

7th Conference on Media Accountability: Journalism and Human Rights

An Overview

The Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb hosted the 7th *Media Accountability* conference in Zagreb from May 19th to 21st. Media Accountability is a conference that gathers social scientists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia. The conference's founders are Viktorija Car and Igor Kanižaj, from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb. They organised the first Media Accountability conference back in 2010, connecting scientists from nine regional universities. The last six conferences were held in Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Dubrovnik and Mostar.

Following recent trends and events, according to recent debates in the domestic, professional and academic spheres, the main focus of this year's panels were journalism and human rights. Media was observed from the perspective of freedom of speech, values of contemporary democracy and the development of the highly active media audiences. The main theme was stimulated by the relevant media reporting about the migrant crisis, which became more intense during the second half of 2015. The media's portrayal of migrants, and the position of minorities and children in the media were also analysed. Vulnerable social groups, and children's privacy and rights were also in focus.

The conference was opened on May 19th, with an opening speech by the organisation committee and the keynote words of the committee members, which included Viktorija Car, Igor Kanižaj, and Gordana Vilović from the Faculty of Political Sciences, also with Danijel Labaš and Nada Zgrabljic Rotar from Croatian Studies. The opening was accompanied by the dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Lidija Kos-Stanišić and Aleksandra Markić Boban, the director of the Zagreb's office of the Hanns Seidel Foundation. The Hanns Seidel Foundation was the co-organiser of the conference.

The Conference consisted of lectures, structured in six panels, with an introductory panel and a "round table" debate. This year's conference represented a collaboration between regional researchers, professors, and students, and professors and students from different German universities, thanks to the Hanns Seidel foundation scholarships. Gabrielle Goderbauer-Marchner, a journalism and media professor from the University of Munich, introduced the guests with her speech about crisis communication and the problems with publications during a crisis era. She addressed the big issues and challenges of crisis communication, which has to maintain its consistency during such a hard time.

A "round table" debate moderated by the veteran of Croatian radio journalism, Marina Mučalo, followed. The debate's participants were established Croatian investigative journalists Nataša Škaričić, Slavica Lukić, Melisa Skender, Berislav Jelinić and Željko

Peratović. They discussed the problems of their profession and career, such as verbal and physical threats, the violation of the labour rights of journalists. This discussion was followed by one of current events and the background of the political system in Croatia. They especially noted the complications in their way of getting relevant information in order to provide their story. This is a complicated process as their investigative journalism may take them a couple of months or even up to a few years to start publishing their story. Their work has revealed many irregularities in the spheres of politics, economics, and even the media in Croatia.

The first panel, "The socially responsible role of journalists and editors", was dedicated to the profession of journalism in five lectures. It was about hate speech that dominates through the virtual media's comments. Gordana Vilović from Zagreb University gave the introduction. Media literacy was connected to media convergence with a lecture by Gabrielle Goderbauer-Marcher. She talked about high technology, like "smart houses", that require constant activity from their users. The following panel was introduced by Rade Veljanovski from the University of Belgrade, discussed human rights and media activities in Serbia. The panel discussed digital media services that provide more active participation of the media audiences. The next panel was about citizens' participation in the public sphere via comments and their complaints about the content of media texts. The lecture was based on research from Helena Popović, which focused on active media audiences. An interesting panel about the current state of Serbian media was presented by Mirosljub Radojković.

The following panel, "The media's portrayal of refugees and migrants" was moderated by Viktorija Car from Zagreb University. She provided a theoretical framework for the visual portrayal of individuals and migrant groups in media, while presenting recent research by Anja Stević, who analysed photographs of the migrants on Twitter – tweeted by the five most prominent newspapers in America. The sample of her research was selected using big data analysis. The iconic photos were emphasised because of their direct impact on their audience. The photos were shown to have the power to symbolise the entire migrant crisis. In the next lecture Boris Beck analysed media humour and satire, based on the emotional narratives of cartoons. Jelena Kleut and Brankica Drašković from the University of Novi Sad, presented the narrative and semiotic analysis of the photographs that provide certain meanings to articles about the refugees. The panel was concluded with research and a presentation by Dunja Majstorović and Martina Soko, who analysed the representation of child refugees in the mainstream Croatian media, *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*.

The theme of the next panel was "The media's portrayal of the refugees and crisis communication". This panel focused on the creation of the media's agenda and contained an analysis of the representation of the Croatian migrant crisis in the media. Nikolina Borčić discussed how some media metaphors can affect audiences, stimulating a change in their political attitudes. This was analysed via the German media discourse and an analysis of the interviews with Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor.

The forth panel “Media and marginal groups” was moderated by Lejla Turčilo from the University of Sarajevo. The focus of the panel was the invisibility of marginal groups in mainstream media. The marginal groups are defined as non-constitutive social and public sphere participants. The pictures of minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the focus of the analysis, but also, the lecture was based on new media trends and online communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was thematically connected to the credibility of influential media in the contemporary public sphere, according to human rights. The position of disabled people and gender issues were also in focus.

The second day of the conference was dedicated to the recent methods of education and media literacy. The purpose of all of these methods is to increase the new generation of participants in the public sphere. Those new methods should be implemented in educational programs, starting with institutions of elementary education. The focus should be on media literacy, and demands a critical response to media use. Danijel Labaš moderated the panel “Media and information literacy”. The first lecture analysed an e-mail correspondence between professors and their students in Italy. Based on that, the main differences between Italian and Croatian academic communication were noted.

The final panel was about children and young adults as one of the most vulnerable social groups. Nada Zgrabljic Rotar moderated the panel “Media and children”. This panel discussed children’s privacy in the media and the mechanisms of self-regulation that are dedicated to the protection of children’s rights in the media and the social networks.

At the end of the conference there was a promotion of a new book with selected papers from the previous *Media Accountability* conference. The book’s title is *Media and the public interests* and it was edited by Viktorija Car, Marijana Matović and Lejla Turčilo.

In their closing statements the participants expressed their satisfaction with the success of the conference based on its organisation level, the content of the conference and how the presented research adds to media studies’ body of knowledge. This successful conference should provide the motivation for the eighth conference on Media Accountability, which is likely to held next year at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade.

Vjekoslav Šago

IPSA Joint Conference RC22 and RC10 with CICOM

**Political Communication in Uncertain Times:
Digital Technologies, Citizen Participation and Open Governance**

University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain
7th and 8th September 2017

Application deadline: 30th January 2017
Contact: ipsacom33@unav.es

The unexpected British exit from the European Union, the migration crisis, the rise of Isis, conflicts in countries as Syria, the emergence of populism and unpredicted citizens' reactions (such as the rejection of Colombia Peace Plan or the election of President Trump) are only some of the events that are taking place nowadays; they all have in common the uncertainty that brings with them and that characterize the current era.

The purpose of this conference is to consider the state of media and communications research in a political period marked by a variety of events that take place within an uncertain context. The conference theme focuses on the intersection between the role of political communication and digital technologies, both understood as potential pillars that may enhance democracy in a communication context characterised by continuous crises and their transnational consequences.

Papers should make a contribution to the development of theoretical or empirical studies regarding digital political communication conducted by diverse actors that range from governments, political parties, media organisations, to non-governmental actors, citizens and social movements. Scholars, researchers and professionals are encouraged to submit paper proposals that either broadly or specifically deal with the aforementioned issues, be it by addressing national or comparative studies, theoretical or empirical ones.

We welcome submissions that cover one or more of the following questions:

>New challenges for journalism and communication in a digital society: What changes have journalists and the media in general gone through? Do digital technologies change traditional concepts of media power? Do media and communication technologies support the formation of community?

>Media coverage and journalist behaviour during moments of political turmoil: What role can media play at times of crisis? Which frames appeared repeatedly while media reported about an event? Is there any danger regarding the empowerment of certain voices while others are ignored?

>Digital technology in election campaigns: How have election campaigns changed in styles, strategies, tools and with what impacts on voter engagement? What factors are shaping election outcomes in the digital age, and to what extent?

>Relationship between representatives and citizens: How do governments and institutions deal with the opportunity and challenges introduced by digital technologies? Do they help to promote a real conversation between both sides? To what extent do they reduce the gap between them?

>New parties in the political scene: Are new technologies promoting the emergence of populist parties? To what extent communication from a new party is different to those from traditional parties? Is there any visible pattern shared by new political actors?

>Political actors and new technologies: To what extent are new technologies shaping political parties? Can we distinguish different practices and uses depending on the countries? Are those different practices somehow driven by any ideological perspective?

>Digital Technology in public diplomacy: How digital media are shaping international political communication? How should international political actors adapt communication to the new digital audiences? Do digital media allow dialogue and interaction with international publics?

>New voices, a multiplicity of agents in the public sphere: Can digital technologies transform the characteristics of the traditional public sphere? Is it possible to have an online public sphere? Will an online public sphere enhance democracy? Do media technologies constitute a new public sphere?

>Mobilization and participation: Are digital technologies really able to empower citizens' political participation? Do they empower specific voices in detriment of others? To what extent social media play a relevant role on social movements? Can we talk about social media echo chambers in some results of recent political events?

Key note speakers

JAN ZIELONKA (University of Oxford)

ANDREW CHADWICK (Royal Holloway University of London)

Further information at:

<http://www.unav.edu/web/facultad-de-comunicacion/cicom33>

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