

Editorial

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Dear Reader,

This issue marks the second year since *Studies in Communication Sciences* (SComS) is published Open Access on the HOPE platform of the University of Zurich (www.scoms.ch).

The present issue of SComS perfectly reflects the unique character of the journal. Not only do we present you a thematic section with a very innovative topic, namely Fashion Communication. We also collect three papers in the general section that, despite their different topics, have something in common that is telling for the role of communication in Switzerland.

The papers of the general section focus on the free press in Austria, on trust in news media in German-speaking Switzerland and on the implications of public diplomacy for domestic audiences in different language regions of Switzerland. With their focus on Austria and Switzerland, the articles highlight the importance of examining closely and of acknowledging the peculiarities of national and regional markets and environments.

What do they have in common? First of all, they all focus on smaller European countries and markets. This allows for comparisons with existing studies on different national and cultural contexts. But at the same time, the application of existing concepts and approaches to smaller contexts represents a challenge, not least due to the fact that many of these concepts and approaches were originally developed for the US context. The studies in the general section thus enable reflections on how to situate and adapt concepts to certain national, regional or even local contexts with their specificities. And they also point to the fact the seemingly small contexts are nevertheless highly complex, with differences even between language

regions. Finally, the papers provide important empirical findings about media environments in Switzerland and Austria. This empirical data and evidence is essential for understanding our own media environments and for providing relevant information to decision-makers; in other words, this information is essential for research to have an impact on society.

The first article of the general section is entitled “Public nuisance or an asset to democracy? Does the free press aim to provide a public service?”. The authors, Marie-Isabell Lohmann and Andreas Riedl, collected data from Austrian journalists within the Austrian part of the Worlds of Journalism Study, funded by the Austrian Science Fund. The authors were interested in different journalists’ opinions regarding the functions of journalism and the role of journalism in society. In particular, they were interested in identifying similarities but also differences between journalists working in free press and journalists working in paid press with respect to three main functions: the information function, the monitoring function and the communication function. These functions represent a translation of EU legislation with respect to the democracy-building role of mass media, as detailed particularly in the European Convention on Human Rights, into a survey design. A general take on the detailed results indicates that journalists working for different kinds of media in Austria widely agree on the important democratic functions that journalism must fulfil for the public. However, some differences were also found. For example, journalists working for free daily newspapers seek to fulfil communicative functions to a greater extent. Connecting with their readers is thus a particularly relevant part of their daily work. At the same time, they are subject to greater commercialisa-



tion demands than journalists from paid media.

In the second article of the general section, entitled “Who trusts the news media? Exploring the factors shaping trust in the news media in German-speaking Switzerland”, Dorothee Arlt engages with the decline of trust that is currently being observed in many countries. Switzerland represents a special case in this regard, as media trust is relatively high and stable compared to other national contexts. Nevertheless, the need for critical examinations and empirical studies of the factors and predictors that lead to a reduction of media trust are highly relevant also for the Swiss context. In order to examine trust, Dorothee Arlt conducted an online survey with 1,019 participants of the population of the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Media trust was measured in terms of a) trust in the journalistic quality of media coverage about political issues and b) in terms of trust in the independence and impartiality of media coverage about political issues. First of all, it is noteworthy that the study found a positive association between watching public television and trust in journalistic quality. On the other hand, the use of particular news websites that provide alternative information on political issues is related to a lower media trust in general. Corresponding to previous research, the study also found a significant relationship between political disenchantment and media trust, which was found to be an important predictor among others, such as populist attitudes, anti-establishment attitudes or demand for people’s sovereignty. Overall, this paper provides important empirical findings for the current debate about the role of public service media in many countries, as reflected in discussions related, for example, to the “No Billag Initiative” 2018 in Switzerland.

The third paper in the general section, “The effects of public diplomacy on country identity in countries with different language regions and cultures: The case of Switzerland”, written by Diana Ingenhoff and Dominique Richner, considers how German and French Swiss perceive

the identity of their country and examines the effects of public diplomacy on such perceived identity. Public diplomacy is understood as a strategy based on communication which sets out to influence another government’s foreign policy decisions. In their paper, Ingenhoff and Richner measure how public diplomacy communication influences the perception of a country’s identity by domestic public(s) – the “s” being particularly important in a multilingual context such as Switzerland. This article introduces an experimental design study using the example of the mass immigration initiative voted in 2014 as a stimulus. The authors analyse the collected data quantitatively, based on a multidimensional model (4D model) for measuring a country image/identity developed by one of the authors in previous research (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015)¹. Their findings show that a public diplomacy strategy designed by the government of a given country for a foreign public may indeed influence the perception of that country for domestic public as well. The effects of such influence are moderated by personal beliefs of the concerned publics and by the framing of the public diplomacy messages. As a whole, this study paves the way to a nuanced understanding of the complexity of communication effects on different – intended and unintended – publics, also shedding light on cultural and linguistic differences within one and the same country.

The thematic section of this issue of SComS, entitled “Fashion communication: Between tradition and digital transformation”, is an example for SComS’ intention of providing a platform on which communication scholars can navigate uncharted waters, opening new research trajectories and even new research fields. The eleven papers in this section examine fashion communication in the past and in the present, touching upon topics as vari-

1 Buhmann, A., & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). The 4D Model of the country image: An integrative approach from the perspective of communication management. *International Communication Gazette*, 77(1), 102–124. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514556986>

ous as sustainability and climate change, narration, nostalgia and fashion paradigms, taste and seduction, and examining different forms of communication contexts and messages, from advertising to (music) videos, films and books. All this is preceded by a Guest Editors' introduction written by Nadzeya Kalbaska, Teresa Sádaba and Lorenzo Cantoni, in which our readers will find a discussion of the origins and the main topics within this multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary collection of approaches to fashion communication.

We hope that our readers will enjoy both sections of this rich and diverse issue of SComS.

