

# Introduction: Researching the transformation of societal self-understanding

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## 1. About the book

It is clearly not an underestimation to state that the pillars of social self-understanding are in the midst of a reconstruction process: What constitutes public spheres, what produces and disseminates representations, and what defines a journalist against the backdrop of the incessant spread of rapid digital media changes. Although there are also many stabilities, these transformation processes impact practically on all aspects of the communicative construction of social reality, e.g. the hegemony of mass media organizations is long gone, in many countries social media have already reached significantly higher usage numbers, and the way news is gathered, disseminated and appropriated nowadays has only little similarity to the mechanisms and habits which were dominant twenty or even only ten years ago.

Communication and media research is at the forefront of the scholarly attempts to answer the question how social and cultural processes are driven or moulded by digitization and other kinds of media change, meaning: the increasing intensity of mediatization processes and therefore the growing importance of digital (social) media when it comes to news, representational processes and the construction of public spheres. This book focuses on the challenges that are an intrinsic motif of transition periods like the one our societies, cultures and academies are currently experiencing in the face of digital media imperatives. From its various perspectives, it tackles a gigantic and fundamental question that occupies scholars in one or another form: How does research reflect the never-ending flow of new ideas, drafts, risks and opportunities, overcoming borders and limits between crisis and euphoria?

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Kramp, L., Carpentier, N., Hepp, A. (2015) 'Introduction: Researching the transformation of societal self-understanding', pp. 7-17 in L. Kramp/N. Carpentier/A. Hepp/I. Tomanić Trivundža/H. Nieminen/R. Kunelius/T. Olsson/E. Sundin/R. Kilborn (eds.) *Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere*. Bremen: edition lumière.

The chapters in this edited volume offer a rare, since versatile, view on these questions as they come from a broad variety of academic cultures that together form and shape European media and communication research. This book can be understood as a distillate of a broad commitment to excellence in research on media and communication, generated in affiliation with the annual European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, and organised, promoted and invigorated by both junior and senior researchers from all over Europe and beyond. Likewise, the book is much more than a reflection of the intellectual outcome of a summer school and certainly cannot be reduced to conference proceedings: most of the chapters reach significantly beyond the work presented at the Summer School. The book picks up on the underlying idea of promoting the pluralism of theoretical and methodological approaches for the study of contemporary (mediated and mediatized) communication and establishing transnational dialogue(s) with these diverse and often still culturally enclosed approaches. As part of the Researching and Teaching Communication Series, this edited volume occupies a liminal position in the field of academic books as it presents both conceptual insights of ongoing research as well as the results of completed research. “Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere” is a thoroughly peer-reviewed book, a result of collective endeavour of its many editors, who paid particular attention to supporting the six chapters provided by the emerging scholars Magnus Hoem Iversen, Georgina Newton, Alexandra Polownikow, Maria Schreiber, Saiona Stoian and Eimante Zolubiene, all of whom were Summer School participants.

The first part of the book is structured into five main thematic sections – “Journalism and the News Media”, “Representation and Everyday Life”, “Public Sphere, Space and Politics”, “Rethinking Media Studies”, and “Academic Practice” – however, most of the chapters published in this volume cut across the disciplines, and consequently reveal not only the richness of contemporary perspectives on media and communication, but at the same time also highlight the growing need for a more thorough theoretical understanding of the analyzed phenomena and clear definitions of theoretical frameworks and concepts.

The three chapters of the first section focus on the current state of journalism, its practice, its education and its role in society. **Leif Kramp** (U Bremen) opens the section with a discussion of transformational processes in journalism. Kramp refers to the heuristic concept of “communicative figurations” to argue that organizational learning in news organizations builds on nothing less than a reinvented understanding of journalism. **Bertrand Cabedoche** (U Stendhal-Grenoble 3) focuses on journalism education at the intersection of the mass media and the social media age. Discussing the role of the UNESCO as a promoter of responsible journalism, the chapter outlines research desiderata on journalism education with an emphasis on specific recommendations. **Eimante Zolubiene** (U Vilnius) investigates the role news media play in com-

municating risks such as natural disasters, political crises or technologically induced accidents. Zolubiene outlines a research design for a systematic analysis of risk discourse in news media as it appears across areas such as social, economic, political, cultural, environmental or technological problems.

The second section presents three chapters that centre on the forms and roles of representation in everyday life. **Ebba Sundin** (U Jönköping) deals with the role of the media in everyday life, one of the core questions in media and communication studies. In her chapter, two classic assumptions of media content are in focus: the first one is about media content related to individuals' experiences and how this content is confirmed and assures the 'state of reality'. The second assumption is about media content related to how individuals can experience 'reality' beyond their own reach. **Saiona Stoian** (SNSPA Bucharest) analyzes how media representations of suffering and mobility intertwine with respect to a humanitarian imaginary. Stoian aims to expand the discussion of this relationship against the background of mobility studies in order to ask how visible patterns of suffering are incorporated into a certain understanding of a mobility/immobility dialectic, and how this incorporation affects the way suffering is perceived. **Maria Schreiber** (U Vienna) focuses on mobile media technology to investigate how elderly media users digitally produce and share photos, with their smartphones. The chapter wants to show how the different affordances that come with mobile multimedia devices are used in an age-specific way.

In the third section, four chapters investigate how the theoretical discussion on public sphere, space and politics can be pushed forward, suggesting new theoretical and analytical approaches: **Alexandra Polownikow** (TU Düsseldorf) puts an emphasis on the question of media quality in the discussion on the construction of public spheres. Polownikow introduces an analytical concept to further develop the study of the transnationalization of the public sphere by incorporating media content qualities. **Hannu Nieminen** (U Helsinki) argues that the change of media production, with the marginalization of the mass media, the growing level of education, and the increase in leisure time, has already transformed civic subjectivity and continues to change into a more self-reflexive and autonomous form of individuality. Nieminen connects a theoretical approach towards media crisis with the discussion of communication policy and media regulation. **Magnus Hoem Iversen** (U Bergen) strives to understand how traditional and emerging forms of intentional, political communication are perceived and interpreted by audiences. Iversen's chapter wants to encourage researchers in the area of practicing reception analysis to pay greater attention to the production of media texts, as well as to engage with the texts themselves. **Simone Tosoni** (U Sacred Heart Milan) deals with a phenomenological conceptualization of urban space, based on social and symbolic interaction. By discussing an original case study on situations where people are

somehow forced into the role of an audience viewing a media spectacle, Tosoni points out that conceptualizations of space – when related to media – should be extended into a fully fledged relational approach, given the omnipresence of media.

Section Four consists of three chapters that suggest rethinking media studies by highlighting different fields of investigation: feminist theory, memory studies and social risk theory. **Georgina Newton** (Bournemouth U) offers a fresh look on socialist-feminist theory from the perspective of critical media studies: Newton calls for a comprehensive approach that integrates all women who are subjected to capitalist and patriarchal media. **Irena Reifova** (Charles U Prague) explores the versatile discipline of memory studies in order to shed light on concepts that are useful starting points for tie links between memory and the mechanisms that impel communication media. Reifova is interested in the intertwining of individual and collective memory with respect to the different memory inducing influences of analogue and digital media. **Maria Murumaa-Mengel, Katrin Laas-Mikko and Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt** (U Tartu) take a look into the complexity of informational privacy situations. The authors investigate self-censorship as a relatively new phenomenon in risk society and conceptualize these mechanisms as coping strategies to deal with the profoundly altered relationship between privacy and publicness.

The fifth section presents reflections and tangible advice on the dynamic field of academic practice. **Nico Carpentier** (VUB) discusses strategies of overcoming various areas of antagonistic conflicts in academia. Carpentier develops a metaphorical yet constructive path to overcome these conflicts with a discursive tool named the “sgridge”. **François Heinderyckx** (ULB) offers a practical guide to enhance oral presentations in an academic context, based on his renowned skills workshop at the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School. **Leif Kramp** (U Bremen) then questions the benefits and drawbacks that digitization brings for science in general, and for academic practice in particular.

The second part of the book contains the abstracts of the doctoral projects of all 41 students that participated in the 2014 Summer School. Throughout the book, a series of photographs taken during the programme are also included. Our special thanks goes to François Heinderyckx for the photographic material that illustrates the sections of the book.

## 2. The Background of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School

The Summer School was established in the early 1990s by a consortium of ten (Western) European universities, initiated by the Universities of Stendhal-Grenoble 3 (Grenoble, France) and Westminster (UK). From then on, these

participating universities have organised annual summer schools for PhD students in the field of media and communication studies, lasting for one or two weeks and taking place in a wide range of locations, including Grenoble, Lund, Barcelona, London Helsinki, Tartu and Ljubljana. In 2013, the Summer School moved for the first time to the ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research at the University of Bremen, Germany. In 2014, it took place from 3 to 16 August.

Including the University of Bremen, 22 universities participate in the consortium: Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), Charles University in Prague (CZ), Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) (HU), Jönköping University (SE), London School of Economics & Political Science (UK), Lund University (SE), University of Ankara (TR), University of Bergen (NO), University of Ljubljana (SI), University of Erfurt (DE), University of Roskilde (DK), University of Sacred Heart Milan (IT), University of Stirling (UK), University of Tampere (FI), University of Tartu (EE), University of Westminster (UK), University on Helsinki (FI), University Stendhal-Grenoble 3 (FR), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE), Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) (LT), and Loughborough University (UK). In 2014, the affiliated partners of the programme were the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and the International League of Higher Education in Media & Communication (MLeague). The main funding institution was the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with additional support from the Graduate Centre of the University of Bremen.

The central goals of the Summer School are:

- a. to provide innovative mutual support for doctoral studies in the field of media and communication, with additional support of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA),
- b. to stimulate bilateral and multilateral cooperation between consortium partner universities in the areas of doctoral studies, teaching and research,
- c. to provide a forum for critical dialogue between academics on the cultural and technological challenges posed by media globalisation and convergence, focusing on socio-political as well as the cultural implications of these challenges,
- d. to promote a respectful but critical dialogue between academic researchers and representatives of civilian society, the media industry and government institutions.

The Summer School follows a number of principles, of which student-orientation is the most important one. The PhD projects of the participating students are at the centre of the Summer School, and its main aim is to enhance the academic quality of each individual project. In contrast to many other summer schools, the main task of the instructional staff is not to lecture, but to provide support to the participants in their PhD trajectories.

The Summer School provides this support through structured, high-quality and multi-voiced feedback on the work of each individual PhD student, combined with numerous opportunities for informal dialogues. The feedback consists of a series of extensively elaborated analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the PhD projects, which allow PhD students to structurally improve the quality of their academic work. Although the feedback is provided by experts in the field of media and communication studies, these authoritative voices never become authoritarian, and the autonomy of the participants is never ignored. Moreover, feedback is always multi-voiced: different lecturers and participants contribute to the analysis of each individual PhD project, enhancing the richness of the feedback and allowing a diversity of perspectives to become articulated.

The Summer School combines a constructive-supportive nature with a critical perspective. During the feedback sessions, the evaluation consists of a balanced overview of the qualities and problems of a doctoral research and publication project, in combination with the options that can be used to overcome these problems. Moreover, the workshops and the lectures are aimed to support the future academic careers of the participants by allowing them to acquire very necessary academic and self-management skills. The atmosphere of the Summer School is fundamentally non-competitive, as the talents of all participants will be acknowledged, and participants and lecturers act as peers, cherishing academic collegiality and collaborative work.

The Summer School also expresses the utmost respect for academic diversity. We recognize the existence of a plurality of schools, approaches, theories, paradigms, methods, and cultures in academia, which makes the Summer School predestined for conversation and dialogue, and not for conversion and conflict. Its commitment to diversity in approaches can only be made possible through an equally strong commitment to academic rigueur, thoroughness, responsibility, honesty and quality.

Finally, the Summer School aims to stimulate connectedness. First of all, the Summer School is aimed at the building of long-term academic networks, enabling future collaborations at the international/European level. We recognize the necessary nature of intellectual exchange for academia and the importance of transcending frontiers. But the Summer School also wants to remain respectful towards the localized context in which it operates, at the urban and national level of the hosting city, avoiding disconnections with civilian society, business and the State.

In order to realise these principles, the fourteen-day 2014 Summer School was based on a combination of lectures, training workshops, student-workshops and working visits. The core format of the Summer School is based on the so-called feedback-workshops, which are oriented towards providing the doctoral students with the structured, high-quality and multi-voiced feedback

mentioned above. For this purpose, the following specific procedure was used: After their application is approved, the participating doctoral students upload their 10-page papers onto the intranet of the Summer School website. On the basis of the papers, the doctoral students are then divided into three groups ('flows'), and each student is attributed a lecturer-respondent and a fellow participant-respondent. Moreover, a so-called 'flow-manager' (a member of the academic Summer School staff) is also attributed to each of the flows. These flow-managers coordinate the activities of the feedback-workshop flows for the entire duration of the Summer School.

During the feedback-workshops, each doctoral student presents his or her project, which is then commented upon by the fellow participant-respondent, the lecturer-respondent and the flow-manager, and finally discussed by all participants. At the end of the series of feedback-workshops, a joint workshop is organised, where the diversity of paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological approaches is discussed, combined with the intellectual lessons learned at the Summer School.

In addition, the training workshops are a crucial pedagogical tool for the Summer School. These workshops provide the doctoral students with practical training on issues related to making posters, publishing, abstract-writing, comparative research, literature review, oral presentation skills, communication of scientific topics to lay audiences, interactive teaching to larger groups, interrogating sources, and creative online writing. They are combined with a number of lectures which aim to deal with specific content, focussing on specific theories or concepts. Finally, the field excursions give the participants more insights into Germany's media structures, politics, cultures and histories.

### 3. The scholars involved in the Summer School

In 2014, 41 doctoral students participated in the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, originating from 21 countries: Austria (1), Belgium (2), Bulgaria (1), China (1), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (3), Estonia (2), Finland (3), France (1), Germany (4), Hungary (2), Italy (1), Latvia (1), the Netherlands (1), Norway (1), Romania (2), Slovenia (1), Spain (3), Sweden (1), Turkey (1) and the United Kingdom (8). All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this book.

The blue flow consisted of Andreas Lenander Aegidius, Rianne Dekker, Stephanie De Munter, Flavia Durach, Scott Ellis, Ralitsa Kovacheva, Daria Plotkina, Alexandra Polownikow, Kinga Polynczuk, Subekti W. Priyadharma, Song Qi, Ezequiel Ramon, Jan Svelch, Dan Zhang, and Eimante Zolubiene

The yellow flow was joined by Susanne Almgren, Sara Atanasova, Simona Bonini Baldini, Gabriella Fodor, Antje Glück, Linda Lotina, Georgina Newton, Saadia Ishtiaq Nauman, Binakuromo Ogbemor, Arko Olesk, Michael Scheffmann-Petersen, Monika Sowinska, Saiona Stoian, Jari Väliverronen, and Susan Vertoont.

The green flow grouped Shani Burke, Paula Herrero, Søren Schultz Jørgensen, Aida Martori, Magnus Hoem Iversen, Can Irmak Özinanır, Maria Schreiber, Robert Tasnádi, Michal Tuchowski, Monika Verbalyte, and Yiyun Zha.

The number of lecturers was 22, including 20 permanent lecturers from partner institutions and two guest lecturers from Denmark and the UK. The permanent lecturers from the partner universities were: Michael Bruun Andersen, Bertrand Cabedoche, Nico Carpentier, Matilde Delgado, François Heinderyckx, Maria Heller, Andreas Hepp, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Anthony McNicholas, Ole Mjös, Hannu Nieminen, Irena Reifová, Tobias Olsson, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Ebba Sundin, Burcu Sümer, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, Simone Tosoni, and Dominic Wring.

Additionally, two guest lectures took centre stage with:

- Mirca Madianou on “Polymedia, Mediatization and Social Change”
- Stig Hjarvard on “Mediatization: Changing the Conditions of Mediation”

In addition to the activities of the Summer School lecturers, the programme also included a study excursion to Europe’s biggest news magazine publishing house DER SPIEGEL in Hamburg, and an intense discussion with the then-editor-in-chief Wolfgang Büchner, the online CEO Katharina Borchert and the online managing editor Janko Tietz. The focus of the discussion was on current challenges of journalism and strategies of a news organization to combine quality management, marketing and cost-efficiency in an increasingly problematic economical situation. The conceptual idea of this initiative was also to build a bridge between the doctoral research and media practice.

Once again this year, Andreas Hepp was the local director of the Summer School, and Leif Kramp the local organizer. Both were supported by the international director Nico Carpentier. In addition, François Heinderyckx acted as the ECREA liaison. Hannu Nieminen, Nico Carpentier, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Ebba Sundin, and Tobias Olsson acted as the Summer School’s flow-managers.

#### 4. Assessment and perspectives

The evaluation was conducted in the form of a workshop including a half-standardized, anonymous survey. All participants completed an evaluation form to rate, and comment on, the lectures and workshops held during the two weeks of the Summer School. Additionally, the participants formed four

evaluation groups and discussed as well as presented feedback on: lectures, workshops and student-workshops; individual discussions with lecturers, discussions and networking opportunities with other students; scheduling of the programme, composition of the programme; accommodation, food and coffee (during breaks); visits in Bremen, social activities; website, pre-summer school communication, the Summer School book; and the flow-managers / Summer School staff.

The evaluation generated – like the year before in 2013 – a very positive feedback and constructive suggestions for further improving some of the conceptual and scheduling aspects for future summer schools: The reputation, experience and teaching qualities of the lecturers present at the Summer School 2014 as well as their approachability was appreciated even more than the year before by the participants. The average ratings for the lectures and workshops (1 = poor to 5 = very good) were up to 0.2 points higher than the year before (lectures from 3.6 in 2013 to 3.77 in 2014; workshops from 3.8 in 2013 to 4.03 in 2014). Also, the Summer School management was given high marks. It was further highly appreciated that the lectures were prepared especially for the Summer School. In the view of the participants, the mixture of workshops and lectures in the Summer School programme was very well-balanced. The interactivity and extended length of workshops (2 hours instead of 1 hour in previous Summer Schools) was appreciated. Additionally, also the scholarship programme was appreciated. The Summer School will continue to offer scholarships to cover the registration fees for participants from Eastern and Southern Europe, thus enabling young researchers to come to Bremen who otherwise would not be able to afford it. This is due to the continuing economic crisis in countries like Portugal, Spain and Greece (amongst others). The aim of the scholarship programme is to allow more participants from these regions, who would otherwise not be able to attend and to benefit from the high-value feedback, access to the learning and networking opportunities of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School.

The overall positive and encouraging feedback was complemented by numerous comments on the social network platforms that were used together with the Summer School website as complementary discussion and networking instruments. After the Summer School, many participants left positive comments on the website of the Summer School Facebook group, e.g.:

*“Not being original here: hard to believe I am back home and that’s been only 2 weeks! Miss you all already and hope we see each other again Lots of luck and sleep! And of course special thanks to the organizers and lecturers!” (16.08.2014)*

*“It was great meeting you all. Thank you. Let me know if you come to Turkey.” (16.08.2014)*

*“It was a wonderful experience and I feel very lucky that I could meet you all. I miss you guys and I wish you all the best with your PhD projects.” (17.08.2014)*

*“It was a great pleasure to meet all of you! Good luck working on your projects and hope to see you again. Greetings from Lithuania!” (17.08.2014)*

Comments also included information on local follow-up meetings, invitations for research stays at some of the partner universities as well as plans for a joint gathering at the biannual conference of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in Lisbon in November 2014.

## 5. Final acknowledgments

The Summer School is supported by a wide range of individuals and institutions. The consortium partners, ECREA and the DAAD all provided invaluable support to this long-standing initiative. Over the past years, lecturers and flow managers have invested a lot of energy in lecturing and providing support. The doctoral students themselves have shown a tremendous eagerness which can only be admired and applauded. The organisers also wish to thank Gabriele Gerber and Heide Pawlik from the secretariat of the ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research, Dr. Diana Ebersberger from the Graduate Centre and Barbara Hasenmüller from the International Office of the University of Bremen, for their strategic and operational support. Additional thanks goes to the Communicative Figurations research network. We are also grateful for the smooth cooperation with DER SPIEGEL, especially to Catherine Stockinger from the reader service, Wolfgang Büchner as an editor-in-chief who proved to be open-minded and appreciated international perspectives, Katharina Borchert as CEO of SPIEGEL ONLINE who gave insights into the corporate struggles of a multi-platform publishing house, and to Janko Tietz as an experienced print journalist who reflected on his decision to change sides to be one of the managing editors of SPIEGEL ONLINE.

With its diverse sections and chapters this edited volume shows that journalism, representations and public spheres all face profound, and maybe somewhat similar, challenges in the era we depict as digital: Journalism is undergoing a transformation as a profession, a cultural practice and a business, experiencing alterations of its structures, instruments and routines; the role and impact of (media) representations in everyday life are also changing and with them the way public spheres, space and politics are constructed and negotiated. We have to look for innovative research strategies to analyze and understand these transformations, and this is what the strength of European media and communication research is all about: diversity and creativeness, and at the same time highly cooperative, especially among young scholars, contributions in the joint pursuit of excellence. This is it what makes the Summer School a unique learning and networking experience, bringing together the less experienced and the more experienced from all over Europe and even beyond, in order to discuss their research agendas. To preserve this experience, be reminded (in many of the Summer School languages): Researchers, work

together! Les chercheurs, ensemble! Forscht gemeinsam! Исследователи, работают заедно! 研究人员, 携手共进! Výchumníci, spolu! Forskere, sammen! Teadlased koos! Tutkijat, yhdessä! A kutatók, együtt! I ricercatori, insieme! Pētnieki, kopā! Mokslininkai kartu! Forskere, sammen! Raziskovalci, skupaj! Los investigadores, juntos! Forskare, tillsammans! Cercetatorii, împreună! Araştırmacılar, birlikte! Onderzoekers, samen!

## Websites

The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School  
<http://www.comsummerschool.org/>

The Researching and Teaching Communication Book Series  
<http://www.researchingcommunication.eu/>

The European Communication Research and Education Association  
<http://www.ecrea.eu/>

The ECREA Young Scholars Network  
<http://yecrea.eu/>

The ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication and Information Research  
<http://www.zemki.uni-bremen.de>

The 'Communicative Figurations' research network  
<http://www.communicative-figurations.org>

