



IASS-AIS
International Association for Semiotic Studies
Association Internationale de Sémiotique
Asociación Internacional de Semiótica
Internationale Vereinigung für Semiotik



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Institute of Philosophy
and Semiotics



semiotics
and visual
communication
lab



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SEMIOSIS IN COMMUNICATION

Culture, Communication and Social Change

Bucharest, 4-6 June, 2020

Conference description

The third edition of the International Conference *Semiosis in Communication: Culture, Communication and Social Change* will be organized by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania (SNSPA), through the Applied Semiotics and Communication Lab (ASCL) - affiliated to the Centre for Research in Communication (CRC) of the Communication and Public Relations Faculty, FCRP, SNSPA - in participation with:

- *Department of Semiotics*, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, University of Tartu (Estonia);
- *SemioLab* - Semiotics Laboratory affiliated with Aristotle University in Thessaloniki (Greece);
- *Southeast European Center for Semiotic Studies* (SEECSS) at New Bulgarian University (NBU), Sofia (Bulgaria);
- *Semiotics and Visual Communication Research Lab* at Cyprus University of Technology;
- *National School of Anthropology and History* (ENAH), Mexico City (Mexico);
- *Romanian Association of Semiotic Studies* (ROASS) and

under the auspices of the *International Association for Semiotic Studies* (IASS-AIS). It will be held in Bucharest, Romania, from the 4th to the 6th of June, 2020.

This conference explores the role of semiosis in communication. Objects of interdisciplinary knowledge par excellence, semiotics and communication are complementary ways of world mastery, of the *big game*, just like Solomon Marcus (2011) would say. The main objective of the International Conference *Semiosis in Communication* is to emphasize the importance of semiotic type queries in the communication sciences and to stimulate the exchange of ideas in these fields and areas of academic research. The theme proposed for this third edition of the international conference *Semiosis in Communication* is *Culture, Communication and Social Change* and focuses on the role of culture in social change, on the contemporary cultural dynamics, as well as on the necessity of studying and understanding the cultural environment in relation to the technological advancement (digitalization of culture, media and digital literacy and emergence of transmedial spaces of communication, etc.).

The conference is organized in several panels, which will address specific topics, such as: *Semiotic of Culture/Cultural Semiotics*; *Semiotics & Communication, Relations between Media*; *Culture & Society*; *Semiotics, Cultural Diversity & Intercultural Dialogue*; *Semiotics of Cultural and Social Issues & Practices* (literature, translation, cinema, advertising, space, everyday activities); *Research on the integration of cultural semiotics, data analytics, digital culture studies & creative industries' studies*; *Communicative Practices in Social Media Cultures*; *Semiotic & Media Literacy*; *Semiotics & New Media*; *Communication & Social Change*; *Sociosemiotics & Multimodality*; *Semiotics, Culture & Brand Communications*; *Applied Semiotics*, etc.

In the tradition of previous *Semiosis in Communication* (SC) editions, keynote speakers will be some internationally recognized experts in their fields of activity.

Panels (*list to be updated*)

1. Semiotic of Culture/Cultural Semiotics: New Perspectives

Panel head(s): **Peeter TOROP**, Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu, Estonia, & **Julieta Haidar**, National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH), Mexico City, Mexico

Names and works of Jakob von Uexküll, Juri Lotman and their colleagues, the founders of world-renowned Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics, form the cornerstone of the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu. Since then, starting from the work of these titans of semiotics, the Department of Semiotics of the University of Tartu made tradition and has become one of the most important centers of semiotics in Europe, with deep roots for cultural semiotics and biosemiotics.

In this respect, cultural semiotics offers the theoretical foundations required for answering a series of questions that concern the contemporary world (Posner, 2004), such as: How do the signs, sign processes, and sign systems of a culture differ from non-cultural (i.e., natural) signs, sign processes, and sign systems? How do the interpreters of cultural signs differ from those of natural signs? What determines the identity and boundaries of a culture? What relations do different cultures have to each other within the semiosphere? How does cultural change originate?

The discussion topics within this panel will attempt to address such questions, will refer to certain aspects of cultural semiotics, but are not limited to:

- explore and understand different situations and communicative phenomena from the perspective of Lotman's semiotic theory of culture;
- apply Lotman's theories to the analysis of diverse cultural phenomena;
- compare different sign systems and analyse the processes of translation between them.

2. Reflecting social change in European media

Panel head: **Evangelos Kourdis**, School of French Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The panel will examine the media landscape in Europe in a changing world. How do the big European media outlets project East-West relations within the European Union, Brexit, officially acknowledged minorities, Europe's involvement in global warfare and cultural affairs? What are the intersemiotic/intermedial techniques, the ideological foundations and the new political ideas being disseminated, and how successfully do they affect European citizens? How is European financial and social crisis reflected across various media (television, cinema, ads and TV spots, written and electronic press, radio etc.)?

Topics can include:

- Is there a "European public opinion"?
- Is there a specific brand of "European populism"?
- Europe losing the "moral high ground" in political communication
- Europeanizing the US technoscientific conception.
- Implicit and explicit censorship in the EU
- Contemporary European crisis narratives

3. The Meaning of Artificial Faces

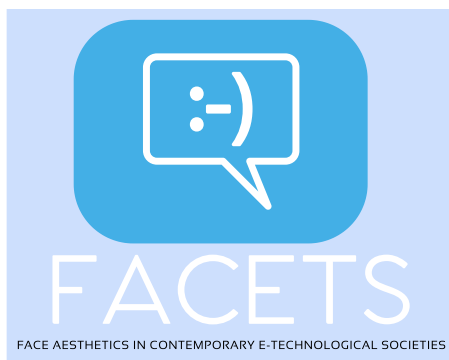
Panel head: **Massimo LEONE**, Shanghai University / University of Turin

Neurophysiology and cognitive psychology, visual history and digital art, artificial intelligence and plastic surgery constitute the *daring cross-disciplinary perimeter* of the panel, which is meant to be an important step in a major research agenda, awarded an *ERC Consolidator Grant in 2019* (FACETS: Face Aesthetics in Contemporary E-Technological Societies, June 2019 – May 2024, 2 million Euros). Within this perimeter, a specific issue is investigated: the meaning of artificial faces.

Whereas the ability to cognitively deal with images is often used as shibboleth to distinguish between humans and algorithms (for instance, in the captcha test), this distinction is more and more challenged by advancements in artificial intelligence. Since 2018, generative adversarial networks have been given the task to create from scratch facial images that do not correspond to any ontologically present faces. The realism of these “artificial faces” is quite impressive, and often induces human observers to adopt a rhetoric of awe: *machines too are attributed the uncanny ability to create images of faces*, with such a level of realism that seems to match that of nature itself. Recent experiments with the animation of these “transhuman portraits” add a further level of complexity to the issue of their social reception.

The panel is meant to attract contribution on the semiotics of these and other “artificial faces”.

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 819649 - FACETS).



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4. Semiotics and communication

Panel head(s): **Dumitru BORTUN**, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania; & **Nicolae-Sorin DRĂGAN**, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

This panel approaches directly the act or phenomenon of communication in the light of semiotic theory. Its purpose is to develop the premises for a semiotic theory of communication. While communication was explored thoroughly in the light of other disciplines, and, as such, understood within the perspective of sociology, psychology, cognitive sciences, cultural studies or philosophy of language, semiotics accounts for communication as an act of signification. As such, communication is not accounted for as necessarily dependent on categories such as social interaction, cognitive abilities or cultural background, but as purely a phenomenon of signification. This is the most theoretically general and open panel.

5. Fake News and Digital Disinformation

Panel head: **Alina BĂRGĂOANU**, member of the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Digital Disinformation, European Commission; Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

The fake news phenomenon gained the spotlight during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and international attention has been drawn to the potential effects of digital disinformation ever since. While fabricating and circulating misleading content is not new, modern technologies, computational propaganda techniques, artificial intelligence, algorithms, and the use of trolls facilitate an alarming fake news proliferation rate (Glaser, 2017). Social media and the Internet allow almost anyone to become a content creator and propagate fake or biased content, even make it viral. While reliance on social media for news and information has risen, and distrust in the traditional news media has grown, the effects of digital disinformation became a focal point of interest.

As the political discourse has rapidly moved online to target a broader part of the electorate, preserving the democratic dialogue online and popularizing fact checking among the general public are mandatory stepping stones in addressing disinformation. The logic of selective exposure and the data-driven filtering of the information that is included in a user's social media news stream shape the perceptions of reality in the post-truth era and maintain online media consumers in their own filter bubbles or echo chambers (Smith, 2017), prone to biased and tight perspectives as well as easy victims to fake content. As disinformation became a troublesome force in the digital news media environment, with harsh consequences for democracy (Zengerle, 2016), European institutions, news organizations and tech companies have taken steps to tackle fake news production and disinformation. Given the challenges associated with detecting fake news and mitigating the effects, the panel seeks contributions that address the fake news phenomenon and look into ways to fight disinformation in the 21st century, increase social media utility for democratic discourse, expose disinformation effects in elections and provide media literacy tools.

Topics may focus on, but are not limited to:

- Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fakery;

- Fact-checking in a disinformation era;
- Democracy and digital disinformation;
- Digital algorithms;
- Effects of fake news in the digital era;
- From echo chambers and filter bubbles to personal choices;
- Countering online disinformation;
- Politically biased fake news;
- Computational propaganda;
- Media literacy;
- Hate speech in the new media landscape;
- Regulating big tech.

Keynote Speakers confirmed:

- **Marcel Danesi**, Director of the Program in Semiotics and Communication Theory and Professor of Linguistic Anthropology at the University of Toronto, Canada – **Marcel Danesi** is *Honorary Guest* of the event;
- **Susan Petrilli**, Professor of Philosophy and Theory of Languages at the Department of Lettere, LingueArti – Italianistica e Culture Comparete (Letters, Languages, Arts – Italian Studies and Comparative Cultures), University of Bari “Aldo Moro”, Bari, Italy; Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Psychology, the University of Adelaide, South Australia, and Vice President of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (IASS-AIS);
- **Augusto Ponzio**, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Theory of Languages at University of Bari “Aldo Moro”, Italy;
- **Paul Cobby**, President of IASS-AIS, International Association for Semiotic Studies, Middlesex University, U.K.;
- **Peeter Torop**, Department of Semiotics, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, University of Tartu; Estonia;
- **Julieta Haidar**, National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH), Mexico City, Mexico;
- **Massimo Leone**, IFK Senior Fellow - International Research Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Art and Design Linz, Wien; Professor of Semiotics, Cultural Semiotics, and Visual Semiotics at the Department of Philosophy, University of Turin, Italy;
- **José María Paz Gago**, Catedrático de Teoría da Literatura Comparada, Departamento de Letras, Facultade de Filoxía Universidade da Coruña, España and
- **Kristian Bankov**, Professor of Semiotics at New Bulgarian University and Department Chair of the Southeast European Center for Semiotic Studies; Secretary General of IASS-AIS, International Association for Semiotic Studies.

Important deadlines

Deadline for submission of Abstracts: **15th of February 2020** - (you will receive an acknowledgment by email)

Notification of Acceptance: **28th of February 2020**

Deadline for participation fee (Early bird): by **27th of March 2020**

Conference: **4 - 6 June, 2020**

Paper submission

Applications for presentations consist in only one document:

- Title and abstract (max. 300 words followed by 3-5 keywords) with short and relevant *bionote* (do not exceed 150 words, please) in MS Word format (.doc, .docx). We highly appreciate short, schematic texts.
- Please use the abstract template available on the [conference website](#). You can download the template of abstract directly from the conference website ([Abstract Template.doc](#))

Co-authored papers are welcome.

Papers are delivered in 30 minutes presentations (20 minutes talk followed by 10 minutes of debate).

Please, submit your proposal to dragan.nicolaesorin@gmail.com or sorin.dragan@comunicare.ro within February 15th, 2020. Only one paper for each participant (as a first author) will be accepted.

The official language of the conference is English.

The authors will receive confirmation via e-mail.

Registration & Conference fee

Early bird registration - by 27th of March 2020:

Delegates should pay the conference fee - **100 Euro/participant** - after the notification of abstract acceptance. Members of the IASS-AIS benefit of a 20% discount, therefore they will pay **80 Euro/participant**. For delegates only attending the conference (without presenting), the fee is **30 Euro/participant**.

Late registration - after 27th of March 2020:

Delegates should pay the conference fee - **120 Euro/participant** - after the notification of abstract acceptance. Members of the IASS-AIS will pay **100 Euro/participant**. For delegates only attending the conference (without presenting), the fee is **50 Euro/participant**.



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The fee includes conference attendance, lunch, refreshments during coffee breaks, conference bag, publication in conference proceedings and in the *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* (selected papers only), refreshments during coffee breaks and lunch.

After the payment delegates are required to send the payment confirmation to: dragan.nicolaesorin@gmail.com in order to register for the conference.

Publication

For conference delegates, we offer more publishing possibilities. In all instances your papers are subject to a double-blind peer review. Each journal has its own peer review process that will be followed. If you have committed your paper for other venues, you may just present your paper at the conference. Please note that only the papers that have been presented at the conference will be published.

Selected papers that will undergo the journal's peer-review process will be published in:

- The Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations (<http://www.journalofcommunication.ro/>), an academic journal indexed in the following research data-bases: Scopus, EBSCO, ProQuest, DOAJ, CEEOL, Index Copernicus, Cabell's, and Genamics Journal Seek.
- Journal of Media Research (<http://mrjournal.ro/>). The Journal of Media Research is a scientific research journal focusing on the field of media and communication. It is a peer reviewed academic publication for interdisciplinary quantitative and qualitative research in the social sciences. Carefully read the guidelines for authors. The journal is indexed in the following international databases: EBSCO, ProQuest, and CEEOL.
- A volume with the best papers presented at the conference that will be published at a prestigious international publishing house - the first volume of the event in Bucharest, which contains a selection of articles presented in the second edition of the international conference **Semiosis in Communication II**, from June 2018, will be released next year, hopefully before the event in Bucharest, from June 4 to 6, 2020.

Conference venue

National University of Political and Administrative Studies, College of Communication and Public Relations, 30A Expozitiei Boulevard, Bucharest, Romania.



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Partners

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Semiotics and Visual Communication Research Lab at Cyprus University of Technology;
Romanian Association of Semiotic Studies (ROASS)

Honorary President of Conference

Solomon Marcus, member of the Mathematical Section of the Romanian Academy and Emeritus Professor of the University of Bucharest's Faculty of Mathematics.

Scientific committee

Kristian Bankov, New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria;
Alina Bârgăoanu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Priscila Borges, Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil;
Dumitru Borțun, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Luis Emilio Bruni, Aalborg University Copenhagen, Denmark;
Corina Buzoianu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Nicoleta Corbu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Loredana Ivan, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Evangelos Kourdis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of French Language and Literature, Greece;
Massimo Leone, Department of Philosophy, University of Turin, Italy;
Constantin Popescu, Department of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, Romania;
Daniela Roventă-Frumușani, University of Bucharest, Romania;
Peeter Torop, University of Tartu, Department of Semiotics;
Eviprides Zantides, Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts, Cyprus University of Technology.



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Organizing committee

Dumitru Borțun, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Oana Chircă, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania.
Paula Drăgan, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
George Tudorie, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania;
Liliana Voicu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania.

For questions and details concerning the conference *Semiosis in Communication: Culture, Communication and Social Change*, please write to Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan at: dragan.nicolaesorin@gmail.com; or sorin.dragan@comunicare.ro.

