

3 Overarching question – Thesis – Objective

Overarching question

An analysis of reporting on the issue in the German media is intended to answer the overarching question: Can the case study of the "German tax affair and Liechtenstein" be analyzed with the help of the "processes of social framing of issues" model, and can Eichhorn's "process of social framing of issues" model be transferred to transnational communication, i.e. to global or transnational framing of issues?

Is this model – which the author suspects at the outset may, with certain modifications, be applicable – a suitable analytical matrix to decode the tax affair examined by this paper during the investigated time period? Can this model be used to identify the underlying communication processes, the actors, and the various flows of influence? Are issues management and agenda setting as described in the literature and applied in practice also applicable to States? What conclusions can be drawn for Liechtenstein? What should an early-warning system for Liechtenstein pay attention to in the future?

Thesis

In the emerging world society, conflicts between States like the tax debate examined in the present paper will increase. Their treatment will require an ever greater role of professional communication by Government offices in the sense of agenda setting and issues management. Interstate, transnational communication via the media is increasingly becoming "communication within a system", in light of the advancing globalization as well as the "growing together of nations" in Europe within the framework of the European Economic Area, so that increasingly the same rules as for enterprises will apply.

This thesis is rooted in the personal professional experience of the author as well as observations in this field. During her 15 years of work as a professional diplomat for the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1986 – 2001), the author was able to follow the changes in the job description of a diplomat. Because of the rapid development of mass media, the World Wide Web, and Internet technologies over the past approximately 15 years, not only the media world but also the work of diplomats, the diplomatic profession, and communication among States and international organizations have changed profoundly. A striking example of this is the tax debate taking place between the European Union (EU) and Switzerland, in which the diplomatic representatives of the EU use skilled communication in the Swiss media to represent and influence the interests of the EU vis-à-vis actors in Switzerland.

In this context, models developed within the framework of agenda setting – even if they have been created with a view to relationships within a society or within a State, such as the "process of social framing of issues" model developed by Eichhorn – can also be applied to transnational communication. The author suspects at the outset that this is indeed the case – perhaps with certain adjustments to the model relating to the designation of actors – and will examine this hypothesis using the example of the "German tax affair and Liechtenstein".