

## Editorial

Dear reader,

Do you like to watch television or listen to radio produced by public service broadcasters – especially when you are looking for trustworthy information in perilous situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East? Perhaps, in the face of the kind of shortcomings revealed by the scandal surrounding wasteful Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb) Executive Director and ARD Chair Patricia Schlesinger, you have begun to doubt the trustworthiness of this traditional media institution. In extreme cases, such doubts can develop into demands for the abolition of public service broadcasting and with it the annoying, flat-rate license fee that every German household is required to pay. Our focus topic in this issue looks at what needs to be done in order to retain and further develop public service broadcasting as a source of reliable information.

The three papers look at these questions from different viewpoints. Peter Welchering is necessarily forthright in his criticism of working conditions in public service broadcasting, from the internal point of view of an experienced journalist in its employ. My own paper takes the external point of view of a sympathetic observer in social sciences and a constant radio listener, and gives suggestions for deep-rooted reform. Hans Peter Bull provides an analysis that includes both external and internal perspectives by conducting an independent examination of an attempt by Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) to learn about internal problems and the need for reform.

In this, the journal's sixth year, this focus topic is an attempt to counteract the problem of journals' shorter shelf life compared to, for example, academic book literature. By focusing on a specific topic and combining multiple articles on that topic in one place, we hope to achieve greater reception and remain in the memory for longer than we would with disparate individual papers. The fact that our focus topic fits in with a debate currently being conducted elsewhere may also be productive in terms of attracting attention. Public service broadcasting is not short of attention at the moment.

Our original idea, as announced in the call for papers in Issue 2/2023, was to put together a focus on the organization of broadcasting in general. Over time, the subject of the discourse naturally narrowed – in part due to the interest concentrated on public service broadcasting. We would be delighted to be offered analyses of other forms and examples of broadcasting organization in the near future.

The other papers in this issue certainly do not suffer from the narrow focus of attention. On the contrary: They indicate gaps in the attention paid by journalism and journalism studies in relation to certain topics and sources. Nora Hespers investigates the question of why media criticism, which does not usually suffer from a lack of subjects, has shown so little interest in digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and the effects of their interests and activities on journalism. Katja Schmidt, Tanjev Schultz and Gert G. Wagner demonstrate the significance of general statistics on the population and professions, which have previously seen little use, as a source for journalism research. Maryna Grytsai calls to mind people whose dangerous work receives little attention, despite its vital importance to reporting on conflicts and wars. Foreign correspondents do not report based (only) on what they themselves see, but rely on local informants known as stringers or fixers. T. J. Thomson and Ryan J. Thomas examine the opportunities and hazards presented by a phenomenon that risks being overshadowed in the growing discussion on artificial intelligence (AI): Not only texts, but also (moving) images can be technically generated to look strikingly genuine.

The section with which we began the 2/2022 issue can also be considered from the point of view of neglect. Journalism is usually taken to mean news and other transitory information products, and the ways of working behind them. But there are also books that deserve to be called journalism on account of their topical themes and inspiring forms of presentation. Vienna-based colleagues Fritz Hausjell und Wolfgang R. Langenbacher present some of these books here, based on an original concept by Hannes Haas. In an age in which news thrusts itself upon its audience free of charge and sometimes unsolicited, journalistic books may be especially important for the future of journalism as a profession.

In this issue, we thus attempt to meet both requirements of a journal in journalism studies: both engaging in a topical debate in a profound, indeed scientific, way, and analyzing topics and subjects that receive little attention elsewhere.

Regardless of which of these two goals more closely matches your ideal for this journal, we hope you enjoy reading it.

Horst Pöttker