

PANEL 1: Teaching media and the city

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PANEL ABSTRACT

In this panel we will share experiences and exchange views of teaching 'media and the city' in four different educational contexts, including the ECREA Summer School 2015 in Bremen and intermediate or MA level courses recently introduced and taught on a yearly basis in three European universities (University of Zagreb, University of Tampere and University of Ljubljana). The presenters will outline the position of their course in the given institutional structure and consider its place and role in the syllabus as well as highlight their pedagogic objectives and more concrete takes on how to teach the topic.

A key focus in the panel is to spot differences and similarities between the courses in terms of organizational arrangements, areas of interest, theoretical and methodological approaches as well as teaching methods and philosophies. In this way, we probe shared ground for developing pedagogic practices and for advancing collaboration in teaching the subject area. Furthermore, based on the individual examples, we will discuss the tensions and challenges that teaching the interdisciplinary topic of 'media and the city' faces. These range from increasing pressures to effectiveness created by the ongoing structural transformation of universities to managing the multiplicity and diversity of relevant research traditions to dealing with the social dynamics and differences in students' knowledge base and skills in the often very heterogeneous groups of participants.

A major issue to discuss concerns the relations of the subject area – and the implicit suggestion of an emerging subfield of urban media studies (UMS) – to the previous scholarly traditions of communication and media research. The question is that if we insist UMS should be institutionalized, is there any way to avoid involvement in the endless identity wrestling that has kept scholars in the field agonizing from early on.

Presenters

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Simone Tosoni, *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* & **Fredrik Stiernstedt**, *Södertörns Högskola*

Urban (media) ethnography for busy people

Introducing ECREA Summer School students to the ethnographic approach

Teaching the ethnographic approach is a challenging effort in higher education, due to the increasing time constraints that characterize contemporary academia. A discussion on how to teach ethnography is therefore particularly urgent. In our presentation, we contribute to this broader debate by introducing a practical exercise, first tested at the ECREA 2015 Summer School in Bremen.

The method we employed in our teaching is based on taking pictures of media practices, texts and technologies in urban public spaces. The mediation of the camera allows students to engage 'hands-on' with the field and at the same time to experiment with the 'denaturalizing' take that generally characterizes ethnographic approaches to media use and consumption. This reflexive stance is further fostered by a classroom discussion on the practice of observation and on the materials produced.

Overall, the exercise aims at an acceptable balance (and a research ethical compromise) between the reduced time available for teaching and the advantages of letting the students to personally experience and experiment with the practicalities of method. In our presentation, we also illuminate the ECREA's summer school as a context for teaching urban (media) ethnography, and discuss how to apply our experiences in other pedagogic contexts.

Zlatan Krajina, *University of Zagreb*

Pedagogic challenges of bifocality

'Media and the City' course at the University of Zagreb

In this presentation, I reflect on the development of the optional graduate course *Media and the City*, which I have convened at the University of Zagreb since 2011. Intended for (both Croatian and international) students specialising in media and journalism, the course faced a challenging requirement from the start, in terms of both teaching and learning: a sound engagement with issues usually taught elsewhere, within urban studies, architecture and anthropology.

At all points of the pedagogic process (teaching, seminar workshops, providing course materials, assessment), issues like representation, identity, and technology were made into central approaches to the understanding of phenomena such as ornamented façades, neighbourhood soundscapes, and the infrastructure of global cities. In turn, by not only reviewing the relevant canons, but also engaging students in the production of audiovisual coursework and embarking on 'urban walks', usual notions of 'media' – and 'the city' – were not merely juxtaposed but transformed, beginning to provide a multidimensional depth of field.

Meri Kytö, *University of Tampere*

Pros and cons of multidisciplinary in teaching 'media and the city'

Experiences from the School of Communication, Media and Theatre, University of Tampere

As part of a larger institutional reform in 2010, the University of Tampere changed its BA degree programs from discipline-oriented studies to multidisciplinary study programs. This has meant that several courses are now organized to provide understanding in broad thematic issues through conceptual perspectives rather

than being based on single core subjects. In my presentation, I will reflect teaching one such course on mediated urban space in the School of Communication, Media and Theatre.

The group in question consisted of second-year students to ones almost finishing their master's degree (the number of participants being about 20). The background of the students, coming from Finland and abroad, ranged from literary studies, photojournalism, social work, urban engineering, speech communication and music studies. As this was not an introductory course but an intermediate level seminar cum workshop, my primary challenge as a teacher was to create an encouraging atmosphere, and provide means, for the students to engage in a multidisciplinary dialogue, a task even many academics find challenging.

I will illuminate the expectations and reactions of the course participants to the study syllabus and course texts, analyse methods of dialogic teaching and discuss how to support and enhance the students' argumentative skills. A central problem and challenge during this particular course was that the students lacked shared concepts and joint research paradigms.

Based on observations made during the course, one of my key arguments is that while teaching inherently manifold topics such as 'media and the city' necessitates an approach that draws from multiple scholarly directions, we also need a sharper focus on the proposed objective of studies. Otherwise, there is a significant risk that amidst the deep structural transformations presently shaping universities, multidisciplinary study programs place the students in a disadvantaged position to begin with.

Ilija Tomanic Trivundza, *University of Ljubljana*

Image of a city as an image of the field

Disciplinary boundaries and »City and image« course at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana

The presentation is a reflection of teaching a course on media and the city in a Master's programme of Media and Communication Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. The introduction of this elective course in 2012 was spurred by an explicit hope to bring the course structure in line with the latest developments within the field of media studies. There was also an implicit desire to gain competitive advantage in the light of increased competition for enrolment of MA level students. The two tendencies, however, have proved hard to reconcile. This is because the tendency to reflect current developments of the field emphasises the need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, while the competitiveness aspect advocates the need of clearly demarcating the boundaries of the field.

The tensions created by these competing tendencies are clearly visible in the course *City and image*. While the course is a highly welcomed (by both students and staff) expansion of media studies within my institution, it is at the same time a specific narrowing-down of the subject of study, limiting itself to the mediated aspects of urbanity. My argument in the presentation is that this is not an idiosyncratic case but bespeaks of the state of our field. Media and communication studies have been for long torn between proclamations of being an autonomous field and lamentations that we are "merely" an intersection between proper disciplines. The emerging urban media studies (or media studies of urbanity) cannot escape this controversy but will need to face it openly and provide a clear answer to it in the process of its (potential) institutionalisation.