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**Media and Communication in and after the Global Capitalist Crisis: Renewal, Reform or Revolution?**

**ESA RN18 Mid-Term Conference 2014**

University of Bucharest, Romania

October 17-18, 2014

**Call for Participation and Abstracts**

European Sociological Association, Research Network 18: Sociology of Communications and Media Research

<http://www.europeansociology.org/research-networks/rn18-sociology-of-communications-and-media-research.html>

Submission deadline for abstracts: July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. Submission per e-mail to [christian.fuchs@uti.at](mailto:christian.fuchs@uti.at)

Abstracts should be written in a word processor, have 250-500 words, and contain title, author name(s), email address(es), institutional affiliations, the suggested presentation's abstract.

The world has experienced a global crisis of capitalism that started in 2008 and is continuing until now. It has been accompanied by a crisis of the state and a general crisis of legitimation of dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism. Responses to the crisis have been variegated and have included austerity measures of the state that have hit the weakest, an increased presence of progressive protests, revolutions and strikes that have made use of digital, social and traditional media in various ways, the rise of far-right movements and parties in many parts of Europe and other parts of the world, the Greek state's closing down of public service broadcaster ERT and increased commercial pressure on public service broadcasting in general, new debates about how to strengthen public service media, increased socio-economic and class inequality in many parts of the world and at a global level, precarious forms of work in general and in the media and cultural industries in particular, the emergence of new media reform movements, an extension and intensification of the crisis of newspapers and the print media, an increasing shift of advertising budgets to targeted ads on the Internet and along with this development the rise of commercial "social media" platforms, Edward Snowden's revelations about the existence of a global surveillance-industrial complex that operates a communications surveillance system called "Prism" that involves the NSA and media companies such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo!, AOL, Skype, Apple and Paltalk; discussions about the power and freedom of the press in light of the Levenson inquiry, shifting geographies of the political and media landscape that have to do with the economic

rise of countries such as China and India.

Given this context, the main questions that ESA RN18's 2014 conference asks and to which it invites contributions are: How has the crisis affected the media and communication landscape in Europe and globally and what perspectives for the future of media and communications are there? What suggestions for media reforms are there? How feasible are they? What kind of media policies and reforms do we need today? Which ones should be avoided? Are we in this context likely to experience a renewal of neoliberalism or something different?

### **Plenary sessions:**

1) Keynote Talk: Prof. Peter Ludes (Jacobs University Bremen, Germany): Wanted: Critical Visual Theories!

2) Special Session: Public Media and Alternative Journalism in Romania

With Dr. Raluca Petre ('Ovidius' University Constanta, Romania): On the Distinction between State and Public Media: Re-Centering Public Options; Dr. Antonio Momoc (University of Bucharest, Romania): Alternative Media as Public Service Journalism; Costi Rogozanu (journalist and media activist, criticatac.ro) – Is Alternative Media an Alternative?

### **Call for Papers**

ESA RN18 welcomes submissions of abstracts for contributions. Questions that can for example be addressed include, but are not limited to the following ones:

#### **\* Media and capitalism:**

How have capitalism and the media changed in recent years? Are there perspectives beyond capitalism and capitalist media? How can we best use critical/Marxist political economy and other critical approaches for understanding the media and capitalism today? What is the role of media and communication technologies in the financialization, acceleration, and globalization of the capitalist economy? What are the conditions of working in the media, cultural and communication industries in the contemporary times? What is the role of Marx today for understanding crisis, change, capitalism, communication, and critique?

#### **\* Media reform and media policy in times of crisis:**

How do the media need to be reformed and changed in order to contribute to the emergence of a good society? Which media reform movements are there and what are their goals? What have been policy ideas of how to overcome the crisis and deal with contemporary changes in relation to European media and communication industries? What can we learn from recent discussions about the media's power and freedom, such as the Leveson inquiry? What are implications for media reforms?

#### **\* Media and the public sphere:**

How should the concept of the public sphere best be conceived today and how does it relate to the media? How has the public sphere changed during the crisis in Europe and globally? What has been the relation between public and commercial broadcasting during and after the crisis? How have public service media changed, which threats and opportunities does it face? How can/should public service be renewed in the light of crisis, the Internet, and commercialisation? Can public service be extended from broadcasting to the online realm, digital and social media? What has been the role of public service media in Europe? How has this role transformed?

\* Media and activism:

How can media scholars best cooperate with activists in order to contribute to a better media system and a better society? What are major trends in media activism today and how do activists use and confront the media and how do commercial, public and alternative media relate to contemporary social movements? What have been important experiences of media activists and media reform organisations in the past couple of years? What are the opportunities, risks, limits and possibilities of media activism today?

*For answering these questions, we also invite contributions and submissions by media activists, who want to talk about and share their experiences.*

\* Media ownership:

Who owns the media and ICTs? What are peculiar characteristics of knowledge and the media as property? What conflicts and contradictions are associated with it and how have they developed in times of crisis? How concentrated are the media and ICTs and how has this concentration changed since the start of the 2008 crisis? How has media and ICT ownership, convergence, de-convergence and concentration developed since the start of the 2008 crisis? What reforms of media and ICT ownership are needed in light of the crisis of capitalism and the crisis of intellectual property rights?

\* Media and crisis:

What have been the main consequences of the crisis for media and communication in various parts of the world and Europe from a comparative perspective? What role have the media played in the construction of the crisis? How have the media conveyed the social and economic crises of recent years to citizens and what are the consequences of this flow of ideas and explanations? What role can they play in overcoming the crisis? What is the relationship of the media and class during and after the crisis? What role have ideologies (such as racism, right-wing extremism, fascism, neoliberalism, anti-Semitism, etc) played in the media during the crisis and what can we learn from it for reforming the media? How have audiences interpreted media contents that focus on austerity, crisis, neoliberalism, protests, revolutions, or media reforms?

\* The globalisation of the media and society:

What are major trends in the globalisation of capitalism, society and the media? Given the globalisation of media and society, what are challenges for media and society today? What can we learn from non-Western media scholars and media cultures outside of Europe? Are concepts such as cultural/media imperialism, transnational cultural domination or the new imperialism feasible today and if so, in which ways?

\* Digital and social media:

What is digital labour and how has class changed in the context of social and digital media? What is the connection of value creation, knowledge labour and digital labour? How do the global dimension and the global division of digital labour look like, especially in respect to China, India, Asia and Africa? How do new forms of exploitation and unremunerated labour (“free labour”, “crowdsourcing”) look like in the media sector (e.g. in the context of Internet platforms such as Facebook or Google)? What is the relationship of the commons and commodification on digital and social media? How do capital accumulation and targeted advertising work on social media and what are their implications for users and citizens? What are alternatives to capitalist digital and social media? How can alternative social and digital

media best look like and be organized? What can in this context be the roles of the digital commons, civil society media and public service media? Which ideologies of the Internet and social media are there? How can we best understand the surveillance-industrial Internet complex operated by the NSA together with Internet corporations such as Google and Facebook and what are the implications of Edward Snowden's revelations? How do power and political economy work in the context of platforms such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WikiLeaks, Wikipedia, Weibo, LinkedIn, Blogspot/Blogger, Wordpress, VK, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, etc?

\* Media and Critical Social Theory:

What can we learn and use from critical sociology and the sociology of critique when studying the media? What do critique and critical theory mean in contemporary times? What are critical sociology and the sociology of critique and what are its roles for studying media and communication's role in society? Which social theories do we need today for adequately understanding media & society in a critical way? What is the role of political economy and Marx's theory for understanding media & society today?

\* Communication and (Post-)Crisis:

How has the crisis affected the communication landscape in Europe and globally and what perspectives for the future are there? How do the working conditions in communication industries look like after the crisis? What are the challenges for communication industries in the near future in the context of the crisis and post-crisis? What is the role of post-crisis-communication industries in a globalised economy?

## **Keynote Talk:**

**Prof. Peter Ludes (Jacobs University Bremen, Germany):**

**Wanted: Critical Visual Theories!**

### ***Abstract***

The “flows of messages and images,” are, according to Manuel Castells (1996: 508) the “basic thread of our social structure,” implying that “image-making is power-making” (ibid. 507). These visual networks, however, are however rarely the focus of research. This has even been the case in ESA’s Research Network 18 that focuses on media sociology. Castells himself did not pay particular attention to this thread in his later publications. More recently, Nye (2011: xiii) has specified that visual narratives contribute to “the public determination of legitimacy, good and evil – and the shaping of the preferences of one’s opponents”. Visual information and communication technologies, forums, and formats are put to use in order to show or cover up social relations, which they pretend to unveil. Moreover, increasingly intelligent devices and national security agencies exceed by far the surveillance conducted by traditional webcams and CCTV. “Critical” visual theories, joining forces with whistleblowers and critical media professionals, should discover systematic neglects and hidings and allow for an ongoing critique of nationalism, power, exploitation, and manipulation. Fundamental criticism uncovering hidden visual patterns and strategies can offer alternatives to the more conventional text-bound study of social actions, processes, or structures. In particular, it is necessary to break out of partisan national or class views into a multicultural and multi-perspective mode of seeing, interpreting, and explaining.

This call for a (self-) critical visual turn in the sociology of communications and media research will, in part 1, offer examples for the continuity of highly biased national visual horizons in Brazil, China, Germany, and the U.S. Analyses of TV Centennial and Annual Reviews will compare dominant power and knowledge presentation patterns. The centennial reviews show a continuation of national priorities and perspectives and imply a perseverance of stereotypes that privilege very few countries, issues, and types of actors. The 20th century preponderance of soldiers and heads of state, all male, changed significantly during the past decade, especially after the global financial crisis since 2008. After an extreme focus on international politics and the “war on terror”, the “irrationality of financial markets” and new types of knowledge and ignorance turned a little bit more (tele-) visible. Whether this presentation shift can be interpreted as a visual indicator of a power shift in favour of common people and a spurt in functional democratization is open to question.

Part 2 will zoom in on the systematic neglect of the most powerful global actors, networks, and corporations by visualizing public spheres. A recent Oxfam report (2014: 5) specified that: “one percent of the world’s families own almost half (46 percent) of the world’s wealth”. Both, the few thousand families and corporations dominating world economy and the billions of people living and dying in relative poverty usually remain beyond journalistic scrutiny and sociological theories.

The concluding part will suggest a few key terms and theoretical strands for critical visual theories, emphasizing perspectives on long-term, international, usually hidden visual conventions and strategies.

### ***References***

Castells, Manuel. (1996) 2000. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, vol. 1: *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Nye, Joseph S. 2011. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.

Oxfam Briefing Paper (20 January 2014): “WORKING FOR THE FEW: Political capture and economic inequality.” Oxfam: Oxfam House, Oxford, UK.

**Biography:**

*Peter Ludes* holds PhDs from the University of Trier (1978, thesis on Marx's Notion of a Classless Society) and Brandeis University (1983, thesis on Chances and Limits for Alternatives). He has held Visiting Positions at the University of Newfoundland, Canada (1981/82), the University of Amsterdam (1987), and a Research Fellowship at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University (1989). He was an Associate Professor for Culture and Media at the University of Siegen (1992-2002), for Media and Communication at the University of Mannheim (1994-96), and a Visiting Professor at the University of Constance (2001). He initiated the Project News

Enlightenment <http://www.nachrichtenaufklaerung.de> in 1997. From 1997 to 2008, he was the Deputy chair of the ESA Research Network "Mass Media and Communications", and from 2008 to 2011 he was, together with Roy Panagiotopoulou, the Co-Chair of the re-named ESA Research Network 18 "Sociology of Communications and Media Research". Since 2002 he has been a Professor of Mass Communication at Jacobs University Bremen, Germany. Since 2003 he has conducted research projects, together with the computer scientist Otthein Herzog, on the semi-automatic detection of key visuals in videos.

<https://www.jacobs-university.de/directory/pludes>

<http://www.keyvisuals.org>

<https://www.jacobs-university.de/iss-program>

**Special Session: Public Media and Alternative Journalism in Romania**

**Speakers: Dr. Raluca Petre ('Ovidius' University Constanta, Romania) - On the Distinction between State and Public Media: Re-centering public options**

**Dr. Antonio Momoc (University of Bucharest, Romania) - Alternative media as public service journalism**

**Costi Rogozanu (Journalist and media activist, [criticatac.ro](http://criticatac.ro)) – Is alternative media an alternative?**

**Abstract:** In their presentations, the speakers will address the problem of public media and alternative journalism in Romania, in the context of the acute financial crisis and the loss of the credibility of the Romanian Public Service Television and Radio Networks.

Raluca Petre will introduce a discussion that has not really occurred in Romania after the fall of the authoritarian regime, namely the distinction between public and state media systems. Her argument is conceptually grounded in the classic Weberian distinction between authority and power. She argues that while a public media system is based on authority and consequently legitimate, a state media system is built on power, thus potentially discretionary. The common element in the two cases is governmental spending and support. Nevertheless, while a public media system is built on a 'bottom up' logic, with public accountability running high, a state media system is constructed on a 'top down' logic, where public scrutiny is not really being considered. After 1989, the Central and Eastern European countries refuted the state media systems, but did not really reconsider a public media system as alternative in the early nineties. Meanwhile, in Western Europe, the legitimacy of public media systems was as well been questioned in the context of the new ethos of free market. The alternative at hand in CEE has been the commercial media system.

Antonio Momoc and Costi Rogozanu will reflect on how alternative media could replace public service in a time of distrust in the public radio and TV stations (which are suspected of being politically controlled, according to the reports of the media monitoring agencies). Their presentations will address the issue of alternative media as a new form of public service that can serve the citizens' interest. To reach an answer, speakers will analyse the alternative media in Romania (Costi Rogozanu), as well as the social media and blogs of the public service representatives (Antonio Momoc).

Raluca Petre received her PhD in Sociology in 2009 from the Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Science, Warsaw. Her MA background is in Economy & Society, from CEU & Lancaster University, and her BA in Communication Sciences, from the University of Bucharest. In 2012, she published the book: *Journalism in Times of Major Changes: Critical perspectives*. Tritonic, Bucuresti.

Antonio Momoc, PhD in Sociology, 2009, University of Bucharest, MA in Political Studies, BA in Journalism and Political Studies. Antonio Momoc's main research interests are in journalism, new media, political sciences and political communication.

<http://www.antoniomomoc.ro/>

Costi Rogozanu is a journalist and media activist. He has worked for the Romanian mainstream media for several years and is now one of the editors of the Romanian online publication [criticatac.ro](http://criticatac.ro), focused on social, intellectual and political critique. He is author of "Carte de munca" (Work Book), Tact, 2013 and one of the editors of "Iluzia anticomunismului" (The Illusion of Anti-Communism), Cartier, 2008.

## **Submission**

An abstract of 250-500 words should be sent to Prof. Christian Fuchs, University of Westminster; [christian.fuchs@uti.at](mailto:christian.fuchs@uti.at). Please insert the words “ESARN18 submission” in the subject. The **deadline for abstract submission is July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.**

A special session (‘Communication and (post)crisis’) will be organised in Romanian language (with Power Point presentation in English). However, the abstracts for this session will be submitted in English, as they are peer-reviewed by the scientific committee as well.

## **Conference Fee**

For members of ESA RN18: 40 Euros

For non-members of ESA RN18: 60 Euros

The fee will be collected from the participants at the registration in Bucharest.

You can become a member of ESA RN18 by joining the ESA and subscribing to the network.

The network needs material support, so we encourage you to join or renew your membership.

The network subscription fee is only 10 Euros:

<http://www.europeansociology.org/member/>

Travel and accommodation support for a few PhD students will be available. This will not cover all costs, but part of them (accommodation, no travel costs). Preference will be given to PhD students, who submit an abstract in order to give a presentation at the conference that well suits the overall conference topic. Furthermore preference will be given to PhD students from lower income countries (band 2 countries, see

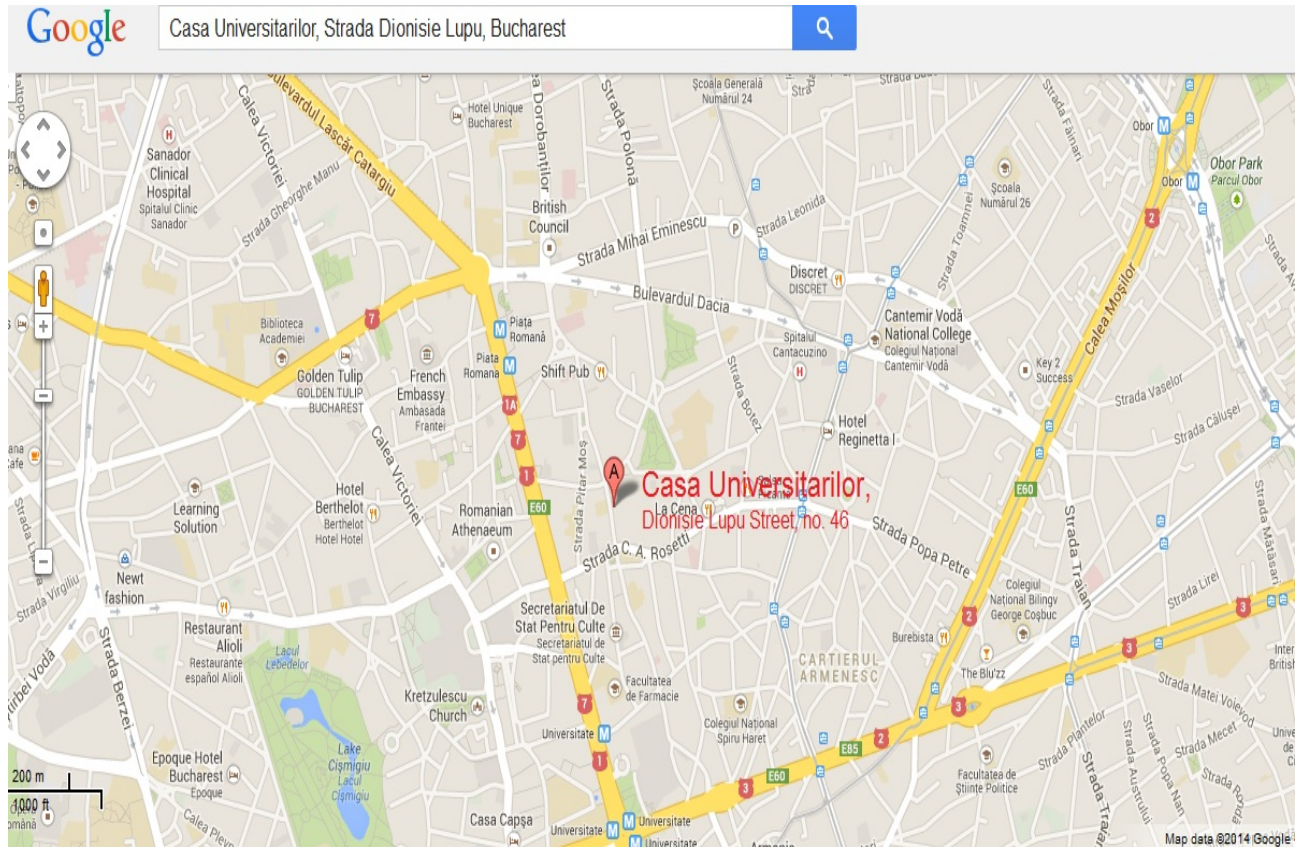
<http://www.europeansociology.org/member/>). If you are a PhD student and want to apply for travel support, then please indicate this in your abstract submission by adding the sentence “I want to apply for travel and accommodation support”. The notifications about travel support will be sent out together with the notifications of acceptance or rejection of presentations.



## Conference venue

Casa Universitarilor, Dionisie Lupu Street, no. 46, Bucharest

The conference venue is in the city centre of Bucharest, 5 min. walk from Piata Universitatii and Piata Romana.



The conference will take place in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. Approximately 2 million inhabitants live in Bucharest. It is safe and hospitable and has many touristic attractions. For information on public transportation, sightseeing, and landmarks, please visit: <http://www.romaniatourism.com/bucharest.html#cityhighlights> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bucharest#Culture>

## Local organizer

The conference will be hosted by the University of Bucharest and its Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies.



The **University of Bucharest** is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Romania, hence it bears the responsibility and the duty to be a pioneer and a model of academic integrity. This year, 2014 marks the anniversary of 150 years from the founding of the University of Bucharest. On 4/16 July 1864, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza established the University of Bucharest by bringing together the Faculty of Law, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, and the Faculty of Science. The University of Bucharest offers numerous study programmes, from Bachelor degrees to

Postdoctoral programmes, as well as lifelong learning programmes and Erasmus programmes.

In 2011, the University of Bucharest was declared the first university in advanced research and education in Romania, according to the classification of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports conducted with experts from the European University Association (EUA). For more information, please visit: <http://www.unibuc.ro>



Founded in 1990, the **Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies** (FJCS) is the leading higher education institution in the domains of Journalism and Communication Studies in Romania. FJCS is nationally and internationally known as an institution that offers professional training of the highest quality. Our alumni have a strong impact on the development of free media and professional PR & Advertising industry in Romania.

FJCS is member of the Theophraste Renaudot Network of Journalism Schools, of European Institute for Commercial Communication Education (EDCOM), and of Réseau Méditerranéen de Centres d'Etudes et de Formation (RMCEF).

In 2012, the University of Bucharest appears in group 151-200 in two of the 29 major domains investigated: Communication and Media Studies, English Language and Literature, according to the overall ranking of universities achieved by Quacquarelli Symonds Limited.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.fjsc.unibuc.ro>

#### **List of Accommodation Possibilities Recommended by the Local Host**

Central Hotel, 13 Brezoianu St.

<http://booknow.securehotelsreservations.com>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel\\_Review-g294458-d309661-Reviews-Hotel\\_Central-Bucharest.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Review-g294458-d309661-Reviews-Hotel_Central-Bucharest.html)

Hotel Siqua, Calea Plevnei nr.59a

<http://booking.hotelsiqua.ro/Book/BookingEngine.aspx>

<http://www.hotelsiqua.ro/>

Hotel Cismigiu, 38, Regina Elisabeta Blvd.

<http://www.cismigiuhotelbucharest.com>

Hotel Venezia, 2 Pompiliu Eliade Street

<http://booknow.securehotelsreservations.com>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel\\_Review-g294458-d659646-Reviews-Hotel\\_Venezia-Bucharest.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Review-g294458-d659646-Reviews-Hotel_Venezia-Bucharest.html)

Tempo Hotel, 19, Armand Calinescu Street

<http://booknow.securehotelsreservations.com>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel\\_Review-g294458-d601712-Reviews-Tempo\\_Hotel-Bucharest.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotel_Review-g294458-d601712-Reviews-Tempo_Hotel-Bucharest.html)

Hotel Triumf, Kiseleff 12th Street

<http://hoteltriumf.ro>

Hotel Berthelot, 9, Bulevardul Berthelot

<http://www.hotelberthelot.ro>