

## **“Funding of independent and/or public service journalism (FIPS-J)”**

This preconference of ECREA 2018 is based on the basic thesis that the fate of public communication will be determined by the further development of digital media convergence. Current scientific approaches define two basic consensuses of a modern contemporary society: Firstly, the general accessibility and comprehensibility of (political) communication has to be regarded as the foundation of the public in society. Secondly “public” in modern society is to be understood as a mass-media-created public (Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1991).

This approach and the development of democratic societies are increasingly contested (Forrer, 2016). Based on the mutual causality of media development and social change, it becomes clear that the technological driving forces of digitization and media convergence have led and are still leading to a profound change in media: From functionally one-sided mass media (as senders) to today's networked interactive, always-on media. With their triumphal procession, a major structural change has begun. It raises the question: “Does the digital media change tends to fragment and polarize society, and does it so particularly through Internet and social media applications?” If it does, this would ultimately mean a loss of the social integration functions of the classical mass media, where this ‘leading media’ is a source of quality information media.

The reasons for this evident and very heterogeneous influence of digital media (and media convergence) on public communication are well-known and largely analyzed: the entry of media-distant companies into traditional media markets, a change in media technologies induced by media convergence, increased competitive pressure, a continuing structural weakness in the information media and changes in usage and demand behavior. Media convergence – in this sense – is to be understood as a multi-dimensional process. It covers: technical convergence (digitization, standardization), economic convergence (merging previously separate markets, re-ordering value chains), convergence of media usage (usage preferences and patterns), cultural convergence (transmedia storytelling, linked content), policy convergence (deregulation, merging of regulatory fields and institutions), global convergence (internationalization of strategies and content) (see von Rimscha & Siegert, 2015).

The continuous economization and commercialization of the media business in the wake of the constraints of the market has led to a particularly dynamic development in the market for classical information media (Altmeyden, 2011; Fögl, 2015; Kiefer, 2011; Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2015). For this reason we want to talk about the future funding of independent quality journalism in the age of rapidly changing media use which causes a change in media markets from supply to demand of information and other content. Discussions about different funding approaches are obviously necessary. National debates in many European countries (e.g. in Germany, France, and Ireland) show that neither former print media nor online media are able to refinance their online supply with quality news by any specific payment method, so far. The future of collective funding of public service media is hardly contested in many countries, which the Swiss case shows in practice with its “NoBillag” referendum on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2018. The general reaction of the media industry to funding problems is budget cuts which can be interpreted as one step of the paradox of thrift. The pre-conference tries to find projects attempting to rupture this downward spiral. Countries like Switzerland and Austria are already discussing general media subsidies (Blumer, 2016) and re-

organization of the public service sector. General independent funds for investigative journalism show other possible solutions.

The organizers of the conference invite their colleagues to contribute with theoretical, empirical, and practical case study work on the following fields:

1. Economic perspectives on media markets and subsidies taking into account the concept of media as merit goods
2. Political and legal perspectives on media subsidies and other ways of promotion
3. (International comparative) analysis of the status quo of media production and product range because of the continuing importance of information media for society and democracy. Can different and possibly even promising models of media subsidies and promotion be found?
4. Analysis of the development of media use (esp. within the younger generations) and the impact of media literacy projects in the broadest sense.
5. (International comparative) analysis of the effects (not only) of the changed media usage behavior e.g. declining participation in society, disenchantment with politics (see Gehne, 2013) and dramatically declining participation in elections (see Doemens and Erb, 2015).

**Abstracts** should be written in English and contain a clear outline of the argument, theoretical framework, and, where applicable, methodology and results. The maximum length of individual abstracts is **1000 words**.

**Deadline June 15<sup>th</sup>,**

Please send **pdfs** to

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Two reviewers will rate the abstracts according to fit to the conference topic, clarity of argumentation, theoretical foundation, innovativeness, and, where applicable, appropriateness of methodological approach.

**Information of contributors by July 15<sup>th</sup>**

The preconference will be held in Lugano at the University (USI) on October 31st). Further information will be given on the website.

**Presentations** at the preconference will be app. 20 minutes with 10 minutes discussion.

## References

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