

DOI: 10.51480/1899-5101.17.4(38).925

Editors' Introduction

New technologies have a complex and evolving relationship with communication, media, and democracy, offering opportunities and challenges. They can enhance citizen participation, facilitate communication, and improve government transparency, but also pose risks of misinformation, surveillance, and inequality. While the technology is changing, the people's goals and motivations seem to remain the same. In a highly competitive environment, everyone attempts to create a positive image to attract attention and persuade others. Politicians try to win voters' hearts (and votes) with rhetoric, promises, and programs, while companies fight against each other with more or less subtle public relations instruments. Even countries are constantly developing their national branding to gain attention from investors and tourists.

All these needs and aims become even more urgent in times of challenges and crisis. While political actors want to gain and keep power, the media face contradictory expectations. On the one hand, they serve as the primary sources of information to the public and the watchdogs who monitor the elites. On the other hand, political and economic pressure limits journalists' freedom and autonomy. Citizens are no longer just the recipients of the messages spread by politicians, businessmen, and journalists. They became active participants in the process of information and disinformation flow.

As scholars, we need to address challenges related to a combination of traditional needs and new possibilities technology offers. We start Fall 2024 CEJC issue with a cross-country comparative study on election campaigns in the era of social media. The study by Delia Cristina Balaban, Xenia Farkas, and Mihnea S. Stoica provides findings from the analysis of political campaigns on Facebook during the European Parliament (EP) elections in 2019 and the national elections held between 2020 and 2022 in Germany, Hungary, and Romania. The study clearly shows that although prevalent topics of the campaigns vary considerably across countries, social media contribute to equalizing political communication in all these places.

Although social media has become an important platform for political communication, television is still a crucial source of domestic and foreign news for a significant part of many societies. The case described by Mariana Kitsa

and Oleh Haliv shows that TV stations may start a close collaboration to meet audience expectations during crisis, such as war. In their study, two Ukrainian scholars captured a phenomenon called the United Television Marathon (Telethon), which was launched after the beginning of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine.

Two other papers in this issue focus on the content and style of political communication from two different perspectives. Magnus Tomas Kevisas examines the attitudes Lithuanian editors-in-chief have towards populist rhetoric used by political actors. His study proves that perceptions vary depending on the audience structure of the publications they oversee. Specifically, the study reveals a pronounced divergence from the negative views of populism of large urban and regional newspapers to the ambivalent views of local newspapers. Marta Kobylska, on the other hand, focuses her attention on actual acts of speech by a political actor, namely the former US President, Bill Clinton, and the rhetorical devices he used to define enemies while justifying the US military engagements. Despite different perspectives employed in these two studies, both papers recognize factors (either organizational or contextual) that affect the perception and expression of political issues.

The way one perceives the political, social, or business aspects of reality may be, to some extent, affected by experts in public relations and branding. In their paper, Gianina Vulpe and Kirill Filimonov present a critical discourse analysis of strategies undertaken by the Invest Moldova Agency, the governmental institution in charge of Moldova's brand communication. Moldova serves here as an example of a country with a high internal diversity that seeks a strategy to build a consistent self-image and national brand. In a following paper, Markéta Kaclová offers insights into those who actually work in the public relations field by conducting a study among the Czech public relations practitioners.

With the last paper, by Jakub Nowak and Johanna E. Möller, we refer again to technology and how it affects citizens' lives in general and privacy in particular. In their study, Nowak and Möller interviewed Polish and German activists who engage in privacy-conscious social and professional relations to understand how self-determined privacy is realized in datafied environments.

In the section on Methods and Concepts, Aneta Duda shows that combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a discourse analysis may facilitate a nuanced examination of how language reflects, reinforces, or challenges dominant narratives surrounding specific opinions or attitudes. Her study focuses on two divergent strategies to drive culture towards the extremes: one involving a stark minimalism and the other, gaudy maximalism. While the critical discourse analysis provides a framework for examining the power structures, ideologies, and cultural values embedded in minimalist and maximalist discourse, corpus

linguistics offers empirical tools to identify linguistic patterns, frequency distributions, and co-occurrence of key terms within large text datasets.

The interview with Professor David L. Altheide, an outstanding scholar and expert on the role of mass media and information technology in social control and qualitative methodology, offers additional insights into changes we are experiencing and challenges we are facing these days. The interview title: *Through the Lens of the Media: Media Logic, Fear, AI* reflects a revolution in the media and technology and the psychological aspects that still drive the media business.

With this issue, we proudly announce the winner of the Media and Democracy Karol Jakubowicz Award 2024. We also present book reviews and a report from the ECREA General Conference, which took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia in September 2024. Members of the Polish Communication Association not only presented their papers at this conference, but also significantly contributed to the structure of the ECREA.

Marco Mazzoni

UNIVERSITY OF PERUGIA, ITALY

Agnieszka Stępińska

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ, POLAND