The 69th Annual ICA Conference theme of Communication Beyond Boundaries aims for an understanding of the role of communication and media in the crossing of social, political and cultural boundaries that characterize contemporary society. The conference organizers encourage work that crosses the boundaries of research domains, of particular fields of research interest, and of academia and the wider community.

Communication and media feature centrally in today’s crossing of boundaries that characterizes societal structures, institutions and cultures, themselves firmly founded in communication technologies, infrastructures and practices. The spatial dimension of the practice of communication, in the past, resulted in legacy media allowing people to be constituted as an ‘imagined community’ within the defined territories of the nation state, while today’s global digital technologies and networks have been central to the expansion in movements of people, capital, commodities, images, and ideologies across national boundaries. This contributes, according to optimists like Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (channelling Marshall Mcluhan), to a ‘global community’, while critical voices see them as markers of new forms of social inequality and cultural domination.
Beyond this, communication and media feature centrally in various other forms of social, political, and cultural boundary crossing. These include:

- the discursive work involved in thinking beyond binary boundaries in contemporary politics of social and cultural identities;
- the role of social media in re-defining the boundaries between fact and fake, and between science and beliefs, affecting the politics of knowledge and the epistemology of science;
- the changing nature of interpersonal and intercultural communication in an age of globalized digital identities that sit alongside geographical mobility;
- the challenges faced by journalists and media workers in providing news, information and entertainment across borders and boundaries, as populist governments challenge independent reporting and open cultural expression;
- implications for communication law and policy and political communication as pressures for nation-states to regulate digital media platforms grow;
- the place of communication technologies in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things, questioning what it means to be human; and
- the growing recognition of the role of the brain as a window to attitudinal and behavioural change and its repercussion for marketing and entertainment as well as children’s well-being.

Communication and media are part and parcel of these trends, sometimes as instigators, other times as the result, most often as important conduits for this crossing of boundaries.

Communication and media in both digital and analogue formats feature in the rise of movements that aim to counter these boundary-crossing developments, for instance, in populist nationalisms that challenge the claims about the irrevocable advance of globalization, as the role of tabloids in promoting the Brexit vote illustrates. Conservative movements employ legacy and social media to rally against political correctness and identity politics, and racism thrives in online hate communities, while activists turn to communication and media to help solve problems of our age, ranging from war and terror, human rights abuses, climate change to fake news, identity theft, and online harassment and predatory behavior.

These examples emphasize that it is timely to consider the boundary-crossing nature and relevance/impact of contemporary communication. This requires interdisciplinary research that crosses the silos of disciplines and research fields. With the theme of Communication Beyond Boundaries, we encourage research that spans across particular research domains, and across the boundaries constructed by particular fields of research interest.

Within the field of communication, we invite researchers to look beyond divisional and sub-disciplinary boundaries, as diverse examples such as intersectionality and health communications’ current shift of focus to entertainment education have shown to be fruitful paths to new insights. Beyond that, communication has long been a highly porous field, or what Silvio Waisbord has termed a ‘post-discipline’, shaping and being shaped by its interaction with many academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. With the rapid expansion of digital communication, and growing awareness of the environmental impact of human activity, the extent of its engagement with the natural as well as the human sciences is increasingly apparent.

As communication scholars, we have important insights into areas as diverse as bioethics, AI, robotics, and cryptocurrencies, as well as how to create more just and equal multicultural societies. The final point also encourages us to think about the role of academics in crossing the boundaries of academia into society, as advisers and activists, reaching out to regulators, industries, civil society organisations and activist groups.

With the conference theme of Communication Beyond Boundaries, we encourage scholars to address key questions related to:

- How to understand the role of communication in boundary crossing developments in politics, culture and society?
- What is the role of communication in the counter-movements opposing/rectifying globalising boundary crossing?
- Where do various strands of communication research need to (re)connected to tackle the issues and problems of contemporary boundary crossing?
- How can communication research inform and be informed by other academic disciplines in understanding these boundary crossing trends and their counter trends?
- What role for academics in crossing the boundaries of academia into society as policy advisors, activists and NGOs, industry researchers, or end-users of communication services?

SUBMISSION FOR THE ICA 2019 THEME MUST:

- Focus on the topic of boundary crossing;
- Demonstrate the need for research collaboration across boundaries within communication research and between communication and other disciplines and fields;
- Panels should include contributions from at least two different countries, and not more than one contribution from a single Faculty, Department or School.

Prepared by CONFERENCE PROGRAM CHAIR Terry Flew (Queensland U of Technology, Australia; ICA President-Elect) and CONFERENCE THEME CHAIR Hilde van den Bulck (U of Antwerp, Belgium)

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