

學術對談

## 傳播研究有多國際化？

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「要面對國際讀者，選取的題目和議題自然要跟他們相關。如果是有關德國記者或德國傳播系統的一些特殊之處，有興趣的讀者不會多，但是研究如果是有關影響記者決策的一般因素，不管是公營還是商營，其他地方的人或者也有興趣。……所以，分別在於題目和變項的選取，而不在於方法和理論。從事實證研究，我尋求一般『法則』，當然，法則也會受相應的文化背景影響，也就是說，這些背景會成為其中一個重要變項。」

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## 胡爾夫·董仕巴教授簡介

董仕巴教授為德國德累斯頓科技大學傳播學系教授及學系創辦人。他於德國美因茲大學取得博士及博士後學位，曾於柏林、美因茲和多特蒙德的大學任教。1989年至1990年於美國紐約哥倫比亞大學的甘尼特傳媒研究中心作研究員，1999年擔任哈佛大學朗伯德客席教授。1995年至1996年間，董仕巴教授出任世界民意研究學會(WAPOR)主席。2004年至2005年間則出任國際傳播學會(ICA)主席。

董仕巴教授曾主編《民意研究國際學刊》(*International Journal of Public Opinion Research*) (2001–2008)，並為《傳播學理論》(*Communication Theory*)、《政治傳播》(*Political Communication*)、《國際傳媒/政治學刊》(*International Journal of Press/Politics*)、《JAVNOST—大眾》(*JAVNOST – The Public*)和《傳播學》(*Communication*)的編輯委員。他的研究課題主要為新聞學、政治傳播和傳媒使用，曾發表過百篇學術文章及出版十三部著作。近作包括其主編的《Sage民意研究手冊》(*Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*)和《傳播學國際百科全書》(*International Encyclopedia of Communication*)全十二卷。

**LC:** 李立峯與陳韜文教授

**WD:** 董仕巴教授

**LC:** 雖然你從事傳播研究達三十年，並出版了超過十部著作和刊登過百多篇文章，但是因為中國大陸學者往往未能接觸所有英語學刊，更遑論德語學刊，所以他們對你的著作可能並不熟悉。趁今次機會，可否為中國學界簡介你這些年來的學術工作？哪一項研究你最感滿意？換句話說，有什麼主要的觀點或理念推動着你的學術研究？

**WD:** 讀書時期我一直希望成為新聞工作者，因此我的碩士論文便以德國記者為研究對象：他們如何看待自己的專業和他們眼中的理想的新聞教育。該項研究是德國其中一個最早及最具代表性的新聞工作者問卷調查。設計問卷和分析數據（包括假設檢定）的過程令我更嚮往學術研究，而對實際新聞工作的興趣則漸漸減低。我的博士論文以至其後的事業均繼續圍繞新聞學研究這個範疇發展，其中一個最有趣和具啟發性的研究是比較五個國家的新聞工作者，原來不同國家的新聞從業員對其專業的定義可以很不一樣。到了今天，傳媒瞬息萬變、新聞素質的界定日益含糊、商業化和新聞娛樂化加劇等等因素，再次吸引我以新聞學研究為主要研究範疇。

不過，除了這個一直受大眾和政界注目的議題外，我亦有研究在理論和方法論領域上更具挑戰性的題目。比如認知衝突如何影響人們閱讀政治新聞，我在這方面的研究可以說最多產，而且大抵是我的研究中做得最紮實的（此研究支持媒介影響微弱的觀點，並一直成為媒介影響的範式）。但是我只將有關研究的結果結集成一本德文書和一本歐洲期刊中的一篇英文文章，真是失策！出版地點實在重要啊！

**LC:** 可以多說一點此一系列的研究嗎？其中最重要的特徵和研究結果是什麼？

**WD:** 研究通過內容分析、問卷調查和讀者分析來探討新聞內容和受眾傾向之間的互動。最重要的發現應該算是認知衝突兩種方向的影響：當報導的觀點與讀者的觀點一致時，讀者會增加接觸此類資訊，但是這只限於正面新聞，例如讀者喜愛的政客的好消息；但如果是一則負面新聞，我們發現不管新聞內容的角度與讀者的傾向是否一致，讀者的閱讀行為並沒有受影響。此論點跟一些心理學研究的發現一致：較之正面信息，人們對負面的信息反應更強更快（「自動警覺」，參看 Pratto & John, 1991）。我們同時亦發現即使是重點新聞（較大篇幅或放於當眼位置），協調與衝突的群組表現仍然沒有分別。

我也應用類似的多元方法研究個人情緒如何影響看電視的習慣。其實在我的學術生涯研究過不少題目，但現在學科愈益分門別類，通才似乎都成為「古老石山」了！

**LC:** 剛剛提及傳播研究專門化這趨勢，你認為這個發展有何弊端？換句話說，傳播學會否有變得支離破碎的危機？

**WD:** 我覺得這趨勢是好壞參半。無可否認，成熟的學科往往如此發展。一門學科發展愈久，問題愈挖愈深，結果自然而然的是愈顯得益支離破碎。但是在這個時刻，我們更需要通才在高處俯瞰傳播學的全貌。這些人仍然存在，比如丹尼斯·麥奎爾 (Denis McQuail)、卡爾·羅森格瑞 (Karl Erik Rosengren) 或是艾利休·凱茨 (Elihu Katz)。一門專業應該讚揚一些不止埋首於自己研究的學者，他們嘗試糅合各家，總覽大局並指出研究的大方向，讓其他人可以找到跟公眾利益密切相關的研究題目。

**LC:** 你在過去十五年或更長時間一直研究另一題目：儘管聲言中立，新聞工作者往往是有政治傾向的行動者。在2004年刊出的一篇文章，你嘗試將「新聞決策的心理學」概念化，並認為記者和大眾一樣，傾向以自己一貫的世界觀來審視身邊一切，並再三確定自己的立場。你認為這種主觀傾向是無可避免的，還是可以透過專業訓練而減少？抑或這種傾向是真的不可取嗎？比如在美國，有人提出增加少數族裔和女性新聞從業員，前題正正是認為個人和社會背景會影響記者的新聞取態。

**WD:** 或者我是舊派人，但是我始終相信客觀是新聞的根本，這主要看你怎麼定義，比如在《傳播學國際百科全書》中，Barnhurst & Owens (2008: 2557) 定義新聞學為「一些經過長時間累積而來的，並在更廣義的傳播範疇中取得特別地位，被視為跟人際傳播中的消息分享不一樣的一系列的實踐」。因此，即使大眾與自己的社交圈子分享新聞資訊是普遍不過的日常活動，社會仍然需要斷定真理和明辨是非的媒介。大眾相信新聞講真憑實據和不偏不倚，這是社會建立互信的根基。

我們剛完成德國新聞工作者可信度的調查，結果是可信度每況愈下，跟美國和其他國家不相伯仲。其中一個主要原因，是讀者覺得本應值得信賴的新聞工作者並沒有作出專業判斷，反而處處顯現主觀和偏見。因此，我不認為新聞行業需要有政治傾向的行動者，又或是黑人和女性因其背景而更能呈現某些真相。新聞學就如其他科學：紮實的研究只會顯示相同的結果。至於多樣化，我們只需要研究题目的多樣化和用以討論這些题目的價值觀的多樣化就足夠了。

**LC:** 我們不如討論一下傳播學作為一個學術領域的一些議題。不少歐美以外的傳播學者都認為傳播學幾乎完全由美國主導，很多中國學者亦覺得中國社會有自己各式各樣的議題。比如說，中國並非民主國家，既然如此，中國在政治傳播範疇中最重要的議題，豈不是應該跟美國十分不同？你認為德國的情況又是如何？儘管德國和美國之間的差別比中國和美國之間小，你是否仍然認為德國和美國的傳播研究有重大分歧？

**WD:** 正如我剛提及，如果是說通過建立假設，並由實證確立因果關係的研究（也就是科學的終極功能），我不認為結果會因文化或政治系統而不同。例如傳媒中的暴力內容對受眾的影響，在不同國家中分別不會太大（雖亦不會完全一樣），因此其背後的基本理論應該也是差不多的。可是，不同文化之間在三方面會有分別：佔主導地位的認識論、自變項和因變項的性質，以及主要的研究題目。

簡言之，今日的德國傳播研究和美國的差別不大，他們同樣將傳播學視為實證社會科學。這並非一直如此，而是六十年代以來經過適應和同化而成。但是，拉丁美洲或澳洲仍然十分不同，因為他們的取向以文化、「批判」和非實證為主。

第二點，自變項的性質會因文化而異，德國的傳媒內容始終跟美國的不一樣，跟中國則更甚，因變項自然也會不同。傳媒暴力所引起的反社會表現，或是電視報導如何影響投票行為可能在某個國家十分重要，但在還不可自由投票的國家，則根本不成議題。

最後一點，其實所有國家都有其重點研究項目，比如在德國、英國和日本一直有公共廣播的研究，但在美國卻完全不是議題；而傳媒暴力、商業廣告和互聯網研究則最早於美國發展。

**LC:** 以一個較為個人的角度看，你在傳播學界舉足輕重，並刊登過大量英文與德文文章。你的德文和英文出版有否不同，比如說所用的議題、方法和理論，或是在其他方面？

**WD:** 剛才的答案有些也可應用於此。再多談一點，要面對國際讀者，選取的題目和議題自然要跟他們相關。如果是有關德國記者或德國傳播系統的一些特殊之處，有興趣的讀者不會多，但是研究如果是有關影響記者決策的一般因素，不管是公營還是商營，其他地方的人或者也有興趣。其他心理因素如主觀傾向、群體間的互動和在不明確處境下如何作決策等，通通可以應用於不同地方的新聞工作者，所有地方的學者都會對這些過程和現象有興趣。所以，分別在於題目和變項的選取，而不在於方法和理論。從事實證研究，我尋求一般「法則」，當然，法則也會受相應的文化背景影響，也就是說，這些背景會成為其中一個重要變項。

**LC:** 不少學刊和學會均自譽具「國際性」，但卻往往被批評名不副實。你曾是世界民意研究學會 (World Association of Public Opinion Research) 和國際傳播學會 (International Communication Association) 的主席，又是備受推崇的《民意研究國際學刊》(*International Journal of Public Opinion Research*) 的前主編，你認為傳播研究是否有民族中心主義的傾向？這些批評合理嗎？如果屬實，可以怎樣糾正偏見？根據你的經驗，一個期刊編輯要令他的學刊真正具「國際性」，最具挑戰的是哪一環？

**WD:** 在國際學刊和會議常常可以見到大部分的研究來源自美國。即使被《傳播學刊》(*Journal of Communication*) 的一篇學術文章 (Laufer, 2005) 評定為最國際化的《民意研究國際學刊》，當中大約一半還是美國學者的作品。那代表它是「民族中心主義」或是「偏頗」嗎？我並不贊同，這只是反映世界各地投稿的比例，原因簡單不過：

美國的傳播學者比其他地方都多，而他們也較多產。如果強加配額甚至禁制這些稿件，那才是真正的民族中心主義。

唯一對美國學者有利的是語言，因為英文是科學（包括社會科學）最基本的語言，美國學者自然較歐洲學者容易寫出優美的文章，更遑論亞洲或是西班牙語系的學者。國際傳播學會和其學刊因而嘗試不以語言和寫作格式作為接納投稿的準則，這是一個好政策，長遠可見其利。

另外，不同國家也可以幫助自己的學者進入國際舞台，例如去年，我兩度獲瑞士機構邀請去教導他們的年輕學者如何投稿至國際學刊，這只是一例，還有很多東西可以嘗試。不過無論如何，選擇稿件不應以地區比例作標準，文章的學術水平才是唯一的準則。

**LC:** 近年你編輯過《Sage民意研究手冊》(*Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*)和《傳播學國際百科全書》(*International Encyclopedia of Communication*)，可以告訴我們計劃背後的理念嗎？你接觸過從事各種研究的學者，這些經驗如何影響你對傳播學的定位的看法？這些手冊和百科全書在學術領域上又有何價值？

**WD:** 出版民意研究手冊的主意來自出版商Sage，國際傳播學會拒絕讓他們接收《民意研究國際學刊》後，他們便給我們另一提議，就是出版一本手冊。跟我合作的編輯麥克·特勞戈特(Mike Traugott)和我都認為民意研究在過去幾十年發展迅速，值得把重要的發現匯集成書。我們覺得有太多人(包括學者)低估調查研究的困難和輕視微妙的枝節，因此在設計問卷時往往忽略與方法學相關的知識。我們希望手冊成為所有從事調查研究的人的參考書，但它不只是關於方法，同時也有頂尖學者撰寫文章，討論民意理論、民意和民意調查在現今政治過程中的角色，以及它們如何影響選民等問題。

《傳播學國際百科全書》則可謂是我的「人生工程」(這是一種德文中的說法，翻譯未必能得其神髓)，計劃源自國際傳播學會學刊出版商Blackwell(後來給Wiley收購)和國際傳播學會之間

的合約。我搞不清為何他們會找我做總編，或者我在2004至2005年當主席時還不至於把國際傳播學會搞成爛攤子，又或者大家覺得擁有過千作者和12卷的龐大計劃需要「德國效率」才能完成，而且還要按時做妥吧！傳播學已發展出大量的研究發現，如民意研究一樣，不過規模更大，現在正是時候把世界各地出色學者的研究匯集起來。

我最重要的任務是訂立編輯結構：為傳播學畫界和分門別類，由於傳統界線愈來愈含糊，再加上傳播研究的定義繁多，因此兩項工作均不容易。舉例來說，我們不可以照抄一些學術團體如國際傳播學會或國際媒介與傳播研究學會(International Association of Mass Communication Research)的內部結構，因為它們的分類並無系統，有時甚至顯得「胡來」——讀者，尤其是圈外讀者都希望見到一個更有邏輯的系統。第二個難題便是要為不同的領域找合適的編輯和作者，同時要留意國際性的問題。最後，三分之一的負責特定領域的編輯皆非美國學者，而作者則來自三十個國家以上。百科全書銷路甚佳，尤其是在亞洲，我認為本書提供整個傳播研究學有關各範疇、關鍵名詞、理論和方法的基本入門。<sup>1</sup>

**LC:** 學術以外，你是非謀利組織——德國傳播內容分析協會——的其中一個始創人，又曾是該會的主席多年，並領導「傳媒內容要旨計劃」(Media Tenor Project)。可否告訴我們計劃的理念和目的？除了學術興趣外，你認為計劃和協會在社會有何角色？

**WD:** 計劃背後的理念很單純：我們幾乎每天都在運用調查監察民意，但是卻長期忽略影響民意的因素，即是傳播內容。我最喜愛的其中一個研究是美國人對總統候選人取態的預測〔參看Fan & Tims (1989)〕，他們的假設是取態全憑傳媒報導的走勢而定。預測的曲線完全吻合實際調查數據，簡直可以省回做調查的費用。我認為每天固定的傳播內容監察不但讓從政者、大公司或非政府組織了解自己的形象，而且還為不同的社會調查提供珍貴的資料，當然也包括媒介影響的調查。



不過，1994年成立「傳媒內容要旨計劃」時，我們本想以月刊的形式將結果售予大眾，但卻不成功。於是我們將主意轉售給一個年輕的實業家，到現在他仍然繼續，而且更將計劃擴大至國際範疇。我覺得傳播內容的影響既深且廣，各類報導和評論的量化內容分析實在不可或缺。

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## 註釋

1. 編按：在《傳播學國際百科全書》的網站 (<http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com>) 中，讀者可得到有關該百科全書的理念、結構和內容的更詳盡資料。

ACADEMIC DIALOGUE WITH PROF. WOLFGANG DONSBACH

## **How Internationalized is Communication Scholarship?\***

**LC:** Francis L. F. Lee & Joseph M. Chan

**WD:** Prof. Wolfgang Donsbach

**LC:** You have been engaging in communication research for about three decades and have published more than 10 books and over 100 articles. But since many Chinese academics do not have comprehensive access to English journals, and let alone access to German publications, Chinese academics may not be too familiar with your works. It will be a great service to the Chinese research community if you could summarize your own intellectual journey throughout these years. What research of yours do you find the most satisfying? Put alternatively, what do you consider as the main thrusts of your academic work?

**WD:** When I was a student I always wanted to become a journalist. As a consequence I chose for my Master thesis a study on German journalists: How they see their professional competence and the ideal journalism education. It resulted in one of the first representative surveys of journalists in Germany. Designing a questionnaire and analyzing empirical data (thus doing immediate “hypothesis-testing”) dragged me more and more into scholarship rather than practical journalism. I then stayed with journalism research for my dissertation and throughout my career. One of the most interesting and enlightening studies was a five-country survey of news journalists that showed how differently journalists can define their professional

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\* Academic Dialogue with Prof. Wolfgang Donsbach Group Members: Francis L. F. Lee and Joseph M. Chan.

tasks in different countries. With the changing world of the media, the blurring boundaries of quality journalism, increased commercialization and tabloidization, I have currently chosen this field again as my main field of interest.

While this has certainly always been a field of major public and political interest, other work probably has been theoretically and methodologically more demanding. I still think that my study on the role of cognitive dissonance in exposure to political news is the most voluminous (and perhaps the most valid) study on this issue (that has determined the paradigms of media effects for such a long time because it suggested weak media effects). It was my own mistake to publish the results only in a book in German language and in an English article in a European journal. The location of publications really matters!

**LC:** Can you tell us something more about this series of studies? What are some of the most important features and findings from this research program?

**WD:** The study combined content analysis, survey and readership test (“Starch test”) to determine how media content and the recipient’s predispositions interact. Probably the most important finding was a two-directional effect of cognitive dissonance: We found higher exposure to information that was consonant only for positive news, e.g. good news about a politician the respondent likes. When it comes to negative news we found no differences between consonant and dissonant constellations, i.e. the valence of the news item and the political predisposition of the respondent. This complies with more general psychological findings about stronger and quicker reactions to negative than to positive signals (“automatic vigilance,” see for instance Pratto & John, 1991). It goes very well this result that we also found no differences between consonant and dissonant cases for highly emphasized (bigger or more prominently placed) articles.

I applied a similar multi-method approach to a study of how mood states affect exposure to television. In my career I have tackled a variety of research topics, something no longer common after the field has become so differentiated as specialized. The “generalists” are fossils...

**LC:** It's interesting that you point to this trend of differentiation and specialization of the field of communication research. Do you think this trend has any downsides? More specifically, would there be a risk of fragmentation?

**WD:** This increasing specialization has good and bad sides. It is, of course, an inevitable indicator of a maturing field. The longer a discipline exists, the deeper it digs into the problems and topics that it is dealing with and, as a consequence, the more fragmented it becomes. But I strongly believe that we need generalists who keep more of a bird's view on the field. We still have these people around. Think of Denis McQuail, Karl Erik Rosengren, or Elihu Katz. I believe that a field must give enough credit to scholars who do not (only) bloom by their own specific research projects but by pulling the pieces together, give us this oversight, and point in the right direction where we can find the right research topics that have a public interest.

**LC:** Another line of research that you have undertaken in the past 15 years or so (if not longer) has shown that journalists are often partisan actors despite their claim of objectivity. In one more recent article published in 2004, you attempted to theorize "the psychology of news decision," and argued that journalists, like common people, also have the tendency to perceive the world in ways so as to reconfirm their own pre-existing world-views. Do you regard such tendencies of the journalists to be subjective as something inevitable or as something which can be reduced by better professional training? Or, is it something really that undesirable? For instance, in the case of the U.S., the claims that there should be more racial minorities and females in the newsrooms are exactly premised on the point that journalists' personal and social background would influence their views on news events.

**WD:** I might be old-fashioned, but I still believe in objectivity as the basic norm in journalism. It's all a matter of definition. In their entry "Journalism" in the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, Barnhurst & Owens (2008: 2557) define journalism as "... a constellation of practices that have acquired special status within the larger domain of communication through a long history that separated out news-sharing from its origins in interpersonal communication."

Thus, while sharing new information with others in one's social surroundings is a common and everyday human activity, it needs a social role that ascertains truth and distinguishes "intelligence from gossip." People's believe in factual accuracy and non-partisan motives for communication is a major if not the basis for social systems because it produces trust.

We have just completed a study on the credibility of German journalists. The results, showing a decline in journalists' credibility over time, are as disastrous as in the US and elsewhere. One of the main driving factors in this development is the audience's assumption of bias and subjectivity among those whom they expect to be just trustful and truthful mediators of professionally ascertained news. Thus, I do not think that we need more partisanship or that black or female journalists will produce more of this truth in the sense of validated assertions about reality. It is in journalism like in science: Well conducted research will lead to the same results. We need variety only in the topics and in the values with which these topics are discussed.

**LC:** Let's get to some issues related to the field of communication research in general. Communication researchers outside the U.S. and Europe often argued that the field is heavily dominated by the American research agenda. Many Chinese scholars often feel that the Chinese societies have their own problematics. For instance, the simple and fundamental fact that China is not a democracy would mean that the most pertinent issues in political communication research in China would be rather different from those in the U.S. In your view, what is the situation in Germany? Although the differences between Germany and the U.S. are probably significantly smaller than the differences between China and the U.S., do you nonetheless think there are still important gaps between German communication research and American communication research?

**WD:** As I said above, when it comes to empirical research, i.e. striving for ascertained assertions about causal relationships (which is the ultimate function of science) I do not think that research results should and will differ between cultures and/or political systems. The impact of media content on images or on violent behavior will be rather (though not totally) invariant. Thus, the basic theories are

pretty much the same. However, three things are different between cultures: the dominant epistemologies, the nature of independent and dependent variables, and the dominant research topics.

In brief: German communication research today is rather similar to communication research in the U.S. in its dominant understanding of the endeavor as an empirical social science. This was not always the case but is the result of an adaptation and assimilation process starting in the 1960s. However, e.g. Latin America or Australia are still a very different case with predominant cultural, “critical”, and non-empirical approaches.

Second, the nature of the independent variables is different due to cultural differences. Media content in Germany is still to some extent different from the U.S., and even more so from China. And the dependent variables might differ. Anti-social behavior from violent media content or the impact of television on voting behavior might be an important issue in one country but not another, particularly when a political system is not yet based on free elections with political choices.

And thirdly, all countries have their dominant research issues. For instance, German, British, or Japanese scholars have always been interested in the performance of public broadcasting which is not an issue in the U.S. — where, in contrast, the effects of violent media content, advertising, or internet research became much earlier an issue than anywhere else.

**LC:** We may put the question in a more personal way. As a highly productive and prominent author in the field of communication, you have published a lot both in English and in German. Do you think there are any significant differences between your German publications and your English publications, in terms of the issues they address, the methods and concepts employed, or any other aspects?

**WD:** Part of my answer to the previous question certainly applies here. To elaborate a bit more, one can only address an international audience with topics and issues that are relevant outside one’s own culture. You will find very little interest in findings about peculiarities of German journalists or the German broadcasting system. But you will find at least some interest in, for instance, research on general

variables influencing journalists' news decisions be it in public or commercial media. Psychological factors such as subjective predispositions, group dynamics, and the need for decision-making in undetermined situations are factors that apply to journalists everywhere and evidence on these processes are of interest to scholars around the world. So, differences apply to the topics and in part to the variables, but they do not apply to methods and concepts. As an empirical researcher I am going for general "laws" — laws, however, in which the respective cultural context is one of many important variables.

**LC:** Journals and associations which proclaim themselves to be "international" are often criticized for failing to live up to their claims. Having been the president of the World Association of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), the president of the International Communication Association (ICA), as well as the managing editor of the much respected *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, what are your views on the claims that communication research is ethnocentric? Is that a valid claim? If yes, what can be done to correct the biases? According to your experiences, what are the most important challenges facing a journal editor who wants to make his/her journal truly international?

**WD:** In international journals and on conference programs one finds more scholarly work originating in the U.S. than any other country. Even in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, which was praised in a research article in the *Journal of Communication* as being the "most international" of all journals (Lauf, 2005) about half of the authors were American. Is the journal therefore "ethnocentric" or "biased"? I don't think so. This figure reflects pretty much the ratio of submissions of manuscripts from different areas in the world. There is one very simple reason for this disproportion: One will find many more and many more productive, i.e. research producing, communication scholars in the U.S. than anywhere else. It would be ethnocentric to accept this research under-proportionally or even to put an embargo on these manuscripts.

The only natural advantage of U.S. scholars is language. Because English has developed as the *lingua franca* of the sciences (including the social sciences) it is much easier for our American colleagues to

come up with an elegantly written manuscript than Europeans, and it is even harder for Asians or the Spanish speaking world. ICA and its journals are trying to make up for this by not using language and writing style as a criterion for the acceptance of manuscripts. This is a good policy and will show its effects on the long-run.

And countries can try to help their scholars to perform on the international stage. Last year, I was invited twice by Swiss institutions to train young scholars in how to write for and submit to international journals. Much more can be done in other countries. But again: The selection of research evidence cannot follow the rule of a proportional representation by geography or any other dimension. The only criterion can be scholarly excellence.

**LC:** In recent years, you have edited the *Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research* as well as the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Can you share with us the ideas and concepts behind these projects? Would you please share with us your conception of the identity of communication studies in light of your experience in dealing with contributors of various strands? What are the values of these handbooks and encyclopedia to an academic field?

**WD:** The idea for the Handbook of Public Opinion Research came from the publisher Sage who had made us an offer to take over the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* — which WAPOR declined. Sage's alternative offer then was a handbook. Mike Traugott, my co-editor, and I thought that the field of public opinion research has so much developed over the last decades that the main evidence could be summarized in such a handbook. We also believed (and still do) that too many people, including scholars, underestimate the subtleties and risks of survey research and thus, when planning a survey, disregard the relevant methodological knowledge. Therefore, the Handbook was planned to become a sourcebook for everyone who does surveys. But it is not only about methods. It also has premium authors write about public opinion theory, the role of public opinion and survey research in modern political systems, and their influence on voters.

The *International Encyclopedia of Communication* probably has become my "life work" (a translation from a German term that might



not work well in other languages). The project goes back to the contract between Blackwell Publishing, the publisher of the ICA journals (it later was purchased by Wiley) and the International Communication Association. I still don't know why they asked me to become the general editor. I probably did not totally mess up when I was ICA president 2004–2005.... And, some might have thought that “German efficiency” is needed to run such a major project with 12 volumes and more than 1000 authors — and to run it on time. Like with public opinion research, but on a much bigger scale, the field was ripe for a compilation of its general evidence, written by outstanding scholars from around the world.

The most crucial feature of my task was the editorial structure: I had to define the borders of the field of communication and its sub-structure. Both are not an easy task given the blurring borders and the many different definitions of what communication research is. To give an example: One cannot just copy the internal system of academic associations like ICA or International Association of Mass Communication Research because their divisions or sections have developed over time in an unsystematic and sometimes “wild” manner while the reader — particularly the reader from outside the field — expects a more logical system. The second challenge was to find the right people as area editors and authors — and keep an eye on internationality. Finally, one third of the area editors are non-US scholars and the authors come from more than 30 countries. The Encyclopedia is selling very well (by the way: particularly in Asia) and we can assume that today it is the standard entry into all areas, key terms, theories, and methods of the whole field of communication research.<sup>1</sup>

**LC:** Beyond the academia, we know that you were one of the founders of the non-profit German Association for Media Content Analysis, which conducted the “Media Tenor Project.” You have also served as the Association’s Chairperson for many years. Can you share with us the ideas behind and the aims of the project? Besides serving the interests of academic research, do you see the project and the Association as playing any specific roles in the society?

**WD:** The idea behind the Media Tenor Project was very simple: We are constantly monitoring public opinion with numerous surveys almost

every day. But we have for long disregarded the factor of which we know that it is the main driving force for public opinion, i.e. media content. One of my favorite studies [Fan & Tims (1989)] is a projection of the development of American's attitudes towards presidential candidates based solely on the trend of media coverage. The projection curve is a perfect fit with real survey data. One could even say that the money for the surveys could have been spared.... A constant, day-to-day monitoring of a country's major media does not only enable politicians, companies, or NGO's to track their media image but create invaluable data for many kinds of social research, including, of course, media effects research.

However, after we had started Media Tenor in 1994 we found it difficult to sell the data (by means of a monthly newsletter) to a larger public audience and we therefore sold the idea to a young entrepreneur who still owns it today and has expanded its scope to the international realm. In my view, media content is much too important and influential to not follow its trends in all kinds of areas of reporting and commenting by means of quantitative content analysis.

## Reference and Selected Works by Wolfgang Donsbach

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for the reference and Wolfgang Donsbach's selected works.

### Note

1. Editor's note: Readers can get more information about the conception, content, and structure of the encyclopedia on its official website — <http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com>.