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Editorial 2021

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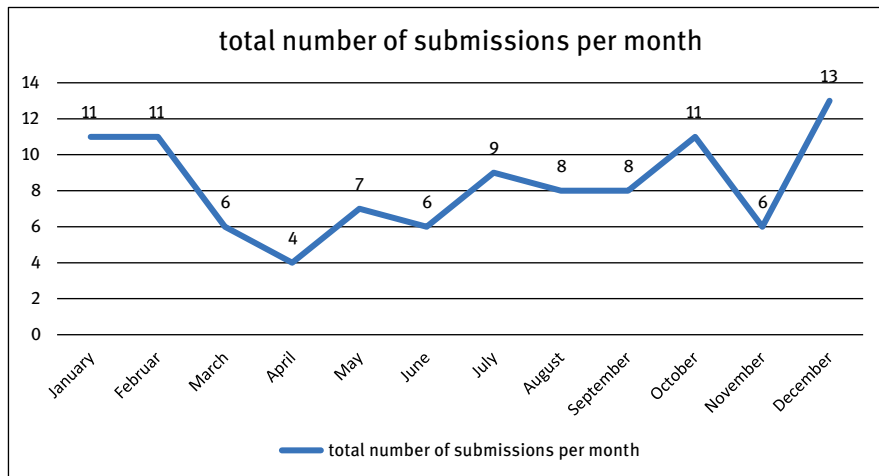
When writing our last year’s editorial during the early days of January 2020, little did we know that our lives were about to drastically change. COVID-19 has affected the way we use technology as well as the way we lead our personal, social and working lives. As to the production process of the journal, COVID 19 clearly was a game changer. During the first lockdown in spring 2020, considerably less submissions reached us. During summer and autumn, submissions increased, reaching 87 articles by the end of the year, more concretely 81 regular articles, five *research in brief* articles and one *debate* article (compared to 85 submissions in 2019, and 65 in 2018).

In 2020, authors had to write while teaching online and coping with a changed work-life balance, faced with field research that had to be rearranged or suspended, conferences that were canceled or transferred to a virtual edition, home schooling and child care and worries concerning relatives and friends. Especially for young researchers this was often combined with the structural problem of short-term contracts. In 2020, we faced disruption and often we lacked the serenity to reflect, analyse and write. Under these difficult circumstances, we are grateful to our authors for their high-level contributions and for remaining committed to our journal. This gives us the optimism that 2021 will be a better and again a fruitful year.

Our journal seeks to improve its position as a forum for high quality research, one additional attracting pull factor being our impact factor that increased to 1.3 in 2020. This success is the result of the sustained joined efforts of authors and our associate editors, namely *Philippe Maarek*, *Tristan Mattelart*, *Hillel Nossek*, *Christian Pentzold* and *Cristina Ponte*, the editorial board, our editorial office managed by *Viviane Harkort* and our copy-editing and correcting team *Annalena Oeffner Ferreira* and *Dave Duke*. Communication Scholar *Aukse Balcytiene* left the journal due to other obligations after several years of working for the journal as an associate editor.

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Submissions during the COVID19 crisis (including the book review section)*

* The book review section is not reviewed, 87 articles were submitted.

The 87 article submissions (without the 13 book reviews) of 2020 originated from 39 countries and authors on research topics ranging from media history to timely topics related to digital public spheres, often looked at from a cross-country or cross-regional perspective.

Beyond the three regular issues, guest editors from Vienna University, Brigitte Naderer, Jens Seiffert-Brockmann, Jörg Matthes and Sabine Einwiller published the September Special Issue on “Native and embedded advertising formats in the digital world” which is setting new landmarks in digital advertising research.

Another special format followed in December 2020: a single online-only issue with 17 articles, see <https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/comm/45/s1/comm.45.issue-s1.xml>. This online-only issue is open access during the first three months of 2021. The issue includes three thematic sections: “Media policy and strategic communication“, “Audiences” and “Media content”. We published this special issue as we were confronted with a long queue of accepted papers that could not be included in our three regular issues per year within an acceptable time frame. We are therefore pleased to announce that from 2021 on, each regular issue will include seven articles rather than the usual five. In other words, *Communications* will grow – and we hope our journal will continue to generate original, empirical, conceptual and review articles like it did in the past 45 years.

As travelling was not possible in 2020, editors and associate editors virtually met in summer. Among other things, we discussed ways to continue to guarantee a high quality reviewing process. Reviewing for this journal is generally carried

out by senior and postdoc researchers. We carefully search our reviewers for each article submission with regard to topic and regional aspects. Since we are seven editors and associate editors from five countries with different expertises, we were able to also find committed reviewers in this difficult year. We extend our gratitude to:

Sigurd Allen, Anna-Mari Almila, Christian Baden, Roger Blum, Mark Boukes, Cigdem Bozdag, Manuela Caiani, Andreu Casero-Ripolles, Teresa Castro, Olivier Champagne-Poirier, Michael Chan, Stephen Coleman, Andrea Czepek, David De Coninck, Kyle Endres, Andreas Fahr, Alexander Frame, Regine Frener, Thomas Friemel, Stephanie Geise, Christopher Green-Pedersen, Stefan Jarolimek, Sven Jöckel, Pablo Jost, Anna Kalch, Antonis Kalogeropoulos, Shai Kassirer, Nissim Katz, Andy King, Susanne Kirchhoff, Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick, Martha Kuhnenn, Grégoire Lits, Melanie Magin, Lidia Maropo, Jackie Marsh, Tal Morse, Maria Ojala, Steve Paulussen, Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink, Elizabeth Poole, Dora Sales, Svenja Schäfer, Christian Schemer, Kevin Smets, Tim Smits, Mélodine Sommer, Jakob Svensson, Yannis Theocharis, Peter van Aelst, Eva van Reijmersdal, Gerret von Nordheim, Stefanie Walter, Ruth Wodak, Rafal Zaborowski, Reimar Zeh

As some texts are still under blind review or under revision, the names of their reviewers will be found in the next year's editorial. Review processes are often intense and therefore sometimes long. Most reviewers agreed to read also the second or third version of an article, thus supporting the entire production process until publication. Currently we are preparing with our publisher de Gruyter some way to reward our reviewers. The outcome of these negotiations will be shared via our Twitter account @commejcr.

For 2021 we are proud to announce a special issue on media and youth in digital societies, a topic that has become ever more relevant during times of physical distancing. Guest editors of the September Special Issue are *Veronika Kalmus* and *Brian O'Neill*.

The editorial team continues to welcome relevant and diverse quality articles.
All the best for 2021 from
Stefanie Auerbeck-Lietz & Leen d'Haenens