

mediální studia

media studies

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

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What is your academic spirit animal? We asked that of the young scholars gathered in Roskilde University's auditorium on a warm summer afternoon in 2023. And we asked them to draw it. And as senior scholars responsible for running the ECREA Summer School, we joined the discussion and drawing. Pille's spirit animal was a hermit crab, because she likes to gather ideas, thoughts and methods and make her own home out of a mishmash of things. Andra's spirit animal was an elephant as similar to elephants who are dedicated to taking care of their calves, Andra believes it is important to teach important academic life-skills and hacks to one's doctoral students. Ib's spirit animal was a peacock, because... well, no further explanation necessary. The summer school students' spirit animals were dogs, dolphins, deers, dragons, and an abundance of other creatures. Some offered profound explanations for their animal of choice; others justified their choice based on what animal they knew how to draw.

In the end, the choice did not really matter. What mattered was the spirit of things. In particular, the spirit we found in the playful exercise of drawing our academic selves as animals. It offered a different kind of conversation about the challenges scholars engaged in doctoral education face. Where shyness meets overconfidence, self-deprecation meets self-worth, and imposter syndrome meets the realisation that you actually know something. Talking through a spirit animal afforded a wonderful way of recognising each other for who we are, and where we come from; to speak about the oft unspoken challenges of academic life.

The European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Since November 25, 2005, when two European communication associations merged, the organisation has grown significantly. And since its early inception, bringing together scholars across languages, research interests and disciplinary backgrounds has remained its *raison d'être*. To offer and foster an inclusive spirit for scholars across the broad field of media and communication studies. More than a decade before ECREA was established, scholars from different European universities saw value in bringing together PhD students so they could meet, learn from one another, and become better academics through critique and knowledge sharing. The idea of bringing

together PhD students and giving them an opportunity to meet and engage with one another is at the core of the summer school. Though its location changes, its students change, its teachers change, the spirit of the summer school remains the same.

This special issue draws on two groups of summer school students. In 2023 and 2024, Roskilde University hosted the ECREA summer school at the Department of Communication and Arts. In 2023 we received 102 applications, of which 50 were offered a spot, representing approx. 40 different universities across Europe, as well as Chile, China, and India. Respective numbers for 2024 were 132 and 50, representing more than 35 different universities across Europe, as well as Canada, India, and Israel. The summer schools were made possible due to the research project Strategizing Communication and Artificial Intelligence (SCAI) and the generous support of the VELUX FOUNDATION.

A combined number of 31 lecturers participated in 2023 and 2024. And we owe them a big thanks: Andreas Birkebæk, Anne Kaun, Billy Tsagkroni, Cathrin Bengesser, Chris Peters, Christoph Raetzsch, Dan Jackson, David Mathieu, David Ongenaert, David Selva Ruiz, Delia Dumitricia, Fredrik Stiernstedt, Giuliana Sorce, Ib T. Gulbrandsen, Jairo Faria Guedes Coelho, Jannie Møller Hartley, John Downey, Julie Uldam, Kim C. Schrøder, Louise Yung Nielsen, Maria Brock, Maria Schreiber, Mariana Scalabrin Müller, Mark Ørsten, Nina Springer, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Rasmus Rex Pedersen, Roman Horbyk, Sine N. Just, Tina Askanius, and Tobias Raun. Without these people, and without the expert help of Roskilde University's and ECREA's administrative staff, the summer school would not have been possible.

In each summer school, in addition to the feedback sessions, which constitute the core of the Summer School, the participants enjoy an extensive seven-day schedule engagements, including hands-on workshops, field visits, round tables, fish bowls, and a social programme. To capture some elements from these intense and fulfilling days, all participants were invited to submit an abstract for the summer school special issue in *Mediální Studia*. And for some, submitting an abstract for a special issue and then putting together a full journal manuscript, marked their first foray into the fraught world of international, peer-reviewed publication.

The papers selected for the present special issue explore important topics in the present-day mediated and digitalised society through different theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches. Each of the contributions introduces original insights into thematic areas that have triggered considerable scholarly attention through the last few years. Below we will provide a brief outline of the content of each paper published in this special issue.

ANNA ELISABETH HASSELSTRÖM - DISTRIBUTING INSTRUCTIVE AND LEGITIMATE CRISIS COMMUNICATION: COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCES IN SCANDINAVIA

In the first article of this special issue, Elisabeth Hasselström presents a thematic analysis of press conferences conducted by public health authorities in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hasselström examines how pandemic-related Scandinavian press conferences framed instructive messages to resonate with the public, provide explanatory information, and offer actionable guidance in accordance with the IDEA model. In the article, the author expands the IDEA model to include legitimacy of crisis leaders. The presented point to how the three Scandinavian countries implemented all dimensions of the IDEA model, though with differences. Norway prioritized internalization, explanation, and legitimacy; Denmark similarly prioritized internalization and legitimacy, but action over explanation; whereas Sweden prioritized explanation, emphasizing data transparency and scientific information.

DORA SANTOS-SILVA AND GABRIELA MATOS FERREIRA - JOURNALISM AND WELL-BEING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH IN NEWS WORK (2000-2024)

The second paper in the special issue is a collaboration between summer school student Gabriela Matos-Ferreira and her supervisor Dora Santos Silva, who conducted a systematic literature review at the intersection of journalism, mental health and wellbeing. Systematic literature reviews following the PRISMA structure are not common in media and communication studies, but this paper provides an overview of all English-language papers published between 2000-2024. Identifying relevant papers from Scopus and Web of Science-indexed journals, the final study summarises key issues and findings from sixty research papers. Their analysis shows that the focus of these inquiries has shifted: during 2000-2015, only a few papers focused on trauma responses. The next period, 2016-2019, shows small growth and recognition that mental health is a relevant aspect of journalism studies. The real catalyst for the field is COVID-19, not only inspiring many more articles directly related to the pandemic but, more generally, making journalism studies as a field more aware and understanding of the working conditions and mental health burdens of journalistic work. Their analysis reveals three dominant thematic clusters: trauma reporting and its psychological impact; occupational insecurity related to digital disruption; and a focus on crisis reaction, which marks a more holistic, workplace-centred approach to mental health and wellbeing in journalism. Their paper also outlines several important gaps, including conceptual ambiguity,

a limited geographical scope, a lack of attention to structural and organisational dimensions, and a lack of longitudinal and comparative studies and solution-oriented approaches. The systematic literature review identifies many issues that need to be addressed and studied further and can hopefully inspire follow-up studies that investigate them in more detail.

**BARBARA RAVBAR: SILENCED VOICES AT THE BORDER:
HOW CROATIAN ONLINE MEDIA REPORTED ON THE
UKRAINIAN REFUGEES**

The third special issue paper by Barbara Ravbar addresses the Silenced voices at the Border and investigates how two Croatian online media reported on the Ukrainian refugees across 491 articles. The quantitative data analysis looks at the article structure, topics in the articles and sources used in reporting. The analysis covers two most popular Croatian media outlets *index.hr* and *24sata.hr*, which both enjoy significant readership and support, but also have a significant group of society that distrusts their news. Focusing only on the first month of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Feb 24 - March 24) the paper captures the peculiar information chaos of the unprecedented attack. The results show a stark difference in both the visuals used to illustrate the stories as well as the voices that get heard in the reporting. The study shows that news outlets tried to capitalise on surging interest in Ukrainian refugees and tagged articles for search engine optimisation, even if the articles did not address the refugees at all. Significantly, the news outlets relied on the news agency (Hina), showcasing that online news outlets struggle for resources may mean that they end up being less diverse than is perhaps desirable for journalistic quality.

**MAGNUS JOHANSSON: “IT HAS SNUCK INTO ALL PARTS
OF OUR LIFE” - A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF
A SWEDISH SINGLE MOTHER’S EXPERIENCES WITH
SCREEN TIME IN EVERYDAY FAMILY LIFE**

In the fourth paper for the special issue, Magnus Johansson applied a social phenomenological perspective to explore the everyday expectations and negotiations a single mother from Sweden experiences related to the phenomenon of screen time. Even though the phenomenon of screen time has been capturing the interests of many scholars and policy makers during the last few years, qualitative empirical studies that would dwell into the actual experiences of parents and children on the topic have been scarce. Thus, Johansson’s paper offers interesting and necessary first-hand insights. In his analysis, Johansson suggests that screen time has become “a ‘naturalized’ part of the life-worlds of present-day

parents; serving as an indication of the experiences, ideals and struggles parents are going through daily. In his analysis of the experiences of a single mother living with her eight-year-old girl, Johansson eloquently describes the complex nature of the screen time phenomenon illustrating the constant process of negotiations the mother is engaging in, depending on the modes of attention (e.g. negotiations related to rules, notions of trust) and inattention due to its ‘naturalized’ and routinized nature within the domestic space.

JULLIETTA STOENCHEVA: ‘REAL BULGARIAN MEN’ UNDER THREAT: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND MISOGYNY IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS ON GENDER ANTAGONISM IN BULGARIA

In the fifth paper of the special issue, Jullietta Stoencheva explores another issue which has triggered considerable academic interest over the past few years – the topic of growing misogyny and anti-feminism in online communities. Most of the empirical research on the topic, however, has been focused on analysing the developments within the Western countries, while Stoencheva introduces the manifestations of the phenomenon amongst the “ordinary” users of an anonymous Bulgarian Q&A platform Spodeli. Stoencheva’s critical discourse analysis of posts in Spodeli convincingly illustrates how platform affordances such as anonymity, lack of moderation, accessibility, and visibility facilitate the proliferation of misogynistic discourse. Furthermore, her findings indicate that although the discussions in Spodeli have similarities with Western misogynist/anti-feminist discourses, post-communist anxieties around economy and national sovereignty tend to dominate.

DEBORAH PHARES - EX-MUSLIMS’ DIGITAL DISSENT A CASE FOR MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND ENUNCIATIVE PRAGMATICS

In the sixth paper of the special issue Deborah Phares recommends using multimodal critical discourse analysis for studying tweets, enabling to reveal how meaning is produced, critique staged and power claimed in the digital public sphere. When combined with enunciative pragmatics, Phares argues, the suggested approach „reveals apostates’ strategic communicative choices and ideological complexity”. A case study about how ex-Muslims articulate critiques of Islam/isms on platform X is used as an example to illustrate how such methodological choices would help to explore how meaning is shaped by the interplay of text, image, hashtags, emojis, and layout in digital platforms such as X.

AMALIE SCHEEL: LONG COMMENT BRANCH SMPLING FOR SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

In the final article, Amalie Scheel introduces Long Comment Branch Sampling (LCBS) as a novel strategy for enhancing qualitative research of social media discussions. Addressing the challenge of purposive and systematic data sampling, particularly from large datasets from social media, Scheel introduces LCBS as a way to build upon and combine established digital methods and ethnographic approaches. Focused on discussions in comment sections, the article offers a structured, iterative process of selecting, sorting, and synthesizing data, aiming to provide a practical tool for researchers grappling with substantial datasets. The LCBS strategy is demonstrated through an examination of meat reduction discussions on Danish Facebook pages, showing its applicability to various contested issues. By introducing the concept Scheel navigates the non-chronological data format of comment sections, facilitating a systematic, qualitative approach. Underlining the importance of a multi-cycle and iterative process of selecting, locating, sorting, and batching, the author offers LCBS as a tool for studying user engagements in comment sections.

Does the summer school itself have a spirit animal? Is it an octopus? Or a spider creating a web? Or perhaps a beehive collaborating to make some sweet honey? It is something that describes the coming together of doctoral students wanting to engage, senior scholars dedicating and volunteering their time, organising university devoting resources and expertise, everyone's families making it possible for us to dedicate ourselves to academia. In making the special issue possible, the anonymous reviewers and the journal editorial team have also made generous contributions. Thank you.

To conclude, this special issue is a honeycomb, the result of the hive's work; sweet, ephemeral, and good for you. We hope you enjoy it.

Ib T. Gulbrandsen (ibtunby@ruc.dk) is Chair of Technology and Publics at Roskilde University. He researched and teaches at the interdisciplinary nexus of communication, organization and artificial intelligence. Within this context, he focuses on strategic management as a communicative activity, thoroughly entangled with technology. He is principal investigator of the research project Strategizing Communication and Artificial Intelligence (SCAI), and project leader of the 10-year research project Algorithms, Data and Democracy (ADD).

Andra Siibak (andra.siibak@ut.ee) is a Professor of Media Studies and a Deputy Head of Research and Development at the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia. Her research focuses on opportunities and risks surrounding internet use, datafication of childhood, dataveillance in education, and privacy. Together with Giovanna Mascheroni she co-authored a monograph “Datafied Childhoods: Data Practices and Imaginaries in Children’s Lives” (2021), published by Peter Lang. She is a member of Academia Europaea and currently serves as the Vice President of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and International Director of the ECREA Doctoral Summer School.

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (pille.pruulmann.vengerfeldt@mau.se), a member of Academia Europaea, is Professor of Media and Communication at Malmö University. Her work takes a critical and creative approach towards issues of digitalisation, datafication, heritage and infrastructures. She likes working together with people rather than writing about people. Her research examines how digital technologies and their impact on our everyday lives are co-created through cultural, professional, and interpersonal contexts. She also has ongoing research projects on the societal relevance of digital heritage and critical impact frameworks for cultural and creative industries. Pille is the president of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).