

**Communication and Democracy Section
2009 Report**

2009 has been the first year the Communication and Democracy section has worked with its current board, which was partially renewed in the 2nd European Communication Conference held in Barcelona in November 2008. The chair and the vice-chairs of the section are satisfied with the day-to-day ruling of the section, with the achievements the section has obtained during the year, as well as with the fruitful cooperative relationship that the section has developed with other ECREA sections and networks. The three members of the board would like to welcome Julie Uldam as YECREA representative for the Communication in Democracy Section. The board is glad that Julie Uldam accepted this role after her name was put forward in the business meeting held in Rotterdam on 27 November 2009 within the framework of the ECREA conference on 'Media, Communication and the Spectacle'.

As 2009 was an off-conference year, the section has mainly been occupied with the final stages of the production process of the book that stemmed from the Symposium on Equal Opportunities and Communication Rights held in Brussels in 2007, as well as with the co-organisation of the ECREA conference on 'Media, Communication and the Spectacle', which was held in Rotterdam end of November 2009.

The aforementioned book was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in April 2009 under the title *Media Agoras: Democracy, Diversity and Communication*. It was a joint project of the Communication and Democracy and the Gender and Communication sections of ECREA and was co-edited by Iñaki Garcia-Blanco, Sofie Van Bauwel and Bart Cammaerts.

The main project the section this year has been its involvement in co-organising the Rotterdam conference. After the satisfactory experience the section had co-organising the 2007 off-conference event with other ECREA sections, the section decided to repeat such a collaborative experience, this time with the Film Studies and the Gender and Communication sections. The three sections agreed on organising a two-day event that would bring together scholars working in different areas of research but with a common interest in the interrelations between the media and the spectacle. The conference was successfully held on the 26 and 27 November 2009 under the title 'Media, Communication and the Spectacle', and was hosted by the Erasmus Centre for Media, Communication and Culture (Erasmus University of Rotterdam). 131 abstracts were received, 120 papers were selected. The conference attracted the attention of 130 delegates from 15 countries.

The section would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Erasmus Centre for Media, Communication and Culture for hosting the conference and for their administrative assistance, as well as YECREA for collaborating in organising a welcome event for young scholars (which was in fact attended by scholar of all ages) and a session on academic publishing specially addressed at young scholars. The section would also like to thank all the chairs and vice-chairs of the Gender and Communication and the Film Studies sections, the chair of YECREA, as well as Fien Adriaens, Frederik Dhaenens and Elke Van Damme for their help during the conference. Finally, the section would like to give a special thanks to Tonny Krijnen (vice-chair of the Gender and Communication section and lecturer at the Erasmus Centre for Media, Communication and Culture) for her commitment and hard work that made the conference happen.

Following our previous experience with the 2007 Symposium, and in line with our conviction that publishing a selection of the papers presented in the conference is the best legacy such an event can leave, the board of the section is already working towards publishing some of the papers as a special issue of an international peer-reviewed journal.

A section business meeting was held during the conference. That session dealt mainly with the organisation of the Communication and Democracy sessions that will be held in the 3rd European Communication Conference in Hamburg in 2010. It was agreed that Jeffrey Wimmer would be in charge of the programme, with the support of Bart Cammaerts, Iñaki Garcia-Blanco, and other scholars affiliated with the section. The section agreed that the board should seek the cooperation of the Political Communication for the two sections to co-organise a joint session (perhaps a semi-plenary) for the 2010 conference in Hamburg.

The future of the section website—which has not been updated for a long period of time—was also debated in the business meeting. It was agreed that the website could/should be turned into a blog. The desirability of requesting some help for its maintenance was also made evident. Finally, and as a result of the satisfactory experience that was the 2009 ECREA conference on 'Media, Communication and the Spectacle', the section agreed that a similar event, jointly organised with other ECREA sections, should be promoted for 2011.

The 3rd European Communication Conference and the eventual coordination of a special issue of a journal publishing a selection of papers presented in the 2009 conference—subject to acceptance of the section's proposal by the publishers—will be the main focuses of attention for the section during 2010. The section already contributed to the general call for papers of the conference, and has disseminated its own call for papers widely, in pursuit of a high number of submissions addressing topics relevant to our section from the widest range of theoretical and methodological perspectives.

The board of the section will also fully endorse and actively contribute to the organisation of an additional event in collaboration with YECREA. This event, mainly organised by Julie Uldam, will be a session on the role of teaching and publishing in CV building, which would both ideally be held at the 3rd European Communication Conference in Hamburg (or at another place and time if that was not possible). The session on the role of teaching will focus on the pros and cons of teaching while completing a PhD, as well as different publication forms and outlets in relation to the requirements of employers who will potentially employ emerging scholars.

Furthermore, a postgraduate symposium is planned as a part of the co-organised event planned for 2011. The proposed postgraduate symposium will consist of a series of roundtables around themes under the interests of the Communication and Democracy section, bringing experienced researchers and emerging scholars together. These roundtables mainly aspire to provide PhD students and young scholars with constructive feedback that would improve their research or expand the perspectives of their research, rather than focussing on the content/methodological questions that often follow conference sessions.