

The series phenomenon Game of Thrones: When journalists become fans.



Ringier

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Startup nation Israel

World-record holder in founding companies: Why this country is a better Silicon Valley

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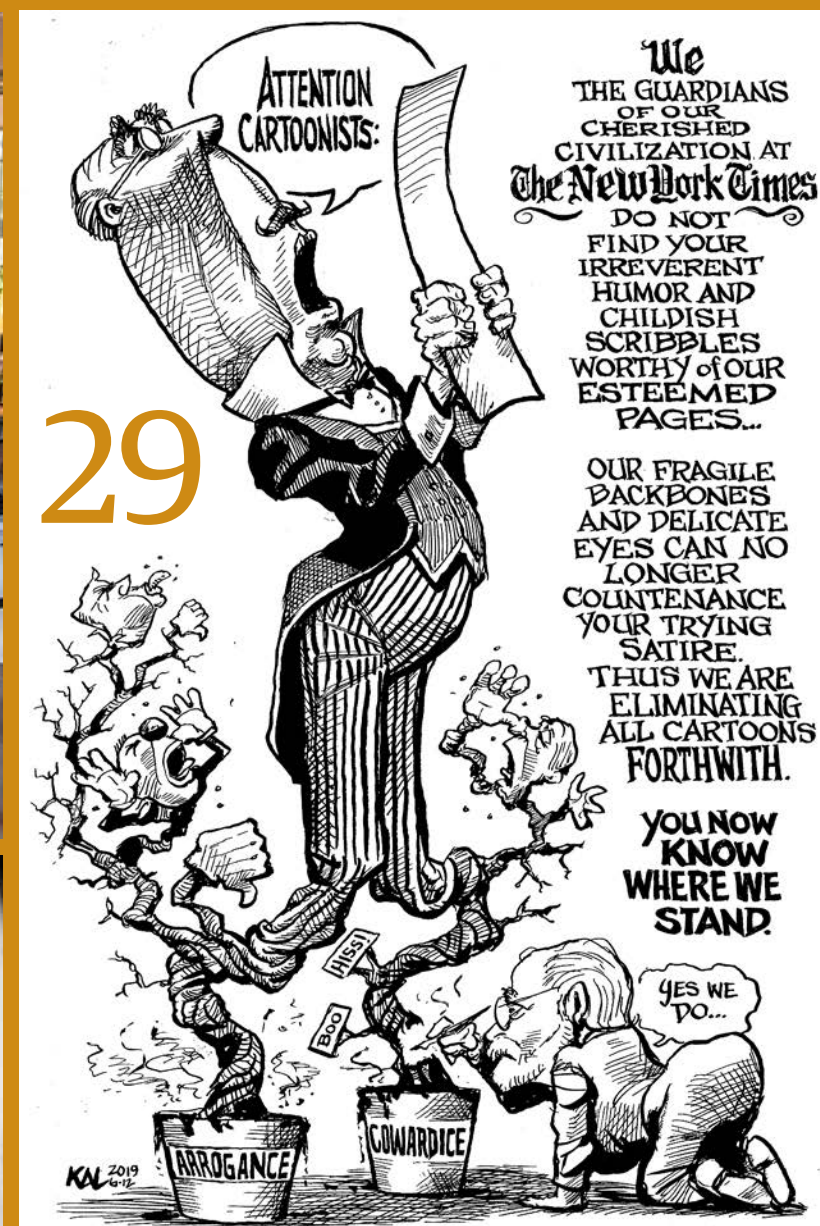
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Record-breaking country

More venture capital is invested in Israel than in Switzerland, Germany and Austria combined. There is hardly any other country in the world that is as successful in terms of startups. What Switzerland can learn from Israel.

Text Marc Kowalsky Photos: Corinna Kern

MAKING THINGS.

Just-do-it mentality. In Jaffa's makerspace «Impact Lab», hundreds of startups implement their ideas, such as developing bones from a 3D printer.

The iron stairs wind steeply down from HaPelech street in Jaffa, a southern suburb of Tel Aviv. In Europe, Jaffa is known for its oranges. In Tel Aviv, Jaffa is known for its startups. Or rather, for the infrastructure it offers them. At the bottom of the stairs, two levels below ground and far from daylight, an 11,000 sq ft. hall opens up. There are rows of 3D printers and sintering machines, there is a counter for power drills and ear protectors, a vending machine for common electronic components is available, even a sewing machine. A chart lists rates: using the laser cutter costs four shekels an hour (about 1.10 dollars), the CNC lathe costs eleven shekels, and so does the 3D scanner. «The idea is to find everything in one place,» says Sefi Attias, who runs this outfit.

Welcome to Impact Labs, Israel's largest makerspace: high-end, high-tech. Hundreds of startups implemented their first ideas here before they could afford their own workshops and laboratories. Dozens of them began their triumphs here. At a large wooden table, a group of students are working on a prosthetic arm, while next to them, young entrepreneurs are tinkering with a drone. They, too, want to make a breakthrough, and they, too, want to become rich and famous someday - with their own company.

No other country in the world is more successful when it comes to startups: there is one new company for every 1,300 inhabitants (in Switzerland there is one for every 5,000). In total, there are 6,500 startups; only the USA numbers more. And every year, 1,500 new startups join them in Israel. Tel Aviv is considered to be the sixth best startup ecosystem in the world and - right behind London - the second best in Europe. Israel currently boasts twelve unicorns, i.e. young companies valued at more than a billion dollars. Switzerland has five. The two countries are comparable in terms of size and population. But in Switzerland, there are few startups and many large companies that would like to be like startups. In Israel, there are many startups and few large companies. In Switzerland, university graduates dream of a career with a major bank, big pharma or a management consultancy. In Israel, even children dream of becoming entrepreneurs.

«It is more lucrative to invest in Israel than in Switzerland because their startups are far more ambi-



Picture at left: Investor Daniel Gutenberg has been investing his money in Israeli companies for 20 years: «The startups here are much more ambitious than in Switzerland.»

Large picture at right: Engineer Sonny Lustov is working on the Harz 3D printer at Impact Labs.

Picture below: Systems engineer Roman Dvorkin simulates a drone delivery in the Flytrex control room. This startup is working on an on-demand drone delivery service.

tious,» says Daniel Gutenberg. «They usually go directly for the global market without bothering with the local market - unlike Swiss startups.» Zurich-born Gutenberg ought to know: He has been an active investor in both countries for over 20 years and was involved in Netscape, Facebook and Mobileye in their early stages. The latter was Israel's most successful company foundation ever: developing cameras and software for self-driving cars was founder Ziv Aviram's vision - in 1999, mind you, when there was no automotive supply industry in Israel to speak of and autonomous cars seemed like a pipe dream. Today, this company from the north of Jerusalem supplies every major car manufacturer with sensor technology, except for Tesla and Daimler, and has - a positive side effect - helped establish an automotive supply industry with 800 companies in Israel. In 2014, Mobileye was listed at the US technology exchange Nasdaq with a valuation of over four billion dollars; two years ago, the company was acquired by Intel for 15 billion dollars. Gutenberg got involved when the company was founded and was able to reap the rewards 17 years later. «It was one of the best deals of my life,» he says.

Now, Gutenberg is banking on Flytrex, a Tel Aviv startup augured to become nothing less than the Uber for drone flights. An online retailer or a pizza service with goods for delivery orders a flight via app, puts the payload into the drone and presses a button, according to their vision. The drone then makes its own way to the recipient - several times faster and more efficiently than a bicycle courier could. A North Carolina shopping center is already experimenting with

Ringier Digital Ventures

With Ringier Digital Ventures AG, Ringier is also investing in start-ups. The focus of the venture capital firm, founded in January 2015, is investing in innovative digital start-ups that can benefit from the extensive media reach and expertise of successful companies within the Ringier network. The focus of Ringier Digital Ventures is investing into innovative digital start-ups, which offer a clear unique selling proposition in the consumer internet space combined with business model innovations.



this technology. «I expect Flytrex to become a unicorn,» says Gutenberg. «The largest drone logistics company after Amazon.»

Gutenberg is one of hundreds of foreign investors in Israel. The venture capital scene there is now the second largest in the world after Silicon Valley, which is why it is also

Young entrepreneur Tal Yemin cleans excess material from a 3D-printed component at Impact Labs.

called «Silicon Wadi». Last year, 6.5 billion dollars in venture capital was invested in 623 companies - more money than in Switzerland, Germany and Austria combined! It all began with a government initiative: Between 1992 and 1997, it provided \$120 million in venture capital and provided attractive conditions to ensure that private investors contributed many times more. The program was a great success and was copied worldwide. This year, 27 years later, Switzerland is launching the Swiss Entrepreneurs Fund, its first government support initiative - albeit at much less attractive conditions for private investors. Israel's tax laws are also startup friendly: stock options as a major wage component are not taxed as income but are only subject to a - significantly lower - capital gains tax if they are exercised.

Of course, in Israel, too, most ►

The world's top startup centers:

1. Silicon Valley
2. New York City
3. London and Beijing
5. Boston
6. Tel Aviv and Los Angeles
22. Lausanne-Berne-Geneva

Source: Ranking Startup Genome

► startups fail. Strictly speaking, 96 percent of them, a similar rate to Switzerland's. But unlike in Switzerland, this is not considered in negative terms, on the contrary. «I'd rather hire someone who has already failed with two companies than someone who hasn't tried yet,» says Ziv Aviram, the man behind Mobileye. This «can do» spirit reflects the Israeli mentality: although its culture has 5,000 years of tradition, the nation itself is only 70 years old and considers itself a startup project. The population is made up of 70 nationalities. In the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of people immigrated from the countries of the former Soviet Union. And while Switzerland has been barring access for foreign talent since its referendum against mass immigration, any foreign entrepreneurs can try their luck in Israel for two years. If they succeed, their work and residence permits are extended. Anyone who starts from scratch in their new home country has nothing to lose and can accordingly take risks as a company founder. The mentality is shaped by the Hebrew «chutzpah» - a certain fearlessness to try something new, a lack of respect for authorities or of casually asking a favor of total strangers. But then, there aren't that many total strangers. Much as in Switzerland, everyone here somehow knows almost everyone else. Israelis are much more direct than Westerners, let alone Asians. Professional relations are very informal; a Swiss would frequently regard such behavior as impertinent. As a foreigner you may have trouble with this mentality. But it is helpful if you want to succeed quickly - or to fail quickly and then try something else.

Add the fact that Israel is surrounded by enemies. This ensures that new technologies are very quickly adopted by the population, to get in touch with the rest of the world. The concentration of smartphones is the highest in the world;

there is a computer in almost every child's room. It also ensures that the army is constantly developing new technologies for self-defense, such as drones, cybersecurity and satellite technology. Because the army releases the technology for civilian use, many soldiers who have accomplished their mandatory period of military service (three years for men, two years for women) start their own businesses, setting up companies with this knowledge. Checkpoint, which is now the world's largest provider of firewalls, was created in this way, as was Waze, which has since been taken over by Google as a provider of navigation systems.

Generally speaking, the army holds the country together to a degree that might have been true of Switzerland until just after World War II. In Israel, 25 years of reserve duty provide a lifelong network of contacts. But first and foremost, a 22-year-old Israeli officer leads 50 to 100 soldiers and is responsible for a dozen vehicles and weaponry worth millions. And unlike Switzerland, they do all this under warlike conditions in sometimes life-threatening situations without the possibility of checking back with their superiors. «The leadership experience you gain in the army is invaluable for business,» says Mobileye founder Avi-

Photos: Corinna Kern, Getty Images



Picture at left: The entrance to Impact Labs, the largest maker-space in Israel. On two floors and 11,000 sq. ft., young entrepreneurs will find everything they need for their work, from milling machines to 3D scanners.

Picture below: British Prince William (r.) alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (m.) and his wife Sara Netanyahu, while Israel's most successful company founder Ziv Aviram presents a pair of talking glasses for the blind.

Picture at right: At the Technion, the Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, an average of one in four graduates found a startup.



ram. A position in an elite troop such as the legendary Tzpiots or the reconnaissance unit 8200 is therefore regarded as a ticket to a managerial career and often counts more than a degree from a renowned university.

Which is not to say that their education system should be underestimated. It consists of eight universities, around 30 colleges, 320 research and development centers and 19 technology incubators. No other country has a higher density of scientists or invests a larger share of its gross national product in research per capita. And above all, no other country translates it into products so consistently. Thanks in part to government aid from the Israel Innovation Authority (IIA), which finances startup projects to the tune of 1.6 billion dollars a year, eight times more than the Swiss counterpart Innosuisse can provide. If the startup is successful - and only then - it will pay back the interest-free loan in small installments, at three percent of its annual turnover. The consequences become apparent, for example, at the Technion in Haifa, in the far north of the country, Israel's counterpart to the ETH, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. Of the 14,000 graduates last year, an average of one in four (co-)founds a startup. At ETH Zurich with its 5,000 graduates, a mere 27 new companies were created as spin-offs last year.

This year, too, some 1,500 new startups will be founded in Israel, and again, a handful of upcoming unicorns will be among them. There is a good chance that one of them is just starting out down in that large hall, two floors below the streets of Jaffa. 🌐



«No multicultural obligation»

Robin Lingg is in charge of marketplaces at Ringier. Previously, this expert on Latin America headed the Asia and Africa business. A conversation about Ethiopian flea markets, steaks for breakfast and wearing sneakers with suits.

Interview: Vinzenz Greiner Photo: Maurice Haas

Good morning, Mr Lingg! What did you have for breakfast today? Bavarian Weisswurst, Mexican huevos rancheros or Nigerian akara?

Robin Lingg: I don't actually have breakfast - except for coffee.

Has your anti-breakfast attitude ever presented a challenge for you in the business world?

It is a bit trying when you're having a sumptuous working breakfast with clients in Mexico. You can easily end up eating about 7800 calories (laughs). But I can also eat a steak in the morning if it's appropriate.

You studied in Passau, Bavaria, lived in Mexico and spent a long time working in Africa. Is that enough to qualify as a «multicultural executive», as you call yourself on LinkedIn?

(laughs) «Multicultural» is an elastic term. To me, it means that you have an interest in and respect for other ways of life and you can get excited about them. I've been lucky enough to see a lot of the world. I like to observe and learn, and I quickly feel at home in different cultures.

That makes almost all of us multicultural. Is there even such a thing as monoculture anymore?

At the end of the day, I am Swiss and European. Because we grow up in a given culture, we come with a particular kind of baggage. But that doesn't mean I wouldn't accept things that I like elsewhere and broaden my horizons.

What is in your Swiss baggage? You

once said in an interview that you were as blunt as possible. Not exactly a typically Swiss trait.

Here we are talking about stereotypes again. Of course, some of them are true - for example, I am extremely punctual. But I think a culture goes beyond cookie-cutter notions like these.

Your wife was born in Germany, you have three children together. How do you live culture in the family?

We do not feel a «multicultural obligation», but we try to set an example in terms of being open. We have an international circle of friends speaking different languages, and language facilitates access to cultures and people. My three children are growing up bilingual with Spanish. Our eldest was born in Mexico, so he is Mexican, and his first words were in Spanish. He should keep that, and we have followed through with it.

The way to culture also leads through the stomach. Rumor has it that you are the Jamie Oliver of Dufourstrasse.

Jamie Oliver is broke, so that's hardly a nice comparison (laughs). But yes: Cooking is my hobby. At home, we cook Mexican, Indian, Asian dishes. In addition to language, eating provides another access to culture - and it's free of tension at that. It's hard to judge food disrespectfully.

You primarily studied the Latin American region, where you lived until 2012. Two years later, you became Ringier's CEO for Africa and Asia. Was

Robin Lingg (39) has been a member of the Ringier AG Group Executive Board since 2014 and heads the International Marketplaces division.

Previously, he was CEO of Ringier Africa and Asia, and Head of Business Development. Lingg studied languages, economics and cultural science at the University of Passau in Germany. Robin Lingg is married to Myriam Lingg; they have three children and live in Zurich.

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it brave or naïve to take on a leadership position in these culturally very different areas?

Ultimately, leadership has to do with people. And people want to be understood and respected and feel that you're honestly interested in them. There is no difference between Mexicans, Vietnamese or Nigerians in this regard. But of course, there are subtleties that need to be taken into account in order to connect.

Do you have an example of such a subtlety?

In Ghana, at the beginning of major meetings or other business events, the highest-ranking person present says a prayer. That's pretty exciting. **How do you prepare yourself when you want to open up a new country for Ringier?**

When you enter a new country on business, you need to have an idea of how their economy and politics are developing and where the risks lie. That means going there and talking to people. Before we invested in any of the countries I opened up, I took three or four trips there, in the case of Myanmar even ten. You have to talk to potential business partners but also to ordinary people, to get a feel for how their culture works and how people think.

What if you simply can't get a feel for the place?

That happened in Cambodia. After two or three trips, I had to admit: This country and our company ►



aren't compatible yet, it's not a good fit. Let's wait another five or ten years.

Compatibility also has to do with economic culture. How do you adjust to that? You can't clinch a deal in Kenya the same way you do in Nigeria.

When I first got off the plane in Lagos, I wanted to go home within ten seconds. It was too much for me back then, too hectic, too loud – simply overwhelming. Eventually, I learned that Nigerians are not just hectic and come across as aggressive, they're also business-driven and more blunt than Ghanaians, who are calmer. Meanwhile, Nigeria has become one of my favorite countries to visit. We have a fantastic team there.

From Myanmar to Senegal to Switzerland, there are almost 100 companies in the Ringier universe. Is there still something like a Ringier culture?

Yes, there's a Ringier DNA. Here's what it's about: How you deal with people and risk, with speed and mistakes. Above all, we believe in allowing a lot of locality – especially when it comes to personnel policy. Of course, there are things you can apply worldwide in terms of technology. We are convinced, however, that you can't measure differing local needs by the same yardstick. There are other companies in our field that take a much more centralistic approach.

Let's talk about error culture. Everybody says we need one like they have in the USA. At Switzerland's biggest bank, everyone is on a first-name basis, including the top management. Just like in Silicon Valley, European CEOs have suddenly taken to wearing sneakers with their suits. Are we all going American?

Not everything that comes out of Silicon Valley is worth copying, but it's not all wrong either. There is a cultural change underway in the world of work: Today, age, gender and hierarchical thinking are fortunately much less important than performance. You now get 30-year-old CEOs, and sneakers is what they wear, not leather shoes. This has nothing to do with Americanization, it's an expression of a change in thought patterns. **Including you, there are three Swiss and two German members on the Group Executive Board. Given Ringier's cultural diversity, wouldn't it also be good thing to have such a diversity in corporate management?**

We are still a Swiss company that



conducts a large part of its business in Switzerland. Because locality is important, it naturally entails that many people in the company are Swiss. At the end of the day, we simply want the best people. Period. **At Ringier, you are in charge of marketplaces – for example, Qefira in Ethiopia. Should you first check out a flea market in Addis Ababa before investing in a company like Qefira?** Absolutely! It's essential to understand how traditional trade works in any given country. And then you have to implement this in the digital world. Certain technological issues that are present may apply across countries. But a Vietnamese expects a completely different user journey on a platform than a Swiss.

In other words: Marketplaces don't work the same way everywhere? I'll give you the example of used cars. In some African countries, they are sold on the street corner on Saturdays. There, the personal relationship between customer and salesman is much more important than in a very structured, formal market like Switzerland. In Kenya, the long-time CEO of the Central

«Yes, there's a Ringier DNA,» says Robin Lingg. In the mid-term he will become the head of the next generation of shareholders.

Bank of Africa recently bought a car from us via a platform. Communication was 100 percent via WhatsApp.

There are already marketplaces for everything – real estate, jobs, electronics ... What's the next big thing in «marketplacing»?

In the future, we will be focusing more on improving the handling of platforms for buyers and sellers by providing new services.

Such as financing products for buying used cars?

Absolutely. Insurance products are also part of it. With jobs, it's matchmaking or digitalizing the assessment process.

What role will technologies such as AR and VR play? Will I be able to walk digitally through advertised apartments?

Sure. But other technologies are also becoming more important. Machine learning, for example, in image recognition. Data analysis and aggregation are becoming indispensable, which is why we have invested in IAZI and are cooperating with Archilyse. We want to make environmental data available on real estate platforms and match it with the lifestyle of our customers. The client buying an apartment should be able to see how much sun the apartment gets, how well it is connected to public transport or where the nearest school is. People will expect these kinds of things in the future. And if we don't meet these expectations, we won't have a good product. **To what extent does Blockchain come into it?**

There are no business-relevant blockchain products as yet. They are conceivable, for example, with relation to notarizing processes in the real estate sector, but that will probably take some time. Our investment in BOTLabs is therefore an investment in a research and development center. We can talk to experts who work with the technology instead of merely reading theoretical papers.

Will Ringier invest more in technologies or in new markets in the future? I'm sure you have your eye on Latin America!

We have invested in Ukraine and are looking at Singapore and the USA. But it's always about very specific companies and their technologies, not about countries. At the end of the day, what matters is staying focused. 🌐

Photo: Getty Images



News on Thrones

«Game of Thrones» is the most successful TV series ever. Not just because of its millions of fans but because media companies also went crazy about this HBO production. To the point where one came close to believing that Westeros was a continent on our globe. Vinzenz Greiner

The 25-page report reads like an ABC of war crimes. Enslavement, hostage-taking, forced displacement, rape, killing of defenseless civilians, torture ... These harsh accusations are solidly backed up with facts: volunteers of the Australian Red Cross collected data for several weeks this past spring and analyzed them together with human rights specialists. The brutal upshot: International humanitarian law had been violated a total of 103 times.

The Washington Post had been investigating the same conflicts for even longer. According to their research, the body count reached 6887 – including farmers and soldiers but also animals such as horses and pigeons. And these are only those deaths that have been witnessed. The number of unreported casualties is many times higher.

The newspaper made this suffering accessible to its readers through multimedia stories crammed with

Queen Elizabeth II marveling at the Iron Throne on the set of Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland. In the background: GoT actors Lena Headey, Conleth Hill and Kit Harington (from left).

illustrations and graphics on the Web. State of the art stuff: A full year before the first version appeared online, the editor in charge had begun researching, designing and programming her presentation.

So, readers can no longer talk their way out of it by saying they didn't know just how bloody this war was. No, it doesn't take place in Yemen, Sudan, or Ukraine but on Westeros and Essos, the two big continents in the HBO series «Game of Thrones». ►

In fact, according to the Australian Red Cross, Ramsay Bolton, a sadistic patricide with a yen for women and bloodhounds, and Daenerys Targaryen, mistress of three dragons, aspiring ruler over all kingdoms and self-proclaimed savior with a Stalinist streak, are by far the most horrific war criminals. The Washington Post concludes that most lives were wiped out by Daenerys's dragon Drogon. In his last attack, he burned an entire city to a crisp.

This penultimate episode of the eighth and last season was seen by about 18.4 million people on its first night. The last GoT episode, in which-spoiler alert! - the Iron Throne, which most kings want to ascend, melts in dragonfire, was watched by more Australians than the semi-final of the 2011 Rugby World Cup that pitted France against Australia's derby opponent New Zealand. A national record! The production costs also reached a record high: HBO, the TV company behind the series, spent up to 15 million US dollars per episode.

On average, each episode of GoT's final season attracted a gross audience of around 44.2 million viewers worldwide. That's as if countries like Argentina or the Ukraine were collectively sitting in front of their televisions. This makes «Game of Thrones» the most commercially successful series of all time. From the Emmys to the Golden Globes and the American Cinema Editors Award, the series has also been showered with countless awards.

No question: «Game of Thrones» is one for the history books. Probably because the series captured the attention of those who also write history: journalists.

At first, the series was only noticed by TV critics and arts editors. And they wrote about it just like any other TV series. But things didn't stay that way.

USA Today analyzed the «economics of mercy» in the series. The Verge asked how moral it was to send dragons into battle and tried making analogies with the deployment of tanks in the First World War. The French daily Le Figaro looked at the 50 most impressive costumes in the series and speculated about the ways in which Jon Snow - a tragically handsome lad with a pet wolf, who stabs his lover Daenerys (who is also his aunt) to death - and his ilk changed the TV industry. On LinkedIn, the focus was on what HR departments might learn from the series. There was



no arts section, whether in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the German weekly Spiegel or in the time-honored Times, that did not discuss GoT in detail.

How did this mania come about? To find out, it's worth taking a look at Washington and New York.

In the Big Apple, TV editor Jeremy Egner has been reporting on «Game of Thrones» since the series launched in 2011. His employer, the New York Times, has made the journalistic newsletter «great again», so a GoT newsletter, as curated by editor Jennifer Vineyard, is indispensable. And it was successful. By 2017, the GoT newsletter has more than 61,000 subscribers. While an industry average of 15 out of 100 newsletters are opened, the New York Times' GoT newsletter sometimes reaches an opening rate of over 100 percent - in other words, subscribers open it several times.

NYT coverage intensifies with each season. Soon, «in-depth analyses» are added to the reviews of the series, as are service articles on the «key episodes» of the various seasons. Then the actors of the series are interviewed, for example on the «cryptic humanity of Melisandre» - a priestess who does not mind resorting to dark magic to fulfill the supposed plan of her fire god. Travel journalists visit locations of «Game of Thrones» for the Times. Vineyard, Egner and three other colleagues finally build a landing page: the «ultimate «Game of Thrones» Guide», including recommendations on which episodes should be watched before the last season.

Global mass phenomenon. People all over the world gathered to watch Game of Thrones together. It is hard to say just how many people really watched GoT. What we do know: illegal streams and downloads exceeded the one billion mark (!) in the seventh season.

The reason for all this is of an economic nature. A New York Times spokeswoman told DOMO at the end of May that reports on «Game of Thrones» were among the most widely read articles on the NYT website in the last six weeks. «Most readers were not subscribers, so the show helped us reach a new audience.»

Reports by their Washington competitor expanded in a similar fashion. On the release of the first season in 2011, the Washington Post TV critic Hank Stuever wrote that «Game of Thrones» could be admired «for its sincerity and clarity of purpose». All in all, however, he thinks the series is basically for nerds. Season two: Introductory analysis at the beginning of the season. Third season: Hank Stuever calls «Game of Thrones» «a masterpiece in the making».

The viewers share his verdict: In the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), the episodes of this season score an average of 9.1 out of 10 possible points. From the fourth season onwards, the paper always provided summaries at the start of each new season «to give readers more of what they want,» David Malitz, deputy Features editor overseeing arts coverage at the Post, told DOMO. Just in time for the fifth season, the Washington Post came up with its big multimedia story keeping track of all the deaths, whose updating required another month's work per season.

Isn't this rather too much effort with respect to events in the fictional world of a series?

For Malitz, «Game of Thrones»

goes beyond ordinary series: «At the end of the third season, we realized that the series had changed from a mere hit to a cultural phenomenon.» Caroline Fux, columnist and sex podcaster at BLICK, describes the series in a similar way: ««Game of Thrones» is a social phenomenon,» says this psychologist. That's why she recorded a sex podcast called «Sex on Thrones» about this series, in which «sex in all its variations is really a fundamental part of the story.»

The more intensely viewers and journalists engaged with the series, the more it diffused through the screens into our pop culture. Westeros became part of our world.

At American universities, departments of history and philology began to offer courses on «Game of Thrones». Nespresso and Soda Stream borrowed events from the series for TV commercials. In Dubrovnik, Croatia, the location for many scenes set in the GoT port city of King's Landing, special city tours were conceived for fans of the series.

At the 2016 White House Correspondents' Dinner, then-US President Barack Obama, after welcoming two Republican senators, said the doors should now be barred immediately. «It's like the Red Wedding.» This is the name for that evening in the series when a wedding party is locked up and slaughtered and the royal house of Stark is butchered to the brink of extinction. The ominous mantra of this royal house, «Winter is coming», has become a catchphrase with a life of its own and made its way into Twitter timelines. US President Trump, for example, sent a warning to Iran in November 2018 by tweeting in «Game of Thrones» script: «Sanctions are coming.» In 2016, the Economist wrote about the succession in the Gulf: «The real game of thrones» was going on in Saudi Arabia.

GoT suddenly stood for Machiavellian power politics, for intrigues and the continuation of diplomacy by other means, as our world knows it, too. Or as Verge editor Jonathan Easton puts it: «A significant amount of the series' success comes from its relevance to real-world events.»

In fact, journalists also reported on GoT-related events in our world. Echo Moskvy wrote, for example, that the Saint Petersburg authorities had confiscated an Iron Throne that fans had set up as a photo subject near the palace square. There were also reports about the Dubrovnik city tours and numerous reaction videos showing



how viewers watching the series in bars reacted to the latest twists in the saga.

Editors writing about fan theories, producing huge features, drawing parallels with international politics - isn't all that going too far?

«Yes, it is,» says Amanda Lotz, who published an analysis of how «Game of Thrones» became TV's first global blockbuster. Sure: «Many editors are chasing clicks and readership,» this Professor of Media Studies at the University of Michigan explains. «My concern about the coverage is the degree to which this very coverage has made GoT a bigger phenomenon, at the expense of very good pieces of TV culture that may not be so well-known.»

Lotz gives the example of the finale of the series «The Big Bang Theory», whose audience was not much smaller than that of GoT. «An equally meaningful moment, which received less attention,» says Lotz.

So, did journalists make «Game of Thrones» bigger than it is? According to Lotz, the series was «a cult hit, catering especially to the taste of arts journalists and critics.»

Scoffers like to say that sports journalists are often just fans who made it across the barrier. Does the same apply to GoT? Have fans been writing puff pieces on their favorite series? After all, the NYT editors describe their ultimate guide as an «obsessive compendium».

Not a soccer final but a series finale: In Moscow, thousands watched the last episode of Game of Thrones in the RZD Arena, the home pitch of the Lokomotiv Moscow soccer team.

What Washington Post arts editor David Malitz describes to DOMO seems to bear that out. For the final season, more «passionate editors» were added to the team covering GoT.

The GoT coverage was so extensive because the series combined the following elements, Malitz explains: «Massive ratings, intense interest plus a rich range of storylines, characters and theories.» And these are exactly the factors that basically decide how many resources are allocated to reporting.

Did the storylines Malitz is talking about get the editors hooked? That wouldn't be surprising. «Game of Thrones» is crammed with stories that many journalists are hungry for: political intrigues, ideally paired with sex scandals, tangled family relationships and complex allegiances. And that's exactly the stuff that the books on which the TV series is based are made of.

The saga «A Song of Ice and Fire» was written by the author George R. R. Martin, voted one of the 100 most influential personalities by Time magazine in 2011 and now a multimillionaire. He knows only too well what stories journalists get excited about. He himself had studied journalism. And he later taught journalism at Clarke College in Dubuque on the Mississippi.

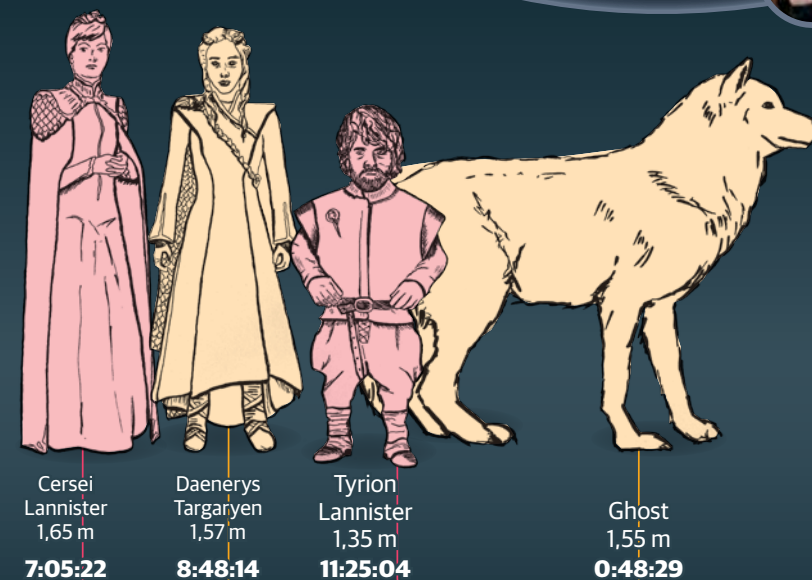
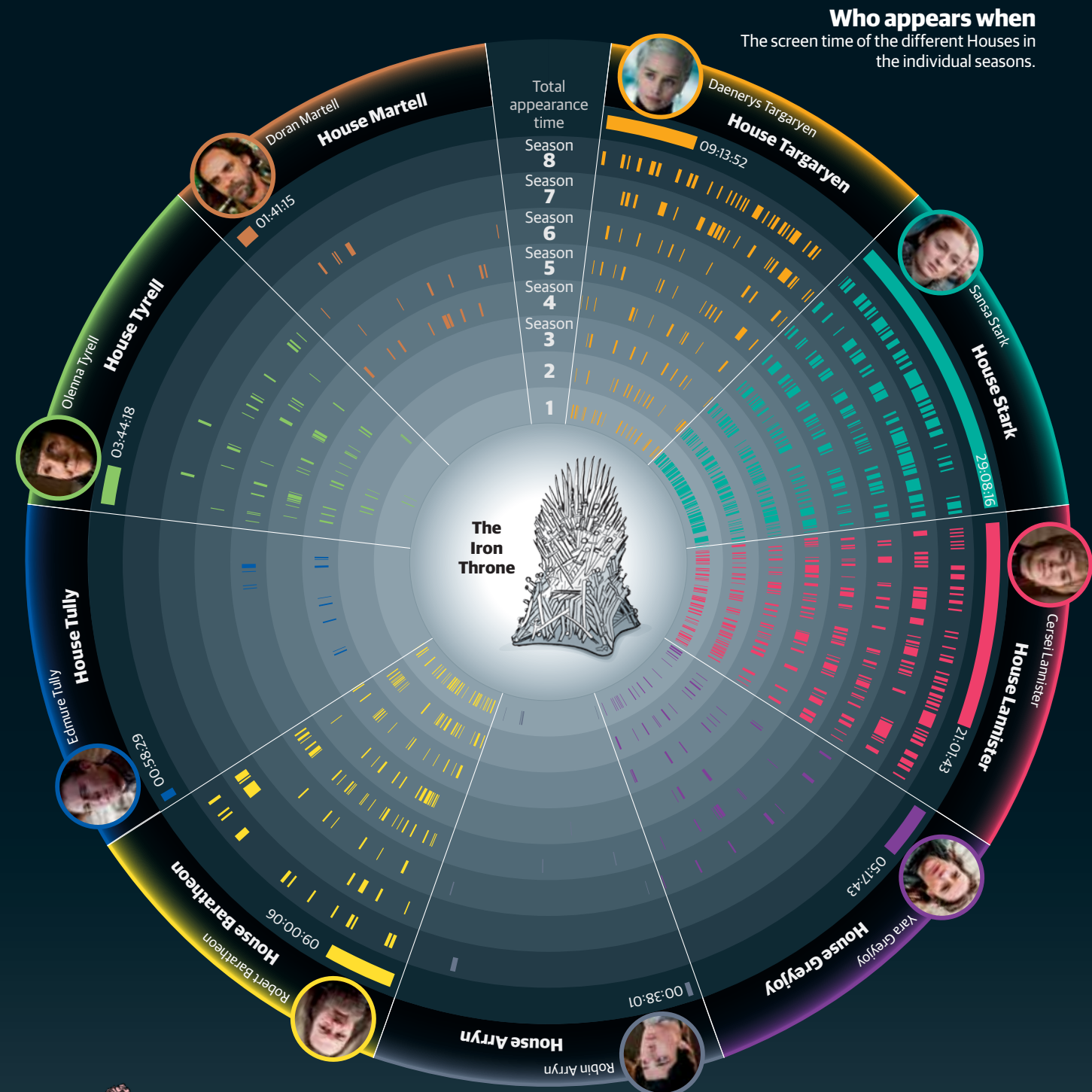
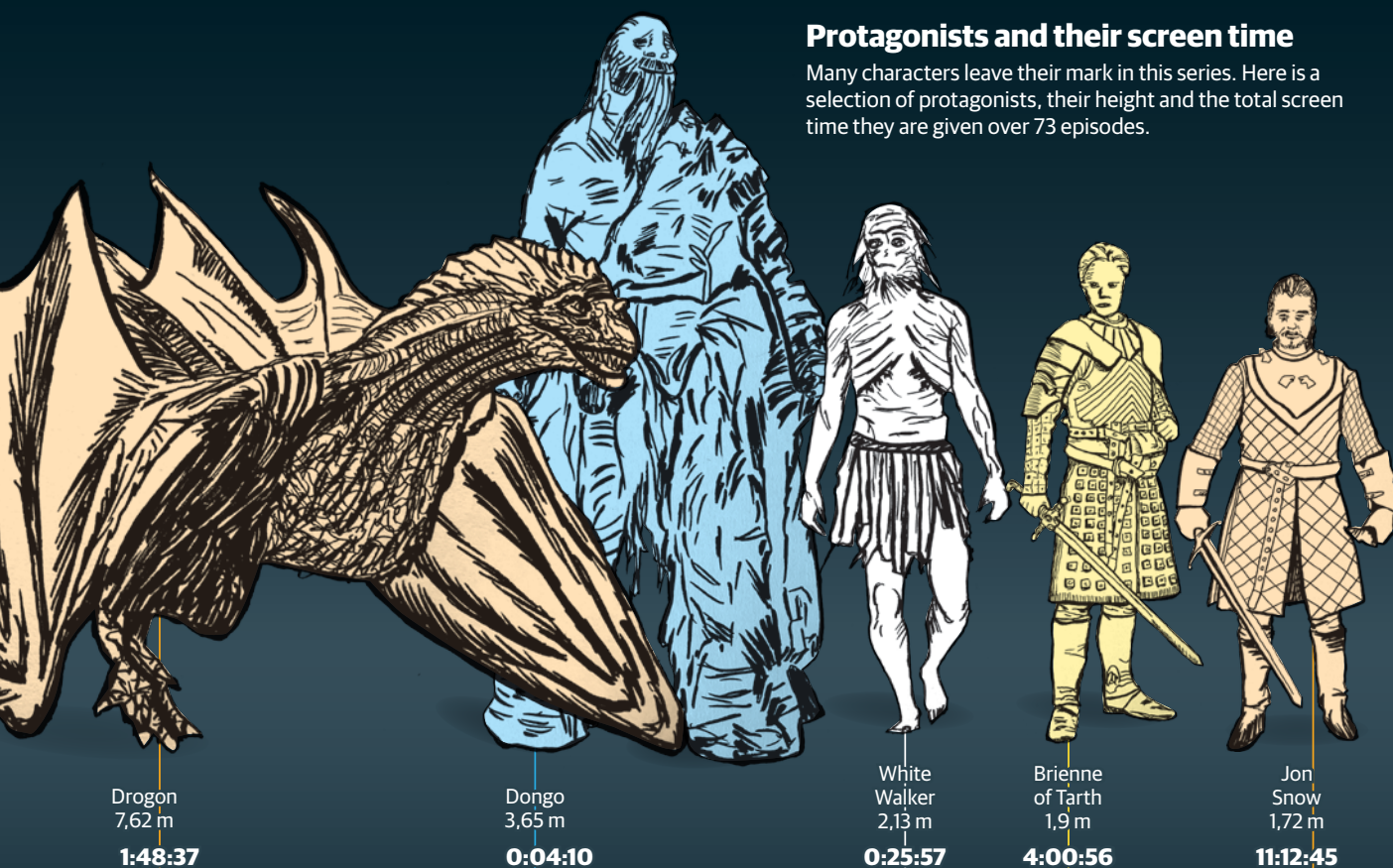
«Game of Thrones» and journalism - they have always been closely related. 🌐

GAME OF THRONES™

If you want to see every episode of Game of Thrones in one go, you'll need to spend 70 hours and 30 minutes in front of your screen. That's the total running time of the 73 episodes in the HBO cult series. A temporal analysis of the struggle for power and the Iron Throne.

Protagonists and their screen time

Many characters leave their mark in this series. Here is a selection of protagonists, their height and the total screen time they are given over 73 episodes.



Man's world

If you count the words spoken in the dialog, the women don't have (as) much say.

Men's words	71%	Women's words	29%
214 320		87 770	

Infographic & Illustration: Priska Wallimann
Sources: Dataset from Jeffrey Lancaster on Github, HBO, Pictures: HBO

Faith food, not fast food: At Storymachine, employees take a pew (bought on eBay) to have lunch. Each prepares his or her own meal, but once a week they order in a menu of their choice for a team lunch and the bosses fork out the money.

The ghostwriters of Storymachine

It is shrouded in mystery and the stuff of legends: Storymachine! This start-up created by former «Bild» editor-in-chief Kai Diekmann, Philipp Jessen and Michael Mronz in 2018 has grown very quickly and already numbers 55 employees. «Totally crazy!» as even the amazed new entrepreneur Diekmann puts it.

Text: René Haenig Photos: Markus Tedeskino

Berlin-Kreuzberg, Tempelhofer Ufer 17. A reddish-brown brick building from 1898. Once upon a time, rubber goods were produced here. Nowadays, behind a thick black steel door on the second floor, experienced journalists, young social media experts and seasoned data analysts are the ones that are delivering the goods. A yellow squeaky duck and a grass-green Frog Prince floating in an artificial puddle of acrylic resin on the floor in the lobby are the only rubber items to be found in the stylish Storymachine offices.

Philipp Jessen, 41, the former head of stern.de, the online version of the German weekly Stern, is one of three Storymachine founders and CEOs. He sits in his office in front of a wide curved monitor. Behind him on the wall is a huge picture of Kai Diekmann, 55, sitting cross-legged on the floor of his old, gutted office at the tabloid Bild on the 16th floor of the Springer skyscraper. «Almost dadaist,» says Jessen, who wanted Diekmann's picture for the agency. «Kai tells everyone that this way he can keep tabs on everything - even when he's not in the house.»

A few days earlier, Jessen had met with Angela Merkel. As part of the party leadership's closed meeting to analyze the European elections, he gave a lecture on digital communication in the presence of the Chancellor and party leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. «Die Welt» subsequently wrote that the Chancellor had been duly impressed by his presentation. And the media service turi2.de reported that the CDU party had hired Jessen and his team «to explain that Internet stuff». Even «off the record», Jessen refuses to talk about the CDU. Discretion is a top priority at Storymachine. Never mind that it costs them opportunities for self-promotion.

There is a simple reason for this secrecy, especially when it comes to their clients. «We consider ourselves ghostwriters,» Diekmann says, putting it in a nutshell. Nobody expects Merkel herself to have written her own recent speech at Harvard that earned her standing ovations. In cases like these, writers inevitably take a back seat to their clients. «That's how we hold it with our customers. We make them appear authentic instead of imposing something on them.» Or as Jessen puts it: «We want to put the brands and people we communicate for front and center. So, it's not about us.»



«Basically, our business model is Trump. He no longer needs traditional media.»

Kai Diekmann, Storymachine co-founder

«Basically, our business model is Donald Trump,» says Diekmann. Since taking office, the US President has shown the world that he doesn't need traditional media to communicate with his audience. «Trump doesn't care what the New York Times or CNN on either side of him say. He has more followers on Twitter than the biggest media in the country have on that channel.»

Storymachine, the founders say, helps brands, companies or individuals become their own publishers to

build and reach a perfectly defined as well as substantial, high-quality audience. To do this, the agency's representatives meet with potential customers to develop new ideas together. Jessen: «We want to tell genuine and lasting stories.»

In order to illustrate how Storymachine works, Diekmann cites the example of a large company operating in Africa, among other places: «First, we asked the client what stories they had to tell. At some point, we heard that their local female COO

was born in Africa, had studied abroad, come home and was now running the African branch, at the top of the organization, as a single parent. What a story! In the past, a journalist would have shadowed the woman for weeks and then published a three-page report in the weekly Der Spiegel,» says Diekmann. Storymachine told the story on behalf of the client on that company's Instagram account - over a period of three months.

Large corporations such as Alli-



Three of the four brains behind Storymachine: CEO Philipp Jessen (at left), CIO Nora Beckershaus and Kai Diekmann. Diekmann's wife Katja Kessler found the sofa at a flea market and other items on eBay and at Ikea. «For years, she's been fixing up old houses, so she furnished our offices.» Small picture at right: In the lobby, staff and visitors are welcomed by a rubber duck and a Frog Prince in a puddle of acrylic resin.

anz, Vodafone and Deutsche Bahn call on the services of the Berlin start-up. This is only public knowledge because the companies chose to communicate Storymachine's involvement. «We would never reveal a client's name,» says Nora Beckershaus, 32, unequivocally. Having helped build Storymachine as Chief Innovation Officer right off the bat, she recently gave a lecture in Zurich, where a client subsequently gave herself away by using the all too familiar phrase, «As Nora already said ...».

Beckershaus' office is next to Jessen's. They are separated by a glass pane. These two are the only ones with personal space at Storymachine. And when they're not in, their offices are open to any of the 55 employees. Beckershaus' office feels more like a living room: comfortable armchairs in front of a fake fireplace with lavish floral arrangements. On the floor is a baby mobile adorned with a crocheted Storymachine «Like» button, a rocket and a rainbow - a gift from her female colleagues for the impending birth of her first daughter in September. Instead of sitting at a bulky desk, the 32-year- ▶



old works at a small Ikea table. She only uses the screen on it to create Excel spreadsheets. «Otherwise I work exclusively on my mobile phone.»

Before Beckershaus joined Storymachine's founding trio in January 2018, she established the German branch of the US lifestyle portal Refinery29 as managing director, worked in the innovation department at Axel Springer, ghostwrote texts for Diekmann's wife Katja Kessler's blog, worked for the youth magazine Bravo when Philipp Jessen was editor-in-chief there, and was personal assistant to Patricia Riegel, the former boss of the weekly Bunte. She dropped out of law school to pursue a career in the media. «What I really am is a storyteller.» And she can tell stories on paper as well as on all social media channels, data-optimized or in any other scaled manner.

At the moment, however, her main job is something else: finding and hiring capable people. «Not an easy thing,» she admits. In addition to technical skills, she is particularly interested in soft skills when hiring new staff: Is this person flexible? Will he or she get involved? Will they go the extra mile, fearlessly try out new

things, maybe jump in at the deep end once in a while? And even more importantly: Will this person, even if he or she fails, get back up and tackle the task again?

On the wall of the open-plan office, a faux white-grey marble stone tablet lists Storymachine's «10 Commandments». From item 1 - «We believe in the power of stories» - to item 10 - «We always help each other, we don't belittle anyone to make ourselves look big» - it's really the final P.S. that stands out: STRICTLY NO ASS-HOLES. «We want people who meet each other on equal terms, regardless of age, ability and experience,» Beckershaus puts it somewhat less drastically. The fact that employees are lolling on sofas or antique bedsteads with their laptops or smartphones is part of the plan and not a sign that people are just here to chill.

The Berlin start-up originated in a Cologne pizzeria on 30 August 2017. The restaurant was where Michael Mronz, 52, life partner of former German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Guido Westerwelle, who died of cancer in 2016, used to temp during his business administration studies. That evening, Diekmann,



Kai Diekmann does not have his own office. At least his image can keep tabs on things from Philip Jessen's CEO's office.

Jessen and Mronz, whom everyone calls Micky, were putting their heads together to come up with a name for their future company. It was Jessen who suddenly called out «Storymachine», to improve on «Content-Machine», which had sounded too anti-septic to them. Still sitting at the

dining table, the trio secured the name rights on the Internet. In January 2018, Storymachine was born in a Berlin shared work space. After only four months, the exploding start-up moved into the Tempelhofer Ufer rooms.

A sheltered corporate child turned independent entrepreneur, Diekmann, who does not have his own office at Storymachine and is in charge of strategic orientation, is in the kitchen, caught up in a discussion with about a dozen employees who have taken a seat for lunch on a former church pew bought at auction on Ebay. «I don't think this plastic tableware belongs in the trash...» In the kitchen, everyone can prepare his or her own menu, and once a week, food that's chosen by the employees and paid for by the bosses is ordered in for a team lunch.

Diekmann has visibly lost weight. The former boss of the tabloid Bild feels comfortable in his new role as an employer, but he is also aware of his responsibility. «When I first heard what we were paying in rent here, I was so scared I almost fainted,» he says. Micky Mronz, who is in charge of finances at Storymachine, reassured him by saying: «Don't think

We only employ people who are capable of teamwork.»

Philipp Jessen, CEO Storymachine

about today, think about tomorrow!» Now, Diekmann is mostly unafraid even to look at the payroll for their 55 employees. «But I'm still kind of in awe, especially of our rapid growth.» He is happy to have Mronz on board as a partner «who is the only one of us to have a college degree and who even has a head for figures.» Mronz has founded several successful companies.

As far as Storymachine's growth is concerned, the founders have begun to put the brakes on. In addition to the German customers beating a path to their door, companies and individuals from Austria and Switzerland have also come knocking.

Another limit that is fast approaching is Diekmann's account of points for traffic violations as filed by the Flensburg Driver and Vehicle Register. In his days as boss of Bild,

Top left: Diekmann talking to customers. «We are not your typical start-up that has to go knocking on doors. In most cases, it's the customers who approach us.»

Top right: Seeing the forest for the trees - In Storymachine's open-plan office, one hundred birch-tree trunks create a woodsy atmosphere. The couch is there for brainstorming.

he rode in the back of the fat, chauffeured Mercedes limousine that took him from his home in Potsdam to his Berlin office for many years. Upon his departure from Springer, the new entrepreneur suddenly found himself at the wheel of his big car, and within a matter of days knocked off its side mirror in the underground parking lot twice. «That's when I bought a Mini.» Now, all he has to do is kick the habit of phoning while driving and ease off on the accelerator.

It's enough that Storymachine has put the pedal to the metal. 🌐

What does 62W+52L actually do?

Three examples of how the Ringier Group's corporate strategy and management principles are put into practice in different areas.

Text and Interview: Alejandro Velert

Human Resources Ringier AG - «Feed-back»

Hannah Zaunmüller, as Head of HR, how do you rate the feedback culture at Ringier?

It's good. At Ringier we promote a feedback culture as a matter of principle. I'm sure some areas are better at this than others. The trick is to give constructive feedback.

Why do you support an open feedback culture?

Feedback plays an important role within the framework of our 52L management principles. And quite rightly so. An open feedback culture is essential to the further development of all employees and to improving the company's performance. Feedback strengthens mutual understanding and builds trust.

If someone criticizes their boss, do they have to be afraid of a backlash?

Not if they give constructive feedback. The boss also depends on feedback in order to develop further – especially in today's complex environment.

Giving feedback can build trust – or destroy it. How do you give feedback properly?

If you approach the other party respectfully, honestly and with a solution-oriented attitude, you're almost there. If something bothers you, react spontaneously or soon after rather than waiting four weeks. You should also focus on the optimal employment of your workmates' strengths.

Ringier Axel Springer Switzerland - «Change Team»

«Of course you can set a lot of things in motion if you get involved,» says Corinne Strelbel, advisor and editor at Beobachter magazine. She is one of five members of the «Change Team» for German-speaking Switzerland at RASCH; the team for the country's French-speaking part is made up of four people. The two Change Teams emerged from a workshop that dealt with the partly disappointing results of a RASCH employee survey. The effort that the Change Team has put in since then has been considerable. «Over the past eight months, we have met every week and worked intensely,» says Annina Krähenbühl, HR manager at RASCH in Zurich. Their work was based on the corporate strategy 62W+52L. One of the project's major upsides, according to Rostislav Zotin, Business Engineer at RASCH in Zurich, is: «It's a bottom-up approach and the support from the company's management has been great.»

One particular shortcoming identified by the Change Team: identification with the company. «Most of the 400 employees feel they are devoted to their product, but not to the big picture,» says Otto Hostettler, a journalist with the Beobachter. The first step, however, was to introduce the Change Team to the employees. And so, last December, the Change Team put a glass of honey and a Christmas card on each employee's desk. On the card, the RASCH vision, which had been developed in a workshop attended by 27 employees, was presented for the first time. This was

only the kick-off for a whole range of activities. Since then, a kind of Rubik's Cube has been used to familiarize employees with 52L, another initiative was the launch of a big summer party. The RASCH Roadshow was a great success: Each member of the Change Team organized an event to familiarize their colleagues with the five management principles and to introduce the various departments in a relaxed atmosphere. «Some colleagues had reservations. They thought this was just tokenism,» says Marketing Manager Anne Kugel, also a member of the Change Team. «But we took up the challenge and tried to make a real impact.»

Customer Service Center Zofingen and Lausanne

To the employees of the Customer Service Center (CSC), the 62W+52L corporate strategy was initially a distant, abstract message hailing from remote Zurich, says Florence Lavanchy. She is Head CSC in Zofingen and Lausanne. «Soon, however, the employees realized that this would change and improve their day-to-day work and that it would help them advance as employees and as a team.»

The CSC handles about 500,000 customer contacts per year. Few are closer to the readers of Blick, Beobachter or Glückspost. «If someone wants to cancel their magazine subscription, for example, it is our job to prevent this. And we do succeed in stopping one in three cancellations over the entire range of titles.»

Lavanchy and her team are deeply

engaged with 62W+52L. For every single piece of the 62W puzzle they deduced what it entailed for the CSC. With the following results: Concrete focus fields and action steps have been defined for each strategy field. In addition, a roadmap specifies which project must be implemented by when. «We can develop much further, in systemic, processual and professional terms. The strategy gives us the direction and the basis for our work,» adds Lavanchy. The discussion of 52L was no less intense. Here, too, they defined point by point what the leadership principles mean

and how they are to be implemented and applied.

Improved communication and commitment, a clear idea of «Where are we heading?» or more responsibility for employees: Everyone at the CSC benefited in some way or other from the discussion of corporate strategy. And that should continue, says Lavanchy. «A process like this only works if the employees see the benefit and the

point of the whole thing for themselves, the team and the company.» So far, this seems to have worked well. Lavanchy adds: «Everyone needs to be willing to keep on investing in this process and the people.»

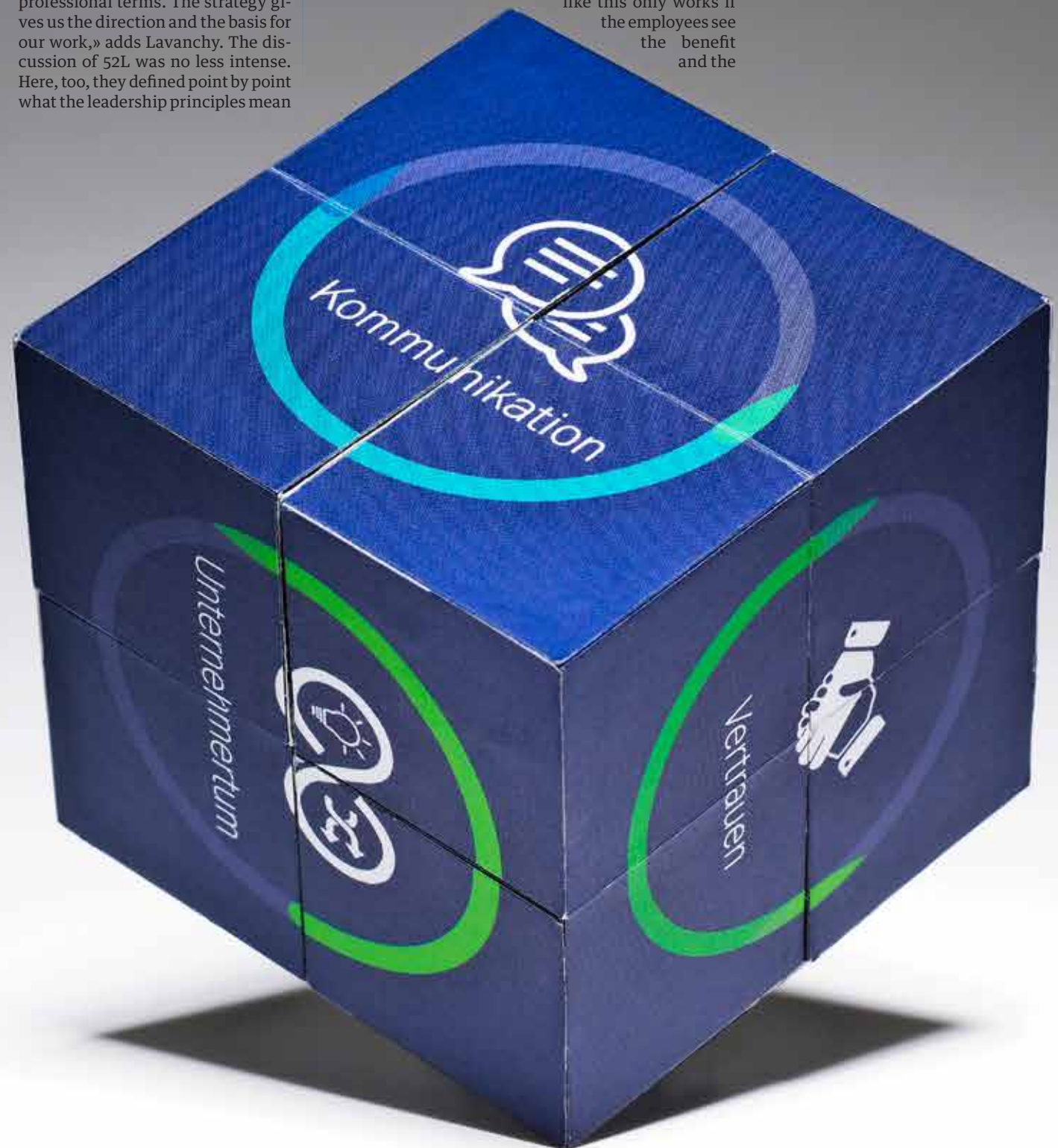


Photo: Paul Seewer

«Fair fares!»

Michel Jeanneret's week zips along like a (cheap) flight. At least the editor-in-chief of L'illustré finds inspiration in Poland. The next item on his agenda: revolution.



MONDAY

We are sending the cover of the new issue of L'illustré to the printers. My deputy Caroline Zingg (r.), my art director Julye Body, and I work on the details down to the wire. A magazine is a synthesis of the arts requiring high-quality raw materials and impeccable workmanship. And the cover is basically the magazine's shop window, reflecting the efforts of a team that wants to produce the best magazine in French-speaking Switzerland.



TUESDAY

Sixty-three Swiss francs for my round trip Geneva-Warsaw? That is hardly a fair fare! We'll have to rethink several business models if we want to save the planet. And I'm going to Poland to discuss - of all things - business models... for print, with my colleagues at RASCH, and I return with a lot of ideas as well as a new favorite restaurant: Atelier Amaro is fantastic, and so is Polish wine!

WEDNESDAY

In many of our editorial meetings, we argue and sometimes we fight - and I love these moments because a magazine is about original points of view, about the way you look at the world. I believe in lively discourse in both my private as well as my professional life. It is my firm conviction that editorial meetings without heat and zest will only produce stale fare.



THURSDAY

I am also in charge of the French-speaking edition of the GaultMillau Channel. The Romandy version of this small, ultra-dynamic platform is the result of the hard work of two (!) people: Knut Schwander and Anysia Pillet. Today, we're tasting the wines for the Montreux Jazz Festival at the request of our sponsor, the Office des vins vaudois. I admit: There are worse jobs in life. ©



FRIDAY

«Be bold!» That's what they tell us. Message received. We are working on the R-E-V-O-L-U-T-I-O-N of L'illustré. I am convinced that print is far from the end of its road. My evidence: Even Instagrammers want to appear in print products! In October, L'illustré will launch a completely new look. We'll also be targeting a younger audience.

SATURDAY

Looking at my four children (three digital addicts and a superhero), I wonder what is harder: digitizing a magazine or dragging your four kids back into the real world. What I know for certain is that the future will happen in both worlds - print and digital.



Michel Jeanneret,
editor-in-chief
of L'illustré





Michael Ringier, publisher

Only the best intentions

Page, the founder of Google, have any materialistic objectives in mind: «If we were motivated by money, we would have sold the company a long time ago and ended up on a beach.» And that Mark Zuckerberg is the ultimate do-gooder is something he has been trying to impart to us again and again: «We don't build services to make money; we make money to build better services.»

All these selflessly dulcet tones from Silicon Valley make me think of the motto of the English Order of the Garter: «Honi soit qui mal y pense» - «Shame on him who thinks ill of it». But this is how American communication works, and after all, these three entrepreneurs have built global market leaders, and every one of you, avid readers of this column, has heard their names many times before.

But are you also familiar with Mr. Rossum and his company R.U.R.? If not, I urge you to dip into Czech literature. The play «R.U.R.» by Czech writer and journalist Karel Čapek was premiered some 100 years ago in Prague and very quickly found its way onto many stages in Europe. The company Rossum's Universal Robots set itself the goal of equipping the world with manpower in the form of automatic, biochemically produced humanoid machines. The cheap robots were supposed to free people so they would «no longer have to waste their souls on drudgery» and to create prosperity for all by means of

abundantly produced goods. So, R.U.R. wanted - much like Silicon Valley - only to do good.

However, it all came to nothing, because the author introduced a lady named Helena, a representative of the League of Humanity. She convinced a scientist to implant human feelings into some robots. With fatal results. The machines suddenly became capable of learning, founded a mass organization, protested against their exploitation and ended up killing people. Still, there is kind of a happy ending: Two robots fall in love, and because they develop human feelings, life on earth will go on.

The message, however, was clear: If you give free rein to technology, you will perish with it. An English edition of Čapek's drama exists but is currently not available from Amazon. A Chinese translation probably still isn't in the works.

Michael Ringier

Photo: Maurice Haas

«There's an outrage boiling in me»

The «New York Times» decided to end its political cartoons. For renowned cartoonist Kevin «KAL» Kallaugher it's an act of cowardice.

Interview: Adrian Meyer

The New York Times decided to end its political cartoons following outrage over an antisemitic caricature of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Does this worry you?

It worries me a lot. Political cartoons have been under siege largely due to economics. I can half understand why newspapers are laying off editors and cartoonists because of financial pressure. But this is a different case altogether.

In a statement on Facebook you said: «This is a story steeped in arrogance and cowardice.»

The Times is doing very well financially. This is an editorial decision that says cartoonists are not worthy of a quality newspaper, they're too low-brow. As a cartoonist, I laugh at the face of that! It's an affront to satire, to cartoonists, journalists and readers.

What is the NYT afraid of?

Cartoons have the power to provoke thoughts and ideas. But they can also provoke anger. They've always been controversial. It takes a mature editorial board to understand that a given take a cartoon can bring into a conversation is valuable. Cartoons engage so many people. It takes just a few seconds to understand them. They can be understood through cultural barriers and across nations. But for a newspaper, it takes a lot of work! You have to constantly stand up for the sharp elbows that a cartoon sometimes employs. And the NYT doesn't seem to want to invest in that work.

Have political cartoons become too risky for these times of outrage and poisoned political discourse?

This decision is symbolic for a bigger story. Because the NYT is considered the world's best newspaper, even small decisions they make speak to all of journalism. So, they have a certain responsibility to also make room for visual satire. And they just don't want to take that anymore. Satire, for them, has become too hot to handle. It's one thing to say we are going to be more careful with our cartoons and apologize for our

mistake. It's another to say we're just not going to bother anymore. It's a ban on this kind of journalism.

What do we lose if we lose political cartoons?

For so many, a cartoon is the pinnacle of freedom of expression. You can take on the most powerful people, draw their faces, abuse their faces and speak the truth. In a bold and frank way that anybody can understand. And in a fashion that cannot be replicated in words. Many countries around the world can't do that. For me, to see that we just take it for granted in the West and toss it into the bin, is an insult. It's an insult to journalism and democracy.

Are you afraid that you too soon won't find an outlet?

I'm not; knock on wood. But I know some colleagues who are soon losing their jobs. It's hard.

In your last interview with DOMO you said, it's your most important time as a political cartoonist. Do you feel that's true now more than ever?

Yes, everyday! Everyday, oh my God! Everyday there's a constant outrage boiling in me. These are truly the times for cartoonists.



Photo: Peter Lueders

American cartoonist Kevin Kallaugher has been drawing cartoons for «The Economist» for 40 years.

Manager in mountain boots

Hiking and climbing are her passion. Natascha Knecht is the new editor-in-chief of BergLiebe. Despite the fact that she used to have a hard time proving herself as a woman in the macho world of mountaineering. «Some men had a lot of trouble accepting me.»

Photos: Bernard van Dierendonck, Dani Arnold, Thomas Senf

The A-, B- and C-list celebrities of Switzerland are not the world of Natascha Knecht, 49. Nevertheless, 15 years ago she applied to Schweizer Illustrierte as head of text. After a brief interview with then-SI boss Marc Walder, she was immediately hired. And SI journalists soon realized: Don't bother showing up in Knecht's office with mediocre text. Because she knew her trade, having written for local papers like Brienzer and Hasli-Zeitung, where she rose from intern to editor-in-chief; she worked for the (then) prestigious weekly Weltwoche and the daily Tages-Anzeiger. «My distance to the celebrity scene proved an advantage at SI. I was critical, wanted to know everything in detail.»

She shared her job as head of text with her colleague Jan Morgenthaler. She would work for three months, then take three months off. Knecht grew up in the Bernese Oberland, where she began to climb rocks and mountains. «I spent a lot of time with the geeks and gradually got into that scene.» But, being a woman, she had to prove herself in order to fit in. «Some men had a lot of trouble with that.»

The hobby turned into a business model: Natascha Knecht founded the Outdoor Blog at tagesanzeiger.ch, hiked and wrote for LandLiebe, wrote hiking and mountaineering books and spent three years as a columnist at SI. She is now regarded as one of the most renowned female writers on mountaineering in the German-speaking world. Even Spiegel Online relies on her.

Knecht's favorite activity on the mountain: icefall climbing. Her greatest remaining alpine challenge: the north face of the Eiger. «In 2017, I spent the whole year training for it. But circumstances didn't allow me to climb all the way.»

It will be a while before she finds time for another attempt. Since April, Natascha Knecht has been the editor-in-chief of BergLiebe magazine. There, she wants to focus on the beauty and the people of the mountains. At the same time, she will not make room for extreme achievements in mountaineering. «I don't want to support this trend. This year alone, I've had to delete three phone numbers of pals who had fallen to their deaths.» AV



Natascha Knecht goes hiking and climbing in the Swiss mountains for her books and various magazines; she has already climbed 52 peaks above 13,000 ft., often in the company of celebrities like Philipp Hildebrand, former President of the Swiss National Bank (bottom left). Knecht has not (or not yet) conquered the north face of the Eiger (below right).



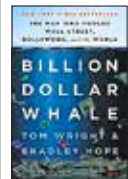
Editor's Choice

by Marc Walder

Ringier CEO Marc Walder tells you which books he is reading and why they fascinate him.

Bradley Hope and Tom Wright

BILLION DOLLAR WHALE



American casino and club operators have a name for particularly generous guests, they are called whales. Jho Low, a Malaysian, was the biggest whale Las Vegas, New York or Saint-Tropez had ever seen. Low cultivated the image of an immensely wealthy financial investor. He financed the movie «The Wolf of Wall Street», bought art worth more than a quarter of a billion US dollars at auctions – and owned an equally expensive yacht. The only catch: This gifted networker did not celebrate his billionaire life style with his own money but with that of the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB. In the meantime, Low has gone underground and is on the run from the law. «Billion Dollar Whale» is a fascinating book about intrigue, financial crimes, decadence and five billion dollars (!) that went missing. Both the «Financial Times» and «Fortune» quite equitably voted this the best book of 2018.

Paul Scharre

ARMY OF NONE



The debate about autonomous weapons systems is in full swing. What happens if we entrust life-and-death decisions to artificial intelligence? This is the question arms expert Paul Scharre explores. His book is based on conversations with military men, ethicists, psychologists and activists and very vividly conveys his knowledge of military history, politics and cutting-edge science. Scharre, formerly a defense expert at the Pentagon, concludes that technology must be used where it makes war more precise, thereby preventing casualties. But he warns against the fact that AI developers leave the question of how the software is to be used in military technology up to the generals.

„Gut zu wissen, wie einfach Rechtsberatung sein kann.“

Daniela A., Guider-Kundin



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