The conditions of public communication are changing and this transformation challenges us to critically discuss our theories of public communication. This also applies to the spiral of silence theory (SoS), which received a tremendous amount of scholarly attention, lively discussion, and seems to be particularly affected by many aspects of this change. This holds, for example, regarding the rise of populists who ostensibly compete to represent the views of a silent majority against the silencing process established by the elites and thus break down ostensible communication taboos. This applies to polarized political cultures, for which we must asked to what extent the concept of social isolation still makes sense and whether isolation is not more likely to come from political milieus and communities of conviction. This concerns the development of social media, which make opinions publicly visible to a greater extent than previously possible, but then again enable us to escape potential social risks through anonymity. And this applies to the blending of mass media and interpersonal communication, in which different sources and their attributes mingle and may have other effects than both sources separately. Especially the last three points seem to make it necessary to re-discuss the relationship between society as a whole, and social groups within society against the background of the SoS.

The preconference “New Directions in Spiral of Silence Research” aims to start here and discuss the SoS with regard to changes in public communication and, in this context, take up current points of discussion – e.g. the theory’s transferability to online, the neglect of the social environment as well as missing tests of the theory as a whole (for an overview see Matthes et al., 2018). By adapting the SoS to the changing nature of public communication and thereby address current criticisms, we believe the theory can be further developed and improved so that it unfolds its strengths (e.g., linking macro-micro levels) to better answer important questions of our time – e.g. dynamics of public opinion. Under the guiding question “How can the SoS be reformulated to better account for current changes in public communication?”, scholars are welcome to present current research results (classical presentation format) as well as discuss research ideas, perspectives and potential collaboration (roundtable format). Both theoretical and methodological (e.g. use of tracking, simulations, network approaches) perspectives are welcome. Submissions could address the following research areas:

**Spiral of Silence Online:** Although a meta-analysis of 66 SoS studies confirmed a SoS online (Matthes et al., 2018), there are mixed results. This is precisely where a multitude of highly interesting questions as well as areas of tension arise. Which digital sources do individuals use to observe their environment and how do they affect the climate of opinion perception? What role does the blending of interpersonal and mass media communication play? What about selective exposure and algorithms? Do the much-discussed homogeneous communication spaces exist, and if so, how do they influence climate perceptions? Does social media reinforce the relevance of the social environment? How do audience size, user anonymity, persistence, degree of publicly (e.g. Neubaum, 2021) and missing non-verbal cues affect opinion expression? And to what extend do online expressions at the micro level have a greater impact on the macro level than offline expressions due to a greater reach online?
Integration of a meso-level: To what extend is the social environment a meaningful source in addition to the mass media and how does it affect climate of opinion perceptions? Can perceptions of the climate of opinion in society and the social environment differ, and how does this tension affect the willingness to speak out? Do I express my opinion if I perceive myself in the majority of my social environment but in the minority of society (e.g. interesting with regard to populism)?

Tests of the theory as a whole: The majority of SoS studies test parts of the theory, but a stronger focus should also be on the theory as a whole. Thus, especially the macro-micro game makes up the theory. Here the question arises, what are the methodological possibilities? To what extent can and long-term studies help? What role do simulations play?

Submission:
- Extended Abstracts (max. 800 words excl. references, tables/figures) should be sent to Marius Gerads (marius.gerads@hhu.de) and Jule Scheper (jule.scheper@ijk.hmtm-hannover.de)
- Deadline: February 4th, 2022
- Notifications will be sent no later than March 4th, 2022

Location and Date:
- May 25th, 2022 (Wednesday)
- 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (lunch break from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.)
- The preconference will take place at the “Grand Amphithéâtre” at CELSA – Sorbonne University (77 Rue de Villiers, 92200 Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris).

Preconference Fee:
- 30 Euro per Person
- The preconference is open to both ICA and non-ICA members.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Marius Gerads (marius.gerads@hhu.de) or Jule Scheper (jule.scheper@ijk.hmtm-hannover.de).