The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) is the leading international professional organization in the field of media and communication research. It’s conference, held annually, seeks to promote global inclusiveness and critical scholarship in the field, with a strong focus on the encouragement and participation of emerging scholars, members from the developing world and women. Established in 1957 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), IAMCR works to advance the public presence of the field of media and communication research and the contributions made by researchers to national and global policy and the development of media and communication education and practice.

Hosted at Dublin City University (DCU), the theme of this year’s conference was “Crises, ‘Creative Destruction’ and the Global Power and Communication Orders”. The conference theme sought to create a space for engagement with the current economic crisis; the role media and communication have to play in the context of austerity measures and to reflect on how such crises can be harnessed for creativity. The President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, opened the conference. In his opening speech, referencing Habermas and Marx, he highlighted the dangers of the rising concentration of ownership of the media, noted the strong presence of young scholars at the conference and praised the work done by the IAMCR for it’s work to promote global inclusiveness and the democratic right to participate. Close to one and a half thousand papers were presented under the conference’s five thematic areas, along with four plenary sessions and ten special sessions. Thirty working groups exist under the five thematic areas, including Pop Culture, Political Economy of Communication, Law and HIV/AIDS and Health Communication to name a few.
Under the ‘Gender and Communication’ Working Group, in the Feminist Theory Panel, my doctoral supervisor and co-author, Dr. Sarah Cardey, and I presented our paper entitled ‘Challenging the Assumptions of Heterosexuality in Development Communication: Queering Development Communication Theory and Practice’. In our paper we argued that communication strategies and interventions in international development would benefit from the application of core principles and ideas from queer theory. Application of these post-modern critiques would, thus, help challenge the present constructions of gender in development communication in an attempt to mitigate the construction, reconstruction and reinforcement of social inequality. We demonstrated the application of our ideas through the deconstruction of a poster used in an HIV/AIDS campaign in Uganda.

Our paper was well received and our audience was pleased to see that this crosscutting research was emerging from the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development at the University of Reading. We were able to receive constructive feedback as a result of this presentation that will only strengthen our work as we continue our research. In addition to our presentation, I had the opportunity to chair a session on ‘Social and Cultural Influences on Health Beliefs and Practices’ in the Health and HIV/AIDS Communication Working Group. Attending the conference afforded me a number of valuable opportunities, not only the chance to see the presentation of interesting and wide-ranging research from around the globe, but to meet key academics in my field of study. As a result of my time in Dublin at the conference, I have been able to network with a range of academics, whose ideas will no doubt feed into my doctoral research. Importantly, I have been able to make contact with academics from sub-Saharan Africa, where my PhD fieldwork will take place, exposing me to a southern perspective in regard of many of the issues I am focusing on in my research. Specific links made include
academics at the University of Johannesburg, The University of Kwazulu-Natal and Wageningen University, as well as key organizers of the conference.

In addition to exposure to new ideas, perspectives and opportunities to network, attending the conference gave me the opportunity to explore Dublin and it’s rich culture and history. Outside of the busy conference schedule I was able to visit Trinity College and the historic Temple Bar area of Dublin.

![Trinity College](image)

I would like to thank the Arthur Hosier and Meyer Sassoon Travel Award Fund and the Research Travel Fund for their very generous financial support that enabled me to attend the IAMCR conference and further my academic and professional development. I would also like to thank the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, in particular my Head of School, Prof. Mike Gooding and my PhD Supervisor, Dr. Sarah Cardey, for their support and encouragement.

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