



The 3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES



COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS IN TIMES OF DISINFORMATION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT BOOK



DEPARTAMENTI
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Albanian
Media
Institute

**The 3rd International Conference on Communication and Media
Studies “Communication and Media Developments in Times of
Disinformation and Global Challenges”**

Book of Abstracts

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ABOUT ICCMS

The ICCMS 2022: The 3rd International Conference on “Communication and media developments in times of disinformation and global challenges”, will explore the global challenges of communication, in this era. It will explore the roots of the disinformation, the threats posed by new technological advances, the propaganda and manipulation in political communication, the transformation of mainstream media, as well as the marketing tools and policies required to offer a solution.

The conference aims to bring together leading academic members, researchers, journalists, communication and media experts, information and media professionals, to share their experiences and research results about issues related to disinformation. This conference also provides an interdisciplinary forum for researchers, to present and discuss their concerns and challenges encountered, along with the solutions adopted about disinformation.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, communications professionals have had to face with countless challenges. Whether its remote working practices, ongoing in-person working, furloughed staff or redundancies, internal communications has been crucial. After the unprecedented disruption of COVID-19, and faced with ongoing challenges including recessions, political instability, supply chain disruptions, climate crisis and more, communication professionals must find new ways of creating powerful, sustainable, and scalable connections with their stakeholders – and the ICCMS conference is best placed to drive this forward.

Nowdays, world is dealing with wars that have changed the traditional political communication strategies and bolster manipulation. The conference also aims to discuss challenges of global political communication, the growing need for a literated audience as a cornerstone of strengthening democracy.

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TOPICS OF INTEREST

- Propaganda, Misinformation/Disinformation, and Persuasive Technologies
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- Global Challenges of Film & Tv Industry

Lindita Camaj,
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The Audience Logic as an Antidote to the “Crisis of Trust” in Journalism: How to engage your audiences and turn credibility into sustainability?

Trustworthiness cuts at the core of Journalism’s identity in society. At the same time, journalism plays an important role in the process of developing trust, not only for itself, but also for other social institutions. Yet, trust in news has collapsed to historic lows globally, as partisan voices become more accessible online signaling and aiding the deepening of social polarization.

The internet can’t be fully blamed for the erosion of media trust, though, and traditional news media have been forced to reckon with internal institutional problems. To reverse this trend, many newsrooms have started to turn their attention towards their audiences in a trend widely known as “the audience turn” in journalism.

In this presentation, I discuss research and practical models on how audience engagement with the news can help regain trust in quality journalism in an age of information overload and disinformation.

Thomas A. Bauer,
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Global Communication Challenges. Post-Crises Concept of Sociability.

The presentation stresses epistemological arguments to value the power of observation, both the intuitive one and the one at logical level: communication, theoretically is not to describe just as a term of action, could also be a metaphor of observation in order not just to achieve congruence, but also to get aware of difference as a constructive part in appropriation of reality and social relevance.

The paradigm of observation stresses the need of contextualizing the metaphors of its (the observation's) description: communication, organization, society, culture. No one of those terms can be used not getting aware of the others. Each one of them firms as the meta-description of the other.

The presentation also stresses the critical observation of what we describe as a crisis: Crisis is not a subject existing as a phenomenon by itself. It rather is - phenomenological theorized - the way as we observe (metaphorize) the challenge of (natural, social, cultural, symbolic) environmental change.

That determination, at the good end learning from crises, could be the theoretical perspective of the value of change as a habit of emancipation – in everyday life, in politics, in economy, in education of knowledge.

Alban Tufa,
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Individualization of communication with the public on Facebook; The case of the Council of Ministers

Governments and parties are in constant communication and political marketing campaigns, which increases the need to communicate in many ways and media channels. Online media and social networks have become one of the most used channels. As a result, communication with the public through online platforms has become a necessity, both to ensure the success of informing the public and to guarantee continuity in politics. So politicians have sophisticated ways and strategies of communicating with the public and their voters. One of the most used platforms by Albanian politicians and those of the region remains Facebook, for the reason that most of their voters and supporters are found there. This need to communicate with them, as well as the necessary need to stay in politics, has made this way of communication increasingly individualized, implicating many issues related to democracy and good governance. This paper attempts to identify and analyze the ways in which governments, namely ministries, communicate with the public through Facebook and how this platform is affecting the increase in the individualization of communication, as a result of the increasing avoidance of formal communication.

Using the monitoring method, in this study Facebook posts are measured in three governments of the Balkan region, the respective Ministries of the Government of Albania; Ministries of the Government of Kosovo and Ministries of the Government of North Macedonia, for a period of one month. Also, in the same period and in the same way, the Facebook profiles of the ministers of the three governments are also measured.

After analyzing the data generated by the monitoring, the paper concludes that the Ministries of the Government of Albania develop a less institutional, more individualized communication, developing and increasing their image and consequently fading the image of the institutions they lead. As a consequence of this situation, it is understood that Facebook plays an essential role in individualizing communication and avoiding formal communication with the public.

Keywords: Facebook; political communication; government; individualization of communication; social media

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The young generation toward online- The dramatic rising of a fifth estate as an authority in the Albanian public sphere

Internet use is rapidly growing and digital technologies are offering huge spaces that offer a good source of accountability. The four pillars of democracy Legislative Executive, Judiciary and Media are being followed by a fifth one which is present thanks to technology and internet. The Fifth Estate is rising up and becoming dominant in public sphere thanks to the popularity and engagement of citizens in social media. The rise of new media is drastically changing communication and is driving our society toward the networked public sphere. Such a sphere is reflected as a new area of active citizenship and increase of public discourse. Social media nowadays is not serving only for entertainment, education or communication, but has created short bridges for a direct contact with the fourth Estate- media, giving the opportunity to citizens to increase the demand for accountability. The father of public sphere Habbermass (2006) has reconceptualised in 1996 the public sphere he presented in early 80's, and yet he has publicly criticized the effects of internet in the public intellectual life

This study will aim to analyse this fifth pillar in the Albanian context with focus in the perspective of the young audiences (Gen Z and Millennials in focus) by following the methodology of combing quantitative research through online surveys for social media users and qualitative research through semi structured interviews with media professionals and academics

This research aims to recognise the presence of fifth estate in the Albanian society in the contexts and approach of public and key players

Key words: Online, social media, fifth pillar, audiences, public sphere

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Artificial Intelligence and the Media: Revisiting Digital Dichotomy Theory

The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism and other communication practices brings up long-standing debates regarding the potentials of technological innovations for good and evil in society. Since the 20th century, when McLuhan argued that technologies help extend human capacity, media technologies have been regarded as liberating and empowering. Technologies aided human manipulation of mechanical and electronic processes in the media and communication industries. Arguably, social interactions were enhanced- extending audience reach, expanding scopes of coverage, altering the limitations of time and space, and bridging critical information gaps. By adding the power of computing to mechanical and electronic innovation of the past, as done with AI, far greater is the potential of media for good or ill in 21st-century society. The network societies are now better connected. Westernized societies are linked with those in the global south, individuals and media organizations alike are creating content. The resultant gluts of information further intensify the nature of global and social challenges. Given digital divide concerns being accelerated by AI, the Digital Dichotomy Theory (DD-Theory) is proposed towards understanding the inherent global media communication dynamics. The paper examines the fundamental issue of digital dominance in information technologies. The paper interrogates how developing countries may, or have been left behind in the journey towards building knowledge societies because of poor technological infrastructure and systems. In particular, the paper examines challenges relating to the commodification, instrumentation, and monopolization of AI technologies and the impacts of this on developing countries. The analysis rekindles the global information order to the past, such as media dominance, information inequality, asymmetrical and imbalanced information flow. The paper equally proposes new ways of addressing the extant inequities and inequalities.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Dichotomy Theory, Digital, Media and Societies

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Media effects on the perception of the public of Kosovo about the war in Ukraine

Abstract: Since the start of the Russian invasion on February 2022, the war in Ukraine is setting the global media narrative. Social media gave Ukraine new ways to spread information that aided the resistance's determination and attracted outside assistance, but it gave Russia ways to spread “fog”. Five of the six Western Balkan nations have placed sanctions on Russia and support Ukraine. Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, used NATO's 1999 operation in Kosovo as a precedent. The research on the media's influence on the public's perception of the war in Ukraine, however, has been evaluated with particular interest not only for media studies and their report to the audience but also for the current importance of this topic, given the complex situation in the Western Balkans and the context of tensions between Kosovo and Serbia. This research looks into how the media have impacted the public's perception of the war in Ukraine as well as how television has covered the situation both before and after the invasion. Therefore, a mixed methodology consisting of a survey, media monitoring, data analysis, and desk research was adopted at the empirical level. 1312 respondents from Kosovo participated in the research, and 716 news stories from were included in the research sample of television monitoring from February 1 to March 31. Results of the research shows that media effect caused fear and panic in Kosovo society, while they believe that a new war in Kosovo can happen, because of unresolved conflict with Serbia, and the continuous apostrophization of Kosovo by Putin.

Keywords: Agenda-Setting, Kosovo , Media Effects, Public Opinion, Television, Ukraine, War

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Portrayal of women in local advertising

This paper aims to highlight the perceptions of the Kosovar audience regarding the portrayal of women in local advertising, with particular emphasis on their stereotyping and objectification in marketing products. The paper also analyzes the presence of these elements in local television-broadcasted advertisements, bringing to light a marked lack of sensitivity of gender representations in the media. This is noticed in most of the advertisements with characters.

The appearance of women in stereotypical roles such as that of chef, housewife and even objectification are some of the findings encountered in the analysis of advertising content. Also, the perceptions of the Kosovar audience show that some of the most common gender stereotypes encountered in local advertising are related to the role of women. The audience survey shows that images of women as housewives are most often encountered in TV commercials, which according to them strengthen gender stereotypes.

Moreover, literature review, qualitative and quantitative analysis bring a disturbing picture of the transmission of stereotypical messages through advertising, fading so the role of women in society and reducing it to non-content levels that are mainly related to visual presentation- bodily exposure.

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Social media an official tool of communication in Kosovo ’s public sector

Social media is massively used in Kosovo. Based on the most recent studies, 93% of Kosovo citizens use the internet for communication, which is also the primary function of these platforms. Except individuals, various organizations, including public sector institutions, have their official profiles and pages in these platforms. Considering the way how public institutions in Kosovo are organized, the institutionalization of social media as an official tool of communication remains as an unexplored topic.

The purpose of this study is to investigate if social media is considered an official form of communication by public institutions in Kosovo. This paper conducts research on the number of the public institutions that have accounts on social networks and whether there is any communication plan, and whether there are officials who manage the content that is published on these platforms of public institutions. Furthermore, in this paper we answer questions as: how social networks are being used and in what cases the message is conveyed through them. The paper, among other things, also deals with the involvement of citizens in the public affairs through these platforms and the impact of these platforms in the transparency of the public institutions.

In order to answer the questions raised, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. The data was collected from the public institutions of Kosovo, through semi-structured interviews with the communication officers in the institutions, as well as a comparison was made between the institutions that have accounts on social networks and those that are not in these platforms. Through the interviews, we understood the communication officials' own approach to these mediums and the way they perceive the message they send through social media. Also, quantitative methods were used to identify public institutions that are active in social networks and those that do not use these tools for institutional communication with the public.

Keywords: Social networks, Medium, Official communication, Public sector, Communication officials

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Hate speech and the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators, under the perspective of international standards: the case of Albania

Freedom of expression and thought, respect for human dignity, the principle of equality and non-discrimination are part of the basic principles of a democratic society. On the other hand, freedoms and rights are not absolute, and can be limited if they are not exercised in accordance with the rights of others. One such right is the freedom of expression, which can be restricted if its exercise incites violence, discrimination, or a state of insecurity in other people.

Despite the widespread use of the expression “hate speech”, as well as the ever-increasing concern about its widespread use, international acts do not make a definitive definition of it. The main international human rights documents have sanctioned freedom of expression, the right to equality before the law and non-discrimination, but have not defined a dividing line between them and what can constitute hate speech. The European Court of Human Rights has examined a number of cases related to the implication of hate speech in the context of freedom of expression. Although it has not provided an exhaustive notion of hate speech and has followed a case-by-case approach, it has elaborated some criteria that help identify it.

This paper aims to analyze the Albanian legal framework regarding hate speech and the punishment for its use. Through this analysis, we try to answer the question of how complete and in accordance with the standards this legislation is. To achieve this goal, international and national legislation will be analyzed. Also, in the paper we will refer to the decisions of international courts, specifically the European Court of Human Rights. The paper argues that it is the duty of the states to define the notion of hate speech in their legislation, taking care that on the one hand it does not violate the freedom of expression, and on the other hand to offer a protection of the rights, freedoms, and dignity of persons others.

Keywords: Hate speech, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, human dignity, violence

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A post-pandemic media aesthetics

The pandemic and the war, happened in Albania, Europe and the world of the media age, moreover at a time where the development of online media, while it has consumed every corner of our lives, has also appeared “pandemic” in terms of the multitude and variety of the information it transmits, for a shorter and shorter time. At this point, whether news broadcasters, media agencies, journalists, or media readers, are at the center of a pandemic rush: thinking, researching, verifying, and writing and broadcasting the news, with reading on the other side, are about to simultaneously. What is missing is the interaction, the involvement of the writer himself, the critical and impactful reflection of the media.

Broadcasting news from a precept became even more visible as a problem in print media during the aftermath of COVID-19. We saw how writing every day no longer narrates through what it conveys, but symptomatically simply communicates coldly, the data, does not pull to keep you stuck reading it. This was not the only problem, the media losing the aesthetics of writing, also lost the originality, authenticity and sensory experience that it gives during the process.

A look at the news, journalism, points out a cold mediation which between the giver and the receiver, in an effort to realize and promote an emotional appeal, must manipulate, thus losing the authentic essence of the media's mission and therefore, either the media itself or its readers are prey to a false approach. On the contrary, an authorial style, of involvement and responsibility, builds a shared world with the recipient, breaking down and conveying a reality which is ethical and at the same time authentic, reflective and self-evolving, true, from the point of view of the writer. It is important to understand the influence that the media has in the process of shaping and mediating that makes it “beyond” us, as a substitute for personal participation.

At this point, the need for a media critique arises from the perspective of media aesthetics, a new discipline in media studies in Europe and certainly new in media studies in Albania.

In this paper, we will try to bring this qualitative, aesthetic critical approach of the media that emphasizes experience vs. lack of experience, sharing of ideas vs. ideological isolation, impact vs. inertness, to create a perception, analyzing these through critical theories of media aesthetics.

Keywords: Online media, aesthetics, power, style, process, mediation, experience

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The Institute for Conspiracy Theory Analysis: An intervention into misinformation and conspiracy thinking

This paper focuses on our creation of a project that develops creative interventions designed to prompt discussion and greater literacy about conspiracy theories, misinformation and fake news. To establish the Institute for Conspiracy Theory Analysis, we conducted archival research at the New York Public Library and Brooklyn College Special Collections to study the history of one of the US' most famous institutions established to fight mis- and disinformation: The Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), an organization founded by journalists and educators in the late 1930s as fascism spread across Europe and the US. The IPA's efforts have been re-examined in recent years and heralded as one of the first modern day media literacy efforts (Fondren, 2021; Hobbs & McGee, 2014; Schiffrin, 2022).

The IPA argued that propaganda should be fought with the dissemination of the truth via bulletins, reports, news stories and other written forms and reinforced through guided discussions with student and adult learners (Fondren, 2021; Edwards, 1938). Institute members even developed a prototype of today's emojis to communicate their messages. The work of the IPA was well known among US communications teachers and students who for decades studied their *Seven Propaganda Devices* (Lee & Lee, 1939; Shul, 2021; Sproul, 1984; 2001).

In our presentation, we will discuss our historical research and the journalistic social art project inspired by it, the creation of the Institute for Conspiracy Theory Analysis, as well as some of the interventions we have engaged in through the institute. Part of this work seeks to build on a turn in journalism toward alternative, creative forms to present information to often overlooked news audiences, including minority groups and youth (Postema & Deuze, 2020; Witschge, Deuze &

Willemsen, 2019). Examples of our interventions include creating and teaching media literacy exercises about conspiracy theories to journalism students. We have also interviewed ethnic media journalists about the kinds of misinformation and conspiracy theories they were hearing about from their audiences. The findings from those interviews were used to inform our creation of a game, “CoCoLo, Conspiracy Theory Lotería,” based on a popular Mexican game, intended to be played by members of the public to engage them in discussions about pandemic-related topics.

In sum, we suggest that solutions for misinformation and conspiracy theories should not only include fact checking but other, more creative approaches such as ours. As Craft, Ashley and Maksel (2017) remind us, “attempts to correct” conspiracy thinking can “backfire” because “the public correction of false claims can actually have the opposite effect and reinforce the original incorrect information” (p. 3). Thus, our interventions seek to both appeal to non-traditional news consumers and also be used to generate non-threatening discussions with the ever increasing misinformed public.

Caroline Patatt,

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Fernando Rocha,

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Associate Professor. Marcela Guimarães,

University Federal of Pampa, Brasil

Transmedia in the COVID-19 pandemic announcement: an analysis of the World Health Organization's social media, websites, and app

This paper focuses on World Health Organization (WHO) posts on March 11, 2020 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as the entity's own information App – WHO Info – and the seven official websites related to the Organization. On this date, a state of pandemic of the new coronavirus was declared. The intention was to verify if WHO communicated strategically, observing the precepts of Transmedia, that enhances the use of each platform and facilitates the audience's understanding. Qualitative and Quantitative Content Analysis was used as a research technique, making it possible to verify that the communication didn't happen strategically.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Internet, Social Media, Transmedia, World Health Organization.

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Strategic communication as an evaluative and helpful tool for overcoming the challenges of startups in the Albanian ecosystem.

The development, success, longevity but also the failure of a startup are closely related to numerous challenges and problems that are encountered in the first days of life and in its continuation, which include:

- Fierce competition – in an arena filled with sharks, startups are like tiny snails that have to work harder to survive, so innovation is the key word for the right competitive advantage.
- Unrealistic expectations - start-ups do not know the saying "stretch your legs as long as the quilt" and this is probably because they do not know the size of the "quilt" very well
- Hiring the right staff – the culture of the organization is a very important factor and choosing staff who are not only talented, but who can coexist within a startup is often a challenge that should not be ignored.
- Partnership decision-making - partnership is essential for the success of a startup because the success of a good marriage depends a lot on the understanding between the "partners".
- Financial management – the different forms of financing that in the first steps of a startup's life have a key impact on creating security, self-confidence and focus on the necessary operational issues.
- Cyber security – we live in the digital age, everything happens online, often failures more than successes.

- Environment - the industry in which the startup operates - some industries are more dynamic, but some industries are less regulated than others.

This study carried out in the ecosystem of startups in Albania aims to analyze the reasons for their successes and failures and to prove the hypothesis that the basic instrument for overcoming or failing in the face of all the challenges faced by startups in Albania is strategic communication, which, being used in different forms and tactics, plays a critical role not only in creating the identity of a startup, but also to assess and help startups in facing and overcoming the challenges mentioned above as well as others that may be encountered during their life.

The other aim of this study is to compare the analyzed results with the reality of what is offered to startups in Albania in the form of incentive methods and strategies, accelerating and facilitating programs by various actors operating in the regulatory and business eco-system in Albania, including government projects, projects of international organizations, the academic world, the media, etc. as well as group initiatives carried out by the business environment itself.

This will be followed by recommendations to better adapt the needs of startups with the support that the latter should receive in order to be able to compete decently in the challenging business environment in Albania but also in the global space.

The method of carrying out this analysis includes a review of studies carried out by researchers and organizations interested in the development of the startup ecosystem in Albania, a review of theories based on the early stages of a startup's life, as well as an empirical analysis of Albanian startups. through interviews and a questionnaire carried out for the purpose of this study.

Keywords: startup, ecosystem, strategic communication, challenge, innovation, accelerator program.

Edona Llukaçaj,
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No Traitors, no Saints: Disinformation through the Translation of News from English into Albanian

The saying “Traduttore, traditore” (translator, traitor) is believed to have been first used in the 14th century Italy and to be rooted in the discontent of Italians with the translations of The Divine Comedy into French. Obviously, based on the idea that the translations did not faithfully reflect the entirety of lingual, structural and conceptual wealth of Dante’s masterpiece into the target language, the saying is used, to this day, to mercilessly blame translators for the necessary and unnecessary compromises they do in translation. Since the 14th century, the approaches to what is appropriate in translation have surely altered. The 17th century concept of “les belles infedele” that emphasizes the beauty in unfaithfulness is widely accepted, especially in our era of multicultural existence, when translation is viewed as an essential tool for inter-lingual and inter-cultural communication. Hence, faithfulness – fidelity - to the original text, in the present, is not considered as essential, particularly if it happens to hinder this communication: that is, the transferring of the original message of the text to the target language. From this perspective, the intended or unintended altering of the meaning of the message is merely manipulation through translation and an effective tool of disinformation. Taking these as a starting point, this paper aims to analyze the translation of news from English into Albanian language, focusing on how the translations of specific articles fulfilled the basic criteria for media (news) translations, but, nonetheless, overlooked the necessity of faithful transference of the original message. It will also maintain that there is no beauty in this act of translation, as the original purpose of translating, which is the informing of the local audience, was betrayed, and the act of translation turned into a reliable tool of disinformation.

Key words: translation, disinformation, news translation, manipulation in translation, (un)faithfulness in translation

Emira Bajcinca,
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Social media and disinformation redefined media reporting in Kosovo

Abstract: The online platform has tremendously influenced the field of media and particularly communication and the way of reporting in general. Press media in Kosovo have already transformed their content completely online. The process of switching from the press to the online platform is characterized by marked changes in the way they report changing fundamentally the content of these media. While press media - especially daily newspapers - contained filtered news, balanced in terms of sources of information, social media most of the time offer short news, without context, without specific filters and without relying on relevant sources. Based on these parameters, the possibility of disinformation is much higher in social media. Information that could potentially be released in a social media has an extraordinary opportunity to be distributed within minutes by many other online media. In the interest of this work is to identify some of the changes in Kosovo's media during the transition from the press to the online platform. It will also try to give an answer to what extent the presence of information on social media is. The object of this analysis will be five social media in Kosovo which are considered representative based on the large number of followers. It will also be analyzed if the number of followers corresponds to the credibility the audience gives for social media. This aspect and other aspects to be addressed within this work will also rely on data that has emerged from the results of the measurement of public opinion in which 1051 representatives are included. This work will also try to identify the types of disinformation that are found in social media, analyzing them on the basis of the framework which is presented by the Poynter Institute.

Keywords: social media, press media, disinformation, online platforms, reporting

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Examining journalist's perception on fake news and their attitudes toward debunking disinformation

Fake news and other forms of disinformation pose a serious threat to the news ecosystem and the informing of audiences, who are increasingly dependent on online sources of information. After the attention paid to the spreading of fake news, researchers have focused on the study of the negative effects that different typologies of disinformation are prone to having on audiences. Similarly, great attention has also been paid to the motives that users have for the spreading of fake news.

These studies, which combine various disciplines, attempt to analyse the psychological factors and motives that lead users to engage with online fake news. On the other hand, several studies have analysed the role of platforms and their algorithmic logic, as well as the main approaches for addressing this significant problem. Although much effort has been devoted to the phenomenon of disinformation in social media, the role of professional journalists in exposing false information has not been given the necessary attention.

Albania is a country with a high rate of fake news and conspiracy theories. And although professional journalists in Albania are well-aware of their role and a considerable percentage of reporters and media professionals believe to have good knowledge of social media and are able to identify fake news, they do not seem motivated enough to engage in exposing them.

Taking these in consideration, this study will investigate the Albanian journalists' perception of fake news and the risk in them being used as a means of (dis)informing the audience. It will also focus on how this perception affects their behaviour and willingness to debunk disinformation on social media. Making use of a national level questionnaire, to which 250 journalists contributing in the Albanian media responded, the study aims to answer some important questions about the role of journalists in addressing disinformation issues in the social media space.

Key words: fake news, social media, debunking, disinformation, fact checking

Media as a powerful tool of change.... what? Connecting the dots between information, media, world affairs and audience.

The mass quantity of information resulting from more advanced communication tools creates diverse problems for all levels of society and some to mention are; fake news, contested news, constructed realities or distorted societal problems. The outbreak of Covid-19, the various world crises be it military such as the war in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, or financial such as the recent one, the energetic crises or the one in Greece few years ago, electoral shift or others events have heightened the role of media in the international sphere factorizing it as an important player in world affairs among politicians and diplomats. The power of communication channels to reach a wide range of audiences, has put media in the spotlight as the main culprit for the way information and news are disseminated and the level at which they affect world events and international audiences.

Moreover, the abundance of information we are experiencing in the modern world, made more available with the advent of technology, has made everyone exposed to information and at the same time everyone can produce information just as easily as news outlets can. This has posed media in the challenge to keep up with the audience by adjusting its content in terms of visuality and lexicology.

It is this uncontrollable flow of information that allows space for the discussion of some phenomena that media has been attributed with in the recent years, and together with this the increased use of words that affect world affairs, such as war, crises, threat or more. This paper is going to place a special focus on specific world events and thoroughly discuss on the influence of the media over the event and the audience.

We will identify and explore different case studies in the field of international relations that better illustrate the way information disseminated through the media affect world events and societies. It will explore the way that news has adapted their terminology not only to factorize its role in world affairs but also in order to keep up with the challenge of maintaining an adequate share of audience, that now is browsing in the web for more trustworthy information.

Faton Ismajli,

University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Kosovo

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“The right to be forgotten” on the Internet – A comparative analysis of the legal regulation in Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia and the EU (2022)

The article analyses a normative-legal aspect and its mechanisms of the “right to be forgotten” on the Internet in three countries of the Western Balkans; Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, comparing it with the Acquis standard of the European Union, which approved this rule years ago.

In order to deal with this right related to online media and their publications, the paper analyses the legal framework and the institutions that are obliged to implement this right.

In order to obtain results in this paper, several methods were used, including desk analysis, analysis of functions as well as comparative analysis of the normative-legal aspect in these three countries and in the EU. The main hypothesis of paper is: Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia have adapted their legislation in relation to the EU requirements related to the right to be forgotten on the Internet. The paper highlights that these countries have a long way to go until full integration, their legislation and mechanisms have also been aligned with EU directives. The conclusions of a paper reflect the state of these three countries that have aspirations in European integrations in the adaptation of laws that offer the “right to be forgotten” on the Internet as a human right.

Keywords: Online Media, right to be forgotten, EU, Law, Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia.

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Semiological analysis of electoral posters and photos in the context of political communication

Discourse is a creative element of politics as a social practice. In electoral campaigns, more specifically, language and other semiotic resources are used in the process of interpreting a candidate's identity and solicitude voter support. Public speeches, rallies, and propaganda materials such as videos and photos are important for establishing a relationship with voters and building one's legitimacy by asserting qualities—although they can also do so by deauthorizing and delegitimizing their most powerful competitors. Electoral propaganda aims to influence the collective imagination by framing candidates in particular ways, presenting them as capable of providing solutions to the problems they strategically place in the spotlight. Elections are therefore a process of mass persuasion where the tools of public discourse are employed towards the ultimate goal. Semiology is one of the scientific methodologies through which media products, both textual and visual, can be analyzed.

This paper aims to present political communication, more specifically the analysis of photographs and electoral posters of political party candidates in the 2021 local elections in Kosovo. The semiological method was used for the analysis, focusing on the analytical form of Roland Barthes of electoral posters and photographs.

Keywords: political communication, election campaign, electoral posters and photography, semiology.

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Restriction of Freedom of Expression on the grounds of National Security: the case of Albania

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of every human being. The freedom of expression is guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as the “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”. As can be seen, this definition is very broad and includes the “freedom of the press” or less formal channels of communication, ranging from discussions and debates in public spaces to social media.

Albania, as a democratic country, has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and European Convention of human rights which stipulates the freedom of expression. Furthermore, Article 22 of Albanian Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression. Nevertheless, the freedom of expression is not absolute, but it can be restricted on certain grounds. This article discusses the restriction of freedom of expression on the grounds of national security by taking the case of Albania. The paper analyses the international and national legal framework of freedom of expression and discuss to what extent such freedom can be limited for the purpose of national security.

Keywords: Freedom of Expression, restriction, national security, Albania

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The use and influence of social networks on young people and their effect on daily life

This paper will deal with the use of social networks among young age groups, specifically pre-university students. The perception of the massive use of social networks is present, but through a research which has been focused and distributed in all regions of Kosovo, we will also produce concrete results. The focus of this research will be to find concrete results on the use of social networks among these age groups, their effect on daily life and the impact of the phenomena that come from social networks on their daily life. In this paper, scientific methodology was used and hypotheses were raised which will be tested through concrete results. The purpose of this paper is to bring concrete scientific results that will be at the service of the community and those who deal with these problems and that are related to studies on new media. At the end, there will be concrete conclusions and recommendations that will come as a result of the research findings.

Key words: social media, students, facebook, instagram, young people, effects of social media.

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Italy

Twenty years later. The media representation of women journalists in Afghanistan

The work introduced here focuses on the socio-political-cultural analysis of Afghanistan, an example of a country undergoing demodernisation whose state weakness 'does not necessarily imply that the rights that modernity represents are being lost' (Minakov 2021). These include the rights that some Afghan women (and) journalists have laboriously won over the past two decades.

The return of the Taliban to Afghanistan, August 2021, has impeded twenty years of important achievements in the emancipation of Afghan women (and) female journalists.

The study presented here is timed between 15 August and 30 September 2021. This timeframe, although seemingly short, represents the fundamental moment in which to grasp the political and socio-cultural changes of the new Afghan course.

Although the present investigation is mainly exploratory in nature, the research questions from which it starts are not likely to lead to a discovery, but rather to validate a hypothesis, which rests on a ground of empirical observations. Specifically, the analysis moves around two research questions:

(a) how did the mainstream Western media publicly narrate the crisis after the establishment of the Taliban government in Afghanistan?

b) how much and how were Afghan women and women journalists' voices 'listened to' and paid attention within the news space?

The newspapers were manually selected by means of a search-analysis of 2181 relevant press articles (out of 7000 initially identified) in the digital archive of The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde and Il Corriere della Sera, newspapers of the countries that actively participated in the mission in Afghanistan after 11

September 2001 and organised the withdrawal of soldiers and civilians during the reference period, thus having had a 'privileged view' to publicly report on the crisis.

Discrimination against women in Aghanistan is a concrete *modus operandi*, deeply permeating every social sphere, and although Islamic radicalism does not reject either traditional or digital publishing, it still does not seem to agree on giving women the opportunity to independently narrate and disseminate facts and news. Instead, it is precisely at this moment that women (and) journalists need support and backing to continue to write their own stories as professionals and as narrators of reality and rights on the paper of a white paper waiting to be read locally and internationally.

Gregory Gondwe,
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Misinformation in societies with unequal digital access and news literacy: A Case of Sub-Saharan Africa

In an event where the problem of information access is almost terra incognita, the derivative challenge is whether too much information is bad. Most research suggests so, yet very few attempts have been made to look at the digital inequalities and literacies that shape how an individual is exposed, consumes, shares, and ends up believing in fake news. As Tandoc, et. al. (2017) asks, “Does fake news remain fake if it is not perceived as real by the audience? In other words, can an article that looks like news, but is without factual basis, with an immediate intention to mislead, be considered fake news if the audience does not buy into the lie? (p.148)”. In this sense, it is highly contested as to whether those with low levels of news literacy are susceptible to fake news and misinformation. Against the backdrop, this study builds upon focus group data from six sub-Saharan countries collected to examine how people in Africa engage with misinformation. This study focuses on variations in digital access and literacy that inform how individuals in Africa are exposed, consumed, spread, and believe in misinformation. Three questions characterize the study:

- How do digitally disadvantaged individuals in Sub-Saharan Africa engage in misinformation?
- To what extent does fake news and misinformation impact those who do not (a) perceive it as real and (b) who are considerate news illiterate?
- Does fake news remain fake if it is not perceived as real by the audience?

Findings from our data suggest that access did not impede exposure to fake news consumption and sharing. However, the presumed news-literate individuals seemed not to believe in misinformation, except in events that compromised their moral fiber. Because of eco-chambers, the so-called news-literate was more susceptible to misinformation. In other words, findings indicate that the more one claimed to be news literate, the more likely they were to believe in fake news. These findings put into question the notion of news literacy and whether it is indeed a panacea to fight misinformation.

Inna Ivanivna Matiushyna,
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Why is Russian propaganda stronger than critical thinking?

The war of Russia against Ukraine demonstrated the phenomenon of the success of Russian propaganda in manipulating the consciousness of Russian citizens. The paradox lies in the fact that a large percentage of:

- people with free access to the Internet, that is, with the opportunity to get acquainted with different points of view. But the categories are especially surprising:
- people with higher education, scientists (who should have a high level of critical thinking),
- people living outside the Russian Federation (they are not under the direct influence of the Russian media).

Question: why is Russian propaganda so successful? What is the reason for this success: the professionalism of the propaganda system or the peculiarities of Russian society?

Sociological research conducted on the territory of the Russian Federation cannot show a real picture of the attitude of citizens towards the war with Ukraine. The principles of propaganda used by Russian state authorities and the media are well known, they are not original: juggling of facts, silence, constant emotional impact, maintaining the idea of the country's greatness, accusing everyone around in a hostile attitude, and so on.

These methods of manipulation are used to varying degrees in the statements of politicians in any country. A distinctive feature of Russian propaganda: a high degree of concentration, support at the state level and the literal murder of all opposition points of view. Fear of physical destruction is a powerful tool against the desire to publicly oppose the official point of view.

However, there are deeper reasons that are at the level of worldview and can be understood by methods of socio-cultural analysis.

The first reason is the “paradox of patriotic education”. Any state seeks to educate in its citizens the idea of the need to protect the state, care for their state, pride in their state. This idea is productive both in situations of criticism of the current government and in a situation of dissatisfaction with the citizens of the current system. Even in a totalitarian state (as was the case in the Soviet Union), criticism of the state and dissatisfaction with the state are an almost constant background. However, in a situation of war, when society and the situation require an unambiguous division of all people into “us” and “them”, patriotic education requires reconciliation with the imperfections of “one's” side, and accept it unambiguously, without criticism.

The second reason is the “paradox of Soviet ideology”. It is known that the traditional Christian opposition between the world of beautiful ideas and the rough imperfect reality (between the spirit and the body) is at the basis of the Soviet ideology. In the system of Soviet ideology, political life was part of the dirty real bourgeois world, since the political confrontation of different parties was meaningless. The Soviet ideology allowed scientists to engage in science, research, to get involved in classical and Soviet art, designating this as a correct life, subordinate to the world of ideas. A person with a higher education should not be distracted by “dirty” issues such as salary, politics, and so on. This ideological attitude was miraculously preserved and continued in Russian society. Especially if we take into account that the population over 40 years old are people who were brought up precisely in the Soviet ideology and this is the main layer of scientists and researchers. Therefore, many Russian scientists before and after the outbreak of the war stated that one should not be interested in politics, it would be better to listen to beautiful music or read a great book. The critical thinking of the researcher is not connected in this case to solve political problems.

So, Russian propaganda is successful not only because of its intensity, the use of classical methods of manipulation. It is successful thanks to a specific ideology left over from the Soviet period, as well as some of the paradoxes underlying human social existence. These paradoxes do not allow us to consider political problems as a subject for critical analysis, but operate at the level of unproblematic grounds for perceiving the world.

Kaltrina Jashari,
University of Pristina “Hasan Prishtina”,
Kosovo

The importance of the office of communication for the overall public image of the University of Prishtina

The image of companies, institutions or organizations in general depends on the public relations. This is what makes Public Relations take an important place in the organization chart of the company or institution.

This study investigates the image and reputation of the University of Pristina “Hasan Prishtina”. This institution was taken as a case of study due to the fact that it is the largest institution of higher education in Kosovo and as an institution, they do not have an office or official for PR. The UP is a complex organization as it has 14 academic units, as well as many centers and institutes. UP has around 42,000 students, more than 900 members of academic staff and administrative staff of 300 employees.

The University of Pristina “Hasan Prishtina” operates in a competitive environment. According to the Statistics Agency of Kosovo, eight other public universities and 23 private colleges operate in this country. Given that public communication has been transformed over the years, especially after the pandemic of Covid-19, digital communication channels such as: social media and the website of the institutions have become the main source of information for the parties and audience of the organization.

In order to see how communication functions in these channels in the absence of the public relations office, the use of social media by the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” has been observed and analyzed. In addition to observation and

content analysis, two other research methods were used: student surveys and interviews with journalists that cover education field.

The theoretical part of the paper is based on the main models of public relations, Lasswell's formula (Harold Lasswell), McLuhan's theory "the medium is the message" (Marshall McLuhan), as well as public relations theories: theory of perfection (J. E. Grunig), the theory of public situation (J. E. Gruning) and other theories, with the aim of historical and theoretical elaboration of public relations. Public relations also take care of informing the public, the organization's relationship with other parties, the organization's presence in the media, its relationship with journalists and many other functions. These responsibilities turn out to be unfulfilled, as a result of the lack of an office for communication with the public, which turns out to have a direct impact on the image of the University of Pristina "Hasan Prishtina".

Keywords: public relations, public communication, social media, University of Pristina, etc.

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Psychology of Conspiracy Theories: The role of Cognitive Biases

A relatively new branch of studies in psychological research has found that people who commit certain logic errors are more likely to believe conspiracy theories. These mistakes are called cognitive biases, which are defined as systematic errors that individuals commit while reasoning or making predictions and choices. There are several types of cognitive biases, but it's useful to make a distinction between those who contribute to the formation phase of such anomalistic beliefs and those who operate in an updating phase. Specifically, we argue that biases related to the judgement of the likelihood of an event based on its resemblance with a priori stereotype (representativeness heuristic – Kahneman & Tversky 1972) occur in the formation phase. Among these, Leman & Cinnirella (2007) have found that proportionality bias correlate with conspiracism. Proportionality bias is the tendency to think that “big events” have “big causes” - e.g., individuals who suffer from this bias might attribute the cause of a pandemic to an international secret plan orchestrated by powerful individuals to control world population, rather than to a random spillover coming from a small bat. Similarly, other scholars (e.g., Brotherton & French 2014, Wabnegger et al 2021) have found a correlation between causal conjunction bias and conspiracism. On average, people who overperceive causal connections between co-occurring independent events endorse conspiracy theories more than others. Finally, another cognitive bias that has been found to correlate with conspiracism is intentionality bias, which is the tendency to over-detect intentions and agency behind random events (e.g., Brotherton & French 2015, Douglas et al 2016). After being formed, these beliefs get updated in a biased way: when confirmation bias kicks in, conspiracy believers tend to seek out only consistent information, while neglecting and/or misinterpreting disconfirmatory evidence (Lord et al 1979), leveraging on conspiratorial unfalsifiability (Goertzel 2010). Moreover, the excessive coverage of conspiracy narratives and

disinformation “gurus”, both through mainstream media and polarized sources (e.g., social media platforms), might trigger availability bias (Tversky & Kahneman 1973), as these information systems make fake stories more salient for individuals, and as a result, the ease with which individuals can recall anecdotes might corroborate their erroneous beliefs. All these cognitive biases are deeply ingrained in individuals’ beliefs system and might make them more immune to fact-checking strategies and data-driven scientific communication. For this reason, it’s fundamental for reinventing science communication for the post-truth era.

Mark Marku,
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Albania

Covid 19, media and information of Albanian citizens during the pandemic.

The outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic found the Albanian media system in a multifaceted crisis, a crisis that deepened even further and had serious consequences for the Albanian media, with the imposition of restrictive measures. In addition to the dangers to life and economic difficulties, Albanian journalists faced difficulties that affected the quality, impartiality and accuracy of reporting. Initially, they faced the lack of trust in state institutions, and direct efforts by the government to delegitimize the media as independent and impartial public information institutions. The attempt to delegitimize the media is concretized by limiting journalists' access to information. The media had as sources of information only the statements of the crisis management officials and the posts on the social networks of the prime minister or other state officials. Press conferences with journalists (with physical or virtual presence) disappeared throughout the period until the end of the state of natural disaster, which led to the avoidance of the journalist and journalism as an intermediary between information and citizens. The concentration of information sources greatly reduced the possibility for journalists to obtain information from various alternative sources. This led to the deterioration of the quality of citizens' information and the increasing risk of disinformation of citizens by the government, the transformation of the media into orchestrated instruments of propaganda and the violation of basic freedoms such as the right to speech, information and exercise of the profession.

Keywords: media, Covid 19, misinformation, government propaganda, government information.

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New platforms of verification as tools against disinformation

As information disorder and propaganda escalate during the times of conflict and war, access to trusted and unbiased information becomes even more vital. During such critical times, citizens must be equipped with the skills to identify disinformation that is shared in media. The need of disinformation detection is inevitable in order to raise awareness. In this paper, we survey the recent literature about different approaches to detect information disorder and particularly the disinformation over the Internet.

Firstly, it discusses about fake news and the various terms related to it that have been considered in the literature. Secondly, it focuses on the various publicly available datasets and various online free tools that are available and can debunk disinformation in real time. Thirdly, it describes fake news detection methods based on two broader areas such as its content and the social context. Finally, as a conclusion we provide a comparison of different techniques that are used to debunk disinformation.

Key Words: disinformation, verification, tools, online, platforms

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The language of war: narratives, signs, trolling

On 24 February Russia launched an attack on Ukraine. Throughout the ongoing war, social media has been serving as a battleground for governmental and non-state actors to spread competing narratives about the war and portray the ongoing conflict in their own words. The topic of the research work is the “language of war” in Ukrainian social media, narratives, and signs. The source is Ukrainian social media, TV, and newspapers from February 24. The Russian leadership views mass communication as a crucial arena in Ukraine and has two aims: influence beliefs and influence on behavior. There are four levels of getting this purpose: Material level (tools and technologies); Signal level (language, rules, protocols); Cultural context (background, history, rituals, news); Meaningful (senses, facts).

Ukraine has to react, answer and build its informational field. During this time, the Ukrainian information field developed its successful communicative strategies in response to aggressive propaganda, and the “language of war” was formed:

- Ukrainian language. When Russia invaded it immediately triggered a surge of patriotism in Ukraine that included a push for people to make more use of the nation’s official language: Ukrainian. Ukrainians use the Ukrainian language in all official situations, in the army, in battle, as a recognition system for “friend or foe”.

- Expressing the position regarding the aggressor. For example, for the word russia Ukrainian authors use a small letter, Ukrainians have taken to calling invaders “orcs”. The word is familiar to JRR Tolkien readers as the name given to the monstrous anthropoids in his epic novel “The Lord of the Rings”, Russian troops labeled “rashists” - the neologism combines “Russian,” “racist” and “fascist”.

- Verbal blasts of anger. For example, the war’s first meme – “Russian warship, go f*** yourself!” – quoted the response of Ukrainian sailors who refused to surrender to a Russian vessel on February 25.

- Formation of its sign system understandable to the Ukrainian population. For example, demonstration of the numbers “4.5.0” - military language, that is a military code - “everything is calm”.

- Specific communication style of Ukrainian officials to the nation. For example, Ukrainian leaders, officials, and military officers communicate with mass media and the public in new and effective ways in an information war.

- Memes and trolling. For example, Bavovniatko – an animated symbol of explosions and fire in Russia; the term “Macronite” — to describe someone who makes a big show of being very concerned about something but refuses to do anything tangible to help; tractor troops - a nickname for the Ukrainian farmers who’ve famously used their tractors to tow Russian tanks and other weaponry from the battlefield.

Oddgeir Tveiten,
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Norway

Theorizing Future Journalism: News, knowledge and information flows in a changing world eco system

Journalism is rooted in the foundational institutions of the Enlightenment, the emergent political visions of progress, new freedoms, balance of power and the diversity arenas on which political as well as cultural discourse is articulated. However, in a time of global crisis, eroding trust in political institutions, if not to say the unraveling of positive visions of the future, it might be time to rethink key aspects of what journalism is all about. How we define news values and news criteria might perhaps be questions worthy of new attention, considering how the world map is being re-drawn by polarization, climate change, escalating differences in economic income, if not to say wars no one thought were possible just few months back. The talk will emphasize emergent visions of alternative journalism, a broader diversity of new values and narrative strategies, aimed at conversations about journalism education.

Omprakash Kushwaha,
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Punjab

Politics of ‘othering’ and Television News Channels during the Covid -19 Outbreak in India

The paper conceptualises the politics of ‘othering’ based on analysis of content and strategies of Television news and debate shows. Aiming that how has the sense of ‘othering’ been perpetuated and how does it perform in order to reproduce anti-Muslim sentiment on the one hand and Hindu supremacy on the other hand during the COVID–19 outbreaks in India? TV news channels, in this case, has constituted islamophic notion by serving majoritarian supremacy through news and debate shows based on virus outbreaks in India. The paper in this concern has key intention to look the television as a facilitator of capital forming a close nexus to the politics of ‘othering’. The treatment of COVID-19 outbreaks in the paper would be to just describe the condition through which the politics of ‘Othering’ has been constituted an anti- Muslim notion across India.

Key Words: Othering, Television, Covid -19, capitalism, Mejoritarianism

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Albania

Global conflict reporting in the digital age, the case of the war in Ukraine

The reporting of global conflicts has so far been seen as the exclusive domain of news agencies and traditional media. The wars of the last decades have been presented to the international opinion by the media, being described as the first version of history. In the case of the occupation of Ukraine by Russia, the use of more sophisticated technological tools and especially the development of citizen journalism are a novelty in the history of the media. Social networks and the first reports that usually come from the citizens themselves, avoiding local journalists and those of international agencies, are playing an important role.

To win the "war" on social networks, Ukraine and Russia, as well as their allies, have activated teams of professionals who produce journalistic content that is distributed first through social networks and then through traditional ones, reaching a more global audience. In the audio-visual format, the content produced by the teams of professionals commissioned by the state apparatus prevails, without excluding photography and text as complementary elements.

In such a situation, the world media, including the Albanian ones, find it difficult to filter information, being exposed to misinformation and falling into the trap of "fake news". In this paper we will answer the role played by the first reports coming from citizens, how these reports affect the content of traditional media, the role of international news agencies, how the Ukraine-Russia conflict is reflected in the Albanian media, which are the sources of information, how is the information verified, etc. The paper will include interviews with journalists who reports these events, reports and studies of relevant international institutions, analysis of specific cases, etc.

Keywords: Global conflicts, Russia-Ukraine war, citizen journalism, technology, news agency, Albanian media

Rahim Ombashi,
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The return of media interest towards national culture as a need for representation itself

Our personalities offered national commitment and scientific seriousness to tradition, especially with the creation of the new Albanian state.

Hafiz Ali Korcha had singled out Islamic mysticism and its poetics, *tasawwuf*, in the oriental Sufi literature of Omar Khayami. The Nezim Berat, author of the *Divan*, is called *mutessavvif*. Eqrem Chabej singled out this form and method of spiritual purification, moral upliftment, internal and external enlightenment, in order to obtain God's reconciliation and eternal happiness, in the poetic beginnings of Naim Frashëri. The religious feeling helped the newly freed Albanian to strengthen the ethnic feeling, moving towards the creation of national consciousness. *Divan*, a complex oriental form, supplied the popular culture, the written text the spoken (sung) text washing away the debt it owed to the oral literary culture. The study will argue that this literature of the tradition is of added value. There are 4 literary monuments to our history of spiritual culture. The first *Divan* in the Albanian language has pure literary discourse. It is a way of being self-sufficient. The truth of his gazelles, *qasidas* is possible. What can happen is marked. The event is represented through the writing process as a story, description or illustration. The real dimensions of the fable are not lost, time and space are not fantasy. Therefore, literary creation is not the literature of fantasy, but of *tasawwuf*. Her hero operates in the domain of spirituality. As a combination of spiritual requirements with the dream of fulfilling them. It is poetry as a value and beauty in itself. The Austrian researcher Han antonomises the author Anacreon of Albania. The *Divan* in Albanian literature was a unified stylistic formation, which served the Islamic aesthetic purpose. Its theoretical literary codification is *tasawwuf*. He is more of a universal poet than a national poet, despite his tendency towards the national. Therefore, the media should invite the reader or the researcher, so that these universal aesthetic values become active again.

Key words: mysticism, poetics, text, *Divan*, *tasawwuf*, ethnic, universal

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Albania

Self-regulation of the media in the context of debates for and against state intervention

Self-regulation of the media and the models followed in this regard have fueled a wide range of debates among experts and researchers regarding the actors that should be involved in this process. Arguments for and against media self-regulation are mostly based on the level of media freedom and the stages through which democracy passes in the respective countries.

This study deepens into the debate of *pro* and *con* arguments about self-regulation models, analyzing it depending on the level of democracy and freedom of expression, but also on the features presented by media actors in Albania. The main research question of the study: “Can the self-regulation of the Albanian media be realized according to the model of co-regulation with the state?”

The study will be based on a critical analysis of researchers about the arguments for and against the model of co-regulation of the media, where the state has the right to some sanctions in this direction. Theoretical approaches will be used for the analysis of primary empirical data collected through several questionnaires with about 300 Albanian journalists, as well as various reports from national and international organizations about the phenomena that have accompanied the political transition in Albania and that affect issues of media regulation and self-regulation.

Some of the expected conclusions are that the Albanian media faces significant difficulties in terms of self-regulation. Within the media industry there is a lack of will to establish some common professional norms that can be applied by the entire media industry. On the other hand, as long as Albania continues to have a fragile democracy, where the government does not respect media freedom at satisfactory levels, the co-regulation model cannot be the right choice.

Keywords: media self-regulation, co-regulation, media regulation, freedom of expression

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Inter-cultural communication between reality, axiom and image

This paper presents a kind of revolutionary state of thought, by suggesting a different approach irresponsive to the stereotyped consciousness of humans and societies. It invites individuals and collectives to communicate with difference through the other's way of thinking, and it encourages people to think out of the box. This leads societies to a certain level of maturity by learning to see reality out of their cultural frames and from the perspective of others, which doesn't necessarily contradict with the core of their identities.

This could be achieved by self-critic, flexing absolutisms, respect of difference, understanding the naturality of diversity between societies and their cultures, and by seeing intercultural differences as a mutual enrichment, rather than reason of conflict and extinction.

When societies reach the maturity and the ability to balance between openness and maintaining their own identities, they would be able to participate in the suggested initiative of elevating upon their own cultural frames. This could be reached by societies moving out of their absolutisms with confidence that is strong to authenticate their identities during a broader communication experience that includes new inter-cultural enrichments, knowing and learning about otherness, and through experiencing difference. As result, societies can go back to their own worlds, having gained a new qualitative and quantitative richer knowledge that widens their horizons, impacting their consciousnesses, developing authentic cosmopolitan individuals and consequently societies.

The paper wanders between theory and realism: defining terms like culture and civilization, attempting to explain the ways of communication between the Arab culture and 'Western' cultures in the era of globalization, comparing the

construction of the Arabic 'oriental' and the European American 'western' societies in the intercultural communication, concluding to the fragility of conceptual grounds -between the past, the present and the age of modernism and postmodernism-, studying the presence of mass media in societies and between them, also analyzing its role in influencing the worldwide public opinions. It reflects the shape and content of the intercultural communication between dialogue and conflict from the different points of view, noting the barriers against a constructive intercultural communication, taking the technological revolution and its challenges into consideration. Finally, this work suggests new constructive approaches towards an authentic intercultural dialogue.

As a sequence of the brainstorming, the discussions, the thinking, the walks and the talks, I suggest the following recommendations towards way forward:

- Overcome oppositional dualities.
- Reconstruction of 'human made' cultural cognitive systems, by creating independent active minds -hence public opinions- that are able to construct and to reconstruct themselves continuously through the cycle of life.
- The need to create a kind of secularization between cultural social systems and political national and international systems.
- Waiving cultural and intercultural 'narrations' -as called by Edward Said-.
- Maintaining the continuous development of societies on the cultural and intercultural level of communication, by interacting through the thought of the other -as Aljaberi explains-.
- Taking the natural instinctive aspect of human co-existence into consideration -when observing and experiencing intercultural communication-, by viewing it as a vital, as a fundamental, as a mutual and as an authentic constructive source of communication. In other words: the natural instinct emphasizes our human similarities in our actions and reactions towards our natural environments in different ways. Building on this idea, we may understand the human structure and we could work on creating mutual constructive cosmopolitan intercultural communities around the globe.

The paper ends with an open ending moving on towards more and more wonderings, observations and interactive experiences in cultures and between them, to reach the ambition of knowledge and to discover the wide never-ending sphere of reality and life, hoping to widen the horizons of perception and deepen the cultural consciousness, reaching intercultural wisdom and dialogue.

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China’s Information Warfare in the Liberal West

The post-Cold War era has been marked not only by greater information freedoms in the formerly autocratic societies but also by the increased liberalization of the information space in the traditional liberal West. The rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as the Internet, smartphones, and social media, have led to the creation of free-information realm. This realm is marked by the availability of great quantities of information that are mostly cost-free to access in real-time by people across the world. When coupled with a free-market economy mindset, these two great liberal systems of information and economic exchanges have not only led to economic prosperity and the liberalization of the information space but have also enabled autocratic powers like Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to exercise their authoritarianism beyond their political borders, albeit in a digital form. The willingness of Western corporations and institutions to outsource their platforms in exchange for profits have enabled the Chinese government to wage information warfare against the West on the cheap. In this paper, through process tracing, we will show: 1) how various Western corporations were critical in the development of the PRC digital information control system, known as the Great Firewall, to limit Chinese people access to free and uncensored content on the Internet; and 2) that Western institutions equip, enable and promote Chinese disinformation, propaganda, and influence regarding topics of special interest to PRC. The objective of Chinese information warfare in the West are to not only allow the government to whitewash its dismal record of human rights abuses in Hong Kong and Tibet, and the Uighur genocide in Xinyang province, but also to advance its narrative of how the liberal ruled-based international system is weak and unjust and that the Chinese autocratic model of political-economic development

is the right alternative. While PRC disinformation, propaganda, and influence operations are currently limited to certain topics favored by the government, in the coming years as ICT advance to be powered by Artificial Intelligence, the information warfare can be waged to not only whitewash PRC human rights abuses, but also to turn the Western societies against their own governments and one another.

Keywords: China, disinformation, influence operation, information warfare, Internet and propaganda.

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PR discourse as a new form of propaganda and its penetration in the Albanian media

Although more than 30 years have passed since the fall of the communist system and the establishment of the democratic pluralist system in Albania, authoritarian mindsets and practices of exercising power are still present today in the country. One of them is propaganda, the presence of which can be explained by specific factors such as: the direct inheritance from the totalitarian communist system, the growing presence of populism and symptoms of authoritarianism, as well as the infant stage of democracy in the country.

The most elaborate and sophisticated form of today's propaganda in Albania is what passes and is produced from public relations (abbreviated: PR) offices. It is understood that public relations activity is a normal communication activity for democratic countries when they use their own channels to distribute messages to the public. But when PR uses or appears in the mass media, it can take the form of propaganda and thus, become a major issue for society. Once it conquers the media, it may transform them from information tools into propaganda tools.

The proposed paper aims to present and analyze the main forms of propaganda that originates from the public relations offices of political parties and state institutions and has managed to penetrate into mass media. It contains a considerable number of concrete propaganda facts and practices, which were identified during the empirical research and monitoring carried out within the work for this paper. The purpose of the paper is to unmask the camouflaged forms of propaganda, considering it as the dual responsibility of political and media actors. It aims to prove the symbiotic relationship between the populist and authoritarian tendencies of the ruling leadership on the one hand and propaganda discourse on the other. At the same time, the report sheds light on the compromised agendas of the mass media which, for the sake of occult interests, leave room for propaganda on their pages or screens.

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Masters of Clickbait: Misinformation, Public Relations, and the News We Consume

Continuing shifts in technology have pushed content creators and producers — news outlets included — to produce content valued by a specific audience for targeted advertising. This shift in technology has created a space in which users can interact, share content, and most importantly, create their own content without a traditional gatekeeper to filter information (Kata 2010). This study examines the ways in which misinformation is potentially used as a public relations tactic, using YouTube's push against the European Union's (EU) Article 13, a copyright law, as a case study. In 2018, the EU sought to put pressure on sites like YouTube to prevent users from uploading unlicensed, copyrighted content, such as music. The measure faced significant controversy; creators began to fear for their ability to make content, and YouTube made significant efforts to push back against the proposed legislation (Alexander, 2019).

This study employed gatekeeping theory, a particularly useful lens through which to examine how successful (or unsuccessful) PR efforts are. Gatekeeping examines how information is selected by journalists and the processes used to make such determinations (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Few academic studies have explicitly named the link between agenda building and gatekeeping theory, despite the connecting ideas surrounding what information becomes news.

Using a modified method from Sissons (2012), this study examined subsidy materials and news articles written about YouTube's push against the EU's passage of Article 13 (which was passed as Article 17 in 2019). These texts were scrutinized

to determine not only the sources of information they used, but also various patterns used in reporting the information and themes surrounding the information.

In total, researchers analyzed 20 subsidy materials, along with 52 news articles published about Article 13. YouTube's tone in their materials is pressing and at times emotional, presenting itself as a safe space for creators. In discussions of Article 13, the press release language becomes inflammatory. Each communication discusses the "unintended consequences" of Article 13, implying the legislation would force YouTube to censor materials published on their site.

Analysis showed the majority of news articles analyzed relied heavily on the subsidy materials; 33 contained a direct quote from YouTube subsidy. News articles with heavy subsidy were written in a he said/she said style, with little fact checking, allowing misinformation to be published. This specific finding makes the amount of misinformation found in YouTube's communications particularly disturbing. While one purpose of media gates is to prevent incorrect or misleading information from making it out to a large audience, misinformation can make it into the news cycle when inaccurate information from a source has not been through rigorous fact checking or when journalists report it as one side of an argument in "objective" he-said, she-said reporting.

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Media freedom in Albania, a reality of standards in crisis.

Freedom of the media and free media are the binomial of the evidence of a deep crisis, of the indicators of democracy in Albania. The media is considered as the guardian of respect for values, the parameters of freedom and the implementation of the law in the public and private spheres. As such, in countries with transitional democracies, the media is under constant attack with consequences for informing and raising a sound public opinion. In Albania, from year to year there is a deterioration of the indicators that define the media as a free power. This is related to a complexity of issues such as: the freedom and independence of the journalist in his work, self-censorship caused by the violence of the external environment, the threat of fines and imprisonment by officials or individuals with immunity and the pressure of employer owners, media ownership and connections her relationship with power, the lack of official information, working conditions and limited rights of journalists and many other challenges. The low level of respect for media indicators is every year in the focus of analyzes of international reports, which classify Albania in the most problematic rankings. According to the 2021 World Press Freedom Index report, there has been a deterioration in the state of journalism in Albania/ This scientific article, in addition to the analysis of the indicators, will also include the opinion of media experts and journalists about the critical reality that the media finds itself in today, as well as finding ways out of the crisis.

Keywords: Freedom of the media, index of freedom, independent media, censorship, self-censorship, violence against journalists,

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Concepts influencing Bhutanese media

Bhutan is the Himalayan Kingdom that for centuries remained in self-imposed isolation. Only the geopolitical tensions forced it on the path to modernization, which included society reorganization in many areas, especially in media production and consumption. Bhutan is one of the last countries on the planet to introduce Television and the Internet in 1999, therefore it needed certain guiding concepts that would structure the ideas presented to the wider audience.

First of them is the idea of Gross National Happiness (GNH) – uniquely Bhutanese theory that proposes to measure the progress of society not in monetary gains like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does, but in the overall happiness of an individual.

The second one is Middle Path Journalism (MPJ), a concept coined by Dorji Wangchuck that draws from GNH and Bhutanese social values. It proposes a four-dimensional approach based on community, compassion, commitment, and contentment. The media should be more human-centric, instead of thriving on conflicts, tragedy, mercantilism, etc.

In this paper I would like to discuss how Gross National Happiness and Middle Path Journalism are represented in the traditional and new Bhutanese media, and if those concepts succeed in bringing the Bhutanese nation to a peaceful and modern existence.

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The Other Side of the Pandemic Reportage. Audience Perception of COVID-19 Media Framing and its Influence on Social Polarization

This paper explores the experiences of Lagos State residents during COVID-19 and the relationship between COVID-19 reportage in Lagos State and ethnic inter-relationship. The goal is to understand media influence in a society from the perspectives of people directly influenced by the COVID-19 media frames. This is the first research to explore ethnic polarization in Lagos State within the context of media and COVID-19. It is significant for researchers and decision-makers in the media to fully grasp what media audiences think about health reportage and how it influences them. It will help direct researchers on the way for further research and help the media decision-makers know what needs to be the focus of improvement for health reportage in Lagos State.

The research adopted a non-media centric approach to study mediatization from below. A non media centric approach means studying subjects in the lower part of the power relations in a mediatized society. The focus is shifted from what the media says to what the audiences perceive from the media and how it shapes their perception of a topic and their everyday actions. The theories of Mediatization and Framing are adopted to understand the power of media and the process of shaping the audience's perception through media frames. Furthermore, Contact Theory is used to explain the relationship between the pandemic situation and ethnic polarization in Lagos State. COVID-19 changed Lagosians' everyday lives, and amid these changes, there is an increased level of Lagosians' independence on the media for information about the pandemic. Research findings show that COVID-19 reportage created and increased the fear and anxiety of Lagosians all through the pandemic period. This influence is attributed to the daily media report of COVID-

19 confirmed cases and the lack of news about other phenomena in the media. However, these reportages also helped Lagosians stay aware of the preventive measures to take, and some interviewees affirmed that it was an essential factor that gave them confidence and helped reduce their anxiety.

During COVID-19, social relationships were negatively affected as people could not physically meet with their friends, families, and colleagues. Furthermore, the research analysis showed that even though social relationships were affected, and ethnic relationships and contact were reduced, it yielded a good result for Lagos State. Unlike before COVID-19, ethnic conflicts drastically reduced while social cohesion and peace were promoted. However, there were other tragic happenings, such as palliatives looting and warehouse robbery. The media also did not report on ethnic conflicts and polarization as there was nothing to report on that. Therefore, this research concludes that ethnic conflicts were reduced during COVID-19 due to a lack of contact between individuals from different ethnic groups.

Keywords: COVID-19, ethnic polarization, prejudice, media frames, ethnic conflicts, Lagos State, non-media centric, stereotypes.

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Albanian journalists facing propaganda, disinformation and fake news - Challenges and Solutions

Propaganda, dubious information campaigns, disinformation and fake news or similar situations in information processes have become permanent problems in the work of Albanian journalists.

On the one hand, these disorders in information are strengthened in specific historical moments and developments such as the Covid19 pandemic or the Ukraine-Russia war, but they do not stop even in normal situations.

Interested in analyzing these phenomena are not only professionals who work with information but also those who feed on it: the audience.

In this study we will analyze and bring some solutions for keeping information disorders under control in Albania with the aim of curbing them as completely as possible, mainly from the point of view of journalists.

Hypothesis: In order to combat disinformation and fake news, it is necessary for the media and journalists to work to raise their level every day and become more professional.

Methodology: After a detailed review of the literature and in-depth analysis of what level and form these disorders have developed, taking the Ukraine-Russia war as a case study, we will use online questionnaires. Target: 40-50 professional media journalists in Albania.

Keywords: Journalism, Propaganda, Disinformation, Fake News, Audience, Fact-Checking Platforms, Media Education, Ukraine-Russia War, Narrative



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