

## THE 73<sup>RD</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION, TORONTO, CANADA, MAY 25–29, 2023

The International Communication Association (ICA) Annual conference took place in the city centre of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The Key conference theme “Reclaiming Authenticity in Communication” offered grounds for reexamining communications scholarship knowledge exchange, with the panel on media freedom and democracy by the Polish Communication Association.

The annual conferences of the International Communication Association are among the largest for media scholars worldwide. The ICA research sections offer various scholarly and methodological approaches as both media and society constantly evolve. Looking at the key themes from the ICA conferences of recent years, the overall goal has been to address the values of openness, inclusiveness, and social justice alongside the question of “One World? One Network” – as in the case of last year’s ICA conference in Paris. This time, the organizers emphasized the authenticity of communication, further asking – above all: What are the key pillars of authentic communication? And what makes communication more or less authentic?

Photo 1. Participants of the panel of the Polish Communication Association during the 73<sup>rd</sup> conference of the ICA, Toronto, Canada, May 2023.



Author: Łukasz Szurmiński (University of Warsaw).

This year’s opening session, entitled “Authenticity at the Heart of Communication (Scholarship)”, featured Sarah Banet-Weiser (University of Southern California & University of Pennsylvania), Pablo Boczkowski (Northwestern University),

Rajiv Rimal (Johns Hopkins University) and Joseph B. Walther (University of California, Santa Barbara) – offering different research approaches and methodologies towards the authenticity. The critical conference theme echoed in the parallel sections’ panels, including the thematic pre – and post-conferences. For instance, the leading themes in connection to authenticity in organizational studies have widely explored the challenge of human-to-machine automation and time-related tensions in news publishing vs news checking. In journalism studies, the emphasis concerning knowledge share has been on the challenge of going beyond perceived journalism values, with data from several journalism ethnographic research projects and data illustrating new forms of media communities (lean and agile forms, sustainable-driven communications, human rights in the data-driven age, etc.).

The panel of the Polish Communication Association in Toronto 2023 looked at authenticity in communication via the researchers’ interests and their lenses towards media freedom and democracy in Europe. Overall, we argued that the umbrella term of authenticity is highly interwoven with the value of truth; something which has been challenged by the polarisation of the European media and multiple narratives on what democracy stands for. We invited the consortium members of the EU-funded project “Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape” (MEDIADCOM, 2021–2024), to challenge the normative media and democracy foundations (theory and media regulation) with their local democratic checks and balances of implementation and effectiveness. Researchers from 14 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden) used the MEDIADCOM methodology to share findings on journalism values, importance of journalism literacies and education, alongside the call for more inclusive and open dialogue between policymakers and media researchers in the national and European contexts.

Participants of the PCA panel received comments and feedback from session attendees and Daniel C. Hallin (San Diego University), who served as the respondent – and is a member of the Advisory Board of the MEDIADCOM project. Findings from the ICA panel of the Polish Communication Association will be published in the Special Issue 2024 of the “Central European Journal of Communication”.

*Michał Głowacki*

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**“MEDIA FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY: EUROPE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE”  
THE PANEL OF THE POLISH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION**

**TORONTO, CANADA, MAY 29, 2023**

**RESPONDENT: DANIEL C. HALLIN, SAN DIEGO UNIVERSITY**

**PRESENTERS:**

**DEMOCRATIC AND CULTURAL U-TURNS? HUNGARY AND POLAND EXPLAINED**

*Gábor Polyák, Michał Głowacki, Petra Szávai, Jacek Mikucki, Łukasz Szurmiński,  
Katarzyna Gajlewicz Korab and Maria Łoszevska Ołowska*

The quality of democracy in Hungary and Poland has raised attention under the ruling conservative right governments. While the European Union acknowledges non-democratic turns and free media erosion in both countries, Hungary’s and Poland’s governments build their success by opposing the Western voices, resulting in value clashes (formerly known as conservatives vs liberals). This paper uses critical cultural junctures and social, political and media lenses to investigate the origins of multiple narratives over today’s democracy.

**HOW QUALITY OF JOURNALISM INFLUENCES PRESS FREEDOM  
IN 14 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A FSQCA COMPARATIVE APPROACH**

*Zrinjka Peruško, Epp Lauk, Filip Trbojević, Iva Nenadić, Dina Vozab,  
Peter Berglez and Mart Ots*

This paper investigates the relationship of the journalistic field with press freedom values in 14 Western and Eastern European countries. The study is based on case studies of media systems in the same 14 countries and the fsQCA (fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis) calibrations performed during the MEDIADELCOM project. The fsQCA analysis is expected to show, which combinations of contingent conditions in the countries related to higher or lower values on the press freedom index.

## **DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY: THE MEDIA-RELATED RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS THE INTERACTION OF AGENTS**

*Halliki Harro Loit, Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte, Lilia Raycheva, Bissera Zankova, Sergio Splendore, Martin Oller Alonso and John Matthews*

This study approaches the media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication using the actor approach. We ask how the action and interaction of different agents (e.g., journalists, media users, politicians, experts, etc.)—who act and interact in specific societal contexts and with specific competence—influence the paths of risks and opportunities in 14 European countries. The study uses agent-oriented modelling as the point of departure.

## **JOURNALISM COMPETENCIES AND SELF-REGULATION: THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE**

*Lenka Waschková Čísařová, Iveta Jansová, Jan Motal, Halliki Harro-Loit, Ioana Avădani*

This paper focuses on self-regulation and its relation to journalism competencies in 14 European countries. The comparison considers historical evolution, political economy changes, and self-regulation development, with a special focus on journalistic (de) professionalisation. The study analyses media policy documents, self-regulation documents and organisations alongside expert interview data. The framework covers a wide range of European media systems; the data stems from the research of the participating teams of the MEDIADELCOM project.

## **RESEARCH WITH(OUT) VALUES: INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPACT OF MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY AS AN ACADEMIC FIELD**

*Tobias Eberwein, Marcus Kreutler and Susanne Fengler*

Research on media accountability stresses the importance of free and responsible media for democratic societies. But how far can researchers themselves contribute to holding media accountable? The paper discusses the relevance of media accountability as an academic field and its impact on journalism practice. The analysis is based on a comparative evaluation of research infrastructures for media accountability in 14 European countries and a discussion of cases of the interplay between journalism and academia.