

# Call for Papers

## **Civil Rights in Mediatized Societies: Which data privacy against whom and how?**

Organized by IAMCR as a Pre-Conference 19-20 July 2008 to the IAMCR 26<sup>th</sup> World Congress 20-25 July 2008, University of Stockholm, Sweden.

### **The need for a Pre-Conference on Civil Rights in Mediatized Societies**

Accountability for the role of media in society and culture is an old topic for media and communication scholars, especially for those who are affiliated to the IAMCR, which at the same time is an Association of researchers and accepted as an NGO by UNESCO and the UN system. For example, topics like the Digital Divide or those discussed at the WSIS Summit always have attracted great interest.

The digitalization and the use of digitalized media of today are not only areas of new possibilities and potentialities for a better life for all, for education and economy, for leisure and contacts between the people, but – under the given conditions of today – also a growing danger for freedom and democracy, a menace for the civil rights of people, as they increasingly control and influence people and give rise to a reduction in our capacity to be human. From concerns about “Big Brother”, questions about data misuse rise issues of civil rights, privacy and the possibilities of social and media activism. Much academic work on these issues is strongly theoretical or undertaken in the fields of Law and Criminology. The field of Media and Communications can draw upon a broader range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, politics and communication theory itself to interpret and learn from empirical evidence to understand the implications of these developments for peoples’ behavior and the potential danger for free and democratic societies.

An example, and there are many:

“As Peter walks up the main street, suddenly his mobile phone is ringing. A kind voice tells him that the retail shop he just was in front of, has a special offer in shoes of the label he usually wears. Behind this call, a lot of media and telecommunication processes and a lot of computer power have been active: A camera took pictures of all people walking on the road – of course because of security reasons. A computer with artificial intelligence software identified his face by biometrical attributes. The computer exchanges its knowledge with the police net, in order to find out the 12 digits personal number of the person and to know whether the person fulfils the important social norms of having a job, is not deviant, is not very ill and so on. Police and other governmental institutions cooperate with private enterprises in cases like this, because the Government feels responsible for the public space and the security of the people in the time of terrorism. The huge data stores of specialized economic enterprises inform about the rest: whether he has a credit card, what types of things he usually buys, whether he pays his bills and so on. Also known are all his operations he did by mobile phone and in the internet: Whether he buys tickets for what, with whom he speaks by phone, what books he bought at Amazon, the websites he usually visits by his provider, which one he searches for with Google, the friends he usually meets in chats or contacts by e-mail or phone.

Of course, Peter is eager to buy shoes more cheaply than usually, he enters the shop. When he leaves it with the shoes, he doesn’t care that there is a very small RFID chip in the shoe, as is the case in everything he buys – the data collected by that technology help to follow the traces of the shoe.”

More and more institutions have begun to collect all the data they can get – in whatever way: the government, the police, the industry, enterprises, the health and the security system, the banks and the political parties, the retail shop chains, the media themselves. They do it in order to make the people's lives more secure and pleasant, and in order to do their jobs better – more information seems always better than less information. Of course, it is not new that they do this. But there are developments which should be taken into consideration:

- More and more data exist about every single person, e.g. about her or his genes, health, wealth, interests, working qualities and so on. Especially, every activity with electronic media produces data and produces traces – with whom we communicate and how often, sometimes about what, what we are interested in and what we do in leisure or a job, what we buy and so on.
- More and more of the produced and existing data which describe a person are collected by more and more institutions, organizations and enterprises – from PayPal or credit card organisations, for example. Here, media society means that more and more areas of life are intertwined with media and thus may be used to collect data. New laws at least in the industrial societies care for a universal order of this data, e.g. a personal number for every individual. Thus, all data may be brought together and ordered by person. By the ongoing development of the media, this set of data may be used everywhere. The outcome of this is dangerous for the individuals, for democracy and society.
- Economy and the enterprises need information about what people want and what they like, to optimise their products and the ads for their target groups. Government, police and more and more societal institutions collect data with the argument that they need them to protect the people against terrorism, for planning and for doing their job. The problem, which carries high risk is that now economy and government have similar interests – against the consumers and the citizens of civil society, who need freedom.
- Technological development is helpful for government and economy, as the necessary devices for control become smaller, better and cheaper: Even if a person does not use electronic devices, it is nearly impossible to move in a European or US-city without being observed by dozens or more TV cameras. In addition, new technologies like RFID chips come to life. And first of all, computers gradually learn, what is understood as artificial intelligence, and they more and more become able to analyze the data automatically, without a person directing them. They will identify persons and they will decide whether a person is dangerous.

In general, the collection of data by government and social institutions or by the enterprises is not new. What is new is that today more and more data connected with a person are produced, and that government and economy collects them all – as it seems better to have them all if one wants to make valid predictions about behaviour. In addition, it is new is that government institutions, private enterprises and other institutions and parties are interested in the same data: they cooperate against the consumer and citizens.

Media and communication scholars observe, describe and analyse what happens with the media, communication and culture. The above developments are among the recent “media effects” on society and the individual. In this context the concept of civil rights and their role in a mediatised society make it important to analyse issues of ideology, culture and cultural diversity, religion, values, ethics and changing political systems. These are the broader issues that frame our interest in the specific topic of data misuse.

This pre-conference is planned, and supported by the IAMCR, to discuss these issues and problems, most of which are being ignored today.

### **The goals of the conference are threefold.**

- It will provide a basis for making an inventory of what happens today in this area and what can be expected over the next decade. This includes the law, media, technical devices for surveillance and so on. This inventory should be based on scholarly research.
- There are a lot of grassroots, other organisations and NGOs that work on these topics and have ideas and experience to develop alternative models. They know what to do and how to do it. The conference will solicit and collect reports from such organisations in order to learn from them.
- A declaration will be developed on what the situation is and what action might be taken. Such a declaration will be discussed by the General Assembly of IAMCR, and if it is supported, it will be distributed, if the Assembly agrees. If of general interest, the papers and NGO reports may be printed and distributed.

### **Who should attend?**

We encourage scholars, members of NGOs and other institutions to present their research and work on data misuse at this pre-conference and to cooperate in a common network based in different countries and cultures worldwide. We invite academic papers and NGO reports from different countries focussing on what can be learned from their experience.

We invite **abstracts of 500 words**. Abstracts will be peer-reviewed by the organizers. Decisions will be reached two weeks after the **submission date of 1 April 2008**. Those invited to present their work will be asked to submit a full paper (or report in the case of NGOs and others) with a view to possible publication **by 1 July 2008**.

### **Timing of Pre-Conference:**

The conference will take place from 19 July 2008 9:00 am to 20 July 2008 1:00 pm at the University of Stockholm. There will be some 20 presentations on the Saturday. The Sunday morning will be devoted to the development and discussion of a declaration by the participants. The organisers cannot provide financial support to participants. The fee covers the cost of lunch, coffee and the room rental. Participants can arrange accommodation at the IAMCR Conference website.

### **Pre-Conference on Civil Rights in Mediatized Societies Fee:**

IAMCR High Income Country: USD 130.00

IAMCR Low Income Country: USD 50.00

Registration will open from 15 April 2008. You will register by sending an email to:

**Friedrich.Krotz[AT]uni-erfurt.de**

You will then receive an invoice from IAMCR to pay your preconference registration fee at PayPal. After the fee has been received your registration will be valid.

### **Pre-Conference Organisers:**

Professor Friedrich Krotz, email: Friedrich.Krotz[AT]uni-erfurt.de

Professor Robin Mansell, email: r.e.mansell[AT]lse.ac.uk

Send your abstract to **Friedrich.Krotz[AT]uni-erfurt.de** by 1 April 2008.

For further information about hotels and the main IAMCR conference, see <http://www.mediaandglobaldivides.se/>

Note that University of Stockholm is NOT responsible for the organisation of this pre-conference. They only do registration for the MAIN IAMCR conference, 20-25 July 2008.