

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **Mediated Citizenship: Political Information and Participation in Europe**

#### **Conference of the ECREA Political Communication Section**

**17 – 18 September 2009, Leeds (UK)**

*In June 2009 European citizens will elect a new European Parliament, some of them who joined the European Union only recently for the first time. 2009 will also see numerous national elections throughout Europe. The Political Communication section will take this important election year in Europe as an opportunity to revisit one of the key areas of political communication research – how democratic participation is shaped and transformed by processes of mediatization and what consequences this has for the nature of contemporary citizenship.*

The nature of democratic citizenship is presently undergoing fundamental changes, which are assumed to have far-reaching consequences for the way democracy works. The relationship between citizens and their elected representatives seems to be characterized by growing distance, mistrust and ignorance. Long gone are the days of an ideal (or idealized) Athenian polity where political engagement was regarded a virtue and daily life was permeated by political debate. Instead, a growing number of citizens has withdrawn from politics and doesn't even find it worth the while to follow the news or to cast their vote. Meanwhile, the enthusiasm that initially inspired the citizens of the new democracies in Eastern Europe has evaporated and we now see similar patterns of disenchantment in these countries like in their established counterparts. Media organisations and political actors have responded to these developments in various ways – so far without significant success. Turnout continues to drop, and news programmes, in particular current affairs programmes, are losing their audiences.

Are modern democracies, then, left without citizens, as Robert Entman suggested twenty years ago? The question is even more urgent with regard to the European Union, which for a long time has been largely ignored by its citizens, but is now at risk to be rejected altogether, as the recent No votes in the referenda in Ireland, France and the Netherlands demonstrate.

However, the situation might be more ambiguous and complex. While citizens are withdrawing from institutionalized politics and established channels of communication new arenas of participation and new forms of communicating political ideas have emerged, which for many – in particular the young – appear more meaningful and more trustworthy. In particular the Internet has opened up new spaces for democratic citizenship from the local to the global level that could not have been dreamed of twenty years ago.

The ECREA Political Communication sectional workshop aims to provide a forum to discuss these themes. We invite empirical as well as theoretical papers that contribute to understanding contemporary democratic citizenship and the role of the media, old and new, in shaping the way it is experienced and practiced. We are particularly interested in papers that address the following aspects:

- □ European citizenship: media and perceptions of Europe; participation and vote choice in European elections and referenda.
- □ The ballot box and beyond: media and national electoral politics; non-institutionalised participation; non-voting and political disengagement.
- □ Communicating to citizens: Mediated and mediated political messages; implications for political information and participation.
- □ Making sense of politics: citizens' response to political information; information processing and civic knowledge.
- □ Conceptualizing citizenship (European, national): relationship between media and citizenship; lay understanding of citizenship.

#### **Submission of contributions:**

Abstracts of not more than 500 words should be sent to [ics-conferences@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:ics-conferences@leeds.ac.uk), mentioning 'Mediated citizenship' in the subject line.

Deadline: 15 May 2009

#### **Local organiser:**

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