

# USER GENERATED CONTENT

## Historical perspectives on the participation of audiences in social communication



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**International Workshop and Founding Conference  
of the ECREA Section Communication History**

**3–5 June 2010 in Potsdam**

Within the last years “User Generated Content” has become the dominating keyword to describe the change of social communication in the World Wide Web. Web 2.0 seems to facilitate the formation of social networks and to enhance political and cultural participation. From a historical perspective the question can be raised whether this change of social communication is rather unique or whether phenomena like “User Generated Content” are a continuity in public communication. Letters to the editor, the publications of social movements and Samizdat literature are only a few and very different examples how the audience tried to participate into public discussions – also in former times.

Especially in times of media change, when new media is integrated into everyday life, the question can be discussed to what extent new media and new opportunities of participation lead to social integration of the audience – or, on the contrary, whether the creation of multiple platforms of articulation primarily leads to a fragmentation of public discourse.

Nowadays accessibility to media – at least to the WWW – is given, but the impact of user generated content on public discourse can be regarded as limited: The public sphere seems to be highly fragmented and usually rather personally than socially relevant content is produced by the users. When mass media like the popular press or TV developed, accessibility was extremely limited. However, TV provides relevant social content for large parts of society and therefore facilitates processes of social integration.

Summing up, the implementation of new media can have manifold impact on society. It can include or exclude audiences and it can strengthen and weaken public discourse.

The conference aims to analyze and discuss the forms and the relevance of the audience’s integration in different times, cultures and political systems. Taking this perspective different types of media can be analyzed referring their potential to enhance traditional forms of participation and to create a platform for new audiences and forms of participation. How did new media affect the formation of new publics and affect traditional publics? Moreover, in a comparative perspective it is intended to take a look not only at long-term developments but also at differences and similarities between cultures, countries and regions: What kind of public discourse was enhanced by the Enlightenment? How did users articulate their interests and connect with each other within social movements like for example the worker’s, the women’s and the peace movement? What role played “User Generated Content” in different political systems? How is it used to support or to oppose democratic but also totalitarian systems? And finally it can be discussed how “the public” and “the private” was conceptualized or has to be rearranged with regard to the historical development of content produced by audiences?

## Programme

### Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June

**Venue:** ZZf Potsdam, Am Neuen Markt 9d, Potsdam, Conference room

**18.00**                    **Business Meeting of the Section  
Communication History of the German  
Communication Association (DGPuK)**

**19.00**                    **Intro and Keynote**

*Paschal Preston, Dublin City University*

**20.00**                    **Get together**

### Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> June

**Venue:** Einstein Forum, Am Neuen Markt 7, Potsdam, Conference room

**9.00 –10.30**            **The need for an active audience**

Chair: *Paschal Preston, Dublin City University*

*Joris van Eijnatten, University of Utrecht*

Getting the public to participate. Eighteenth-century discourse on the wakeful audience.

*Thomas Birkner, University of Hamburg*

Use the typewriter! – “User Generated Content” at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

*Koenraad Du Pont, Hogeschool-Universiteit Brussel*

User Generated Content in Italian Front line journals following the defeat of Caporetto (1917–1918)

**10.30–11.00**            **Coffee break**

**11.00–13.00**            **Public discourse and lifeworld  
in mainstream media**

Chair: *Christoph Classen, Center for Research on Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam*

*Marcel Broersma/Bas den Herder/Frank Harbers, University of Groningen*

Letters to the editor: critical platform or lip service? Great Britain and the Netherlands, 1885–2005.

*Hans-Ulrich Wagner, University of Hamburg*

Private opinions and public discourses. West German broadcasters and their attempts to deal with the participation of audiences after 1945.

*Anke Fiedler/Michael Meyen, University of Munich*

Letters to the Editor and the Public Sphere in the GDR. A case study on User Generated Content in Socialist Countries

*Thomas Haeussler/Peter Meier, University of Berne*

Mediating old and new. Values and proper conduct in advice columns in Swiss popular magazines in the 1950s and 1960s

**13.00–14.00**            **Lunch break**

**14.00–15.30**            **Counter-public and alternative media**

Chair: *Jürgen Danyel, Center for Research on Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam*

*Juraj Kittler, St. Lawrence University Canton*

From Roman Graffiti to Renaissance Political Cartoon: A Study in Subversive Political Culture in the 1500s Venice

*Susanne Kinnebrock/Christian Schwarzenegger, RWTH Aachen University*

The role of User Generated Content within the German Suffrage Movement

*Jeffrey Wimmer, Ilmenau University of Technology*

The times they are a-changin'. A comparison of political activism and participation during the student protests 1968 and 2009

**15.30–16.00**      **Coffee break**

**16.00–18.00**      **User participation influencing media, politics and society**

Chair: *Marcel Broersma, University of Groningen*

*Nelson Ribeiro, Catholic University of Portugal*

Audience Participation in Transborder Broadcasts during World War II. The Importance of Listener's Feedback on the BBC Portuguese Service

*Norbert Grube, University of Applied Science Zurich*

The Role of Media Research in the United States and Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

*Maria Löblich/Claudia Riesmeyer, University of Munich*

Open channels in Germany. The regulation of participatory media – a history of ideas

*Gabriele Balbi, University of Lugano*

How Subscribers Mattered. The Early Italian Telephone and its Users

**18.15**              **Business Meeting of the ECREA Section for Communication History**

**19.30**              **Dinner**

**Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> June**

**Venue:** Einstein Forum, Am Neuen Markt 7, Potsdam, Conference room

**9.00–10.00**              **Media change, new media and media systems**

Chair: *Joris van Eijnatten, University of Utrecht*

*Christian Oggolder, Austrian Academy of Sciences*

Us and Them – A theoretical Approach to Times of Media Change

*Dan Hunter, New York Law School/Julian Thomas /Ramon Lobato, Swinburne University of Technology*

The informal media economy: unofficial histories of audiovisual circuits

**10.00–10.30**              **Coffee break**

**10.30–12.00**              **User Generated Content – changing patterns and functions in the age of Web 2.0?**

Chair: *Klaus Arnold, University of Trier*

*Annika Sehl, Dortmund University of Technology*

Participatory journalism: Has there been any real advancement from the past until today?

*Melanie Hellwig, University of Applied Sciences Wilhelmshaven Oldenburg Elsfleth*

User Generated Content in the Context of the Breach of a Taboo

*Guido Keel, Zurich University of Applied Sciences*

Audience participation and technological change

## 12.00–12.30 **Résumé of the workshop and future challenges**

*Christian Schwarzenegger/Susanne Kinnebrock/Alexander Keus,  
RWTH Aachen University*  
Exploring tomorrow's yesterdays – User Generated Content as a future challenge

*Susanne Kinnebrock, RWTH Aachen University*  
Closing remarks

## 12.30 **Lunch break**

## 14.00–17.00 **Tourist programme**

Historical Sites in Potsdam – A walk around town.

## Information

### Organizer:

- ECREA Section Communication History
- Historical Section of the German Communication Association (DGPK)
- Center for Research on Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam

### Venue:

Except of the opening event on Thursday (ZZF Conference room, Am Neuen Markt 9d, Potsdam) all panels will take place in the Einstein Forum, Am Neuen Markt 7, 14467 Potsdam, Germany.

### Location plan:

<http://www.zzf-pdm.de/site/323/default.aspx>

### Registration:

Please register until **31 May, 2010** by e-mail:  
[timmm@zzf-pdm.de](mailto:timmm@zzf-pdm.de)

### Conference fee:

40 €, reduced (half-time employees and students): 20 €. Dinner and accommodation are not included.

### Conference management:

- *Klaus Arnold, University of Trier, Department of Media Studies*
- *Christoph Classen, Center for Research on Contemporary History (ZZF) Potsdam*
- *Susanne Kinnebrock, RWTH Aachen University, Institute for Language and Communication Studies*
- *Paschal Preston, Dublin City University, School of Communication*

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### For overnight accommodation see:

<http://www.berlin.de/tourismus/>  
<http://www.potsdam.de/cms/ziel/26854/EN/>