

Call for Papers

Critical Mediatization Research.

Power, inequality and social change in a mediatized age

Conference of the ECREA section “Mediatization”, organized by the Priority Programme “Mediatized Worlds” at the University of Bremen,

30th of August (Get together) to 1st of September, 2016 in Bremen, Germany

Today, we are witnessing a transformation of the media from a system dominated by individual media, each with its own characteristics and channels of distribution, to a much more dense, complex, and converging media environment comprising interpersonal, group and mass communication in a digital and computer controlled environment.

The study of mediatization is concerned with the ongoing developments of media, and the related changes in the everyday life, social relations, and identity of people, as well as transformations in organizations and institutions, and culture and society as a whole. Mediatization research does not strive to become a closed conceptual domain, but rather seeks to develop an open and broad investigation of the interplay between changes in media and communications, on the one hand, and social and cultural changes on the other. It thus intends to integrate empirical research with conceptual work, and to develop an open and broad theory based on historical and current insights which also includes critical research. Our understanding of contemporary on-going changes should be understood within a framework of long-term cultural and social processes.

As more and more media become relevant and intertwined with various social and cultural practices at a micro, mezzo, and macro level, it becomes evident that mediatization research cannot just describe, reconstruct and explain the ongoing developments, but must also involve critical studies, critical analysis, and reflections or start by referring to critical theories. ‘Critical’ in this context does not imply utopian hopes or dystopian fears, but rather an understanding of the interrelations between communicative, social and cultural changes from the perspective of civil society: how do media related transformations affect the constraints and opportunities of social and cultural life or create new ones, and for which groups in society may changes be beneficial or detrimental? With this call for papers we intend to contribute to an open debate about mediatization research in relation to various critical approaches.

In the view of this, we invite proposals for papers concerning (but not limited to) the following issues:

- Research on transparency with respect to the dynamics of mediatization and its path of development; for example, how media related changes are negotiated between industry, government and bureaucracy;
- Research concerning media transformations as opportunities and risks for democracy, participation, freedom, and justice;
- Research on the ongoing challenges of mediatization, e.g. LGBT equality, exclusion by income, education or other reasons, unequal power relations, surveillance, control, digital traces, datafication, net neutrality, commercialization of social relations and similar processes, lack of transparency regarding use of data, problems of journalism and participation, which are necessary for democracy, enforced individualization and so on;
- Research with reference to critical theories, e.g. those of Marx, Bourdieu, Foucault or other more contemporary ones;
- Theory-based approaches, for instance, comparisons of ongoing observable processes with the possibilities of other trajectories (for example, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School's as a comparison of the further developments under the condition of net neutrality or not);
- Research emphasizing problematic consequences of media change for individuals, culture, society, and the power relations between different entities and states;
- Research providing orientations, recommendations to guide the media related changes, ideas to support social movements and community media in order to shape the ongoing developments.

Submissions may include both theoretical and empirical work as well as a variety of different methodologies, they should of course refer to the mediatization approach. Both contemporary and historical perspectives are welcome.

Please send your extended abstract of 300-400 words and a short academic biography to Stig Hjarvard and Friedrich Krotz, no later than 31st of March 2016.

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