

***A History of Early Modern Communication:
German and Italian historiographical perspectives
(Trent, 6.-7. December 2018)***

Conference Schedule

(6th December)

Introduction: What is the history of communication?

Daniel **Bellingrad** (Erlangen) - Massimo **Rospo**cher (Trento)

Approaches

Rudolf Schlögl (Constance): *Public Sphere in the Making in Early Modern Europe*

Mario Infelise (Venice): *Information and communication in Early Modern Europe: from national historiographies to a European model*

(7th December)

Intermediality of Communication

Alexandra Schäfer-Griebel (Mainz): *News on the French Wars of Religion. An intermedia perspective*

Chiara De Caprio (Naples): *A linguistic perspective on intermediality in Early Modern Italy. The Regno, 1450-1700*

Carla Roth (Basel): *Speaking of Print: Oral Informants on the Marketplace of News*

Sabrina Corbellini (Groningen): *Shaping Religious Literacies in the Long Fifteenth Century: Intermediality of Communication*

Comments by **Jan-Friedrich Missfelder** (Zurich)

Communication as Information Acquisition

Paola Molino (Munich-Padua): *From street to paper? Language, translation and communication in late Renaissance German and Italian newsletters*

Andreas Flurschütz da Cruz (Bamberg): *The Republic of Venice and the German Princes as Military Allies: A German-Italian History of Communication in Times of War (17th and 18th century)*

Davide Boerio (Cork-Teramo): *Communication and Emergency: Information gathering in times of crisis in the early modern period*

Isabella Lazzarini (Molise): *Tutto serve a sapere: gathering, ordering and using information in diplomatic communication (Italy, 1350-1520 ca.).*

Comments by **Matthias Pohlig** (Berlin)

Roundtable coordinated and with comment by **Heiko Droste** (Stockholm)

What is the history of communication? This conference aims to approach and discuss possible answers to this question, focusing on early modern Europe (1400-1800). While being a forum for discussing recent and on-going research on this broad topic, the conference highlights especially approaches and trends within German and Italian historiography. Although there is as yet no chair for the history of communication either in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, or Italy (‘Storia della comunicazione’ – ‘Kommunikationsgeschichte’), communication history is a well established field of research within historiography. In fact, an early modern history of communication remains to be written: the scope and limits of a communicational approach to historiography are still unclear and under-theorized. Some aspects of communication history have been addressed fruitfully, both on an empirical and theoretical level. These components derive from different historiographical backgrounds and schools of thought, for example ranging from narrow perspectives on certain forms of media only (e.g. on speeches, newspapers or books) to wider examinations into the intermediality of the communication landscape, or from the ‘public’ dimension of certain acts of communication to the accompanying non-public or clandestine aspects. By adopting a wide understanding of ‘communication’ this conference sets out to evaluate the scope, concepts, and approaches of an inclusive history of (early modern) communication.

Abstracts

Rudolf Schlögl: *Public Sphere in the Making in Early Modern Europe*

Starting with three short remarks on the interaction of writing and printing in the evolution of a media system in early modern times, this paper is to unfold a notion of public spheres which is based on a theory of media and communication instead of normative assumptions.

Forms of printed media as they occurred from the end of the 15th century onwards were characterized by communication to an unspecific anonymous public as well as by their entrepreneurial attitude. Until the end of the 18th century the differentiation of various types of printed media and the subjects published in them – including the forms of their presentation – were strongly determined by these factors. The enormous acceleration in the growth of the media system since the mid 17th century however was stimulated by politics becoming more and more competitive and fragmented into antagonistic interests and factions. Printed media in this way was made a sphere to deal with political and religious conflicts by persuasion, condemnation of the enemy and invented facts and rumours. I will argue, that the paradigm of printing true, reliable and neutral observations of events and actions in newspapers and journals, which did not occur before the last third of the 18th century, was stimulated by the serial publication of this media. Integration of serial news into a comprehensible story required theories of political process to discern the probable from the improbable. Another origin of truth and reliability in publicity can be found in the New Science, where truth always was contested truth taking into account multiple perspectives of observation by uninvolved eyewitnesses. Reason therefore was not an inherent capacity of the media system (as Habermas put it). Enlightenment and its criticism rather had to solve a problem posed to society by printed media.

Mario Infelise: *Information and communication in Early Modern Europe: from national historiographies to a European model*

With this paper I intend to retrace the evolution of historiographical interests towards communication and information systems of the early modern age. Taking note of the vitality of studies in this field in recent decades, I consider that in this direction converge suggestions that come from different fields of study: economic and political history, the history of book and writing, the analytical bibliography, the history of diplomacy.

Focusing above all on the systems of political information, the paper also suggests some research paths that could prove particularly fruitful.

Alexandra Schäfer-Griebel: *News on the French Wars of Religion. An intermedia perspective*

In the French wars of Religion, the Catholic League, a party opposed to the French king, interfered heavily the production and circulation of contemporary media. Especially preaching, processing and pamphleteering played a major role for the establishment of the League, on the one hand, and the self-image of the League, on the other hand (“period of the League”: 1585-1594). The extraordinary phenomena of the League and their handling of media have already been studied intensely since the 19th century. Up to now, researchers have been satisfied with the very general statement that the king and Royal party were not able to oppose this media offensive by the League. This statement is hardly based on any research. The present paper is going to question this foregone conclusion. How did King Henry III and the Royal party cope with the spectre of contemporary media? Did they, for example, use different media which have dropped off the radar of researchers because of the one-sided focus on the League? The production and circulation of contemporary Royal and Royalist media will be examined with a focus on 1589.

Chiara De Caprio: *A linguistic perspective on intermediality in Early Modern Italy. The Regno, 1450-1700*

My paper aims to shed light on the fruitful use of the notion of *intermediality* for a deeper understanding of the linguistic and communicative dynamics of urban networks and urban writing traditions in Early Modern Italy. Drawing on the theoretical acquisitions of the Italian

and German historiography both on news networks and the interchange between oral and printed circulation, the paper proposes a more dynamic representation of the several writing traditions which were circulating in Early Modern Regno and were affected by the inextricable coexistence of oral and written repertoires of stories and versions of the past. Due to their oral, print, and manuscript circulation, a vast array of texts (such as chronicles; *avvisi* and *relazioni*; *lamenti* and oral narratives; administrative and diplomatic documents) formed a space in which information and entertainment, voices of the present and memories of the urban past intertwined in a continuum of narrative forms and solutions. Through analysis of their textual structure, I intend to show their different narrative styles and strategies, their distancing and overlapping; in particular, I mean to underline the porous boundaries between factual and fictional reports and the different techniques connected with the task of reporting oral voices. Finally, I suggest that, adopting a linguistic perspective which is sensible to the mutual interchange between oral and written culture, it may be advisable to historicize the different modes of describing, narrating and informing and assume that these modes were molded by different traditions of urban writings. These texts and their authors behave as mediators between many urban strata and levels of political communication, but they also serve as collectors of written and oral narrative traditions that implied different spaces, audiences, and modes of use.

Carla Roth: *Speaking of Print: Oral Informants on the Marketplace of News*

This paper uses the notebooks of the St Gallen linen merchant Johannes Rütiner (1501-1556/7) to examine the role of orality in the circulation and reception of news in a sixteenth-century small town. From 1529 to 1539, Rütiner filled two volumes with a potpourri of anecdotes, jokes, gossip, rumours, and news from all over Europe; with densely scribbled notes on past and contemporary political events, economic developments, family histories, accidents, crimes, and scandals – in short, with anything he considered noteworthy. Since Rütiner usually named his informants, their sources, and the context in which information was exchanged, his notebooks offer a rare glimpse at an oral culture usually hidden from view and allow us to study how St Gallers engaged with a range of different news media. Letters and prints were not only read aloud, but also discussed, challenged, and processed in conversations. At the same time, newsmongers used the flexibility of oral narratives to their advantage: they presented themselves and their sources as reliable, adapted stories to fit the expectations of their audiences, and often concealed their reliance on sources of news considered less trustworthy - including print. The history of reception that emerges from a study of Rütiner's notebooks not only highlights the numerous ways in which speech, writing, and print interacted, but also reveals the extent to which oral informants shaped the marketplace of news in St Gallen well into the age of print.

Sabrina Corbellini: *Shaping Religious Literacies in the Long Fifteenth Century: Intermediality of Communication*

Starting point for the presentation will be the discussion of the term “religious literacies”. The use of the plural, often used in connection to literacy practices in contemporary society in response to broad social, economic and technological changes, refers to multiple and coexisting literacies in a given time and context. The multiplicity of coexisting literacies is strictly related to the “intermediality of communication”, to the interrelatedness of media in the late medieval cityscape and to the possibilities of city dwellers to participate in religious literacy practices. This change of perspective is fundamental for the reconstruction of the late medieval religious landscape in the long fifteenth century (1370-1520), a period of religious multiplicity and transformation that is characterized by a wider access to religious knowledge from larger groups in society and a growing participation of lay people in the access, use, production, and dissemination of religious contents. These transformations also affected the “topography of religion”, i.e. the places and the spaces where religious knowledge was produced, consumed and transformed. The paper will explore the possibility to approach religious literacies through a spatial approach to mediality, i.e. the combination of the awareness of the seminal relevance of inter- and multimediality with the “localization” and “spatialisation” of communication. This

approach will be tested and discussed through a series of, apparently unrelated, case studies from late medieval Italy, and in particular from Perugia: the textual cluster around the notary Pierfrancesco de Giovagne (1448-49) and his personal library; the visual, textual and material documentary cluster concerning the chapels of the Franciscan church of San Francesco al Prato; the religious theatrical activities organized by lay confraternities. By approaching these sources through an “inclusive” approach, I will discuss and test possibilities and limitations of an “inclusive history of communication”.

Paola Molino: *From street to paper? Language, translation and communication in late Renaissance German and Italian newsletters*

The volumes of the collection of the Wiener *Fuggerzeitungen*, the handwritten newsletters gathered by the Bavarian brothers Octavian Secundus and Philipp Eduard Fugger between 1568 and 1604— are bilingual Italian-German for the time 1571-1586, and only in German for the time afterwards. In the first volumes, The German part contains newsletters mainly from Antwerp, Cologne and, less frequently, from Prague, Vienna and Lyon. The Italian avvisi in the other part were sent mainly from Rome and Venice. As of 1586, this situation changed. After a year in which almost no news from Rome and Venice was preserved in either language (1587), newsletters from these places are only preserved in German for the years 1588–1604. However, year 1601 is exceptional and contains again German and Italian handwritten newsletters, but of a different kind. Here we have German *Zeitungen* from Rome and Venice that are a translations of/elaboration on the Italian Avvisi preserved within the same volume or to elsewhere in other collections. For unknown reasons, in this volume the main Italian models for the translations have been preserved by the collectors. Furthermore, Avvisi preserved at the Medici Archive in Florence or in the collection of the Urbinati Latini in Rome allow historians to consider further versions of the same news that circulated at the time and might have influenced the German translations. This all allow historians reflecting upon the choices and selections made by the German news-writers. In my paper I will consider for the first time a large selection of the Italian and German newsletters of the year 1601, and will go deeper into their language and narrative, their different vocabulary, and also the “voices” and the actors they mobilize to convey the same message. Finally, I will try to consider the question of whether the different German and Italian editions can be also related to two different audiences or not.

Andreas Flurschütz da Cruz: *The Republic of Venice and the German Princes as Military Allies: A German-Italian History of Communication in Times of War (17th and 18th century)*

The “Serenissima” Republic of Venice was in great need of military support during the early modern period to protect their dominions against the Osman Empire, especially in Greece. Lacking their own army, the Republic rent troops from abroad, especially from several German Princes who disposed over this instrument of sovereignty. How did the Venetian powers know about the military potential in the German principalities, and how did the German Princes acquire their information about the republic’s need of troops? The presentation will focus on the intermediaries between those powers who served as dealers or brokers of military power, money and prestige. It will show different strategies to acquire information: the use of established channels (ambassadors) and the formation of new ways of communication especially for military needs. The talk will also take into consideration the two different views onto the respective contract party, based on the results of the negotiation between them. Three examples will show the expectations, problems and challenges in the communication between the German Princes and Venice. I will also give a prospect to similar early modern military co-operations between other prominent European powers and their strategies of communication.

Davide Boerio: *Communication and Emergency: Information gathering in times of crisis in the early modern period*

In the course of the early modern period several developments in the field of information processes and communication practices took place throughout Europe. These developments went hand in hand with the unfolding of other historical phenomena, such as the formation of larger territorial states, as well as economic and technological advancements. Early modernity

was characterized by improvements in information gathering as a result, on the one hand, of the growing efficiency of different players in joining their efforts in the common project for the formation of an early modern political system, and, on the other, of the burgeoning early world economy. Political, economic, bureaucratic, cultural, religious networks formed the complex system in which several competing powers synthesised their messages, and then spread them thorough all facets of everyday life. Through political, cultural and technological devices, they were able to impose their predominance upon the rest of society by monopolising the means of production and exchanges of information. Through communication practices such as the control of the printing press, censorship, and so on, they helped shape worldview by manufacturing consent for established powers and traditional knowledge. Early modern societies were characterized by an 'information asymmetry' which favoured the higher social echelons, and displayed a structural imbalance in favour of those who could make sense of the vast amount of information they collected. If this pattern was common practice throughout the early modern era, however there were also numerous exceptions, especially during emergencies, such as natural and political calamities, as revolutions were actually considered. It was during these moments of common tragic experience that the communication hierarchy was overturned in favour of an "information equivalence", in which different messages emerged from competing sources. This phenomenon greatly impacted the information network as a whole, bringing about changes in the chain of transmission of news, dramatically affecting the information gathering process. Beside focusing on some particular periods of crisis during the early modern era, this paper will analyse in detail information processes and communication practices which emerged during the Neapolitan revolution of 1647-48, through a wide range of sources such as manuscript and printed newssheets, diplomatic letters, pamphlets, and other informational materials, produced and widely circulated during this event. This analytical perspective allows to highlight, through the study of revolutionary events, the emergence and function of an Early Modern information society, characterized by the coexistence of different forms of communication (oral, handwritten and printed). It will help us to understand the making of news, which was often the heterogeneous combination of handwritten news, printed gazettes, and diplomatic correspondence, as well as to explore the interaction between the secret, private, and public spheres of information.

Isabella Lazzarini: *Tutto serve a sapere: gathering, ordering and using information in diplomatic communication (Italy, 1350-1520 ca.)*

While information has been at the heart of recent research in diplomatic and political history of late medieval Italy, communication has been less investigated and, more significantly, less thematised. In my paper I would like to focus on the impact of the increase of available information on the transformation of diplomacy from an negotiating event to an uninterrupted communication process. The increasing amount of news (official or unofficial, open or secret, fake or true, mediated or not) had in fact a crucial role in such a change, at the same time transforming the ways of analysing, evaluating and recording facts and ideas, and of ordering and preserving records in order to facilitate the decision-making process. This transformation was common to politics and diplomacy (if such a distinction in this period had any sense at all): the diplomatic sources (i.e. letters, instructions, final reports), by becoming incredibly rich in quantity and nuanced in quality, offer to us an excellent starting point for recognising and investigating the building blocks, strategies and ressources of political communication in early Renaissance Italy.