



DACH 21

CALL FOR PAPERS

#Communication #(R)evolution Changing Communication in a Digital Society

DACH21: Three-Country Conference on Communication Science
DGPuK, ÖGK und SGK
April 7–9, 2021, in Zurich
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Background

“Digital revolution”, “algorithmic society”, and “media disruption” are just some of the buzzwords used to describe the current changes in media and communication. Similarly, the key concepts of our discipline, such as digitalization, mediatization, datafication, and platformization, point towards fundamental transformations of the objects we study. These changes challenge communication science in terms of its theories, methods, empirical approaches, and identity as a discipline.

The DACH 21 conference focuses on these changes, i.e. on the transformation of media and communication in digital societies. It considers the full scope of these transformations, including structural transformations of the public sphere, changes in media regulation, the changing normative and ethical requirements of the digital era, and the impact of changing media and communication technologies on media organizations, broader society, culture, politics, and everyday life as well as changes in media content, formats, production, use, and effects.

Topic Areas

At DACH 21, changes in media and communication will be examined in terms of theories (Topic Area 1), methods (Topic Area 2), empirical research (Topic Area 3), and self-reflexivity, i.e., the significance these changes bring to the identity and role of our discipline (Topic Area 4).



Topic Area 1.

Theories of Change – Changing Theories

From a theoretical point of view, the first set of overarching questions are: How can change in communication and media be understood conceptually and theoretically, if at all? How does change relate to terms such as “evolution”, “transformation”, “revolution”, and “upheaval?” To what extent, where, and under what conditions can media change be described as “incremental” or “disruptive?” Of particular interest is whether and how communication and media change can be conceptually grasped and theoretically modelled: Are existing theories sufficient? Are systems, evolution, innovation, complexity, discourse, and institutional theories useful in modelling change? Do we need new theories to do justice to the interrelated social, cultural, and media changes in contemporary societies? What theories, including those of medium range, has communication science developed to model change processes? And from which normative perspectives can change and its societal consequences be evaluated?

Topic Area 2.

Methods of Change – Changing Methods

The concept of change is often primarily related to new media and media innovations. Thus, studies on short-term and ongoing changes predominate the literature. Today, however, communication scholars have more opportunities than ever to collect and process historical data and trace various changes in media and communication. These opportunities and their realization will be discussed under the second set of overarching questions: What research designs, data, and methods are available to describe change? How can long-term change to the public sphere, including the emergence of different platforms and media genres, be empirically traced so that trends or breaks are not prematurely postulated? How can access to high-quality data from social media companies and search engines be ensured, and how can they be translated into robust findings? Which methodological procedures, methods, and research techniques are available to diachronic media and communication research?

Topic Area 3.

Research on Change – Changing Research

To answer the third overarching question, scholars are invited to present studies and findings on short-, medium- and long-term changes in media and communication and/or on their prerequisites and consequences at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Topic Area 3 can include empirical contributions that study all aspects of communication, including the transformation of the public sphere; the interplay between journalism and social media; the transforming influence of the Internet and social media platforms; changes in journalism; changing media representations of gender; changes in media language, and economics, public relations and organizational communication, advertising, health, sports, and cultural and science communication; and changes in media use and effects as well as changes in the broader relations between culture, society, and media.



Topic Area 4.

Changing Discipline – Communication and Media Science in Transition

As a result of digital transformation, communication processes and media are increasingly studied outside our discipline, such as in political science and sociology, linguistics, and information and computer science. On the one hand, this is an opportunity for our discipline to engage in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research; on the other hand, it necessitates a reflection on our discipline's role and status: What is our unique selling proposition at a time when other disciplines are increasingly turning to our research topics? What is the material object of our discipline in these data-driven times? Is public communication our material object, and if so, what does that mean in the digital era? Is it all forms of mediated communication or even all forms of communication in general? What is the formal object of our discipline in these times of digitalization, i.e., what perspectives and approaches should communication science employ in order to deal with changes in communication and media? Which alliances with other disciplines are useful? What do such alliances mean for the identity of our discipline? How do society's expectations of our discipline change, and how is our discipline perceived in public? Furthermore, how useful is communication studies an increasingly specialized and differentiated discipline in dealing with fundamental and overarching questions about change in communication? Have we lost the generalists? Finally, could the topic of change be a common denominator that unifies communication science in the search for answers?

Submission details and important dates

Five types of submissions are possible:

1. extended abstracts on the conference theme,
2. panel proposals on the conference theme,
3. panel proposals for discursive formats on the conference theme,
4. extended abstracts for presentations in open panel sessions, and
5. Science Meets Practice workshops.

Submissions and presentations can be delivered in German, French, Italian, and English. All submissions must include an English title, and all presentation slides should be in English. This policy is meant to help participants from different language regions better understand each other.

With the exception of discursive formats and Science Meets Practice workshops, please ensure your submissions do not contain any information identifying authors or participants.

Submissions are only eligible if, at the time of submission, they have not (a) been published in writing and b) been submitted, accepted, or presented at a conference at which the audience significantly overlaps with the audience at DACH 21 (particularly division conferences of DGPuK, SGKM, and ÖGK). On the title page of their submissions, submitters must explicitly state that



these two conditions have been met.

For empirical submissions, please note that the abstract must include results and a discussion based on these results. Empirical submissions that describe expected results will be disqualified.

When submitting material on the conference theme, please indicate to which of the four topics your submission refers. Please note that your submission can refer to more than one.

Submissions will be anonymously reviewed based on the following criteria: (1) theoretical foundation, (2) relevance of the research question, (3) adequacy of the method(s), (4) innovation and originality, and (5) clarity and concision. Submissions on the conference theme will also be reviewed based on their fit with the theme. For theoretical submissions, the third criterion (methods) will not be applied.

Submissions regarding discursive panels and Science Meets Practice workshops will be reviewed by the DACH 21 steering committee. In addition, Science Meets Practice submissions will undergo an adapted review procedure. They will be selected based on the following criteria: (1) relevance of the topic, (2) the workshop's fit with the conference theme, and (3) links between practitioner contributions and communication and media science research.

Submissions must be made through “ConfTool” (www.conftool.org/dach21). The below dates and deadlines apply to all types of submission.

- The ConfTool opens April 15, 2020.
- The deadline for submissions is 24:00 on July 31, 2020.
- Notifications of acceptance or rejection will be issued on November 15, 2020.

1. Submission of extended abstracts on the conference theme

Extended abstracts for presentations on the conference theme should have between 4,000 and 6,000 characters (including spaces, references, tables, and charts).

2. Submission of panel proposals on the conference theme

You can submit full panels (presentations plus moderation). This is how bigger projects or thematically linked contributions that explicitly refer to the conference theme can be presented. Individual presentations must link to each other. Panel proposals must include the title of the panel, a description of the panel (3,000–4,000 characters, including spaces, references, tables, and charts), and a title and abstract (1,000–1,500 characters each, including spaces, references, tables, and charts). Panels last 90 minutes and can have up to four presentations. Presentations that are part of a panel proposal may not be simultaneously submitted as extended abstracts.



3. Submission of panel proposals for discursive formats on the conference theme

You may submit proposals for a discursive format addressing the conference theme. Submitters are free to choose and propose the form and type of discursive format (World Café, Thesis Café, Fishbowl, etc.). Discursive panels last 90 minutes and should focus on one or several topic areas.

Proposals on discursive formats must include the overall topic (as well as subtopics or theses), the names of the participants, and a description of the discursive format, including its form, type, content, and any subtopics or theses (4,000–6,000 characters, including spaces, references, tables, and charts).

4. Submission of extended abstracts for presentations in open panel sessions

Open panels are an opportunity for those submitting presentation proposals not directly linked to the conference theme. This way, current research projects on other topics can be presented and discussed. Extended abstracts should be between 4,000 and 6,000 characters, including spaces, references, tables, and charts.

5. Submission of Science Meets Practice workshops

Science Meets Practice workshops allow for exchanges between communication and media scientists and practitioners (e.g., journalists, PR professionals, etc.). Proposals should include moderation and between three and five individual contributions. An abstract of 1,000–2,000 characters, including spaces, should describe the topic and the questions to be discussed. In addition, submitters must provide the names of the scientists, practitioners, and moderator as well as a short summary of each contribution (500–1,000 characters each). Workshops last 90 minutes.

Organizing committee

Scientific steering committee

Prof. Dr. Mark Eisenegger
Prof. Dr. Thomas N. Friemel
Prof. Dr. Mike S. Schäfer
Prof. Dr. Thomas Zerback

Conference coordination

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Questions

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