



Call for Papers

International ZeMKI Conference 2021

Communication history of International Organizations and NGOs

Questions, Research Perspectives, Topics

In cooperation with the "Communication History" division of the German Communication Association (DGPuK) and the Institute for Newspaper Research, Dortmund

April 22-23 2021, Bremen

Subject

The International ZeMKI Conference 2021 will focus on a topic that has thus far received little attention from historians of communication and media: the communication history of international organizations. 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, which was established in 1919 as the predecessor institution of the UN.

From a communication and 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 towards global governance. In order 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 League of Nations based its information policy.

Effects of the differentiation and organization of international organizations' communication, such as the emergence of institutionalized public relations and PR 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 communication and media history has been by and large neglected.

The aim of the conference is to discover and systematically develop international organizations as a communication and media history relevant field of research. In doing so, the conference will lay the foundations for research in communication history as well as offering the discipline as a whole a historical perspective that will enable communication studies to reflect on international organizations of the present day.

Confirmed keynote speakers are **Prof. Dr. Madeleine Herren-Oesch** (University of Basel) and **Dr. Torsten Kahlert** (Aarhus University).

Problem areas and focal points of the conference

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

- 1. The communication and communication management of international organizations**
How did non-governmental and intergovernmental international organizations design their (media-mediated) 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 the public and medial 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 trans-nationalization of journalism and media communication? In these contexts 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 and public debates**
What notions of a global or inter- and trans-national 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)?

4. Theories, methods, sources

How can the communication histories of international communications be embedded theoretically and methodologically? Which sources can be used, and which methodological approaches and triangulations are possible and necessary to deal with the usually immense quantity and variety of handed-down sources?

Optionally, within the framework of an "Open" panel, research conducted by young scholars or work-in-progress research from the entire range of communication and media history can be presented.

Submissions

We are requesting submissions on the conference topic and for the "Open Panel" in the form of detailed "Extended Abstracts" (preferably in English, German is possible; 4,000 to 5,000 characters including spaces, exclusive bibliography) by **September 1, 2020**. Abstracts must be submitted in pdf format and anonymized by means of a detachable cover sheet and removal of all author identifying information from document settings and text. Submissions and questions concerning this call for papers should be sent exclusively to: ekoenen@uni-bremen.de

Submissions will be peer-reviewed according to the following criteria: theoretical foundation; relevance of the question; appropriateness of the method/procedure; novelty/originality; clarity and conciseness of presentation. The results of the review process will be announced by November 10, 2020.

Organization

The conference will take place on April 22 and 23, 2021 in Bremen. The host institution is ZeMKI of the University of Bremen. Dr. Erik Koenen and Prof. Dr. Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz are responsible for the organization. Up-to-date information on registration and travel, the program, the venue and accommodation can be found on the conference website:

<https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/zemki/events/conferences/communication-history-of-international-organizations-and-ngos>

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