

Call for Papers

Standards, Disruptions and Values in Digital Culture and Communication



The [Digital Culture and Communication Section](#) in ECREA will be hosting the next workshop on “Standards, Disruptions and Values in Digital Culture and Communication” at the University of Salzburg, 26-28 November, 2015. Please **submit abstracts by May 11, 2015** to ecreadigitalculture@gmail.com. Web: <http://wp.me/p2XXkX-6v> released 2 March 2015.

Call for Papers

Technical and social standards are consistent, formal and informal norms, values or conventions of doing, operating, producing, and/or performing something. As the basis of technical transmission, standards in media allow transferability and interoperability, reduce complexity, and facilitate communication across formats, platforms and boundaries. Their relevance and power become evident with regard to co-existing or competing standards that result in disruptions and interferences, as expressed in the ‘videotape format war’ of the late 1970s or in the ongoing incompatibilities between Apple and Microsoft. But standardisation can also limit diversification and create lock-ins, which restrict future choices and prevent more radical changes. In society, standards generate common understandings and shared meanings, but can likewise be a source of inequalities, discrimination, and forms of exclusion – especially as not all people equally contribute to, or even participate in creating new standards. Media technologies provide standardised patterns of media production. Such patterns, in turn, may encounter a great diversity of publics and audiences, who remix, modify or create alternative narratives and hegemonies.

In digital culture and communication, standards and values are contested in many respects. In the last few years, with the emergence and pervasiveness of the Internet and online technologies, well-established paths in the production and circulation of information have been newly arranged or abandoned altogether. As a consequence, transformations and re-orientations are continuously happening in almost all fields of media and communication, such as media industries, media politics, media usage or journalism. New technological standards, ethical codes as well as narrative and visual canons are appearing in this process – not only with regard to technical systems, but also in terms of audience behaviour, media accountability, production ethics and regulation. In this context, standards also

refer to professional requirements, for example, in journalistic writing, broadcasting or media content production.

These new canons, standards and regulations in digital culture and communication are of different type, significance, scale and scope. It is important to critically evaluate the relationship between standards and values in their social, political, technological and artistic dimensions. Such questions include who has the power to define, develop and implement standards? What social values emerge in transformed communication spaces? Which values are attached to standardisation processes in creative industries and how are they related to copyright and patents in technological development? Are peer-production, open-access publishing and free-culture movements different kinds of markets or disruptions to existing models of markets? What is the relationship between technological standardisation and cultural diversity? Are there new canons in storytelling? What is the relationship between people's creative processes and media and art canons?

Within all these processes, values play a significant role as they provide orientation and guidance for the actions and decisions involved. Through the articulation of values, societies define what kinds of standards are desirable and which ones are less wanted. How do values, technology and media production relate to one another? How are values put on play in technology design, mass media production and popular culture processes of standardization? How can local adaptations of global formats in different communities and cultural backgrounds be regarded as sources of power, agency or new identities?

The workshop aims at collecting papers that analyse standards and values from different angles and perspectives in media and communication research, taking into account disruptions and continuities. The papers should represent the broad diversity of the section with regard to theoretical and empirical approaches. The conference organizers propose the following thematic fields.

A. Technical and Social Standards in Digital Communication and Media

- How do new technical standards evolve in the media industry? What values guide this process? What does the establishment of new standards mean for older technical systems?
- How do the diverse pressures to innovate in media industries interact with the resistance to and/or transformation of extant standards, and/or the development of new standards?
- How is the implementation of new standards negotiated? How and by whom are decisions taken and what modes of intervention exist (e.g. between players like platform operators and users)?
- How and to what extent are standards in digital culture and communication socially constructed by the media users?
- What is expected from media users by technological capacities of devices, by industry decisions or politics?
- How do heterogeneous social practices of users affect or influence technical standardisation?

- What values guide people's choice of media, technologies and platforms? What standards and values are people expecting from different media outlets?

B. Visual and Narrative Standards and Disruptions in Digital Culture

- How are visual standards and codes built? For instance, visualization of data is currently being developed as a field and there are no consolidated visual standards.
- **Ethics and aesthetics of data:** How do visual standards influence the comprehension of data in aesthetic, practical and epistemological ways?
- **Remix cultures:** Has remix become a standard? Which types of remixes and memes are disruptive? Are there new storytelling formulas emerging?
- How is the visual developing in digital culture? For instance in the social use of images such as selfies, which types of narratives are emerging?
- And finally, how all the previous issues are dealt with in terms of digital and visual literacies?

C. Professional Ethical Standards and Disruptions

- What are current challenges and issues regarding professional and ethical standards in digital culture and communication?
- How have professional standards and values (e.g. in journalism) changed with the pervasiveness of digital culture and communication?
- Who is responsible of implementing professional and ethical standards in digital culture and communication? How and by whom are these standards negotiated?
- How do ethical codes inform digital culture research?
- What explicit and implicit norms, frameworks, and/or ethical traditions ground the emergence, interpretation, transformation, and enforcement of and/or resistance to earlier and current standards?
- Are there emerging developments that offer new and potentially better grounds and frameworks for current and future technical and ethical standards in digital communication and media?

We welcome papers picking up any of the described issues and topics. Extended abstracts should be no longer than **700 words**, written in English and contain a clear outline of the argument, the theoretical framework, methodology and results (if applicable). Participants may submit more than one proposal, but only one paper by the same first author will be accepted. *Panel and paper proposals from PhD students and early career scholars are particularly welcome.*

All proposals should be **submitted by May 11, 2015** to ecreadigitalculture@gmail.com. Notifications of acceptance will be sent out approx. 4-6 weeks after the deadline. Keynote speakers to be announced.