

Call for Papers

Historizing international organizations and their communication – Institutions, practices, changes

Guest Editors

Erik Koenen, Arne L. Gellrich, Christian Schwarzenegger, Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz, & Astrid Blome

University of Bremen

University of Augsburg

University of
Bremen

Institute for
Newspaper Research
Dortmund

Deadline for submission of full papers: January 30, 2022

The Thematic Section will focus on a topic that has thus far received little attention from communication and media researchers: the history of international organizations and their communication. Since the second half of the 19th century, for numerous and diverse areas of social life, globally active international organizations of varying degrees of institutionalization and scope, both non-governmental and intergovernmental, have been founded and have dedicated themselves to the global challenges of the first modern age. The most famous of these is certainly the League of Nations (LON), which was established in 1919 as the predecessor institution of the United Nations.

From a media-historical perspective, international organizations played a highly visible role in the transnational intertwining and consolidation processes of journalism, culture, media, politics, technology, and the public sphere in the 19th and 20th centuries. Against the background of the much-discussed boundaries between secret diplomacy and public diplomacy, especially after the First World War, such organizations contributed to the development of the first arenas and forms of international and transnational public spheres whose orientation was toward global governance. To spread their concerns and goals globally, they: constantly used the latest communication technologies and the growing diversity of the media for their communication; organized and professionalized their information work; and developed specific information-policy instruments and strategies for that purpose. Woodrow Wilson's idea of "open diplomacy" (in fact, the early forerunner of today's public diplomacy), for example, was the idea on which the LON based its information policy.

Effects of the differentiation and organization of international organizations' communication, such as the emergence of institutionalized public relations in these specific contexts, the development of international summit and conference journalism, the creation of publicity for international politics and, in parallel, the genesis of structures of inter- and transnational public spheres conveyed by the media, are issues and topics within this field of research, which from the perspective of media history has been by and large neglected.

To illuminate and discuss issues, research perspectives and the thematic spectrum of the history of international organizations and their communication, the guest editors request submissions which, using concrete international organizations as examples, address one or more of the problem areas and thematic focuses outlined below:

1. Communication and communication management of international organizations

How did non-governmental and intergovernmental international organizations design their communication to reach and inform the media and the public? Which actors and groups of actors did they address and how? What were the expectations regarding media and public attention? What ideas existed about the relationship between media and politics? What forms, infrastructures, instruments, concepts, and strategies were developed to generate public and media visibility of international organizations? How and by whom was information and public relations work institutionalized and standardized? How were relations with individual media and their representatives organized and professionalized?

2. International organizations, media, and journalism

What influence have international organizations had on trends in globalization and in the inter- and transnationalization of journalism and media communication? How did new forms of foreign journalism such as summit and international conference journalism develop? What position did journalistic and media practices occupy within the context of international organizations? Which international media policy agenda developed in the interaction between international organizations and media institutions, for example, with respect to: ensuring the free movement of global news; tendentious reporting and dissemination of false reports; unimpeded activity of correspondents; and international standards of press freedom and copyright? Which international organizations were established, especially in the media context?

3. International organizations in the public sphere

What notions of a global or inter- and transnational public sphere were generated in the context of international organizations? How were conferences involving international organizations publicly staged? What public image did international organizations have? On which topics and with which objectives did international organizations try to address and reach the public (e.g., disarmament, gender justice, health, nature, and environmental protection)? How were international organizations perceived beyond the mass media (e.g., in film, photography, caricature, art, literature, and posters)?

Submission guidelines

SComS welcomes submissions in English, German, French, or Italian. However, English is the preferred language of this Thematic Section. Manuscripts should be a maximum of 9000 words in length (including the abstract and all references, tables, figures, footnotes, appendices). In addition, authors may submit supplementary material that will be published as an online supplement. Authors are invited to submit original papers that are not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Articles shall be submitted using the APA reference style, 6th edition. The manuscript itself must be free of any information or references that might reveal the identity of the authors and their institution to allow double-blind peer review. Manuscripts should be submitted via the SComS platform: <https://www.hope.uzh.ch/scoms/about/submissions>. We ask authors to carefully prepare submissions according to all rules given in the [SComS Submission Guidelines](#).

The expected publication date of the Thematic Section is May 2023. However, early submissions that successfully pass the review process will also be immediately published [online first](#). Contributions that receive positive reviews but are not accepted for the Thematic Section may be considered for publication in a subsequent SComS issue within the General Section. Papers are published under the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights without restrictions.

Key dates

- Submission of full papers closes on **January 30, 2022**.
- The first review will be provided no later than **April 15, 2022**.
- The revised manuscript should be submitted by **June 30, 2022**.
- The second review and notification of acceptance will be provided no later than **September 15, 2022**.
- Final papers should be submitted by **November 30, 2022**.
- Online first publication of accepted manuscripts up until **February 2023**.
- Publication of the Thematic Section is scheduled for **May 2023**.

We look forward to receiving your submissions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact guest editor Erik Koenen (ekoenen@uni-bremen.de).

About SComS

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