

**Dr Marie Gillespie**

## **Tuning in: Diasporic Contact Zones at the BBC World Service**

### **End of Year Report for 2007**

- **An international conference** bringing together academics, broadcasters and policy-makers to debate the past, present and future of British overseas broadcasting with over 50 papers from key scholars in the field, and from our project members. *International Broadcasting, Public Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange: An international conference to evaluate 75 years of the British Overseas Broadcasting Brunei* Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, London W.1 18-19/12/2007  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/conference-december2007.doc>.
- **An international workshop** to debate media diplomacy and English language broadcasting abroad. *Transnational TV News and Media Diplomacy: Al Jazeera English in Context* 22 November 2007 at King's College London, Dept. of War Studies.  
<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/#events>
- 
- **Radio: Nightwaves, BBC 4, June 2007**, Annabelle Sreberny on the proliferation of 24hour English-language channels
- **Research collaboration** with user groups and partners, particularly: *FCO public diplomacy group*  
PI Gillespie offered advice and research documents to Stephen Lysaght which contributed to a bid for £1million funding from HM Treasury to the BBC World Service to work with UK diasporas (£1m. funding granted October 2007).

#### *FCO Communicating with Arabic and Islamic World: Islam Research team*

led by Dr Cornelia Sorabji. PI Gillespie presented a paper at their Lunchtime Seminar Series 24/09/07. At their request, it was subsequently distributed to FCO colleagues at the British embassy in Paris and shared with their French counterparts, and to British Embassy in Washington DC and circulates among their State department counterparts.

#### *Wilton Park Conference (FCO)*

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WITH DIASPORAS 3 – 6 December 2007 (883th WILTON PARK CONFERENCE) – PI Gillespie suggested to Julia Purcell that a conference on diasporas could be productive and subsequently offered advice and suggestions in the overall conception of the conference and on speakers.

- **Research Tools**

We are developing a number of research tools including a project website <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/>. The website houses BBC Audience research to which we have been granted access <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/bbcindex.htm>

We have an email discussion group [socsci-diasporas-list@open.ac.uk](mailto:socsci-diasporas-list@open.ac.uk)

- We also have a blog which facilitates communication between researchers on the Drama for Development theme.

The project has progressed according more or less to plan. All six research themes are up and running.

We planned for 80% of research to take place (interviews with audiences and producers: approx.150 in total), textual and archival research in first year. In hindsight this was unrealistic and it's likely that the empirical work will extend well into year two. A great deal of empirical work has been achieved including: approx. 50 interviews with key BBC and FCO staff; 40 days at BBC written archives at Caversham by project team members; 70 days observational research and resource gathering at Bush House; textual and discourse analysis of 'World Have your Say' website). But there is still much to follow up.

We had a very productive project meeting with the full research team and the advisory board April 17-16 2007 at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies. At this meeting Baumann and Gillespie presented their joint working paper outlining the analytical framework of the project.

We had planned to hold SOAS workshop in December 09 but the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of (BBC) British overseas broadcasting presented itself and this proved to be a useful way of gathering people together and using the conference itself as a research tool. This was very useful in helping us to gauge what relevant research already exists. Given the paucity of historical or comparative, theoretical or empirical work on the international and transnational dimensions of the work of the BBC, the conference has proved to be a very effective way of identifying researchers working on the borders of our project and drawing them in, thus adding significant value to the project's output. It is likely that we will edit a volume in the CRESC series and publish at least two or maybe three special issues of journals resulting from the conference.