Introduction: Researching Present Scenarios of Media Production and Engagement

Simone Tosoni, Maria Francesca Murru, Laura Peja and Nico Carpentier

1. About the book

This book, the twelfth volume of the Researching and Teaching Communication Book Series, launched in 2006, stems from the combined intellectual work of the lecturers, the students and the alumni of the 2016 edition of the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School (SuSo). The main sections of this collective endeavor aims to shed light on key issues of the present scenarios of media production and engagement, and in particular on transmedia communication (Part I, Section I), on the current strategies and transformations within media and cultural industries (section II), on the politics of representation in contemporary media discourse (section III), as well as on some of the methodological challenges media scholars have to face in doing research (section IV). At the same time, the book gives an account of the work done at the Summer School, and in particular of the plurality of research interests and analytical perspectives that the SuSo community values as its main asset. The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, in fact, is run by a consortium of 21 European universities, and brings together PhD students coming every year from more than 30 different European and extra-European institutions: it therefore represents an arena where different disciplinary traditions and methodological backgrounds in media and communication studies can get in touch, debate and cooperate to advance our understanding of media systems and communication processes. The reader can get an insight of the richness and variety of the different perspectives in dialogue within SuSo from the second part of the book, dedicated – as it is customary in the series – to the PhD projects' abstracts of the students participating to the summer school. Altogether, these abstracts represent a good sample of the ongoing research of the next generation of media scholars, and an overview of the current trends in media and communication studies.

Six among these students–Julie Escurignan, Leandro Augusto Borges Lima, Naima Huassain, Anna Grøndahl Larsen, Justyna Pierzynska and Yuliya Lakew– have been selected to develop their research into a full paper. Their work features in this book together with eight lecturers' chapters and with the three chapters from SuSo alumni (Tania Lucía Cobos, Scott Ellis, Johanna Möller) that were selected through an open call.

The first thematic section deals with present scenarios of convergence and trans-media communication. **Julie Escurignan** opens Section I, interrogating the transme-dia franchise *Game of Thrones* through a semiotic approach*,* to clarify how the visual identity of the brand is created and sustained across different media and products – the HBO TV show, adapted since 2011 from the novels by George R. R. Martin, and video games, dedicated websites and collectibles. *Games of Thrones*' visual identity emerges as coherent, with the notable exception of the product's licensed merchan-dising. This observation suggests interesting questions about the tension between the strategy of valorization of a transmedia franchise through third parties licensing, and the firm control on the franchise needed to articulate a coherent transmedia identi-ty and storytelling. The second chapter, by **Simone Tosoni** and **Mariana Ciancia**, moves the focus of the section to user-generated content production, and in particular to vidding, the practice of synchronizing a song with excerpts of one or more visual texts (usually a TV series or a cult movie), so to confer new meanings to the vid-eo materials. The adopted practice-centred approach drives the authors to focus on the material and digital artefacts employed in vidding, on the competences required by the practice, and on its symbolic meanings. In particular, the analysis shows the transformations foregone by the practice when it moves from the fandom realm to the realm of video making. **Sonia Livingstone**'s chapter presents the findings of a year-long ethnographic research with one class of 13-14 years-old students, inves-tigating the ways in which they appropriate digital media. The author underlines the existence of a deep tension between the young people's desire to find in digital media new spaces of personal autonomy and agency, and the attempt by parents and teachers to deploy these same media normatively, in order to "*shape young peo-ple's present achievements and future prospects*". Finally, **Leandro Augusto Borges Lima** addresses videogames – in particular, the *Mass Effect* trilogy – from the un-derstudied perspective of political communication. The author, in fact, underlines how videogames can be part of "*scenes of dissensus*", being political in three distinct axes: production, content and consumption. *Mass effect* would allow the articulation, at all these levels, of a specific political discourse on gender, as shown by the author through content and gameplay analysis, and through interviews with players.

Section II of the book deals with media and cultural industries, their structural transformations and their strategies in the present media system. In the first chap-ter, **Montse Bonet** offers an overview of the early years of the study of political

economy of communication and culture in Spain. This kind of contribution makes available at an international level the research done in non-Anglophone contexts, and is much needed not only by scholars working on cultural and creative indus-tries, but in all the fields of media studies. Especially in the past decades, a difficult access to international publications and obstacles related to language have in fact hindered non-Anglophone scholars to fully contribute to the international debate: national research traditions in media studies still represent an under known, yet potentially valuable resource for the whole field. Regarding cultural industries, as the author resumes, "*the insistence that the critical analysis of culture and com-munication should not be separated, the classification and the exhaustive study of each and every one of the cultural industries, the division between industrialized and non-industrialized culture, as well as the defence of public service and critical perspective could be the principal contributions of the Spanish researchers in the early years of democracy – and still today*." In the second chapter of the section, **Tania Lucía Cobos** focuses on the key topic of the tensions between the interests of news producers and what she calls the "Fifth Estate": the multinational tech-nological companies on the internet, providing service of news aggregations and distribution like Google news. In this respect, the author talks about "frienemies" to highlight the ambiguity of this relationship, one of symbiosis but also of com-petition, not rarely giving rise to conflicts and legal actions. The author identifies five areas of potential conflict: technological dependence, distribution of the adver-tising revenue, competition for the audience, irruption of territories and the subtle or explicit influence on public opinion. In the chapter that follows, **Leif Kramp** addresses the strategy of news media companies to attract young audiences in the German context. Discussing the cases of *VICE Germany* and of *jetzt*, the author shows how journalistic media companies face the intense competition of non-jour-nalistic providers of news and entertainment. In particular, the author shows how the new strategies involve also a relevant organizational restructuring, together with a pursuit of new channels to engage their target (most prominently, social media) and with new editorial approaches (the intentional blurring between news and commentary, for example). This restructuration is particularly related to the institution of editorial teams characterized by a low average age, to reduce the communicative distance with the audiences, but also to valorize the skills in using social media that young journalists share with the target group. In the final chapter of the section **Naima Huassain** interrogates ethnographically the journalism prac-tice in Greenland through the lenses of Bourdieu's field theory, and in particular through the analytical concepts of *habitus* and *capital.* The author underlines how the understudied case of Greenland must be read in terms of the relationship of dependency, but also of the tensions, between the "*small, exposed and vulnera-ble*" local journalistic field and the transnational field. While, in fact, "*legislation*

and the organizational structure of the media are inherited, and a flow of Danish visiting journalists and editors keep up norms and the value system of the field", Greenlandic journalists operate in a context with its own specificities, like for example the close tie between reporters and sources of information. Drawing on these empirical observations, the author points also out some possible directions of further development of Bourdieu's original account of the journalistic field.

Section III of the book is dedicated to the politics of representations in contemporary journalism, and it's opened by a chapter by **Anna Grøndahl Larsen** on the representations of foreign fighters (Westerners joining the Islamic State in Syria) in Norwegian media. Based on content analysis and on in-depth interviews with journalists, the chapter describes a representational strategy based on humanization: rather then simply depicting them as dangerous criminals, Norwegian media describe foreign fighter as complex human beings, giving them a detailed story and describing their "path to extremism". This representational strategy would allow to expand the understandings of violent extremism, and to broaden the range of perspectives on the topic within public discourses. The following chapter, by **Justyna Pierzynska**, addresses the construction of brotherhoods of nations in post-Communist media, and in particular in Serbian media. The author shows how the construction of an "*exotic brotherhood*" with different nations of the Caucasus (Georgians, Armenians, Ossetes) should be interpreted in terms of the anti-Westernism of their political orientation and as a way of contrasting the great powers' political strategy in the peripheries such as the Balkans or the Caucasus. Yet, at the same time, the author underlines how these kinds of symbolic brotherhoods would also represent a valuable occasion to overcome nationalism and historical manipulation by fostering new occasions of cultural exchange. In the third chapter of the section **Michael Bruun Andersen** introduces the reader to indexing theory, stating that in those circumstances where the national interests are at stake, most notably in war, media "mirror" political power. At the origin of this phenomenon there would be the dependence of routine news journalism by official sources. This approach is applied and illustrated by an analysis of the media coverage of COP15 – the 15th International summit on climate change organized by the UN in Copenhagen 2009. In the following chapter, **Johanna Möller** investigates how, in Germany, the debate on Edward Snowden's disclosures on NSA surveillance contributed to the de-mystification of discursive myths about technology as invariably promoting "self liberation" and social democratization. Drawing on social constructionist perspectives, the author points out how such a disenchantment would potentially be of great relevance for a more democratic rethinking of the relationship between technology and society, hindered by dominant techno-utopist discourses. Yet, the NSA debate would represent a sort of missed occasion: German newspapers would have not got fully rid of deterministic ways to conceive the relationship between technology and society, conceiving the

former as "black boxed" and, as such, defying at least in part the public political debate. In the final chapter, **Scott Ellis** discusses how media can contribute to create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBT youth, protecting them from bullying and victimization. In a mediatized society, in fact, LGBT identities are in part defined also by media and thought media. Drawing on a small research among higher education students in the US and UK, the author analyses the effectiveness of gay-straight alliances (as well as high-profile campaigns with heterosexual spokespeople, particularly straight men) in improving social inclusion for LGBT.

The fourth and last section addresses issues concerning doing research in media and communications studies, and it deals with methodological problems and with academic research practicalities. The section opens with **Bertrand Cabedoche**, which discusses the differences between common sense and academic knowledge. This very basic issue is of key relevance for any student and researcher moving his/her first steps into media and communication studies, and more in general into any discipline dealing with culture and society. In the second chapter, **Yiannis Christidis** and **Nico Carpentier** present their experimentation with an alternative form of communication of academic knowledge: the sound art composition – or "*Audionces*", as the authors have named it. After accounting for the production of their *Audionces* as a translation of a pre-existing academic written text, and after discussing the main theoretical issues risen in the process, the authors clarify what in their view are the opportunities that a sonification process offers to academic knowledge: the possibility to target different audiences and the circulation of ideas in societal fields often inaccessible to academia; the enrichment of the original text as a consequence of the combined processes of conceptualization and sonification; the possibility to communicate different things at the same time allowed by the multi-layered nature of the sonic. In the chapter that follows **Yuliya Lakew** discusses about reflexivity in quantitative research, and the need "*to unravel conventions and granted assumptions of media studies as a discipline, reflect upon data's temporal and spatial components, the subjective position of the researcher, the limits and the meaningfulness of generalizations, and the role of interpretations in statistical analysis*". Drawing on her research practice, the author convincingly demonstrates the need to extend reflexivity from qualitative research, where it is part of the validation process, to quantitative research, to consider the cost of deriving knowledge from statistical models, in terms of what has been omitted, ignored or not taken into account. Finally, in the chapter closing the section and the first part of the book, **Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt** addresses the present neoliberal academic culture and the problems of time management it implies. The author discusses six time management strategies: working shorter hours, focusing on tasks, sleeping, planning, multitasking and forgiving yourselves if something is not as it should be.

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.

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 2016, the Summer School moved for the first time to the University of Sacred Heart in Milan, where it took place from July 25th to August 5th, 2016.

Including the University of Sacred Heart Milan, 22 universities participate in the consortium: Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), University of Bremen (DE); 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 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 2015, the affiliated partner of the programme was again the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).

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 research-

ers 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 2016 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 gave the participants more insights into Italy's media structures, politics, cultures and histories.

3.   The scholars involved in the Summer School

In 2016, 44 doctoral students participated in the European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, originating from 20 countries: Austria (2), Belgium (8), China (1), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (2), Estonia (1), Finland (2), France (1), Germany (3), India (1), Italy (2), Norway (3), Slovenia (1), Spain (2), Sweden (3), UK (10) and USA (1). All of their abstracts, and a selection of six chapters based on their work, are included in this book.

The blue flow consisted of Jolien van Keulen, Marta Albújar Villarrubia, Diana Livadic, Novella Troianiello, Julie Escurignan, Shant Fabricatorian, Miriam Bartsch, Veera Ehrlén, Yuliya Lakew, Martina Topinkova, Felicitas Schenz, Thanh Loan Ngo Thi, Qiong Dang, Sofie Flensburg and Amy McHugh.

The yellow flow was joined by Christiana Voniati, Ida Vikøren Andersen, Gyorgyi Horvath, Anna Grøndahl Larsen, Diretnan Dusu Bot, Débora Antunes, Maryam Vaziri, Mehtap Çalar, Hannah Grünenthal, Bilal Ayan, Dianjing Li, Leandro Augusto Borges Lima, Demetra Kolakis, Karianne Sørgård Olsen and Mihael Djukic.

The green flow grouped Marija Skoir, Yingzi Wang, Kate Moffat, Justyna Pierzynska, Sarah Gillaerts, Marlen Komorowski, Pauliina Penttilä, Petre Breazu, Amy Genders, Serena Fossati, Gemma Gómez Bernal, Age Rosenberg, Xiaomin Hu, Philippine Clot, Dan Wang and Naimah Hussain.

The Summer School hosted 20 permanent lecturers from partner universities from all over Europe: Peter Berglez, Michael Bruun Andersen, Bertrand Cabedoche, Roberta Carpani, Nico Carpentier, Fausto Colombo, François Heinderyckx, Maria Heller, Montse Bonet, Richard Kilborn, Risto Kunelius, Sonia Livingstone, Anthony McNicholas, Simone Natale, Hannu Nieminen, Tobias Olsson, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Ilija Tomanić Trivundža, Tomas Trampota, Simone Tosoni and Karsten Wolf. Furthermore, Peter Lunt from the University of Leicester contributed to a workshop with Sonia Livingstone.

In addition to the activities of the Summer School lecturers, the programme included a visit to Triennale Design Museum and Museo del Novecento. This year, Fausto Colombo was the local director of the Summer School, and Simone Tosoni and Maria Francesca Murru were the local organisers. The local team was supported by the international director Nico Carpentier. In addition, François Heinderyckx acted as the ECREA liaison. Richard Kilborn, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Anthony McNicholas, Risto Kunelius, Tobias Olsson, Nico Carpentier 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 feedback on: lectures, workshops and student-workshops; individual discussions with lecturers, discussions and networking opportunities with other students; the scheduling of the programme, composition of the programme; accommodation,

food and coffee (during breaks), social activities; website, pre-summer school communication, the Summer School book; and the flow-managers/Summer School staff.

The evaluation generated 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 2016 as well as their approachability was appreciated by the participants on nearly the same levels as in the previous years.

The average ratings for the lectures and workshops (1 = poor to 5 = very good) were 3.5 points for lectures and 3.5 points for workshops. In the view of the participants, the mixture of workshops and lectures in the Summer School programme was very well-balanced. The interactivity and the split workshops with half of the groups were highly appreciated.

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.

5.   Final acknowledgments

The Summer School is supported by a wide range of individuals and institutions. The consortium partners and the ECREA 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 success of the Suso 2016 has been possible thanks to the organisational and financial support of many institutions. Organisers wants to express their gratitude to: the Department of Communication Studies and Performative Arts of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano; Almed – Post-graduate School in Media, Communication and Performative Arts and his Director prof. Ruggero Eugeni, Lifelong Eduaction Office and Educatt – Student Services of the same institution; "I Don't Want to Be Inactive" Research Network D3.2. on aging, funded by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore; and Sky Italy.

With its diverse sections and chapters this edited volume shows that the profoundly changing social and cultural environment poses new challenges to media scholars. The continuous effort to analyze these transformations should be combined with the attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what is ahead of us in its variety and entirety. This is what the Summer School proves year after year: strong European media and communication research is about diversity and creativeness, and about cooperation and networking, especially among young scholars who con-

tribute fresh inquiries to the research discourse. This is what makes the Summer School a unique learning and networking experience, bringing together the less experienced and the more experienced from all over Europe to promote a constructive dialogue by which new research horizons emerge.