Seismo

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The communication manifesto is a timely book that calls for more public scholarship in communication and media studies. It aims to develop ideas that further stimulate conversation about our contribution to society and, most importantly, action that strengthens "scholars' engagement with publics beyond academia" (p. 9). This means not only to communicate and discuss scientific knowledge in and with various publics but also to do research with practical implications and learn from the public (pp. 19–20, 42–44).

The author, Silvio Waisbord, is a professor at the George Washington University and published many pertinent articles and books in the fields of journalism, media policy, participatory and democratic communication, populism, human rights, and health communication. Over the years, he has gained profound insights in the development and diversity of communication scholarship by working and lecturing across the world.

With his book, Waisbord addresses a long-standing discussion in our discipline. Over the last decades, many researchers have criticized that communication research does not contribute sufficiently to public discourses on media and communication and thereby misses opportunities to contribute its knowledge and demonstrate its social relevance (see Altmeppen, 2012, pp. 37–38; Brantner & Huber, 2013, p. 250; Craig, 2008; Docherty, Morrison, & Tracey, 1993; Fengler & Eberwein, 2012; Ruß-Mohl, 2006, p. 203; Wartella, 1993). Most recently, this discussion has gained renewed momentum. On one hand, it has become easier to participate in public communication about science due to online media (Jünger & Fähnrich, 2020; Yeo & Brossard, 2017, pp. 267–268). On the other hand, there are many issues and current debates "about which communication science as a discipline has a lot to say" (Jünger & Fähnrich, 2020, p. 388) such as the spread of disinformation and hate speech, data surveillance and the power of large tech companies, threats to journalistic autonomy and the financing of news media (Lewis, 2020; Pavlik, 2019). Despite these developments and pressing problems, some scholars observe that communication research is still often absent from public debates and too far removed from non-academic perspectives (Fürst, Vogler, Sörensen, Schäfer, & Eisenegger, 2020; Haller, Wied, Mayer, & Michael, 2019; Lewis, 2020; Nielsen, 2018).

Waisbord takes a somewhat different stance on this. On one hand, he also observes that public scholarship is largely a "luxury" (p. 64) of a few senior scientists with personal convictions even though there are many current communication problems as well as new opportunities to communicate science online (pp. 25–31, 80–81). Therefore, the *manifesto* aims to broaden public engagement beyond the currently committed "slice of communication scholars" (p. 6) and to contribute to establishing public engagement as an integral part of scientific work. On the other hand, however, Waisbord emphasizes the already existing variety of public engagement and states that "public scholarship is flourishing" (p. 92). Large parts of his book are dedicated to acknowleging the various settings (public events, media appearances, online platforms, meetings with organizations, etc.), social connections (with

media professionals, government officials, citizens, communities, etc.) and roles (as experts, commentators, advocates, activists, practitioners) in which communication scholars share their findings and expertise, inspire changes, and get new ideas. Thus, the *manifesto* is not clear in terms of concrete needs and lacks that would require a strengthening and institutionalization of public scholarship, even more so as Waisbord assumes that important groups are not that interested in our research (pp. 41–42). Hence, to continue this discussion and develop reasonable goals, we clearly need more empirical data and comprehensive analyses on the various forms of public scholarship in communication and media studies as well as on the perceptions, expectations, and needs of those groups with which we communicate or want to engage.

One important question of the *manifesto* is what are the drivers of and barriers to public engagement. Waisbord mainly identifies drivers on the personal level and barriers on the structural or institutional level. He argues that public engagement is driven by various individual motivations, in particular ethical and political commitments, the hope of improving specific social problems, the need to feel that one's research has an impact, curiosity about other ways to communicate science and people's reactions to it, and also self-promotion and reputation-building (pp. 24–25, 53–55). However, in a growing number of countries, "political and economic interests undermine academic autonomy" (p. 49) and turn public engagement into a risky endeavour. Moreover, in many countries, public engagement still receives rather little support and is generally not considered as important for building an academic career or enhancing employment opportunities. Even though outreach, social impact, transfer, and public engagement are important terms with which some universities and scientists describe their tasks and self-conception, public scholarship in fact is seldomly rewarded and considered as an important part of science next to research and teaching (pp. 46, 56–64). Instead, "[i]nstitutional

expectations tilt academic productivity in favor of the conventional metrics of excellence" (p. 59), i. e., reputation as measured by rankings, citations, and impact factor of scientific journals. This leads Waisbord to a remarkable conclusion: The growing importance of these metrics and the simultaneous rhetoric of the need of public engagement results in a further increase of demands on scientific productivity and puts public scholarship in a problematic position. It "becomes part of the 'double shift' of scholarly work: what scholars do in addition to meeting academic expectations" (p. 63).

The last parts of the book deal with questions that are characteristic of the manifest genre: stating and elaborating one's own position (pp. 86–90) and making proposals for how to change things for the better (pp. 98–105). In Waisbord's view, public scholarship is about communicating in and with various publics by being open-minded and bringing forward critical perspectives and evidence-based arguments in order to address social problems and strengthen democratic processes, structures, and values. To establish "public engagement as an integral part of communication studies" (p. 94) and scholarly work, Waisbord addresses his readers. He has a clear sense that publications such as his book mainly reach those scholars who are already "convinced that public scholarship matters" (p. 94). Therefore, Waisbord appeals to his readers: "Decide the public scholar you want to be", "work to improve institutional conditions in universities", "Make academic cultures supportive of public scholarship", and "Foster sociopolitical conditions for autonomous public scholarship" (pp. 98–102). Readers are asked to find their individual way of being a public scholar, talk about and explain their public engagement among scholars and university administrators, contribute to establishing structures that support and reward the various forms of public engagement of other scholars, build networks with colleagues, deans, university leaders and funders committed to public scholarship, promote the work of other public scholars and find ways to demonstrate the

impact of public scholarship, and dicuss its relevance with sceptics.

Examples of such actions from Switzerland, Germany, and Austria have recently been seen in the association «Öffentliche Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft» (public media and communication science, see https://oeffentliche-kowi.org)[1] and the network «Kritische Kommunikationswissenschaft» (critical communication science, see https://kritischekommunikationswissenschaft.wordpress.com).

Although these are possible ways to strengthen public scholarship and the discipline's contribution to society, it is remarkable that the suggested "road map to action" (backcover) that the book wants to offer is focused on the efforts of individual scholars and their responsibility for taking action. The *manifesto* neither addresses the responsibility of politicians, funders, university administrators and leaders nor the one of existing associations, divisions, and groups in communication and media research. In a critical view, *The communication manifesto* can thus be read as an appeal for the 'triple shift' of scholarly work: For now, not only working extra time for public engagement but also for promoting the very idea of public scholarship. In a more optimistic view, the book could be an encouragement and inspiration for those scholars who strive to find ways to make their work more meaningful to society and are willing to build up structures that, in the long term, may eventually stimulate and reward public engagement.

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1   Note: The author of this book review is a founding and board member of the association "Öffentliche Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft".

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