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Questioning the nation:

#QandA and the mediatisation of Zaky Mallah

‘Q&A is about democracy in action –the audience asks the questions.

It doesn't matter who you are, or where you're from - everyone can have a go and take it up to our politicians and opinion makers’ (“About the show”, 2015).

Our language, culture and even national identity are increasingly regulated and legitimised in transnational markets of late capitalism (Duchêne and Heller, 2012). As a result, media institutions have become the gatekeepers of our language ideological processes (Milani and Johnson, 2010), directly challenging the role of the nation in the production of knowledge and expertise. Exemplifying this contention, the Australian television program, #QandA, is presented as a challenge to national hegemony and homogenisation. Through commodifying the performativity of the ‘Question and Answer’ component typically present in political speeches (and academic presentations), #QandA is constructed as an open, ‘democratising’ space on the global mediascape. Critically examining this multimodal space, I focus on a disruption: a question posed by Zaky Mallah, an Australian citizen acquitted of terrorist charges. The mediatisation of this question directly results in government intervention, ongoing citizenship amendments, debates about censorship and comments from Tony Abbott, the Australian Prime Minister. Even this decentring, I conclude, perpetuates the expert systems and language ideological processes of the nation-state.

About the show. (2015, Aug 1) Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/about.htm>

Duchêne, A., & Heller, M. (2012). *Language in late capitalism: Pride and profit*. New York: Routledge.

Johnson, Sally and Tommaso M. Milani (eds.) (2010). *Language ideologies and media discourse*. London: Continuum.