence was lost from my everyday life over more than four decades, yet, as a sonic fragment, it actively worked as a cross-temporal transmission between past and present times. (Re)listening to Scott's playing "Freedom Dance" (by Oliver Nelson), 'a tune with the fervor of the times' – yes, BLM, still, current times –, and its 'gospelish flavor', revealed to be an amazing sonic experience (Shields 1963).

MATERIALITIES OF SPATIAL CONFINEMENT: WALES MEETS BEIRUT

Photograph by Dan Burwood

DIMA SABER

Dima Saber is a Reader in Media & Cultural Studies and Associate Director for External Funding and Research Development at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. Her research is focussed on media depictions of conflict in post-war and post-revolution contexts, and on the role of archival records in identity building processes.

- The farmer moved the sheep to the field up the hill, they have eaten all the grass in the field across the lane since we came here at the beginning of the lockdown. That's how long we have been here.

- We only eat chicken now. Meat is so expensive that most people stopped buying it. Soon the whole country will become vegetarian like you.

- It was the first time I actually saw farm dogs herding sheep. It was amazing, they are pretty good at it, and guess what, I saw a hare. A real hare, with long ears and all.

- The dollar is trading at 9,000LL on the black market today. Imagine? The Lebanese pound lost about 80% of its value since you were last here over Christmas.

- A flycatcher bird nested on the house wall. I always wondered if birds left their nests unattended. We set up a nature camera so we can see the chicks getting fed.

- Live rounds were fired last night, on old demarcation lines between Chiah and Ain el-Remmaneh. Did you watch the news?

- There are estimates of over 60,000 C19 deaths in the country, and only around 100 in Lebanon. It is amazing that numbers are so low. You somehow managed to do better than the UK.

- Have we, though?

I have been living in a postcard since the beginning of the lockdown in the UK. In a beautiful Welsh village called Trefeglwys (it took me around 10 weeks to learn to spell its name), with a river, woods, and green hills all around. This is the material reality of my spatial (non)confinement. We came here just in time for lambing season too, so there were lambs jumping around, like in dreamland visions. We have been living in a 380 year-old Grade-2 listed Tudor house, which is now part of my British family heritage.

Meanwhile, in Beirut, my parents are buying candles because of power cuts. 'It's more romantic', they jokingly tell me, 'we will no longer be distracted by TV or the Internet'. Lebanon is currently going through the worst economic crisis in its modern history, pushing the majority of its population below the poverty line. More recently, a huge explosion rocked the port of Beirut causing massive destruction; 150 people were killed, over 5000 injured, and almost 300,000 people were left homeless.

I recently read an article by Anna Reading in which she suggests looking at the political economy of digital memory in an attempt to conceptualise it in terms of the 'commodity chains of environmental impact, human labour, and material processes' involved in various aspects of memory making (Reading, 2014: 749).

This made me think about the ways we will remember this lockdown years from now; what traces will remain in our everyday lives? Will my two-year old daughter remember anything at all?

Despite the river and beautiful outdoor spaces, my memory of our (Welsh) lockdown has mostly been digital. Mainly because it involved a lot of screens. And behind those screens a part of my family which has been living through a social, political and economic meltdown, haunted by the ghosts of civil war, and an under-reported C19 pandemic.

Screens, voice notes and short video snaps. That is the materiality of my C19 confinement story, so my daughter remembers some of the people when being with family in Beirut becomes part of who we are, or what we do, again.

For now, she thinks they all live in my phone.

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NB: Figures given above were accurate at the time of writing, in 2020.

USE HYPERLOCAL MEDIA - SAVE LIVES

JEROME TURNER

Jerome joined BCMCR in 2012 as a Research Assistant on the Media, Community and the Creative Citizen project, where he developed his research interest in hyperlocal publishing. This resulted in his PhD studying local community Facebook audiences, completed 2018. He currently lectures and works on a variety of research projects.

I study hyperlocal media. I also co-moderate a hyperlocal Facebook group (for more context and a slightly expanded version of this piece, follow the link). And then covid19 happened.

I was interested here in trying to identify what I felt changed in the Group:

- Where events/evening classes/sports/fitness groups would have been advertised in the past, they were now all inactive. But interestingly, people didn't really ask about online equivalents, sharing their loneliness or asking for other suggestions - perhaps because those online equivalents weren't geographically localised, and didn't require local knowledge, they didn't feel it relevant to ask in this Group e.g. people doing Joe Wicks which was discussed on national news, rather than local fitness groups.

- Where the above describe some of the prior functional aspects of a hyperlocal page, the functionality changed to asking what time shops were closing and opening, what the queues were like, whether there was actually any food or toilet roll in the shops. This became a very practical aid to lockdown, meaning people didn't leave the house if they knew it would be a wasted trip or potentially cause them harm through unnecessary exposure, hence my title: USE HYPERLOCAL MEDIA / SAVE LIVES.

- 'Rants' were common - people expressing frustration about others not social distancing, stockpiling, and littering. These became repetitive so we tried 1. allowing fewer such posts through the doors and 2. some stockpiling of our own, inviting all covid complaint or information comments into one 'covid post' at the start of each day. By this time though, such posts were starting to ease off anyway. i.e. audience behaviours were actually shifting faster than we could think up contingency/management plans for them.

- Gig economies / side hustles may have flourished or benefited. Mask makers emerged, first for charity or donation to NHS as PPE was discussed in the news, but then as a business. 'Man with a van' requests became more popular as people cleared out their houses, but so too did flytipping as a result, especially given that municipal tips were closed.

- Lost or 'spotted' pets, usually a staple of hyperlocal groups, took a backseat, and are only now just starting to return – not so much because pets aren't getting lost as often (although this may be true as more people were at home looking after them), but perhaps reflective of what people thought was important to post in these times, what the norm of the space had become.

- People still shared local experiences. 'Clap for carers' on Thursday became the new version of posting photos of sunsets, as people almost competitively talked up the activity on their street – the culmination being a local musician livestreaming a full concert on his driveway.

- People sharing, requesting, or offloading things, e.g. 'Puzzles for my nan'. Perhaps because people knew we didn't allow 'selling' in the Group, people left things out in the street for others and signalled that for the readers. Altruistically? Not necessarily – for many it would have been the only way to have a clearout with tips closed.

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LOCATION, AGENCY AND HASHTAG ACTIVISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Photo by Mattia Faloretti on Unsplash

YEMISI AKINBOBOLA

Yemisi Akinbobola is an award-winning journalist, academic, and co-founder of African Women in Media (AWiM). AWiM's vision is that one-day African women will have equal access to representation in media.

Yemisi holds a PhD in Media and Cultural Studies from Birmingham City University where she is a Senior Lecturer and International Research Partnership Manager. She has published scholarly research on women's rights and African feminism, and journalism and digital public spheres.

Joint winner of the CNN African Journalist Award 2016 (Sports Reporting), Yemisi ran her news website IQ4News between 2010-14. Her media work is Africa focused, covering stories from rape culture in Nigeria, to an investigative and data story on the trafficking of young West African football hopefuls by fake agents. She has freelanced for publications including the UN Africa Renewal magazine, and has several years' experience in communication management for charities. She was editorial consultant for the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 commemorative book titled "She Stands for Peace: 20 Years, 20 Journeys".

I have always been torn between my physical home in the UK, and my sense of home in Africa. I use 'Africa' deliberately, because in the last few years I have become increasing connected to a continental outlook and not a national one focused solely on Nigeria. While I continue to reflect on the word to describe my identity, I cogitate 'Afropolitan', a word coined by Taiye Selasi (2005), and which Eze (2014; 239) describes as a term used in an "effort to grasp the diverse nature of being African or of African descent in the world today". For me, I use it to describe an empowered stance, which does not take its starting point from a resistance to the West, and that rejects notions of victimhood.

The pandemic heightened my sense of responsibility to the continent. Here, in the UK I positioned myself as a citizen leaving the responsibility to those in leadership. Whereas for Africa, I feel I have a responsibility to be part of the leadership addressing the challenges in African countries. I cannot address challenges faced by everybody, so I concentrate my effort on supporting African women working in media.

Blackout Tuesday took place on 2 June 2020 in response to the
killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor

All was going well until George Floyd was murdered. The Black Lives Matter protests began, and I am jolted back to seeing myself as Yemisi in the UK. Forced to reflect on my experiences of racism as Yemisi in the UK. I have always resisted seeing myself as subordinate, racialised and racially observed. In reflecting on this, I begin to remember the biases I have experienced in the UK, during my education, socially, in my places of work. It was an emotional thing to do, I wrote a Facebook post about the first time I realised I was black, aged 10 in school and being told by my teacher "IF YOU WANT TO BEHAVE LIKE A MONKEY, GO BACK TO AFRICA", simply because I displayed excitement in the way I knew how. In that same year, I was called a N****r in the playground. The silent complicity of others who have been witness to some of my experiences of racism, including in my workplace, and choosing to look the other way. When I wrote that post, I cried at the acknowledgement that there is a Yemisi in this place in the Diaspora, whose agency is limited. My sense of agency *is* attached to Africa. There I feel a leader, I feel I have agency, and a respect for who I am, and I do not feel that here in the UK, and that is what the Black Lives Matter debate has really helped me to face. I am now challenging myself to do something about this, to take back power!

While the Black Lives Matter discussions was happening online for the global audience. For Nigeria, there was a heightened debate around Gender-based Violence (GBV). The lockdown saw an increase in reports of rape. Yet there is a sense of hope there, because 10 years ago this would not have been reported. Social media presents an opportunity for it to be reported and debated, much like police brutality in the USA. It is hard to see, but it needs to be seen so that we can do something about it.

WE'RE ALL VICTORIANS NOW

KIRSTEN FORKERT

Kirsten Forkert is a researcher, author, teacher and activist; her work explores issues of austerity, migration and nationalism. Kirsten is a Professor of Media Theory in the Birmingham Institute of Media and Enghlish, and is one of the Associate Director of the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. She teaches on the BA Media and Communications and the MA Media and Cultural Studies

I've been doing cycle journeys for a daily exercise routine, which means I've been going to different neighbourhoods in Birmingham I don't usually visit (prior to this, my movements around the city were quite utilitarian – going between home or work, or various errands, or occasionally gigs). Is Covid-19 inspiring new forms of psychogeography? On these journeys I've noticed that in the poorest neighbourhoods (Handsworth, Small Heath, Sparkbrook etc.) few people seem to be social distancing, and you wouldn't know we were in lockdown other than the odd person wearing a mask or gloves; the streets are only slightly less busier than normal. In the whiter, more middle-class areas I pass through, social distancing is adhered to more stringently (is this a certain kind of luxury?) with the exception of VE Day when there are street parties with bunting, with mostly white participants (a greater identification with official national narratives?).

Inequality is not only in the streets; it's in the news headlines: Covid-19 deaths are twice as high in deprived areas, and ethnic minorities are dying more from this disease, and there is a reluctance to publicly admit how structural racism and class inequality is making people sick.

Beyond the neighbourhood mutual aid groups and #clapforcarers, Covid-19 reminds us of long- standing social divisions and returns us to some older fears, including some Victorian-era paranoias: cities, particularly dense multicultural ones, are to be avoided; the wealthy flee to second homes in the countryside. There are speculations about the virus spreading through air, echoing 19th century theories of miasma (the belief that diseases circulate through corrupted air), believed to be worse in cities. More disturbingly, 19th century eugenics seems to be implicit in the conspiracy theories which attempt to explain the ethnic minority deaths (the latest being that those with darker skin are suffering from Vitamin D deficiency, implying they shouldn't be living in "colder countries"), or the rhetoric around bodily strength and strength of character of populist male leaders, or the more implicit belief that if we end the lockdown quickly we don't have to worry about the vulnerable, as they are the 'surplus populations' which are only a burden on society and a drag on the economy. The 19th century was also the era of the rise of the nation state. The response to Covid-19 seems fundamentally national; the closing of borders and ending of international travel, the calls to move manufacturing back onshore (instead of the long global supply chains we've become used to) but also the various charts and statistics comparing death rates, the calls to 'look after our own first' and in the very old racist tropes of disease carrying foreigners. At street level, is the equivalent of these headlines the suspicious glances or the wide berth towards the poor, the black or brown, or the different? And conversely, what would be the street-level equivalent of the internationalism and global solidarity we so desperately need?

ONLINE COMMUNITIES ARE A THRIVING SPACE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF DIGITAL MATERIALITIES

RACHEL-ANN CHARLES-HATT

Rachel-Ann is a Course Director on the MA in Global Media Management and she lectures across undergraduate courses within the School of Media. She is also a Researcher at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR), Birmingham City University (BCU) and has made contributions to the study of community media within a Trinidad and Tobago context. She is currently exploring the practice of podcasting within the Caribbean Diaspora community.

My way of life for much of the past 15 years has been played out online and is centred mainly around digital "stuff" exchanged through online platforms. The digital artefacts exchanged online range from images to videos all of which are closely connected to significant life events. While some may view these digital exchanges or stuff as merely everyday experiences, I interpret them as a form of materiality. Although traditional thinkers may argue that a "pure realist conceptualisation of materiality" consists of a type of matter (Sondergaard, 2011), my lived experiences are entangled between types of materiality that are digital and offline (Morizio, 2014). As such, the following paragraphs reflect on those experiences.

One such encounter relates to the intangible nature of digital religion. For example, a lot of traditional Christians, I have encountered, frowned upon the idea of an online church, often citing Hebrews 10:25 (Holman, 2015) to support their myth. In a recent collection on Religion and Materiality scholars such as Narayanan (2020) have debunked this untruth held by many parishioners. This body of work highlights the negotiation of digital religion particularly in the 21st century, which sheds further light on the type of materiality amassed within these spaces. Evidently, many Christians have been forced to reconsider their own prejudices held against online spaces. Above all, these intangible experiences matter though they are without "matter."

During the 2020 pandemic social distancing measures led to interesting ways of activism for me, especially as it brought the offline and online space together in new ways. This space, once and still considered dark, has now produced some of the most crucial and historical digital materiality observed in decades particularly around Covid-19 and the #BlackLivesMatter movement. For instance, on June 4th I viewed George Floyd's memorial, fighting back the tears brought on by a combination of systemic racism and my own internal struggles surrounding the issue. Never thought that I would be standing in silence and solidarity, as part of a global community, for a total of 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time it took for a white police officer to murder a black man named George Floyd. The totality of these intangible experiences matter though they are without "matter."

The final point of reflection is on the positionality of a life that is lived on the margins of the global and local; and I often question whether I belong there or here? As an Afro-Caribbean immigrant woman working and residing in the United Kingdom I primarily have a connection with the Caribbean Diaspora through online spaces. As the boarders closed around the world during the pandemic, I wondered if it was safe to stay in the UK or if I should seek repatriation? I began to think deeply about my sense of belonging and "nationhood" (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). Although I live within a locale, and from what I have heard the people are very warm here, my sense of belonging seems very remote yet unidentifiable.   These intangible experiences matter though they are without "matter."

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The Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) was established in 2009 to develop excellent research as a core activity within the Birmingham School of Media. Currently, BCMCR has over 30 research-active staff and 30 research degree students. The Director of the centre is Nicholas Gebhardt, and the Associate Directors are Kirsten Fokert and Dima Saber.

The BCMCR aims to produce distinctive, collaborative work within the field of media and culture research. in the previous Research Excellence Framework process for assessing the UK HE sector, the majority of BCMCR research environment and activities were judged as of a quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

We welcome visiting researchers from across the world and hold regular research seminars which mix presentations from staff, students, and speakers from a range of our collaborative partnerships. Please feel free to contact us if you have a research enquiry.

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Over the course of the 2019/20 academic year, researchers from the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) have been working in response to the research theme of **Materialities**.

Colleagues from each of the BCMCR's research clusters were asked to create short pieces of writing which capture some of the thoughts, ideas, and discussions which have emerged over the course of the year in relation to the **Materialities** theme.

This work forms the basis of a series of pamphlets which capture the ways in which the theme has shaped / changed thinking within each cluster.

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