

Call for Papers: “History of the Media in Transition Periods”

4-6 September 2013

Lisbon, Catholic University of Portugal

Convergence and digitalization have become buzz-words employed to demonstrate how technological change has impacted on the media and is reconfiguring today’s media systems. Accordingly, media research in the last decade has centered itself on the contemporary changes operated on and by the new media sometimes over-estimating the transitions that are taking place and not acknowledging common patterns that can be found between the emergence of new media and the appearance of other means of communication in previous decades. In fact, instead of being something new brought by digitalization, moments of technological transition can easily be found in many historical periods namely throughout the 20th century. While today the internet and new media are inducing new patterns of media consumption, back in the 1920s radio broadcasting facilitated change in everyday life by bringing entertainment into the homes while in the 1950s television also enabled new patterns of media consumption inside the home.

The increased interest in understanding today’s new media can be explained by the seductive power of “the new” which leads scholars to interpret contemporary transitions as being the most profound in history. For example, it is now frequently claimed that new media play a crucial role in changing social habits, economic structures and even political regimes. Whatever about the past, in today’s culture there is increasing concern and attention focused on the media’s active role in transition periods, i.e. during periods of discontinuity. When thinking about economic or political crisis, or even in war periods or regime changes, the media have been active players in mediating the new reality and promoting the discussion on the public sphere besides being used as instruments of cultural diplomacy.

Having this background in mind, the ECREA Communication History Section intends to discuss the role of the media in transition periods either these are technological, political, economic, social or cultural transitions. Thus, the Section invites contributions from scholars who are interested in topics related to this theme and who can present papers and engage in the discussion at its 2013 workshop in Lisbon that will be organized in collaboration with the research line “Media, Technology, Contexts” of the Research Centre for Communication and Culture. Extended abstracts (500 words max.), for a 15 minute presentation, can be submitted by e-mail to: ecreacomhistory@gmail.com until 17 March 2013, focusing (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Media and technological change
- The emergence of new media (popular press, film, radio, television, internet)
- The role of the media in regime transitions or political change (emergence of authoritarian regimes, implementation of democracy, political shifts inside a particular regime)
- The media in periods of uncertainty (economic transitions, social uprisings, war periods)
- Past economic crisis and their impact on media and journalism

- Media and the creation or alteration of social habits
- Changes in audience behavior and consumer/audience identities
- Mass Communication in the two World Wars or in the Inter-War Crises (Russian Revolution and Rise of Fascist and National Socialist Regimes)
- The role of the media in the Cold War
- Media change in specific European 'regions' or geo-political formations
- Theories and conceptualizations of media change in transition periods
- To what extent is historical understanding and explanation becoming increasingly techno-centric or media-centric?

The ECREA Communication History Section is also planning to publish a handbook with the aim of providing a coherent set of contributions which yield a well-structured and relevant overview of European mass media history and so provide a platform for more transnational perspectives on relevant historical developments. The workshop in Lisbon will also provide an opportunity to advance the Section's interests and plans for handbooks and other texts related to overviews of European media and communication history.

All abstracts submitted will be subject to peer-review. Authors will be notified by 14 April 2013. Both ECREA members and non-members can submit extended abstracts to the workshop.