

## **New call for papers: “Nordic perspectives on strategic Communication”**

*With special paper development workshop in November. Deadline for Abstracts is 31 May 2024*

Edited by guest editors Øyvind Ihlen (University of Oslo, Norway) and Winni Johansen (Aarhus University, Denmark), and with the editorial team consisting of Alexander Buhmann (BI Norwegian Business School, Norway), Jesper Falkheimer (Lund University, Sweden), Guro Refsum Sanden (BI Norwegian Business School, Norway), and Chiara Valentini (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), the special issue aims to explore how strategic communication is conceptualized and practiced within the Nordic region, considering the arguably unique aspects of the so-called ‘Nordic model’ (e.g., Byrkjeflot, 2001; Byrkjeflot et al. 2022). The meager research that has addressed such topics (e.g., Falkheimer & Heide, 2014; Flodin, 2009; Ihlen & Rakkenes, 2009; Larsson, 2005), is in dire need of being updated in the light of continuing processes of digitalization, mediatization, and globalization. We invite submissions that examine strategic communication of private, public, and/or non-profits/non-governmental organizations and institutions in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. We further encourage submissions that look at how the “Nordic realities” might be similar or different from practices in other regions.

### **Background**

The Nordic countries are known for their stable democratic welfare states, high trust levels, and strong cooperation among social partners (Hilson, 2008; SAMAK, 2016). The ‘Nordic model’ is claimed to represent a unique blend of welfare capitalism and social democracy, prevalent in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden (Arter, 2016). It is characterized by a comprehensive welfare state, providing high levels of social security and universal health care, combined with a thriving economy. The model also emphasizes strong labor force participation, egalitarian policies, and an extensive social safety net, supported by a high-tax framework. At the organizational level, the model refers to low-hierarchical, egalitarian leadership styles, high gender equality, inclusive employee participation and a collaborative approach to internal and external communications (Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Smith et al., 2003). Finally, the high level of social trust and social freedom among citizens may explain why the Nordic countries score high on the UN World Happiness Reports (Bjørnskov, 2021, Booth, 2015).

On the one hand, such apparent specificities of a socio-economic model can be seen as highly impactful determinants for how organizations (can) communicate and manage strategic communication and, as such, offer rich areas for exploration in our field. Various studies in recent years have taken them as a backdrop for examining strategic communication among private, public, and non-profit/non-governmental organizations, during times of change and crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic; geopolitical tensions and conflicts; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)-issues and moral outrage; climate and sustainability issues leading to emergencies (floodings, fires, etc.); economic problems and energy issues; and changes of citizen and consumer habits and expectations (e.g., Buhmann et al., 2021; Johansen et al., 2022; Johansson et al., 2023; Knutsen, 2017; Skogerbø et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the professed “uniqueness” of the Nordic model and its implications can also be challenged. Some have even talked about the “myth of Nordic exceptionalism” (Bengtsson et al., 2014). Are the countries in the Nordic region so different after all? There seems to be several small Western European countries where similar observations can be made. In other words, is the expectation of a different form of strategic communication in this region valid?

With a sensitivity for both viewpoints, we invite submissions that explore or criticize the 'Nordic model' and how it relates to the theory and practice of strategic communication, to offer valuable insights for both practitioners and scholars.

In the context of the Nordic model, strategic communication of organizations might be explored along several dimensions:

- High trust in government and media: What opportunities does this offer to strategic communication professionals?
- Egalitarian society: How is this reflected in strategic communication practice and the potential for inclusive communication, ensuring messages that resonate with a wide demographic?
- Comprehensive welfare state: To what extent and how can strategic communication support the advancement of social welfare themes oriented at improving CSR and community engagement?
- Strong labor relations: Does strategic communication benefit from collaborative approaches with labor unions and employee groups, reflecting the cooperative labor market model? To what extent can strategic communication support and enhance such collaborative approaches?
- Less hierarchical and egalitarian leadership style: Do strategic communication activities such as strategic listening, soliciting input, and collaborative co-worker practices support the Nordic leadership style? And if so, how?
- Sustainable and ethical practices: In what respects might strategic communication on sustainability and ethical business practices in the Nordics differ from other regions?
- High expectations to DEI and CSR practices of organizations: How is strategic communication shaped to embrace corporate citizenship and take socio-political stances in a world of conflicts, reflecting high expectations for DEI and CSR?

The call for papers seeks to delve into if and how these and other features of the Nordic model may influence strategic communication. We are interested in contributions covering the Nordic model taking micro, societal, critical, or organizational lenses. Contributions may examine how the features of the Nordic model shape strategic communication in all sub-areas, e.g., related to change, crises, stakeholder engagement, corporate social responsibility, and media relations to mention a few.

In addition to the above questions, topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Comparison of strategic communication in the Nordic countries versus other regions.
- Role of trust in authorities and media and/or among citizens and consumers in shaping strategic communication.
- Strategic communication, leadership, and stakeholder engagement of private, public, and non-profit/non-governmental organizations in the Nordic countries, e.g., within internal communication, change communication, crisis communication, CSR and sustainability communication, CEO-communication, social media communication or marketing communication.
- Impact of the Nordic model on change and crisis communication (especially beyond already extensively discussed crises like the pandemic; see Ihlen et al., 2022)
- Analysis of political and social landscape influencing strategic communication practices in the Nordic countries.

- Use of media technology and AI for strategic communication influenced by the Nordic setting.
- Characteristics of communication professionals and/or their roles in the Nordic countries.
- The influence and power of the Nordic communication professionals.
- Case studies of successful or unique strategic communication campaigns in the Nordic region, including the use of specific multimodal elements (verbal, visuals, audio, tone, and style e.g., the use of humor and irony).

The special issue is open for interdisciplinary work, as well as a wide range of methodologies and epistemologies.

The selection of papers will reflect the scope of the International Journal of Strategic Communication, which aims to build an interdisciplinary body of knowledge in strategic communication, defined as “all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals. Entity includes all kind of organizations (e.g., corporations, governments, or non-profits), as well as social movements and known individuals in the public sphere. Communication can play a distinctive role for the formulation, revision, presentation, execution, implementation, and operationalization of strategies” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 487).

Submitted papers should clearly be linked to existing scholarship in strategic communication and reflect the understanding mentioned above, but can be based on theoretical and methodological approaches from diverse disciplines. Research questions and topics addressed should be valuable for a global readership. While international, comparative, and cross-cultural studies are especially welcome, research with a regional or national focus is suitable if insights or results build understanding of strategic communication in other parts of the world.

### **Submission and Selection Process**

**Abstracts:** Abstracts with proposals for submissions should be no more than three pages, including references (double-spaced with 1” margins, Times New Roman 12 pt.). Abstracts should outline the paper, providing research questions and/or hypotheses, methods, key messages or results, and contribution to the body of knowledge. Please also submit a separate title page to list all author names and affiliations, as well as a short bio (2–3 sentences; max. 75 words) of the author(s). Abstracts and bios should be submitted by March 31, 2023, to guest editors Øyvind Ihlen ([oyvind.ihlen@media.uio.no](mailto:oyvind.ihlen@media.uio.no)) and Winni Johansen ([wj@mgmt.au.dk](mailto:wj@mgmt.au.dk)).

The authors of the abstracts most suited to the topic of the Special Issue will be asked to submit full papers of not more than 32 pages, including references and tables/figures (maximum 8,000 words), by February 28, 2025. Full paper submissions should follow the Instructions for Authors on the IJSC website. Authors must use APA 7 style for citations, references, tables and figures caption. All identifying information must be deleted before full paper submissions.

**Special Issue Manuscript Development Workshop:** To help authors prepare their manuscripts for submission, a special issue paper development workshop will be held on **29. November 2024** at BI Norwegian Business School in Oslo. Authors are invited to present and discuss their working papers during the workshop. Presentation at the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the

manuscript for publication in the International Journal of Strategic Communication and submission of a paper to or participation in the workshop is not a precondition for submission to the special issue. The workshop is sponsored by #NORA – The Nordic Alliance for Communication and Management. #NORA will cover registration/meal costs and up to 500 EUR of travel support for papers accepted for the workshop.

**Upon final submission:** Full papers submitted by the deadline mentioned above will receive blinded external review, as well as review by the guest editors. The accepted manuscripts will be published online in late 2025 and in print in IJSC, Vol. 20(2). Depending on the overall breadth and quality of the selected submissions, the articles might also be published later on as an edited book by Routledge – this was done with some special issues of this journal before and gained more outreach for all authors.

### Timeline

- Deadline for abstract submission: May 31, 2024
- Requests for full papers provided: July 15, 2024
- Paper development workshop (invitation only): November 29, 2024
- Deadline for full article submissions: February 28, 2025
- Reviews of full papers provided: June 30, 2025
- Deadline for revised submissions: September 31, 2025
- Additional revisions (if necessary): subsequently
- Final versions due: December 10, 2025
- Papers and editorial transferred to production: January 15, 2026
- Special issue articles published online-first: subsequently
- Special Issue IJSC 20(2) published in print: March 2026

### About the guest editors

Dr. Øyvind Ihlen is a professor in the Department of Media and Communication and co-director of POLKOM – Centre for the Study of Political Communication at the University of Oslo, Norway. Dr.

Winni Johansen is a professor of corporate communication and crisis management at the Aarhus School of Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University, Denmark.

### About the journal

The *International Journal of Strategic Communication* (IJSC) is one of the top journals published by Routledge (Taylor & Francis) listed since on the Web of Science (Clarivate) since 2023 and a CiteScore (Scopus) of 4.9 (2022). The journal had a record 230,000 downloads of articles in 2022. It has a truly global outreach: almost 3,000 institutions have access through subscriptions to Taylor & Francis Online and more than 1,000 through EBSCO. Its readership is truly international with article downloads spread over Asia (22%), North America (19%), Europe (39%), Africa (10%), and Australasia (8%). The journal is part of a multi-national effort to integrate various communication disciplines into a coherent body of knowledge and facilitate the development of strategic communication as a domain of study. IJSC seeks to define the field of strategic communication, address the application of theory to this emerging field, provide a forum for multidisciplinary approaches and diverse research traditions, and espouse a truly international perspective that gives voice to cross-cultural research and scholars in all regions of the world. To view an online sample, visit [www.tandfonline.com/HSTC](http://www.tandfonline.com/HSTC). The journal is managed by editors Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Leipzig University, Germany & BI Norwegian

Business School, Oslo, Norway; Kelly Page Werder, Ph.D., Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA, and associate editors Dr. Jens Seiffert-Brockmann, WU – Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria; Brian G. Smith, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA.

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