

CALL FOR PAPERS

New challenges and methodological innovations in European media audience research

**First conference of the COST Action IS0906:
Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies
in partnership with ECREA, IAMCR and ICA**

University of Zagreb, 7-9 April 2011

The convergence of traditional mass media, computers and telecommunication creates new audiences and new practices. Rapid development results in the turn of the tide from information to communication, from audiences that “read” media material to audiences that produce and interact with media material. Social and cultural changes that intersect with technological changes frame, limit, or facilitate new audience practices.

Traditional media are also responding to the changes. Media content is packaged into new forms and formats that result in new hybrid genres. Content has become less classifiable, and more fluid – and more controversial, for example, regarding social networks and content-sharing websites as YouTube.

In light of the ongoing technological developments that create new audience practices as well as altered content structures, new challenges emerge for audience research, and they are most notably apparent in the need for innovative research methods.

Apart from methodological innovations triggered by new media, developing methods is also necessary in the context of traditional media: Triggered by the ongoing dialogue between research traditions, as well as by the changing processes and contexts of audience actions, new approaches and creative combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods are needed.

This COST conference calls for submissions that present and reflect research methods and methodological issues such as:

- What are the shortcomings of conventional research methods and what are the needs for innovative approaches? Where do we need to stick to conventional methods? While interviews and focus groups have afforded some insights to qualitative researchers, and surveys have provided quantitative information, audience researchers now need new tools to understand the increasingly complex media environment that people engage with every day.
- Cross-media contents and convergent technologies, for instance, question single-media approaches to reception and use, and ask for new approaches that fully recognise the many

types of media with which people engage every day and are significant as a whole. Also, audience practices are increasingly diversified and dispersed over time and space, raising important methodological and practical problems to audience researchers.

- What are the practical opportunities offered by Web 2.0 tools for audience research methods? Web 2.0 technologies are not only challenging objects of study, they are also new instruments that can help researchers to better understand and chart audience/user practices. Indeed, Web 2.0 tools can facilitate access to and communication with research participants, as well as the sharing of research materials (photos, videos...). For instance, this can help in studying global issues (such as the worldwide reception of globalised media materials) and identities (as reflected by users' online productions). Yet, Web 2.0 technologies raise important methodological and practical problems (inequality of access to the Internet, obstacles to proper identification...) that also need to be thought about.

Submissions may deal with methodological reflections, but also present studies illustrating innovative methods. Apart from individual submissions, panel proposals of 4-5 individual presentations in a coherent context are also welcome.

Please send abstracts of 250 words max. (excluding references) via email to the organizers (jjurisc@hrstud.hr; helena.bilandzic@phil.uni-augsburg.de) with the subject line "COST conference Zagreb". Submissions should contain a title page with the title of the presentation (in case of panel submissions: title of the panel *and* titles of the presentations), names and contact data of all authors. Please send one document containing title page and abstract in a word file, and be sure to remove all author identification from the abstract itself, as proposals will be submitted into blind peer review.

Deadline for submission is January 15, 2010.

The abstracts will be submitted to blind peer review; participants will be notified about results by February 28, 2011. Accepted abstracts will be considered for a full paper publication.

Organization:

For the local organizers:

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For more information on the COST Action "Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies", see <http://www.cost.eu> and <http://www.cost-transforming-audiences.eu>.