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Global Dialogues on Communication, Knowledge and Culture: Conclusive Remarks

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Communication issues are currently on the top of sociological research worldwide, mainly because of the detected impact of Information Technologies on everyday habits (participative journalism, social connections on specialized platforms, role of social media, globalization of products – including cultural products – consumerism, importance of mediated self, etc.). Researchers working on communication, knowledge and culture issues are interested in several important themes (where digitalization seems to be crucial). The contributors of this volume (coming from different parts of the world, such as Greece, Romania, the United Arab Emirates or the United States of America) represent a good sample of ongoing research topics in Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture confirming that the core theme of the contemporary interests is the role of digitalization in different areas (education, human rights and video activism, journalism and of course cultural products), affronting almost the same issues in all parts of the world, because of the globalization.

Our first topic concerns the *video use*. Is sharing videos a necessary part of reporting? Should eyewitnesses be asked permission before their videos are broadcasted by news media, or would that hinder the reporting process? How can investigators and advocates report on abuse caught on camera without violating the privacy or impacting the security of those seen on video? We must here remark that traditional protocols and guidelines have not kept up with these new ethical challenges. Although codes of ethics instruct to do no harm, it is difficult to apply that principle when working with videos produced by others (activists or victims).

The research on eyewitness video's role[1] as a policy-oriented mechanism for human rights (mapping out why and how human rights collectives have been aspiring to professionalize video activism) has explored its importance on social awareness (showing at the same time the difficulties to detect / and or select the "events" of huge injustices around the world). Still, the systematic approaches to video production, standards, and training help the human right collectives tap more prominently at least into the institutional and legal environments where human rights agendas are developed, discussed, and implemented (placing activist and other eyewitness video into institutional and legal service), although the possibility of exaggeration or personal interference is present there too, as in any "visual" creation (which of course characterizes sides of the contemporary "visual culture").

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[1] Entitled "Eyewitness Video's Role as a Policy-Oriented Mechanism for Human Rights" written by Professor Sandra Ristovska (University of Colorado Boulder, USA College of Media, Communication, and Information).

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A consequence of the *cultural globalization* (assisted by digitalization) is the circulation of several "national" popular cultures all over the world (showing first of all certain similarities of the "popular culture" in general). One of the striking effects is the global circulation of Korean popular culture (known as the *Korean wave, or Hallyu*). How something so seemingly hyper localized transcended borders to become the biggest cultural export the world has seen for some time? Hallyu, Korean pop culture, is in an all-time high demand, with tv-series like Netflix's Squid Game, Oscar award-winning films like Parasite and K-Pop stars like BTS and BlackPink dominating entertainment across the globe, from the US to the Philippines and Thailand to the United Kingdom. What Japan did not have in the past, is what Korean culture strives on now, a digitally globalized world. Hallyu has especially benefited from global digitalization where K-pop fandoms have thrived on platforms like Twitter.

The cultural and educational export of Hallyu in other parts of the world had an enormous success, conducing to analyse the reasons of it. The case study of Romania[2] shows how the appealing of these products created the interest of teaching and learning Korean Studies something that explains how a *cultural product can stimulate knowledge about "other" (universal?) values* in the globalized world[3]; the success of Hallyu culture does not concern a homogenous audience but a diverse and polyvalent one. The research has shown that audiences of South Korea's cultural products perceived and decoded Halluy as a cultural "mix" between the "local" (that is, South Korean) elements and the appeal at a set of "global" (universal) values; in the case of Romanian audiences for Hallyu products -TV series and/or K-Pop music- there was a validation of theories regarding the cultural hybrid motivations involved in media consumption and theories emphasizing globalism of these cultural products, making them desirable and wanted world-wide.

The current importance of Artificial Intelligence has been already notified in communication studies. The article on *journalistic digitalization*[4] pointed out the huge differences between developed Western countries (which use AI technology and automation in their newsrooms) and developing countries that confront multi-facet challenges to embrace AI-related technological advancements in their news ecologies (as observed in the specific case study about Pakistan's mainstream news media). We might suggest here that the adoption of AI technology and automation also creates problems which apart the local resistances (some due to the fear to adopt technologoical innovation in routine practices) must also be considered together with the global issues that the "automation" can bring (to jobs, professions, everyday issues and mentalities about the ideas of "information" and participation).

When journalism studies are involved, we must have in mind that there already currently exist huge media problems (such as slipping public confidence in them as mistakes – regularly left uncorrected- and the creation of fake news); there is a general tendency for the press

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[2] Written by professor Valentina Marinescu (University of Bucharest) and entitled "The relevance of "Soft power" and Hallyu's success in Romania".

[3] Dimitra Laurence Larochelle has revealed how these cultural products produce interest to learn more on the other's culture, also stimulating cultural tourism: Larochelle Dimitra Laurence, (2019). The Greek fandom of Turkish soap operas and the tourism industry: Travelling through borders, realities and identities. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *52*(6), 1472-1493; Larochelle Dimitra Laurence, (2021). "*They're not that much different after all...*". The reception of Turkish soap-operas by Greeks: between otherness and proximity. In Pinar Aslan (Ed.), *Transnationalization of Turkish television series*. Istanbul University Press, Istanbul – Turkey.

[4] Written by Dr. Sadia Jamil (Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi), entitled *Stepping towards Technological Innovation in Journalism: Barriers for the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Automation in Developing Newsrooms*.

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(which focuses on huge profit margins) to play up and dwell on stories that are sensational - murders, car crashes, kidnappings, sex scandals and the like, together with the poor coverage of important issues (such as the environment, international "governance", education etc.). In addition, "quality" is not a goal and (according to many surveys) the public seems misinformed or/ and uninformed. Thus, the "artificial intelligence" journalism problems should be considered, in the frame of this general media situation. The question is neither simple nor easy to answer.

How important is technology in education? The COVID-19 pandemic has made of online education a vital part of teaching. Virtual classrooms, videos, augmented reality (AR), robots, and other technology tools are supposed to make class more lively and create supposedly more inclusive learning environments that foster collaboration and inquisitiveness and enable teachers to collect data on student performance. Still, it's important to note that technology is a tool used in education and not an end in itself. The promise of educational technology lies in what educators do with it and how it is used to best support their students' needs.

How the contemporary educational systems react and incorporate digitalization? The question is of utmost importance, as education "builds" and / or strengthens knowledge structures (the ways offered to understand and react with our natural or social environment). Still, sociologists are invited to *redefine the concept of progress* with emphasis on the structural interpretative criticism so that the educational capital becomes meaningful on the basis of "political morality", inter-culturalism and "social equality" as democratic educational values[5]. These values seem to be "less important" when an educational system is evaluated, although they should be constitutional ones at least in societies which aspire to "democracy".

The dialogue on the contemporary communication aspects is crucial for the sociological research because of the huge importance that these aspects present in the field of the contemporary societies[6]. Over the course of the twentieth century, information flows became omnipresent; people were eager to connect to the world by dealing with long sequences of news and mass media entertainment, through images on the screen and, in the last decades, with the Internet and mobile telecommunications. The Media and information technologies have penetrated the most diverse areas of public and private life, changing the meaning of social relationships (where "information", has become the basis of a powerful, international sector of the economy). At the same time, the flow of information promotes somehow the supremacy of the "visual" over the "intelligible" and the degradation of abstract thought encouraging a passion for the image.

As Filipa Subtil[7] remarks, a conceptual renewal could usefully draw on neglected ideas such as those of the Chicago School in the 1920s, of the Canadian thinker Harold Innis, the American scholar James Carey or the French Philippe Breton (who criticizes the idea of information cybernetics). This type of thinking has significant potential to *increasing awareness* that communication is only possible by creating the feeling of belonging to a community. In order to finally pose the question if the idea of utopian characteristics in the information society, constitutes another technological utopia, where one waits that technology does what social transformation should have done?

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[5] As explained by Professor Evaggelia Kalerante (University of Western Macedonia) in her contribution entitled "Constructing the humanistic knowledge amidst crisis periods: the role of leadership in formulating democratic educational culture".

[6] Although communication is important for any society, when it comes to the contemporary one, its importance becomes more evident (because of the extremely mediated modern world).

[7] Subtil, Filipa Mónica de Brito Gonçalves, "A cultural conception of communication**", paper presented at Technology and the Public Sphere, Department of Information Sciences and Media Studies at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen, Noruega (14-17 November 2006).

When it comes to the Sociology of Communication, we understand that the "dialogue" (very important in any sense) is extremely crucial. Democracy, which has placed the speech at the center of public life, seems to be threatened by the proliferation of techniques designed to compel contemporary people (without realizing it), to adopt this or that behavior or opinion. Are all methods of communication and debate good in a public space that claims to be democratic? Philippe Breton[8] attempts to answer these questions by describing the various techniques of manipulation that saturate our environment, using numerous examples from the fields of politics, advertising, psychotherapy and communication. This author also opens up a few avenues for restoring the role of the spoken word as a *living tool of democracy*. In particular, it introduces the original concept of freedom of reception, without which freedom of expression remains above all the freedom of the powerful. In this sense, the Global Dialogues goal, has succeeded initializing a step in the Sociology of Communication referring to Public Sphere.

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[8] Philippe Breton, *La parole manipulée*, La Découverte (Poche), Paris 2020.