

## Introduction

This volume is devoted to Jewish images as portrayed in Western media – using both historical and contemporary contexts as well as multidisciplinary perspectives. It is composed of two parts. While the first part “(Re)Producing Images and Stereotypes” is dedicated to articles exploring the use of images and stereotypes in the media discourse, the second part “Dealing with Stereotypes and Antisemitism” focuses, additionally or exclusively, on the media’s reactions to stereotypes, and reactions to antisemitism. Sixteen authors present studies that apply either a comparative approach to the subject matter or provide results that should be discussed in relation to the findings of other analyses presented in this book.

Kenneth Boulding (1969, 423) defines image as “the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe.” Obviously, images serve as important filtering mechanisms in the perception of the self and the other, and such perceptions are, in turn, one of the key elements that influence individual and collective behaviour. Images linger in the mind, creating stereotypes, entering our subconscious and becoming part of our culture.

In the context of social sciences, the term “stereotypes” is supposed to have been coined by Walter Lippmann (1922) in his classic work on *Public Opinion*. “Stereotypes” can be best described as “widely shared and simplified evaluative images” (Hogg and Vaughan 2005, 354) or – as Lippmann has put it – the “pictures in our heads” that allow us to master the complexity of our social environment. While images are more subject to fluctuation, stereotypes seem to be slow to change. However, as collective images, their content and expression are responsive to the social context. Generally speaking, “stereotypes will persist if they are readily accessible to us in memory” and if “they seem to make good sense of people’s attitudes and behaviour (i.e. they neatly fit ‘reality’)” (Hogg and Vaughan 2005, 59). If one of these preconditions changes, stereotypes are likely to change too.

It is obvious that the accessibility of stereotypes is promoted through their representation and use in communication, and that social communication as well as social construction of reality, in modern societies, depends heavily on the mass media. As recent research on agenda setting and framing has shown, the media plays an important role not only in defining *what* people think, but

*how* people think about issues and other people. This has been the case since the establishment of the mass press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which created the conditions that allowed a political popular culture to emerge, while at the same time being a component of it.

More than eighty years ago, Lippmann (1922, 59) pointed out, that the “subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception. They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien”.

When stereotypes are applied to members of a social group – and, actually, they *are* mainly generalizations about groups – simplification and overemphasis of certain aspects may lead them to becoming derogatory and hostile, especially when social tensions arise (or are fuelled) between groups. In this case, stereotypes function as central elements of prejudice which often translates into discrimination, into aggression, and ultimately, as history has shown, into dehumanization of an “outgroup”. Exploring Jewish images and stereotypes in different periods and different cultural contexts as well as responses to stereotypes and reactions to antisemitism before and after the Holocaust should help us to understand the causes and consequences of prejudice as one of the great challenges of a democratic and free society. By taking various comparative perspectives, the articles in this volume of *Relation* aim to stimulate a debate about a topic critical to the role of the media in society.

## **(Re)Producing Images and Stereotypes**

Emphasizing the larger social context of the mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe, the first two articles discuss the age-old stereotype of the “Wandering Jew” from quite different perspectives. Based on content analyses of newspaper articles published between 1997 and 2006, *Nelly Elias (Beer-Sheva)* and *Julia Bernstein (Frankfurt)* compare the images of the Jewish minority in the Former Soviet Union prevailing in the Russian press with the media images of Russian-speaking Jews after their immigration to Israel and Germany. In a comparative perspective, they conclude that the media images of Russian Jews in the three countries reflect the broader changes taking place in the respective national contexts, thus fulfilling the majority’s need for self-definition. Using a cultural history perspective, *Philip Webb (Atlanta)* explores the same stereotype in

the context of the American discourse on homelessness, which arose from bourgeois social and political anxieties about the impact of modernization in the late 19th and the beginning 20th century. In spite of distinguishing religious anti-Judaism from modern antisemitism, he argues that antisemitic motifs were paradigmatic for this discourse and Jewish images were easily appropriated for forming a nascent discourse on homelessness.

Emphasizing the visual tradition within the aforementioned time span, the article by *Michaela Haibl (Vienna)* compares representations of Jews in Austrian and German satirical magazines in an effort to advance understanding of the interplay of culturally-based phenotypic traits and the current social functions of the respective images. While the following article by *Hatice Bayraktar (Berlin)* on stereotypes of Jews in Turkish caricatures in the 1930s and 1940s reveals differences and similarities between Central European and Turkish views (and, partly, direct influences from the German Nazi journal *Der Stürmer*), both authors point to the antisemitic attitudes reflected in the caricatures and to their possible long-term impact on public opinion through leaving their imprints in people's minds.

Finally, from a contemporary perspective, an analysis of the "Letters to the Editor" section of major Swiss newspapers related to the debate on the issue of Holocaust victims' dormant accounts illuminates the wave of popular antisemitism generated by this debate. As *Brigitte Sion (New York)* reveals, this wave was publicly expressed across Switzerland's linguistic regions, social classes, and political affiliations, which should be considered with regard to the results of the following study by *Linars Udris and Mark Eisenegger (Zurich)*. While in all the articles so far, Jews represent the suspicious others, this study, as well as the last article of the first part, provide comparative analyses of Jewish and Muslim media images. On the one hand, by contrasting so-called "typifications" conveying empathy with those conveying distance, Udris and Eisenegger found that most typifications of Jewish actors in fourteen Swiss-German media convey empathy, whereas Muslims are portrayed in a significantly more negative way. On the other hand, an analysis of the prime time news programs of the two German public service broadcasters ARD and ZDF in 2006 (conducted by *Roland Schatz and Christian Kolmer from "Media Tenor", Bonn*, and compared to results from earlier studies) assumes the coverage of Israelis and Palestinians to be distorted as it focuses on violent actions, with Israel primarily appearing as perpetrator and the Palestinians appearing mainly as victims. Lacking almost all context information, the audience scarcely gets a point of reference to understand the background of the Middle East conflict. However, Udris and Eisenegger also concede that it is in the context of this conflict

where the highest frequency of “typifications” conveying distance to Jewish actors occurs. Nevertheless, the quite different results of these studies (conducted in different countries, applying various thematic perspectives and using different kinds of measurement) should contribute to a serious discussion of the role of the media in international relations.

## Dealing with Stereotypes and Antisemitism

The ongoing spreading of Jewish stereotypes has been challenging Jews and non-Jews alike to deal with the inherent meanings and to react to the underlying antisemitic attitudes. In one of the articles stressing a Jewish perspective, *Kerstin von der Krone (Neuenhagen/Berlin)* reminds of the Damascus affair in 1840 (when Jews in Damascus were accused of ritual murder) which is regarded as being the first media event in Jewish history that captured the attention of the Western world. Differing markedly from English and French reporting, the coverage of the German-Jewish press not only informed their readers about the so far unique diplomatic efforts from European Jews, it also criticized the negative images of Jews in German newspapers and discussed strategies to deal with the affair in a scientific manner. Concerning Alphonse de Rothschild’s reaction to Toulouse-Lautrec’s 1892 poster “Reine de Joie” and the use of the stereotype of the Jewish speculator in the 1955 Israeli election campaign, the following essay by *Ruth Iskin (Beer Sheva)* discloses the difficulties when a stereotyped group tries to free itself from a negative identity mediated by visual representations – whether by repeating it in a new critical context, or by proposing an opposing image. Both ways risk reinvoking the stereotype in the ongoing “battle of representations”.

Obviously, these risks are inherent to every attempt to deal with hostile stereotypes, the underlying attitudes and the horrible consequences of these attitudes manifested in the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews. At a political level, this becomes clear, for example, when considering the conspicuous absence of reports about the “Kristallnacht” and the subsequent intensification of Nazi anti-Jewish policy in BBC’s German-language broadcasting, as reported in *Stephanie Seul’s (Bremen)* study of pre-war British propaganda. Giving highest priority to foreign and defence policy aims, the British feared that sympathising with the Jews would render the British anti-Nazi propaganda campaign wholly ineffective in light of widespread antisemitic attitudes among the German public, and, moreover, would stir up domestic antisemitism.

While political decision-making usually is committed to – sometimes problematically – weighing up the possible advantages and disadvantages of alter-

native courses of action, free media face the constraints of market forces. In order to identify possible scopes of action, the next two articles examine the role of fictional film as one of the most prominent contemporary media of political culture in setting standards for interpersonal and intergroup-behaviour through reconstructing collective memories of the Holocaust. Comparing the narrative structures within four central audio-visual projects of Steven Spielberg, *Carsten Hennig (Frankfurt)* argues that Spielberg's work makes an important contribution to the inscription of the Holocaust within the collective memory, because it replaces World War II with the Holocaust as the representative symbol for the twentieth century and, consequently, establishes the corresponding set of morals as a basic reference point for contemporary social values. However, Spielberg has to rely on the channels of the Americanised mass media culture, and the reconstruction of a collective memory implicitly acknowledges the structures (and, thereby, the national American ambitions) which enabled its communication. Similarly, *Hanno Loewy (Hohenems)* argues in his analysis of the comic-based film "X-Men", that in order to become cinematic narratives, holocaust narratives have to follow generic traditions as much as they have to appeal to the desires of the audience. Within these constraints, the film still tries to convey a sense to its young audience that it is growing up in a world with ruined moral standards, not *beyond* good and evil, but *after* any certainty about what these words should mean.

There is no simple answer available as to how to deal with hostile stereotypes. Therefore, in the last article of this volume, *Elisabeth Kuebler (Vienna)* seeks to relate theoretical and methodological findings from the area of communication studies to the evaluation of media-related measures against antisemitism as proposed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) located within the framework of the Council of Europe. Presenting *HaGalil Online* as a good-practice example from Germany, Kuebler ultimately places emphasis on the challenges and constraints of pan-European action in the respective field, such as distinct political cultures and collective memories and the lack of a common European communication sphere.

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Martin Liepach   Gabriele Melischek   Josef Seethaler

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