

ECREA *Media, Cities & Space* Section Report for 2019

Management of the Section

In 2019 the *Media, Cities & Space* Section came into existence after a successful application for Section status by the Temporary Working Group *Media & the City*. The new Section inherited the TWG's management team, including Tanya Lokot (Dublin City University) as chair, and Seija Ridell (Tampere University) and Simone Tosoni (Università Cattolica di Milano) as vice-chairs.

Since 2016, the management team is backed up by an *advisory group*, whose role focuses on increasing the diversity and scope of expertise of the Section's activities. The advisory group currently includes Zlatan Krajina (University of Zagreb), Matteo Tarantino (University of Geneva), Giorgia Aiello (University of Leeds), Shaun Moores (University of Sunderland), Scott Rodgers (Birkbeck, University of London), and the new section YECREA representative Lou Brandner (Sapienza University of Rome).

In December 2018, the management team and the board submitted to ECREA an official application to have its status transformed into permanent section, in order to proceed with its efforts to advance research and knowledge exchange on urban media and communication studies. The application was successful and in July 2019 the TWG became a Section, now called the Media, Cities & Space Section.

In December 2019, YECREA elected a new YECREA representative for the Media, Cities & Space Section – Lou Brandner, Sapienza University of Rome.

As of January 2020, the temporary working group has 116 members, involving an active network of researchers across the field of media studies, urban studies, locative media studies, geography, science and technology studies and other disciplines.

Apart from its application for section status, which entailed a lengthy period of uncertainty, the TWG/Section pursued a range of activities in 2019 in the following areas: *events, teaching, publishing, research collaboration* and *dissemination*.

Events

Vice-chair Seija Ridell organised two thematic panels dealing with themes of urban communication and spatiality, both of which included presentations from Section members:

- 1) Thematic panel with two separate sessions on 'Reconfigurations of infrastructure in the algorithmic age' in the Nordic STS 2019 Conference, 12–14 June 2019, Tampere University.
- 2) Thematic panel on 'Reconfiguration of infrastructures, reconfigurations of inequalities' in Infrastructures and inequalities: Media industries, digital cultures and politics, ECREA Section Conference, University of Helsinki, 21–22 October 2019, University of Helsinki.

Section Advisory Group member Scott Rodgers led an interactive public walking tour of media-related sites and phenomena in London's King's Cross cultural quarter in May 2019. The tour is related to a project he is undertaking with Susan Moore (University College London) on ideals and materialities of platform companies' urban redevelopment endeavours.

Scott Rodgers also co-organised with Joel McKim (Birkbeck, University of London) an ongoing seminar series on 'Data Materiality', including in May 2019 a lecture by Shannon Mattern on the implications of 5G technology for cities. The project, funded by the Vasari Research Centre for Art and Technology and Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Research in Media and Culture, also includes a related podcast series (<https://soundcloud.com/bbkvasari/sets/data-materiality>).

Teaching

Section Advisory Group members Zlatan Krajina and Scott Rodgers worked to develop the framework for an Erasmus staff exchange between Birkbeck, University of London and the University of Zagreb. The agreement will be finalized in 2020, with a visit by Scott Rodgers to Zagreb planned for the same year.

Scott Rodgers co-organised with Mari Paz Balibrea (Birkbeck, University of London) and Lawrence Webb (University of Sussex) a doctoral training workshop titled 'City maps: Navigating the urban object across disciplines'. Funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council CHASE consortium, the workshop included sessions on researching cities and cinema, mobile mapping, and urban media infrastructures, as well as getting published in urban cultural studies.

Publishing

In October 2019, *The Routledge Companion to Urban Media and Communication*, edited by Zlatan Krajina and Deborah Stevenson (Western Sydney University, Australia) was published. The book, first of its kind, features 45 chapters, encompassing major media and the city research issues. The book includes work by most active Section members, the Section's management team & advisory group. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Companion-to-Urban-Media-and-Communication-1st-Edition/Krajina-Stevenson/p/book/9780415792554>

In October 2019, a special section of the *International Journal of Communication*, edited by Simone Tosoni, Seija Ridell and Zlatan Krajina and called "The mediated city between disciplines: A call for Urban Media Studies", was published online and is available in open access here: <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/issue/view/15>. It features multiple contributions by Section members.

Matteo Tarantino, Tetyana Lokot, Susan Moore, Scott Rodgers and Simone Tosoni submitted a policy report on 'Urban Data Cultures in Post-Socialist Countries: Challenges for Evidence-Based Policy towards Housing Sustainability' to UNECE, based on a related research collaboration (see below in *Research Collaboration*).

TWG's Giorgia Aiello is currently editing a special forum issue of the *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* journal focusing on urban media & communication in Europe with a critical/cultural approach. The issue will feature contributions by the Section's management team, advisory group & members, to be published in 2021.

Research Collaboration

Section members Matteo Tarantino, Tanya Lokot, Scott Rodgers and Simone Tosoni, with Susan Moore, collaborated on a preliminary research study into the urban data cultures of Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, focusing specifically on the field of housing, in partnership with UNECE.

Several Section members, including Zlatan Krajina, Seija Ridell & Tanya Lokot, joined the Network of Proposers for the resubmission of COST Action Proposal OC-2019-1-24012 "CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT", which is currently under consideration.

Seija Ridell and Simone Tosoni were involved in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie innovative doctoral training network (EJD) application (H2020-MSCA-ITN-2019) coordinated by Tampere University and having as partners University of Groningen, Tel Aviv University, Università Cattolica di Milano and University of Lisbon as well as municipalities and other public and private agencies from each participating country. The network would have focused on imaginings and imaginaries of future urban complexity, combining in doctoral education the expertise of urban planning and architectural research, media studies and game research. Unfortunately, however, the funding decision in June 2019 was negative.

Dissemination

The Section's communication and dissemination activities continued on its three key public and semi-public channels: the Section website, a Facebook page and a Facebook group.

The Section website (<https://mediacitytwg.wordpress.com/>), recently updated to reflect its transformation from TWG to Section, is used for informational purposes and as a repository of downloadable materials (such as the podcasts of keynote speeches from the *Urban Media Studies Conference* held in Zagreb in 2015).

The Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/mediaandthecity/?ref=ts&fref=ts>), used both for informational purposes and to keep in touch with the TWG members, currently has 212 followers/members (up from 188 in 2018).

The membership figure in the Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/media.city.ecrea/?fref=ts>), used as a space of discussion, community building, and sharing resources, has increased from 264 in 2018 to 277.

The Section has been actively soliciting submissions for the ECC 2020 in Braga in October 2020 and is currently preparing for the management team elections as well as planning other future events and collaborations for 2020-2021.

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