



Global Dialogues on Communication, Knowledge and Culture: An Introduction

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The increasing globalization as well as the ongoing integration of digital technology in everyday life have resulted to the emergence of new issues related to communication, knowledge and culture.

Smartphones, digital platforms and social media are tools that have spread globally resulting to major changes on the ways individuals around the world *interact, learn* and *consume culture*. To begin with, the digital revolution has empowered the disempowered and blurred the boundaries between producers and consumers by creating symbiotic relationships between social subjects and powerful corporations, and by generating new forms of cultural production (Jenkins, 2007; Pearson, 2010; Jenkins et al., 2013).

While traditional media continue to be submitted to censorship and the dynamics of current power relations, social media and smartphones have allowed individuals around the world to express themselves and thus raise awareness on different forms of abuse. Not only social subjects can easily record their experiences or the events they witness with their mobile phones, but they can also easily share them through digital technologies. Thus, citizens have the possibility to play an active role in the process of collecting and disseminating information within the public sphere (citizen journalism). The increasing digitalization, allowed citizens to invite global community to pay attention on issues that could have been neglected otherwise. As it has been witnessed over the past years, the use of social media has also led to the strengthening of social movements such as *Black Lives Matter* or *Me Too* on an international level. Consequently, digital technologies seem to have accorded *power to marginalized social groups*.

The spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and particularly of social media has accorded a certain power to consumers. While in the past, consumers bought products and did not speak out, today, they have the possibility to give their feedback about the products/services within the public sphere by using digital technologies. Furthermore, due to recent technological advances, the way culture is generated is changing with the active participation of target groups. This results to the emergence of a *participatory culture* (Galuszka, 2015). Participatory culture relies on the eradication of the idea of a distinction between active producers and passive consumers (Jenkins et al., 2013). In addition, digital technologies have given the opportunity to social subjects to create and diffuse their own contents through different social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc.). This, has conducted to a new era of mediated self-representation (Goffman, 1959) focusing on the individual self¹.

¹ Within this context, the widely argued individualization thesis becomes relevant (e.g., Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Thus, give the above-mentioned elements, it is becoming evident that not only social subjects have now more of a voice than in the past but also new professions and ways of public influence have emerged (e.g., online community manager, digital media supervisor, engagement coordinator, social media analyst, social media influencers, etc.).

Digital technologies are now omnipresent in an important part of the globe allowing individuals to interact, express themselves and access knowledge². NGOs and international organizations have also seized the power of digital technologies. Thus, the implementation of several strategies aiming to raise awareness on (and/or fight against) different humanitarian and environmental issues is now widely practiced. For instance, the United Nations work closely with the video games industry in order to sensitize youths on climate change³.

Furthermore, digital revolution has also changed the ways individuals relate with each other. *Socializing* (Boyd & Heer, 2006; Gunn & Thumim 2012; Bakardjieva, 2005), *flirting* (Anzani et al., 2018; Strugo & Muise, 2019; Sumter & Vandenbosch, 2019; Timmermans & Courtois, 2019) or even *grieving* (Roberts, 2004; Carroll & Romano, 2011; Moss, 2004; Brubaker & Hayes, 2011; Foot et al., 2005; Kohn, 2012; Georges, 2020) are now activities practiced also – and perhaps some of them mostly – online (e.g., dating apps, online cemeteries, etc.).

The development of digital technologies – and particularly the *platformization* of the audiovisual sector – has also intensified the transnational circulation of cultural goods. The intensification of cross-border cultural flows has generated an unprecedented cultural mixing, transnational dialogue, hybrid cultural identities and cosmopolitan consciousness (Hall, 1996; Appadurai, 1996; Iwabuchi, 2002; Beck, 2005; Bhabha, 2007; Hannerz, 2010; Cicchelli et Octobre, 2017; Larochelle, 2021).

Despite the fact that ICTs may have given more of a voice to citizens, they have also raised several problems such as socialization issues, online catfishing, increased hate speech and bullying (Amedie, 2015). Furthermore, as we have witnessed during the pandemic, the dissemination of fake news has become easier than ever while NGOs and international organizations have warned on the negative impact of digitalization on media worker's freedom of expression and particularly on female journalists⁴.

This volume⁵ brings analyses of important issues on communication, knowledge and culture during the era of globalization and digitalization from different corners of the world and aspires to offer a sociological lens on current world questions, underlining thus the need for a continuing relevance to public debates.

Through her article, Sandra Ristovska, examines eyewitness video's role as a policy-oriented mechanism for human rights by mapping out why and how human rights collectives have been aspiring to professionalize video activism. Velentina Marinescu shows how the appealing of K-wave has resulted to an increased interest of teaching and learning Korean Studies. Sadia Jamil

² On this point, we refer to the role played by digital technologies in the learning process during the pandemic.

³ See in this sense “Video games for climate action: winning solutions for the planet”, United Nations, published on 31 May 2022 and consulted on 26 June 2022 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1119292>).

⁴ See in this sense “The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists”, UNESCO (<https://en.unesco.org/publications/thechilling>), consulted on 26 June 2022 and “Journalism under the digital siege”, United Nations (<https://www.un.org/en/observances/press-freedom-day>), consulted on 26 June 2022.

⁵ This volume is inspired by the webinars organized by the Research Committee 14 (Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture) of the International Sociological Association during the academic year 2021-2022 and entitled “Global Dialogues on Communication, Knowledge and Culture”.

is analyzing the use of AI technology and automation in Pakistan's mainstream news media. Finally, through her contribution, Evaggelia Kalerante, analyzes how the contemporary educational systems react and incorporate digitalization.

In a constantly changing world, the sociological reflection on issues related to communication, knowledge and culture during the era of digitalization and globalization seems more necessary than ever. This issue attempts to feed public debates on these issues by bringing together studies from different geographical areas.

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