

Editorial

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Dear SComS readers,

While our journal enjoys increasing recognition by international readers and authors, it also remains a vital forum for Swiss communication and media studies. The current issue testifies to this attachment, as it includes research from universities in Switzerland's German-, French-, and Italian-speaking parts.

The General Section opens with two articles addressing the micro level of in-person communication and the macro level of mass-mediated discourses in the public sphere. In the first article, Jonathan Gruber, Eszter Hargittai, and Minh Hao Nguyen from the University of Zurich investigate the value of face-to-face communication in a world where digital communication technologies are omnipresent. The researchers draw on survey data collected in the U.S. when the first COVID-19-related lockdown limited in-person interactions. They use this opportunity to study what people value in face-to-face interactions, as this likely becomes more salient to people when in-person interactions are less available. Their results show that most people missed elements of face-to-face interaction, such as the special value of spontaneous conversation and physical closeness. The study also sheds light on which modes of digital communication seem to compensate for the lack of face-to-face interactions better than others.

In their study, “Bad guy or good guy? The framing of an imam,” Regula Hänggeli and Noemi Trucco from the University of

Fribourg retrace the temporal and social dynamics of a framing process in the Swiss news media from 2015 to 2019. Through a qualitative content analysis of the coverage in Swiss newspapers and public broadcasting websites in German and French, the authors find six different frames in the coverage of imam Bekim Alimi, including “bridge-builder,” “trust-builder,” “deceiver,” “radical imam,” “influential imam,” and “responsible Swiss citizen.” Hänggeli and Trucco also identify two critical events that influential actors seized to impose their frame on the debate. However, the coverage remained diverse and resisted escalation, owing partly, in this case, to the neutrality of local journalism as the authors suggest.

The Thematic Section is dedicated to the *Changing Communication of Higher Education Institutions*. A growing body of literature sheds light on how these pivotal organizations conduct public relations and engage in science communication. However, scant research has been conducted on how the communication of universities has developed over time and changed as a result of transformations in higher education and the media landscape. The contributions in this Thematic Section address this gap in research, presenting and discussing findings based on diverse methods, including standardized online surveys, semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and critical discourse analysis. The guest editors Silke Fürst, Daniel Vogler, Isabel Sörensen, and Mike S. Schäfer introduce the five arti-



cles assembled in the Thematic Section and reflect on three overarching themes to which the articles contribute: the impact of digital media, centralized and decentralized structures of communication, and dysfunctional effects in the communication of higher education institutions. These themes come with a focus on the past decade. However, the invited essay by Hans Peter Peters also sheds light on developments since the 1980s, while the guest editors outline major changes in university communication since the late 19th century.

Three studies in this Thematic Section were published online first and altogether have already been seen more than 1000 times (abstract views) and downloaded around 500 times during the past three months. These figures underline the importance of advance online publications, which SComS introduced in 2020.

In the Community Section, we have the honor of featuring a summary of Rana Arafat's dissertation – this year's winner of the Dissertation Award from the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research (SACM). The SACM Dissertation Award honors the best PhD thesis in communication and media research completed at a Swiss university or by a Swiss researcher. Rana Arafat's dissertation was completed at the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) and is entitled "Rethinking digital media use for diasporic political participation: An investigation into journalism advocacy, digital activism, and democratic divides." It develops a novel understanding of the concept of *Hybrid Diasporic Public Sphere* by employing four qualitative research methods and examining three groups of Arab diasporic exiles: journalists, activists, and ordinary refugees. The rich empirical studies show how the digital practices of these three groups of diasporic exiles are highly interactive, overlapping, and complementary in aiming to mobilize political change in their homelands. By adopting a comparative perspective, the dissertation reveals that their digitally empowered collaborations blur boundaries between their normative role distinctions, thereby creating new

interchanging political logics, norms, and practices. Congratulations to Rana Arafat for this outstanding achievement! We invite the SComS readers to read the summary of her excellent cumulative thesis.

The Community Section also includes a report with political implications for Swiss research and teaching in general and our discipline in particular. Quirin Ryffel, Sarah Marschlich, Silke Fürst, and Stefanie Thai organized a panel discussion at the 2022 SACM conference in Zurich and discussed the need and measures to create more permanent positions with representatives from SNSF, SAGW, VAUZ, Petition Academia, professorate at the University of Zurich and USI as well as with a large number of panel participants. The discussion was informed by preliminary results from a recent study on the working conditions of young communication scholars in Switzerland and highlighted several reasons for inducing a systemic change. Next to fighting the precarious working conditions and insecure prospects of young researchers, such change is about ensuring that the Swiss university system promotes thorough and innovative research and attracts high-quality researchers. While there are manifold arguments for creating more permanent positions beyond professorships, these arguments must appeal to those actors who are responsible and have decision-making power. The authors emphasize the need to continue discussing the issue and advocating for improved working conditions and prospects for secure employment.

In our Review Section, Roger Blum discusses the book "L'autodisciplina della professione giornalistica in Svizzera (1972–2022)" by Enrico Morresi (The self-regulation of the journalistic profession in Switzerland). Blum emphasizes the overview of the Swiss Press Council's rulings as a major contribution of this book to the state of the literature. He particularly praises the depth of field that Morresi covers, including 300 cases and a selection of 1600 statements.

As the year draws to a close, 2022 is already being "wrapped" by social media and staged in televised retrospectives.

Table 1: Submissions to SComS and editorial decisions in 2021, compared to 2020

	Submissions (full paper)	Acceptance	Rejection after review	Regular desk rejection	Desk rejection due to plagiarism
Total 2021	50	18	8	24	0
General Section	38	8	6	24	0
Thematic Sections	12	10	2	0	0
Total 2020	42	18	7	15	2
General Section	33	11	6	15	1
Thematic Sections	9	7	1	0	1

On our side, we are now ready to give you a complete overview of what has become of *last* year’s scholarly seed (i. e., the manuscripts submitted in 2021). Table 1 shows an increase in submissions from 42 in 2020 to 50 in 2021. The acceptance rate for all submitted manuscripts in 2021 was 36%, which rose to 69% for those that crossed the threshold of a desk reject. Most desk rejects were due to a lacking fit to the thematic focus and scope of SComS or a low general quality, that is, the manuscripts did not meet our scientific standards. In contrast to 2020, no cases of plagiarism were detected among the submitted manuscripts.

The two Thematic Sections in 2021, “Visibility in the Digital Age” (ed. by Cornelia Brantner & Helena Stehle) and “Critical Perspectives on Migration in Discourse and Communication” (ed. by Dimitris Serafis, Jolanta Drzewiecka, & Sara Greco), received a total of 12 full paper submissions (not counting prior abstract submissions). Most of these passed the double-blind peer review process and have been published.

The growth in submissions to SComS was accompanied by an exponential increase in total downloads of articles, from nearly 5500 downloads in 2019 and around 10500 in 2020 to 22000 downloaded articles in 2021. In addition to these downloads on the HOPE open-access platform, SComS is also read in the printed edition created by Seismo Press.

The editorial processing of the increasing number of submissions to SComS would not be possible without the engagement and thorough work of the reviewers. We sincerely thank all the reviewers who reviewed manuscripts in 2021 and supported authors by providing detailed feedback and constructive suggestions: Mino Alemi, Stuart Allan, Corina Andone, Stavros Assimakopoulos, Johannes Beckert, Samuel Bennett, Emma van Bijnen (2), Cornelia Brantner, Ruth Breeze, Michael Brüggemann, Patrick Donges, Jakob-Moritz Eberl, Birte Fähnrich, Stefan Geiss, Marco Giugni, Jörg Hassler, Beatriz Herrero, Dagmar Hoffmann, Marina Joubert, Carmen Koch, Mari Korpela, Anna Sophie Kumpel, Matthias Künzler, Christine Lohmeier, Melanie Magin, Jörg Matthes, Christine Meltzer, Julia Metag, Teresa K. Naab (2), Rudi Palmieri, Christina Peter, Carlo Raimondo, Mike S. Schäfer, Svenja Schäfer, Markus Schäfer, Johanna Schäwel, Anna Schorn, Christian Schwarzenegger, Daniel Süß, Barbara Thomaß, Josef Trappel, Daniel Vogler (2), Gerhard Vowe, Hartmut Wessler, Nina Wicke, Dominique Stefanie Wirz, Antal Wozniak, Maria Xenitidou, and Thomas Zerback.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue.

Thilo von Pape, Silke Fürst,
and Mike Meißner