ECREA DIGITAL CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION SECTION (DCC)

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

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Report on the activities

1. New website for DCC

After our business meeting in Istanbul in 2012, the new management team decided to start a new website for the Digital Culture and Communications Section of ECREA. The objective was to have a more dynamic and visual space to reflect the activities of the section and its members.

http://dccecrea.wordpress.com/

The new launching is possible to our website manager, Christoph Raetzsch, who takes care of organizing the contributions on research, conferences, publications and related matter. We have usually a modest number of visitors to our website (according to our moderate activity), but exceptionally, after posting the comments and pictures after our workshop in Bonn, we got almost 1.000 in a day, as the graphic of our provider shows

This is just an example of how important can be the communication tools of sections. We hope to have more time to invest in our section blog.

2. DCC ECREA workshop

Between the main biannual ECREA conferences, the section organizes a workshop. During 2013, the workshop **Digital Culture: Promises and Discomforts** was held October 2 to 4, 2013. The workshop was co-organized by the DCC section and University of Bonn (Department of Media Studies).

Website: http://131.220.42.248/wordpress/

Call for papers:

In this workshop we want to critically discuss the promises and discomforts of digital culture taking into account the tensions raised by different material practices, understandings and social orders around the role of digital media in performing social change. Special focus lies on the three aspects of Digital Culture:

(1) Digital imaginations and narratives. The images of future are drawn in tecno-scapes, like in science-fiction films, artificial intelligence designs, virtual worlds or metaverses. What kinds of individuals, societies and environments are imagined through the growing pervasiveness of Digital Culture into our lives? How digital imaginaries shape our experience and relate to our ways of narrating ourselves and our creative practices? What are the role of innovation, creative industries and urbanlabs in the design of the future and in the different kinds of social intervention? How digital imagination is performing new narrative forms as well as transforming knowledge production and sharing?

(2) Digital Neighbourhoods and Citizenship. Among the existing networked digital technologies it is smartphones and tablet computers, which are becoming increasingly popular at an extraordinary pace. These devices not only make digital media applications truly ubiquitous but also create an abundance of digital location-sensitive information, which saturates local places, social relations, and the perception and organisation of neighbourhoods. The concept of space turns into a mash-up of material and digital places, creating new forms of the social while at the same time renegotiating the cultural and

political logics of local/global or private/public. How does the use of digital media trigger new social phenomena, such as altered forms and modes of communication, collaboration, consumption, infrastructure, mobility or public service?

(3) <u>Digital Engagement and Social Change.</u> Digital engagement manifests itself in a broad range of digital practices. People discursively engage through and with digital media and thus dissolve spatial, temporal and social boundaries. Especially a few popular commercial social networks, like Facebook and Twitter, are presumed to play a crucial role in the process of social change by means of interaction and connectivity. On a political dimension, citizens and activists voice their opinions, discuss political issues, organize and mobilize for protest in new or alternative public spheres. However, it remains unclear, whether and in which differentiations digital media engagement affects established power relations and thus promotes social change. Which diverse forms of political engagement unfold in digital media environments? How can underlying technological and power structures of media be rendered visible and to what extent do they affect the possibilities and boundaries of digital engagement?

Participation and program:

We received about 50 abstracts for presentation of papers and 40 proposals were accepted from a procedure-blind review. Compared to our previous workshop in Barcelona (2011) (which received 80 proposals) the number of proposals received was lower, but the rate of acceptance was higher. This is because in the 2013 workshop the quality of the proposals has been very high in general terms.

The final version of the workshop program included 37 communications, distributed in 10 parallel sessions over two days, plus 2 keynotes: Annette Markham and Jacob Svensson. Markham talk was about rethinking methods in digital culture, and Svensson was focused on new media in developing countries. We had 40 participants in total.

The event was very successful in terms of exchanging knowledge, since the size of the workshop and the organization of panels allowed for very interesting conversations in focused themes, such the following that organized the panels:

- Digital imagination and narratives of future
- Participation and cultural practices
- Activism and social media
- Digital and mobile media for inclusion
- Activism and digital engagement
- Social media, identity and sociability

3. YECREA WORKSHOP

As part of the 2013 workshop our YECREA representative Aristea Fotopoulou organized the meeting Young ECREA Workshop on "Planning a non-conventional academic career in digital culture and communication: Challenges and opportunities". The aim was to discuss how scholars in different stages of their careers confront specific challenges in our field. We tried to draw on similarities and differences that apply in different European contexts, as well as on experiences and strategies that scholars at different stages have followed in their personal careers.

The plenary discussion provided helpful insights and will help to address questions and personal issues of participants. The complete report can be found at:

http://yecrea.eu/node/2345

4. BUSINESS MEETING

During the "business section meeting" in Bonn we discussed several questions regarding the distinctiveness of the section as well as its future activities. Thinking in the future ECREA event in 2014, we reflected on the need to be specific and selective, since our section is very attractive (in the 2012 we got a high amount of proposals). Contrary to what happens in the workshops, which are very focused, the general conference attracts a great variety of topics and approaches, and sometimes the quality of the presentations is not as good as the abstracts promised. The amount of proposals is important, but also the quality, so we will have in mind some core ideas that we consider relevant for the section, such as the critical approach to the digital, the importance of methods (both quantitative and qualitative), or looking at the complexities and the limitations of digital culture.

5. NEXT STEPS: MAIN CONFERENCE

Lisbon 2014 The next ECREA main conference is in Lisbon. The call for papers was launched on the 1st of December and of course you are all invited and welcomed to submit. There is generally a large response to the papers and so we're also looking for people to volunteer to help peer review abstracts. The system is automated, peer review is blind and abstracts are always assessed by at least two people independently.

6. FURTHER STEPS: NEXT SECTION WORKSHOP

The next section workshop series should take place in two years time. During the next months and particularly during our meeting in Lisbon we will decide on this topic. If you would be interested in hosting or co-hosting a workshop – then once again, please let us know.

7. PUBLICATIONS

We are thinking about several options to publish the results of our workshops. This is an aspect that we definitely would like to work harder in the next months.