Communication, Crisis, and Critique in Contemporary Capitalism.

Conference of the European Sociological Association’s Research Network 18 - Sociology of Communications and Media Research


Keynote Talk: Prof. Peter Golding (Northumbria University, UK) – Why a Sociologist should take Communications and Media Seriously

Abstract
In the presentation of this paper, Peter Golding will reflect on why the study of communications and media demands the insights and methods of sociology, and why RN18 therefore is an appropriate network within the European Sociological Association. He will present reflections on how such key sociological concerns as inequality, identity, power, and change are at the heart of the questions we should be posing in addressing the nature and role of the media as institutions and communications as a social process. The paper will also address how far changes in the technologies of media and communications alter, or should alter, our approach to generating research and insight in this field.

Peter Golding is pro-vice chancellor of research & innovation at Northumbria University. He is founder and honorary chair of ESA RN18, an editor of the European Journal of Communication, and was Co-Chair of the European Science Foundation Programme “Changing Media, Changing Europe”. Peter Golding’s research interests are in media sociology generally, journalism, media political economy, social inequality, international communications, new media, and media constructs of public and social policy. See also: http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/sass/about/media/staff/profpgolding/

Call for Papers

We are living in times of global capitalist crisis that require rethinking the ways we organize society, communication, the media, and our lives. The current crisis seems to a certain degree be different compared to previous ones, among other reasons due to the role of mediated communication and information in establishing/changing economic, political, and social relations as well as the crisis itself. The crisis can also be seen as crisis of what has been called consumer capitalism or informational capitalism. More precisely it has resulted on the one hand in a hyperneoliberal intensification of neo-conservative policies and on the other hand in the emergence of new popular movements that are critical of the commodification of everything and demand the strengthening of society’s commons. The second movement has in the social sciences been accompanied by a renewed interest in critical studies, the critique and analysis of class and capitalism, and critical political economy. The overall goal of this conference is to foster scholarly presentations, networking, and exchange on the question of which transitions media and communication and media sociology are undergoing in contemporary society. The conference particularly welcomes contributions that are inspired
by sociological theories, critical studies, and various strands and traditions of the critical study of media & society.

Questions that can be covered by presentations include, but are not limited to:

* What is a crisis? What forms of crisis are there? How do they relate to capitalism and communication?

* How have the media presented the crisis? Which similarities and differences in crisis reporting are there between different media (television, press, and new media) or between media in different countries?

* How has the crisis affected various media and cultural industries? What is the role of changing media technology in the economic crisis? How has the media economy changed since the start of the crisis in 2008? How have advertising investments, profits, market values, etc developed in the media economy since the start of the crisis? How has the global expansion of media industries been reshaped by the crisis and what is the future of global media and news agencies? What changes can be traced in the production of news and other media content? Are there changes in the nature of media products?

* What is the role of media and communication technologies in the financialization, acceleration, and globalization of the capitalist economy? How can a post-crisis media economy look like? How has advertising favoured a climate of private consumer debt?

* What are the ideological implications of the crisis for mediascapes? Which ideological discourses do companies, CEOs, managers, or neoliberal politicians use for justifying their interests, lay-offs, high bonuses, inequalities, etc and how are these discourses represented by the media or in strategic company reports? How are hyper-neoliberal crisis policy responses (“socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor” in the form of bank bail outs and budget cuts in areas like welfare, education, social security, health care, etc) ideologically justified and how do the media represent such ideologies? What is the role of finance capital in the media and cultural industries? Which hegemonic, alternative, or contradictory interpretations and reception practices of media content that relates to the crisis are there? Which ideologies and myths underlie the capitalist crisis?

* What is the role of media, communication, critical journalism, and alternative media in contemporary uproars, riots, rebellions, social movements, protests, demonstrations, and revolutions?

* How do identities and mediated identities change in times of crisis? How should one think about the relationship of economy and culture in light of the capitalist crisis? What is the relationship of class and identities and of politics of redistribution and recognition today? How do we have to rethink and reshape the relation between political economy and cultural studies in the light of capitalist crisis in order to adequately study the media and communication?

* How is the public sphere changing in the light of the global crisis? What are perspectives for politics, participation, and democracy today and how do these perspectives relate to the media and communication? Is the role of media in democracy changing? If so, how? Are media a distinct player in politics? If the established media form an estate of power in
democracy, do we today new a new estate of power? If so, how could it look like?

* What are the causes, realities, and consequences of the commodification of the communication commons? What are alternatives to the commodification of the communication commons? How can one strengthen and create public media and commons-based forms of communication? What are the relationships and differences between the commodity logic, the gift logic, and the logic of public goods and how do these logics shape the media?

* How do contemporary societal trends, such as integration, diversity and conflicts in Europe and the world, transnationalism and networking, digitization, informatization, globalization, glocalization, prosumption, neoliberalism, privatization and commodification, migration, racism, changing gender relations, consumer and advertising culture, warfare, terrorism, the new imperialism, surveillance, social movement protests, global societal risks, the strengthening of right-wing extremist and fascist movements, or the anti-corporate movement and other movements, shape media and communication and how do media and communication in turn shape society in times of crisis and transition?

* What are the tasks, roles, responsibilities, and identities of the sociology of media and communication in a society that is facing deep crisis? What is the actual or potential role of critique, ethics, struggles, counter-power, resistance, protest, civil society, and social movements in contemporary societies and contemporary communications?

* What are the major trends that shape contemporary society and how are these trends related to mediated communication and knowledge production? In what society do we live? What society do we desire to have? What forms of media and communication do we find in contemporary society? What forms of media and communication do we desire and how must society change in order to achieve these goals?

* What are the major trends in respect to crisis, communication, and critique in Europe? What are the major trends in respect to crisis, communication, and critique in other parts of the world?

* How do different companies and organizations make use of different information transmission technologies? What is the role of high speed financial flows and associated transmission networks in the finance industry? How (in)visible are these flows?

Submission and Participation

An abstract of 200-250 words should be sent to Dr. Romina Surugiu, University of Bucharest, at the following e-mail address: bilbao.conference@yahoo.com. Please insert the words Bilbao in the subject. The **deadline for abstract submission is July 20th, 2012.**

If you want to participate without paper presentation, then please register via e-mail to Romina Surugiu, stating that you want to register and participate.

Conference Fee

For members of ESA RN18: 35 Euros
For non-members of ESA RN18: 50 Euros
The fee will be collected from the participants at the registration in Bilbao.
You can become a member of ESA RN18 by joining the ESA and subscribing to the network. The network subscription fee is only 10 Euros for a 2-year period: http://www.europeansociology.org/member/

Travel and accommodation support for a few PhD students will be available. This will not cover the whole costs, but part of them. 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**

Bizkaia Aretoa Auditorium  
University of the Basque Country  
Abandoibarra Avenue, 3  
48009 Bilbao  
http://www.bizkaia.ehu.es/p209-sharethm/es/  
The venue is marked with “A” in the map below
List of Accommodation Possibilities Recommended by the Local Host

Walking distance from the conference venue:
* Silken Gran Domine Bilbao
  www.hoteles-silken.com/gran-hotel-domine-bilbao/
* Miró Bilbao
  www.mirohotelbilbao.com/
* Meliá Bilbao
5-10 min. by Tram:
* Barceló Nervión Bilbao
* Hotel Esperia Bilbao
  www.hesperia.es/Hesperia-Bilbao
* Peiti Palace Arana Bilbao
  www.petitpalacearana.com/index.html
* Husa Jardines de Albia
  www.hotelhusaspajardinesdealbia.com/
* Hotel Abando
www.hotelabando.com/

You can check the availability and prices on this website: http://hotels.skyscanner.net/
Enter “Bilbao, Spain” in the field “search field”, specify the duration of the stay and then press the search button, which brings up a list of hotels and prices.