The Muslim world is experiencing a media explosion – from street-corner kiosks to satellite television and the Internet. Islamic messages and discussions of them are everywhere. They are being magnified, mediated, and expanded public sphere of new genre and channels of the already familiar tapes of preachers and their satellite outlets. They are vernacular and down-market, often overlooked in text-based scholarship focused on intellectuals and the more social and behavioral analyses applied to the masses. The new media range from pulp novels and popular culture magazines to the more diverse playbooks of non-Muslim consumers of the Internet, the medium to vernacular preachers. They in turn lead the way for more orthodox institutions, including new, international Islamic and local Muslim communities for mobilizing and combining personal networks of nation-building states and stages for ritualized communication to mass citizens as witnesses. The new media, in their comparative diversity, flexibility, and lower barriers to entry, are channels for diverse, flexible, and more accessible participation than mere witness. This emerging public sphere is not only one of talking back to power, but also one of a wider range of actors who talk to each other, sometimes about power, and often about the power of the emerging public sphere. They are also indicators of an emerging public sphere that displaces authority with engagement, even activism, even fundamentalism. Islam that is emerging that expands the public sphere of its proponents’ new dilemma with a world where messages move across borders and are broadcast, and participants in it. It is clear that we need to pay more attention to precisely where and how they are emerging in the Muslim world, and that we need to examine the varying patterns of their mobilization and their impact.

The passing of traditional societie...