

Media Industries and Cultural Production Annual Report, January 2020

The Media Industries and Cultural Production Section has been running since September 2015, when it was approved as a thematic section by the Executive Board of ECREA.

Membership

As of January 2020 the Section had 275 members, slightly down from 308 members in January 2019.

Management team

At the business meeting in Lugano, November 2018, the Section elected a new management team. Catherine Johnson (University of Huddersfield, UK) replaced David Hesmondhalgh as Chair of the Section. Maria Michalis (University of Westminster, UK) stayed on a Vice-Chair and Julia Velkova (University of Helsinki, Finland) replaced Hanne Bruun as Vice-Chair. Giulia Manica (University of Nottingham, UK) replaced Julia Velkova as YECREA rep.

The management team feel that the current term of two years is too short. It does not allow management teams to develop a strategy and is time-consuming. We would like to suggest that ECREA consider moving to a four-year term, which would be in line with other organisations such as IAMCR, while still enabling members of the management team to stand down early if they wish.

Conferences

Over the year the section has organised two conferences:

Infrastructures and Inequalities: Media industries, digital culture and politics

<https://www.helsinki.fi/en/conferences/infrastructures-and-inequalities>

This was a joint conference of three ECREA sections: Communication and Democracy; Digital Culture and Communication; and Media Industries and Cultural Production

The conference ran from 21-22 October 2019 at the University of Helsinki in Finland and addressed the 'infrastructural turn' in media, communication and cultural studies. During the conference participants engaged with questions concerning inequalities and the infrastructures of digital culture, media industries and (digital) democracy. We had two high-profile keynote speakers: Lisa Parks (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA) and Kaarina Nikunen (University of Tampere, Finland) who explored the conference theme at the intersection of the disciplines of the three organising sections. In addition, the conference ended with a roundtable that brought together the two keynotes with David Hesmondhalgh (University of Leeds, UK) and Jean-Christophe Plantin (London School of Economics, UK) to discuss the relevance of infrastructure studies to media industries, digital culture and democracy research. The conference consisted of 74 papers and was attended by 98 participants from 25 different countries. The conference also included a workshop on 'Expert Communication on Social Media' jointly organised by the YECREA reps from the three sections and targeted specifically at junior scholars. Co-organising the conference across three sections, therefore, provided an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary investigation of an area of study with relevance for multiple sections within ECREA and for valuable conversations across disciplinary boundaries. Julia Velkova, in particular, should be

commended for the significant amount of work that she put in to organising such a successful conference.

Public Service Media's Online Strategies: Industry Concepts and Critical Investigations
<https://www.facebook.com/events/ponrepo/screen-industries-in-east-central-europe-conference-2019/2523353837778815/>

This was the Eighth Annual Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference and was co-organised by the ECREA Media Industries and Cultural Production Section with Charles University in Prague and the Czech Society of Film Studies. The conference ran from 22-23 November 2019 at the National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic and addressed the online strategies adopted by public service broadcasters and the wider significance of streaming for public service media. By co-organising with the Eighth Annual Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference, we were able to combine papers that addressed the specific challenges facing Central and Eastern Europe, with papers that explored the strategies of public service broadcasters in other national contexts and in the wake of transformation to the global media ecology. The conference included keynotes from Catherine Johnson (University of Huddersfield, UK) who explored the rise of online TV and its impact for public service broadcasters in the West, and Thomas Poell (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) who examined the ways in which platforms are shaping the values and operations of public service media. The conference consisted of 21 papers and was attended by 80 participants. In addition, the conference included an industry roundtable on online curation and methods to study its implications for public service values, which was organised by the section's YECREA rep, Giulia Manica. The roundtable included four high-profile industry speakers invited by Manica: Sasha Scott (EBU), Gianluca Visalli (RAI), Fadi Malak (BBC) and Ondrej Cerny (Czech TV). This enabled the conference to create a space for industry and academics to engage in dialogue about the challenges facing public service broadcasters today, and Giulia Manica should be praised for the extensive work that she put into organising such a high-profile line-up of industry participants.

In 2020, the Section is involved in the organisation of the Media Industries: Global Currents and Contradictions conference to be held at Kings College London from 16-18 April 2020, following the success of the previous conference in 2018. <https://media-industries.org> The Section Chair and Vice-Chairs are on the organising committee for the conference.

Business Meeting

At the Infrastructures and Inequalities conference we held a business meeting for the section. Introductions were made to the new Section management team and thanks were given in particular to Julia Velkova and Giulia Manica for the work that they put in to making the two conferences so successful.

Section members were very supportive of the interdisciplinary approach to the Infrastructures and Inequalities conference. In addition to the benefits it provided for intellectual exchange across disciplines, some members also felt that there were environmental problems and resource issues with multiplying the number of conferences that ECREA sections organise in off-years, particularly given the growing number of ECREA sections. Overall, section members would support future conferences co-organised by multiple sections as a way of developing cross-section collaboration, addressing the

resource issues for individuals unable to travel to many conferences and the environmental consequences of conference travel. We would, therefore, request that ECREA reconsider its current position which dissuades sections from collaborating on off-year conferences.

We discussed the idea of developing a publication that builds on the interdisciplinary ideas explored at the Infrastructures and Inequalities conference. Following this discussion, Sander de Ridder, Lisa Parks and Julia Velkova are working towards an edited volume on *Media Studies, AI and the Cloud*, consisting of contributions from some of the papers at the conference.

Section members raised concerns about how panel proposals were reviewed for the main ECREA conference, where reviewers only see the overall panel proposals and are not able to view the individual paper abstracts. I raised this with the organising committee for ECREA 2020 in Braga, but it seems as if, once again, panels will be reviewed on the basis of the panel abstract alone. This is not made clear in the submission guidelines.

Finally, given that one of the highlights of the conference in Prague was the industry panel, and given the importance of engaging with industry to Media Industry Studies, we would like ECREA to consider ways in which we might incorporate industry panels into the biennial ECREA conference. This would be difficult to manage through the typical panel proposal system, given that industry participants won't be proposing papers and would be hard to pin down a year in advance, but could be organised if the section was able to leave one panel space free for an industry panel that could be co-ordinated through the section management board and other interested parties. We aim to raise this for discussion in our business meeting in Braga.