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Special Issue: Fresh Voices in European Media and Communication Scholarship

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FRESH VOICES IN EUROPEAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP

SPECIAL ISSUE BASED ON THE SELECTED PAPERS FROM ECREA DOCTORAL STUDENTS' SUMMER SCHOOL FROM 2019

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I will recommend this event to all young media scholars I know. It has been a life-changing experience, and I kind of wish I could join again :)

Quote from the anonymous feedback form

In 2019, the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer school took place 27th time. In 1992, the University of Stendhal-Grenoble III (Grenoble, France) led a consortium of ten (western-European) universities to start a summer programme for their PhD students in order to offer an opportunity to debate about contemporary issues in media, communication and cultural studies (cf. Parés i Maicas, 2008; Peja et al., 2018). Since then, summer school has had many phases of transformations - from with or without financial support, from a committed consortium of colleagues to an open initiative now hosted and supported by European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).

The summer school has been held in many locations in Europe, including Grenoble, Lund, Barcelona, London, Helsinki, Tartu, Ljubljana, Bremen and Milano. In 2019, the summer school returned to Tartu where the Institute of Social Studies, at the University of Tartu, hosted all together 41 doctoral students and 17 senior scholars from 18 countries and 35 different universities.

The main emphasis of the ECREA doctoral summer school is not on focusing on a particular theme, but on providing structural and individuated PhD-support for young scholars, through a variety of working forms, including feedback seminars, workshops, and lectures. All through its many years of existence, the summer school

has aimed to provide a supportive international setting where doctoral students can present their ongoing work, receive feedback on their PhD-projects from international experts and meet students and academics from other countries, establishing valuable contacts for the future. In fact, when reflecting about the challenges young scholars face when they “walk into the unknown world of academia without much prior knowledge of the grammar of the field or of its implicit rules”, the summer school alumni Anne Kaun, Benjamin de Cleen and Christian Schwarzenegger (2014, p. 23) favourably acknowledge the role of the summer school and ECREA's Young Scholars' Network (YECREA) in providing this secure space for solidarity and inspiration. The success of the summer school has largely been built on the ideals of its organizers who have always wanted to provide its participants with a “unique learning and networking experience, bringing together the less experienced and more experienced from all over the world to promote a constructive dialogue from which new research horizons emerge” (Peja et al., 2018, p. 17). In spite of the fact that media and communication scholarship have undergone significant changes, these founding ideals of the summer school have stayed the same. Furthermore, these ideals and values have been cherished for almost three decades. They also served when cornerstones when preparing the 2019 summer school in Tartu.

Although “media studies” or “media and communication” is viewed as a still relatively young discipline (cf. Nordenstreng, 2009), scholars (cf. Herkman, 2008, p. 156) have argued that it has become “‘mission impossible’ to define any clear-cut discipline of media and communication research”. In fact, although some scholars (e.g. Carlsson, 2007) have critically noted that media and communication scholars are used to borrowing theories, perspectives and methods from other disciplines; the doctoral summer school has always emphasised its “utmost respect for academic diversity”, i.e. “it recognizes the existence of a plurality of schools, approaches, theories, paradigms, methods and cultures within academia, which makes it suitable for conversation and dialogue, not conversion and conflict” (Peja et al., 2018, p. 14). Such deep respect for diversity can also be explained by the fact that the field of media studies has gone through considerable changes, in fact, Nordenstreng (2009, p. 254) suggests that “media studies has expanded more than any other academic field, apart from computer science and biomedicine”. Such a fast multiplication has been viewed as rather problematic by some authors (e.g. Nordenstreng, 2009; Carlsson, 2007) who argue that the discipline might lose its healthy roots that can be found both in the basic disciplines of social sciences e.g. in sociology, political science, psychology, educational sciences; but also in humanistic research, e.g. history, philosophy and the study of literature (cf. Herkman, 2008).

All the academic advisors and senior scholars participating in the ECREA doctoral summer schools have, however, eagerly promoted the pluralism of methodological and theoretical approaches for studying contemporary mediated and mediatized societies and enabled the students to get inspired by the plethora of ways one can study the “proverbial elephant”. Considering that the interest in interdisciplinary

research and multidisciplinary social science has been growing in recent years (cf. Loewenstein et al., 2019), the approach taken by the summer school almost 30 years ago could be considered a pioneer one.

In addition to providing the participants of the summer school with an opportunity to gain multi-voiced high-quality feedback to their doctoral projects, and engage in a respectful but critical dialogue between academics; the organizers of the summer school have always been aiming to provide the students with a chance to publish their research. Since the launch of the Researching and Teaching Communication Book Series in 2006, the lecturers, students and alumni of the summer school have published their intellectual work resulting from the discussions from the summer school in a format of an edited volume. This time, however, we have partnered with the journal *Media Studies* to provide the participants of the Tartu 2019 summer school with an opportunity to publish their research in a form of special issue “Fresh voices in European media and communication scholarship”.

In the current special issue, our aim is to showcase some of the outstanding work from our summer school students. But staying true to the nature of the summer school, we are not preferring specific themes over the others, but are bringing you a diversity of topics and approaches. Furthermore, as the title of our special issue indicates, we aim to introduce you to some “fresh voices” in the media and communication scholarship, i.e. for most of the authors enlisted in this special issue, this special issue marks the very first peer reviewed academic publishing experience.

This special issue contains seven articles, which nicely illustrate the diversity of the current media and communication scholarship. The articles in the special issue not only contain a variety of approaches, theories and methods; but also stand for truly European scope as the empirical material as well as the background of the authors spans from north to south and from old and established Europe to new and struggling member-states. Below we will give a short overview of all the seven empirical papers.

In the first paper of the special issue, **Philipp Seuferling** brings life to archival materials of post-second-world-war refugee camps in Germany and discusses “how mediated memory and witnessing are fundamental components of refugees’ media practices”. Such practices, Seuferling argues, were characterised by an ambiguity of “hopeful” and “obligatory” memory, grounded by the structure and agency of the refugee camps.

In the second paper, **Lorenzo Giuseppe Zaffaroni** discusses the emergence of photography as an art form in the Italian context. Relying on qualitative interviews with photography professionals and ethnographic observations during field-configuring events, Zaffroni claims that the legitimisation of photography in Italy is still very much a work in progress as the members on the field have yet to adopt consensual legitimising ideology.

Adoption of a consensual ideology is also explored in another paper in our special issue, as **Maris Männiste** and **Anu Masso** explored how data pioneers from

Estonia practice, experience and express their ideals about algorithmic governance. Interviews with Estonian data experts indicated that social good, transparency and accountability were considered to be universal and normative ideals of data governance, universally accepted by the pioneering community of experts.

Natasja Van Buggenhout, Wendy Van den Broeck and **Pieter Ballon**, however, provide another angle to the data work when screening into the mindset of Flemish media professionals, marketers and advertisers. Relying on the results of the first round of e-Delphi method the authors not only investigate the value of disclosing personal information to media companies, but also propose a set of recommendations for media organisations of how to be more transparent when collecting media users' personal information.

Transparency is also a topic in the paper by **Kathrin Stürmer** and colleagues who have made interviews with federal parliamentarians of the German Bundestag, their employees and lobbyists so as to explore their perceptions and experiences with digital lobbying. The interviews are complemented by autoethnography allowing the authors to provide an insightful analysis of both the sender and receiver side of lobby-work.

Yet another angle about transparency in communication is explored by **Raluca Iacob**, who makes use of quantitative content analysis to investigate the manner Romanian online media framed the reaction of the National Bank of Romania to the "giving in payment" law in 2016. Iacob's research, anchored in media framing theory, is thus representative of a more traditional take on media and communication research.

The final paper of the special issue by **Kaisa Tiusanen** similarly represents a classical research paradigm in media studies as Tiusanen takes a discourse-analytical look at how *Helsingin Sanomat*, largest daily newspaper in Finland, discusses organic and local food and in these discussions reinforces stereotypes about middle-class' cultural tastes.

We hope that the present special issue helps to illustrate both the new research horizons as well as some classical approaches of media and communication scholarship that have resulted from the discussions taking place during the ECREA doctoral summer school of 2019.

The ECREA doctoral summer school was possible thanks to the organizational and financial support of many institutions. We are grateful for ECREA for offering a number of scholarships for the participants and for providing invaluable support for this initiative. We also want to express our gratitude for the support of the Baltic Association for Media Research (BAMR), the institute of Social Studies at the University of Tartu, and the Doctoral School of Behavioural, Social and Health Sciences. We are also thankful for the help and kindness of Kateřina Kirkosová, the managing editor of *Mediální Studia/Media Studies*, for providing us with this opportunity to publish a special issue in the journal. And last, but definitely not least - we appreciate every one of the participants of the summer school - doctoral students and senior

scholars - who invested their time, energy, expertise and passion into making the ECREA doctoral summer school in Tartu and publishing this special issue a memorable experience.

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Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (pille.pruulmann.vengerfeldt@mau.se) is a professor in Media and Communication, Malmö University since November 2016 and has previously worked in University of Tartu on different positions, last as a professor in media studies (2014-2016). Her research interests have focused on questions of cultural citizenship and participation in various online and offline contexts. She has studied engagement in museums, libraries and within the context of public broadcasting. She has also worked internet users and social applications of new technologies. She is currently the international director of European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School and has been engaged with the summer school as student, teacher and organizer since 2004. She has participated and been a leader of different national and international projects. She has published over a hundred articles both in journals and as book chapters and has been part of the editorial team for more than ten books.

Risto Kunelius is a professor in Communication Research and the director of Helsinki Inequality Initiative at the University of Helsinki. Previously he has served as a professor of journalism research and the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities at University of Tampere. His research interests include theoretical questions of media and power, mediatization and social theory, the changing role of journalism and development of public sphere(s). He studies these issues as they intersect with contemporary, complex social and political problems. Most recently he has published on global climate change coverage and on surveillance and journalism. He has participated in numerous doctoral summer schools as a lecturer and mentor.

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