



# ALMA MATER EUROPAEA

ECM

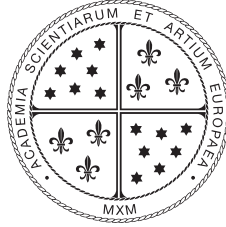
ALMA MATER PRESS



## COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION

Editor: Božidar Veljković

MARIBOR 2023



ALMA MATER  

---

EUROPAEA  

---

E C M

**ALMA MATER PRESS**

## **COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION**

Scientific monography

**Editor:** Assist. Prof. Dr. Božidar Veljković

**Reviewers:** Prof. Dr. Sc. Sead Alić, Sveučilište Sjever, Varaždin, Republic of Croatia;  
Assist. Prof. Dr. Sc. Dragana Stöckel, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of  
Belgrade, Serbia; Assist. Prof. Dr. Sc. Slobodan Hadžić, Alma Mater Europaea,  
European Center Maribor, Slovenia

**Technical Editor:** Suzanna Mežnarec Novosel

**Front page cover design:** Tjaša Pogorevc

**Type-set:** Tjaša Pogorevc s. p.

**Published by:** Alma Mater Europaea – Evropski center, Maribor, Alma Mater Press

**For publisher:** Prof. Dr. Ludvik Toplak

Alma Mater Europaea – Evropski center, Maribor, Alma Mater Press, Maribor

Available at: <https://press.almamater.si/index.php/amp>

First online version, 2023

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji  
Univerzitetna knjižnica Maribor

316.77:004(082)(0.034.2)

005.591.1:316.77(082)(0.034.2)

COMMUNICATION in the light of innovation and digitalization [Elektronski  
vir] : [scientific monography] / [editor Božidar Veljković]. - 1st online version.  
- Maribor : Alma Mater Europaea – Evropski center, Alma Mater Press, 2023

Način dostopa (URL): <http://press.almamater.si/index.php/amp>

ISBN 978-961-7183-13-9

COBISS.SI-ID 141747971



ALMA MATER  
EUROPAEA  
ECM

ALMA MATER PRESS

# COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION

Maribor, 2023





ALMA MATER  
EUROPAEA  
E C M

ALMA MATER PRESS

*In memory of the founder of the doctoral study program  
Strategic Communication Management  
at Alma Mater Europaea - European Center Maribor*

***prof. emerit. dr. sc. Mario Plenković***





## TABLE OF CONTENT

PREFACE .....	9
Slađana Strmečki, Ljubica Bakić-Tomić, Anamarija Kirinić Economic Diplomacy as a Form of Innovative Communication .....	11
Maruša Mavsar Digitalization of media - dispersion of views and knowledge .....	27
Maja Popović Blog as a means of innovative communication for persons with disabilities in the city of Zagreb .....	44
Astrid Mušura Kaučić, Ljubica Bakić-Tomić The undefined nature of the influencers' profession in Croatia .....	56
Vesna Delić Gozze Innovative digitalization of integrated architecture .....	63
Božidar Veljkovič, Daria Mustić Post tourist communication paradigm .....	75
Toni Čabraja Communication in the local community and the subjectivity of voters .....	87
Dubravka Jakšetić Primary healthcare and deliberative communication at covid times in the age of digitalization .....	98
Karla Kardum, Daria Mustić Research of students' experience with distance learning and communication obstacles during the Covid-19 pandemic .....	113
Marko Mikša Teaching and learning in the COVID-19 pandemic .....	129
REVIEWS .....	135





## PREFACE

The modern world is defined by global processes of environmental change, digitalization, and the covid-19 virus pandemic, which are changing the communication paradigm and thus also the ways in which communities on all levels and structures communicate. Research confirms that the processes of innovation of forms, methods, and types of communication are much faster compared to the practice of adequate implementation of the results of this development. With such complex challenge of modern times in mind, academician prof. emerit. dr. Mario Plenković (Alma Mater Europaea) started a new study program that corresponds to the key issues of the development of communication science. Through scientific research work in the doctoral study of Strategic Communication Management, students and professors are looking for answers to the communication challenges of our time, as discussed in this monograph. In their efforts, the researchers rely on important professional, substantive, and methodological knowledge left to us by Professor Plenković. This monograph is dedicated, with gratitude and respect by students and professors, to one of the greatest men of communication science, the eminent professor Mario Plenković.

The present scientific monograph contains research papers that offer answers to the questions of the development of communication in the light of intensive technical and technological innovation and digitalization of society. Also, the authors in defining the field of research, consider other current issues of the social environment, such as the covid-19 pandemic, globalization, endangering the natural environment and the prevailing neoliberal concept of material production of social life. The monograph includes ten chapters, all of which underwent a peer-review and proofreading process. The authors of the chapters are students and professors, researchers of the doctoral study program Strategic Communication Management at Alma Mater Europaea and partner universities.

The content of the monograph can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of contributions that explore the processes of innovation and innovative communication in modern society. The second group consists of contributions that explore the effects of digitalization on communication or social interactive symbolic processes in terms of the effect of alienation and emphasizes deliberative communication in response. The third group consists of contributions whose research activity is focused on the impact of the development of information and communication technology in the educational process or the public sector.

Although the chapters are seemingly separate thematic units, what connects all of them, is especially evident - empirical research based on scientific principles of the phenomenon of communication in the context of dynamic changes in social and technological reality.

Doc. dr. sc. Božidar Veljković, Editor



# ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AS A FORM OF INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION

**Slađana Strmečki**, University of Zagreb, Croatia

**Ljubica Bakić-Tomić**, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

**Anamarija Kirinić**, University of Maribor, Slovenia

## ABSTRACT

Economic diplomacy in relation to its origin - diplomacy in general or political diplomacy as a state function and especially in the context of actors who apply it, namely companies (non-state actors), which means that evolution has transformed diplomacy as a state function to non-state function – certainly is an innovative form of communication. The paper analyzes the context of transforming the importance of the economy in the framework of political and social development and national security, as well as innovation in terms of introducing new instruments - economic diplomacy - to achieve goals from this context. The aim of this paper is to analyze the basic concepts and their connection: what is diplomacy, economic diplomacy and innovation and to present the effects of economic diplomacy and its location as a form of innovative communication in a series of case/state studies.

**Keywords:** diplomacy, economic diplomacy, economic security, innovation, innovative communications

## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ECONOMY

Economic statehood is the highest form of economic state engagement, it includes domestic and foreign economic policy (Žirovčič, 2016). David Baldwin defines economic statehood as "government influences that rely primarily on resources that have a reasonable illusion of market value in terms of money" (1985, 13-14). Overall economic security is a key indicator of a country's overall security. Experts rightly point out that due to the nature of the economy itself, threats to the economy are difficult to pinpoint (Stone, 2009). Namely, risks, uncertainties and aggressive competition for market economy actors are a normal situation. Perhaps more than ever in history, the economy in the modern period occupies every segment of human and social existence and creation. From a sociological perspective, the economy is a pattern of social interactions and institutions that people create and use in their efforts to make a profit. The economy is also an expression of power, as an integral element of social relations, as well as one of the central concepts of international relations. The classic realistic definition of power, according to Max Weber, argues that power is the ability to impose desired behavior on others by one's own will, Therefore, power is the ability of individuals and groups to pursue their own interests or goals, even when opposed by others (Haralambos & Holborn, 2002). In *The Sources of Social Power*, Michael Mann (1993) pointed out that the question of power is a lasting and unavoidable element of social theory and a constitutive element of political and social relations. Mann's model of power, IEMP model, consists of four elements (sources of power): ideological power, economic power, military power and political power. Economic power stems from the need to extract, transform, distribute and consume natural resources. Within international relations and sources of power, the status of the economy in modern conditions has changed, and an innovative location of the economy in this context dates back to 1990's. It is a famous statement by James Carville, the chief strategist of Bill Clinton's presidential election campaign, who said in 1992: "Damn, it's the economy" (Political Dictionary, 2021). This phrase pointed that in modern globalized conditions, trade methods have supplanted the hitherto dominant state-centric military methods, and that the security context largely depends on material resources. Moreover, it points to a restructured distribution of political, economic, and social power that leads beyond geopolitics to geoeconomics. The definitive disintegration of the communist bloc in the early 1990s, in parallel with accelerated globalization movements, significantly changed overall international relations and the international order. The concept of geoeconom-

ics appeared, linked to Edward Luttwak<sup>1</sup>: trade methods have replaced military methods, with capital instead of armed force, civilian innovation instead of military-technical progress, and trade breakthroughs instead of accumulating military bases and garrisons (1998). Although without an unambiguous definition, geoeconomics is understood as the use of economic resources to achieve geopolitical goals (Schneider-Petsinger, 2016). It was also a certain extension and reformulation of the famous statement of Carl von Clausewitz<sup>2</sup> (2010) who defined war as a continuation of politics by other means. In the new conditions, pointing to the growing importance of economic power, the economy is defined as the continuation of the war by other means (Baru, 2012). Post-Cold War conditions have led to dramatic global shifts in social, political and economic processes, introducing geoeconomics as a relevant factor in determining security issues, recognized in the new strategic documents of numerous countries, such as: "National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement" (USA, 1995) and "New Approaches to National Security Problems" (RF, 1996). Thus, many countries have realized that economic stability, economic development, competitiveness in global market competition and rising living standards are the most important national interests (Bilandžić, 2008). In such a world order, each participant aims to achieve their own goals by choosing different ways and means of communication, and one certainly is diplomacy and its modern form - economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy has evolved and transformed in relation to its origin - diplomacy in general or political diplomacy as a state function into a non-state function in the context of actors who apply it (non-state actors) - an innovative form of communication. The aim of this paper is to analyze what economic diplomacy is and to present its effects in a series of case/state studies.

## 2. DEFINITION AND UNDERSTANDING OF BASIC CONCEPTS

**2.1. Innovation:** Innovation is one of the fundamental activities of human adaptation. Innovation or attitude towards it is present in every activity of a human being, both individual and social. In the broadest sense of the term, innovation is understood as any intended (and sometimes unintended) change. Until the late 1800's, innovation as a phenomenon and term mostly had a "bad reputation"

---

1 A review of the historical review of theoretical reflections on the coexistence of geoeconomics and geopolitics in the context of conflict, peace and war is seen in: Baru, 2012. The introduction and popularization of the term geoeconomics is also linked to the name of the French scientist Pascal Lorot and his work *Introduction à la Géoeconomie* (1999). According to him, geoeconomics analyze the economic strategies of states that present a framework for states in the political environment with the aim of protecting their own economy. In the early 1990s, authors such as Paul Kennedy, Jeffrey Garten, and Lester Thurow also contributed to the popularization of the concept of geoeconomics and theoretical predictive insights. The importance of transformation is also reflected in the fact that the term *Competition State* has been developed, which indicates a redefined relationship between state and business. See: Coolsaet, 2002.

2 German military strategist and scientist

as a factor of change that is perceived as negative in the conditions of the ruling intellectual paradigm turned to stability and order as desirable, even those innovations that have a positive direct effect. The turn of the century brought a paradigmatic shift in the perception of innovation, slowly losing its negative connotation until today's, when innovation is the focus of many different scientific disciplines and a very fashionable term in public and economic discourse that is often used precisely to positively color the topic, subject or actors concerned. (Perković, 2019). The Oslo Manual (OECD/Eurostat, 2018), a key EU thematic document on innovation, identifies innovation as a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from previous production or process units and is made available to potential users (product) or put into use by the organizational unit (process). Thus, the notion of innovation refers to the activity as well as the end result of the activity. Economic diplomacy, as the analysis below points out, certainly applies to both. Socio-scientific theory of innovation emphasizes that innovation is the main driver of economic growth, productivity growth and social prosperity (Švarc i Lažnjak, 2017). The standard concept of innovation policy as an interaction of science, economy and state support for innovation development with the aim of economic growth and competitiveness is increasingly being replaced by the concept of transformational innovation policy in favor of innovation aimed at solving *grand challenges* and sustainable development (Švarc, 2020). In this context, economic diplomacy is one of the innovative functional instruments and innovative forms of communication. Sociological interest in the diffusion of innovation dates back to the turn of the 20th century when Gabriel Tarde<sup>3</sup> published his work *Laws of Imitation*, which sought to theoretically integrate innovation and imitation at a very comprehensive level, interpreting the total world of existence in the light of the three forms of universal repetition: vibrating motion, inheritance and imitation (Kinnunen, 1996). All three have the nature of a wave, each in its own kind of medium. In this sense, innovation is an impulse that produces a wave of imitation in the social medium - the network of individuals. Diffusion of innovation means the dissemination of abstract ideas and concepts, technical information and real practices from source to adopter, mainly through communication and influence. This definition reveals four main elements - innovation, communication channel, time, social system - which are identifiable in all diffusion studies as well as diffusion campaigns and programs. The novelty of an innovation is not necessarily a novelty in the absolute sense, but it is important that the adopter perceives the novelty, whether it was his first knowledge of innovation, novelty related to the process of considering adoption or his decision to adopt.

---

<sup>3</sup> A French judge and one of the founders of sociology and social psychology

*2.2. Diplomacy:* Diplomacy, as a skill of negotiating and developing international relations, is a very old field of human activity, much older than its relatively new name, and even the existence of the diplomatic profession. Diplomatic history undoubtedly grows out of political history, but it is not "event history" (*l'histoire evenementielle*), rather focuses on the historical continuity of community efforts to resolve relations and disputes peacefully and constructively, through dialogue (Bekić, 2016). According to Geoff Berridge (2007), diplomacy is, in essence, political activity and an important component of power, well-designed and skilled. Its main purpose is to enable states to achieve their foreign policy goals without resorting to force, propaganda or law, but through formal agreement or tacit adjustment. Diplomacy as a *sui generis* function since its inception in the 16th century has been tied to the state as a central actor in traditional, political diplomacy. This function has been internationally codified by Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 and Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963, and precisely defined: representation of the sending state in the receiving state, protection of the sending state's interests, promotion of interests, informing about the state and development of events in the recipient country and negotiation. Radovan Vukadinović defines diplomacy as a social activity with an appropriate organization whose main intention is to represent the state in international relations and work on achieving the state's foreign policy goals by peaceful means (2004, 180). In summary, most definitions of diplomacy come down to the same content: diplomacy is a tool of foreign policy or a set of skills and activities aimed at achieving the foreign policy interests of a country (Bekić, 2016). However, the diplomatic function has evolved both in the areas of consumer actors (ie communication between states and non-state actors) and in terms of moving away from traditional political diplomacy and its application in other areas: economy, culture, sports, and business. This created new typologies of diplomacy: economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, business diplomacy, sports diplomacy, not exclusively related to the state. The area of transformation of diplomacy from state to non-state actors and its certain "privatization" is an argument for the innovative use of economic diplomacy and the status of economic diplomacy as an innovative communication tool.

*2.3. Economic diplomacy:* Economic diplomacy, of course, is not a new phenomenon. Ever since ancient times and the beginnings of regulated contacts between the then separate state entities, economic interests have been the driving force behind the emergence of diplomatic relations. It was a point of connecting political and economic practice, use of economic instruments for political purposes. Economic diplomacy was a tool in interstate relations long before the establishment of state institutions or the system of foreign policy and diplomacy. However, until modern times, economic/trade diplomatic activities have been subordinat-



ed to the political sphere. The agenda of modern diplomacy created by the emergence of modern states in the 17th century focused on two issues: trade and political-security/military, and their intrinsic connection with the territorial interests of states. The Republic of Dubrovnik (1301-1806), for example, is an excellent historical case of the model of efficient economic diplomacy (Dedijer, 2003). Later, in the Cold War confrontation, economic and trade relations were considered peripheral diplomatic activities. But in recent decades of a globalized world the development of trade and economic relations has again been placed at the center of diplomatic action. The reconfiguration of geoeconomic power has prompted governments around the world to re-evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of their national and foreign policies and the economic dimension took precedence. The Competition State, which contains redefined relations between the state and business, and economic diplomacy have become especially important in the modern international system (Bilandžić & Barun, 2012). Economic diplomacy is becoming an increasingly elaborate topic in the international environment, so it is necessary to define its meaning. Although economic diplomacy has a clear historical development dimension, it is a more recent term and has its roots in the French language - *la diplomatie économique*. It was very quickly accepted by Russian diplomacy as - *ekonomičeskaja diplomacija*. Anglo-Saxon variants use different terms: trade diplomacy, commercial diplomacy, business diplomacy, corporate diplomacy. Economic diplomacy involves broad national interests relating to the political and strategic as well as economic dimensions and thus, is part and an instrument of foreign policy. Economic statehood refers to means and structures, while economic diplomacy refers to the actual and intended effects of policy, primarily processes and practices (Baldwin 1985). Experts are of the opinion that the term economic diplomacy adequately covers the entire spectrum of areas related to economic-commercial activities of diplomacy and covers trade diplomacy, commercial diplomacy, business diplomacy, corporate diplomacy etc, (Sadzak et al, 2008; Brewer et al, 2003). Economic relations, understood as economic diplomacy defines economic diplomacy as a trade, financial and other economic relations between countries, industrial, investment, customs cooperation, cooperation in agriculture and transport, joint venture and joint access to third markets. Economic diplomacy refers to the activities of the diplomatic service aimed at increasing exports, attracting foreign investment and participating in the work of international economic organizations. Within the system of international political economy and relations between international corporations and states, there is a "triangular diplomacy framework" with triple relations: state-state, state-enterprise, enterprise-enterprise (Brewer et al, 2003: 125). According to experts, economic diplomacy is characterized by the promotion of trade and investment, securing property rights and stability of economic relations, influencing foreign national policies in favor of do-

mestic multinationals and maintaining a favorable international policy environment (Moons, 2017). A *Dictionary of Diplomacy* distinguishes between commercial diplomacy and economic diplomacy, equating the latter with economic statehood (Berridge, 2001). Nicholas Bayne and Stephan Woolcock, argue that in economic diplomacy the authorities are trying to reconcile three types of tensions: (1) tensions between politics and economics; (2) tensions between international and domestic actors, levels and pressures; and (3) tensions between government and other actors, such as private business and NGOs. Analyzing dozens of definitions of economic diplomacy, the authors in the book *Economic Diplomacy* draw a conclusion about its strategic goals, which is also the content of the concept of economic diplomacy: promoting the possibilities of the national economy and its enterprises in world markets, protection of national (economic) interests in international economic relations and foreign economic cooperation and identifying instruments and mechanisms for their implementation (Sadžak et al., 2008: 28-30).

### **3. ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: STATUS AND EFFECTS OF AN INNOVATIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATION**

The Member States of the European Union, or those economically integrated into the EU, and those "older" and "new", have established national systems of economic diplomacy. The organization and achievements of countries without implemented economic diplomacy<sup>4</sup> as an innovative diplomatic form can be seen by comparing them with the systems of economic diplomacy of European countries.

### **4. RESEARCH METHOD**

The comparative method, by showing the similarities and differences of a number of national economic diplomacies, enables causally valid conclusions to be drawn from it. Country/case study approach allows analyze the basic features of the economic diplomacy system in selected countries.<sup>5</sup> This type of research is useful for studies that ask "how" and "why" something is happening and for analysis of a modern (innovative) phenomenon within a real life context. A multi-case design was chosen, with the cases understood equally. Each individual case consists of a comprehensive study that seeks convergent data in terms of

---

4 Empirical analysis of the (in)existence of the system of economic diplomacy in the Republic of Croatia is seen in: Bilandžić & Baron, 2012. The evolution of empiry and the historical development of the system of economic diplomacy in the Republic of Croatia are seen in: Boromisa et al., 2012; Radolović, 2016.

5 An excellent overview and systematized comparative analysis of a number of models of economic diplomacy in countries around the world is seen in: Žirovčić, 2016. The cases presented are taken from several sources, and some in a significant part from: Žirovčić, 2016; Bilandžić & Baron, 2012; Radolović, 2016; Latković, 2019. On the models of economic diplomacy in a number of countries, and the areas of its application (e.g. development aid, international business, competitiveness, impact on makoeconomic indicators) in: van Bergeijk et al., 2011; Radolović, 2016; Madunic, 2020.

facts and conclusions about the case, which become information that needs replication through other cases involved. The selected sample of the case study is intentional with an emphasis on a deep understanding of specific cases. The sampling technique is such that the researchers themselves chose the "case" that corresponds to the focus of the research, which means that it is a matter of choosing what will be researched, and not a methodological choice (Yin, 2007; Miočić, 2018). Their comparison serves to draw valid conclusions that can be applied to other cases. That is the goal of the work.

**The research question:** Are the experiences of other countries that have built systems of effective economic diplomacy valid and do they have application potential as "lessons learned", as an innovation for countries that are just building such systems?

**H0 main assumption:** innovative diplomatic forms are certainly one of the crucial variables in the performance of national economies and their competitiveness.

In each of these countries, the goals of economic diplomacy are identical - realization of economic interests and economic development. However, there are different ways of realization and models of organization of economic diplomacy conditioned by historical development, political structure, level of economic development, geopolitical characteristics, economic specifics etc.

## 5. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

*5.1 Swiss Confederation:*<sup>6</sup> According to the World Economic Forum for 2019, Switzerland is ranked 5th in the world according to the competitiveness of the economy (WEF, 2019). Experts and scientists (Žirovčić, 2016) define it as a politically stable, prosperous and modern market economy with a low unemployment rate, highly skilled workforce and GDP *per capita* among the highest in the world, based on a highly developed services sector led by the financial sector, and a technologically cutting-edge industry that relies on knowledge-dominated manufacturing resulting in the fact that it has been a world innovation champion for a decade (WIPO, 2021). Switzerland's success as a world leader in economic competitiveness and innovation capacity as a result of a thriving economy is based on knowledge and connections between academia and business and the application of scientific research in business and economics (Schlegel, 2014). The Swiss Confederation, located in the heart of Europe, although not a member of the EU, is deeply integrated in the European and global geoeconomic and geopolitical framework, achieving economic cohesion using the tools of economic diplomacy (Nünlist, 2018). After the Second World War, Switzerland has experienced the greatest and fastest economic and social changes based on dramatic

---

<sup>6</sup> An excellent representation of the Swiss model from which some elements were taken sees in Latković, 2019.

economic growth, social harmony and stability, political cooperation, moderation, democracy, and diplomatic development, which is why Switzerland is described as a "Sonderfall Schweiz" (exceptional country). Internationalization in many industries, as a result of a small domestic market, has forced companies to adequately engage in foreign labor and cultures, which has helped Swiss companies take over foreign companies. Also, the fact that Switzerland has hosted about 40 international organizations for more than a century and many financial institutions and banking giants<sup>7</sup> have certainly contributed to successful foreign and economic policy. Switzerland is a leader in the model of economic diplomacy, maintaining competitiveness by good economic conditions for business and awareness of attractiveness. The federal government directs an export promotion program positioning Swiss exporters as internationally competitive service providers and supporting Swiss companies' access to foreign markets (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO, 2021). The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and SECO, in cooperation with 170 Swiss embassies and consulates, provide a wide range of services to support Swiss (and Liechtenstein) companies. Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) is the umbrella organization to encourage exports, imports and investments, and to promote Switzerland as a first-class business location. The Economiesuisse business association as a key link between politics, companies and society, represents the interests of Swiss business - competitive, internationally networked and responsible. Finally, the economy plays an important role in preserving Swiss welfare, promoting sustainable economic growth, preserving and expanding Switzerland's economic competitiveness. Peace and security, prosperity, sustainability and digitalization are key points of the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy (FDFA, 2021). Economy in general, diplomacy and economic diplomacy in particular are crucial tools in this context.

5.2. *France*: The French Republic is one of the most powerful economies, ranked 15th in the world (WEF, 2019). France has a centuries-old tradition of economic diplomacy, yet a network of economic attachés was established in the early 20th century. At that time, MP Francois Nobimer in the French Parliament pointed out that the tasks of the French foreign apparatus are the protection and representation of French companies abroad and the collection of information on the market of other countries (Radolović, 2016). Henry Hauser, a professor at the Sorbonne, published a book entitled *Economie et diplomatie* (1938) in which he advocated that diplomacy promote French economic interests under the slogan "economics for diplomacy". France was the first European country to demand an intensive turn to economic diplomacy during the time of Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Francois Mitterand (1981-1995). The greatest economic diplomat of modern

---

7 The reason is the Banking Secrecy Act of 1934, which made Switzerland one of the world's tax havens

times, President Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), aimed at the realization of French economic interests through the strong action of economic diplomacy (Radolović, 2016). Historically, with the increasing importance of the economic sphere, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has lost the lead in managing economic issues, and the economic diplomacy and the network of economic attachés have been managed since 2004 by the Directorate-General for Treasury and Economic Policy (DGTPE) of the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry. Embassies around the world primarily deal with political and consular issues, while economic diplomats are guaranteed autonomy in diplomatic missions. Regardless of such a division, economic diplomats work with ambassadors who put their influence and status at the service of the economy, primarily through lobbying. The network of economic diplomats is scattered around the world as more than 2,000 of them operate in over 100 countries, and regional coordinators manage the activities of economic missions in the area. The Directorate-General for Treasury and Economic Policy is linked to the French Agency for International Business Development (UBIFRANCE), which harmonizes requirements and synchronously pursues the interests of the private and public business sectors.

*5.3. Federal Republic of Germany:* The German diplomacy is a complex and voluminous system with over 10,000 employees. Economically powerful Germany, as one of the largest importers and exporters in the world, is very dependent on foreign markets. In the world competitiveness ranking, Germany is ranked 7th in the world (WEF, 2019). Therefore, it is quite understandable that the promotion and protection of economic interests and assistance in the creation of correct and sustainable economic cooperation are strategic priorities of German foreign policy. Organizationally, German economic diplomacy is a synergistic action of government and the private sector. There are three pillars of external economic promotion, ie the network of diplomatic and consular missions, the chambers of commerce abroad and the Federal Agency for Foreign Trade and Investment. All three components contribute to the promotion and strengthening of Germany's economic position and presence in all major markets. Each of the more than 200 German diplomatic and consular missions provides advisory services to German companies, chambers of commerce (representing 40,000 members) develop cooperation, trade and trade flows in two directions, while the Federal Agency for Foreign Trade and Investment, based on economic diplomacy, provides strategic information to German companies helping them to navigate foreign markets more easily.

*5.4. Poland:* Poland is a former communist country that became a full member of the European Union in the fifth wave of 2004 enlargement. Changes in the geopolitical and economic environment required the reform of Poland in order to strengthen it internally, but also on the international scene. By realistically analyzing the social environment, the Government has put economic diplomacy at the

top of its priorities and given it three tasks: cooperation with EU member states, contributing to the consolidation of institutional and macroeconomic indicators of the Polish economy and finding solutions to economic security including energy security and environmental protection. In operational terms, the priorities of economic diplomacy in 2007 determined: analysis of mechanisms to strengthen competitiveness (analysis of economic policies of other countries, assistance to Polish companies, analysis of legal and financial solutions, identification of potential areas of economic cooperation) and identification of new trade and investment opportunities. In line with the new strategic orientation, the foreign affairs department has been reformed. A Department for Economic Diplomacy/Economic Cooperation has been set up within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). At the same time, separate economic and trade sections were created within diplomatic and consular missions. The economic sections remained under the MFA, while the trade sections, although still part of diplomatic and consular missions, were transferred to the Polish Trade and Investment Agency established in 2007 as part of the Ministry of Economy for providing support to Polish companies, promoting exports and the Polish economy abroad, which remained foreign policy priorities for the next period, and still is the dominant activity of Polish economic diplomats in more than 60 Polish diplomatic and consular missions around the world. Finally, it contributed to the development and competitiveness of the Polish economy. From a hopeless communist planned economy, the Polish economy, thanks to managerial and communication (diplomatic) innovations, has reached 37th place on the World Competitiveness Map (WEF, 2019).

## **6. INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: PERSPECTIVES OF ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AS A FORM OF INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION**

Modern economic processes characterized by globalization and hypercompetitiveness have conditioned the development of society and the economy to become dependent on participation in a larger, more competitive and faster world market. In the information-global "new economy" (Castells, 2000) state borders have become relative when it comes to production, investment, profit, consumption, imports, exports, employment. In such a hypercompetitive globalized world market, there is a need for new knowledge and innovation. The basic precondition for functioning and development in such a competitive environment is innovative state, social and business action based on knowledge. Seven decades ago, the American anthropologist Homer Garner Barnett (Bilandžić & Barun, 2012) defined innovation as an idea, behavior or thing that is new because it has a qualitative difference from the existing form, warning that the conditions for creating new ideas and their acceptance must be seen as two separate phenomena. Innovation, according to Gabriel Tarde represents a kind of change in social conditions and is

a consequence of human progress (Kinnuen, 1996). Innovations are therefore an organized process of creating and introducing new ideas, they develop according to the conditions in society, depend on the knowledge of individuals and the accumulated ideas about a problem. Economic diplomacy is certainly an innovative national-economic, foreign policy and business tool and a resource that should contribute to social change. As a sum of political and the business, it is a set of socio-economic, political and legal mechanisms through which economic goals are achieved in the most efficient way at the bilateral, multilateral and global levels. Economic diplomacy is, therefore, an innovative mechanism for the development of the economy and the positioning of the state in the international economic environment, and a mechanism without which there is no efficient economic and business international communication. After all, the measurement of national power according to the traditional, Cold War model of the composite index of national capabilities (CINC) is rapidly being abandoned. This concept, which viewed the state as an isolated entity in relation to the structure of the international system, was based on what the state possessed, namely: demographic, industrial-energy and military capabilities. Modern concepts of measuring national power start from the perspective of social networks. The Structural Network Power Index (SNPI) determines the national power of a country according to its position within the networks of international relations. Thus, national power means not only what the state possesses, but how it is connected to other members of the international system and what the interaction between them is. Power is therefore a relational concept (Kim, 2010). Economic diplomacy is precisely the instrument that establishes economic relations in the networks of international economic relations for the realization of national economic interests.

Resolving economic issues in international relations has historically become an integral part of diplomatic theory and practice. The latest acceleration of globalization and trade liberalization has resulted in increased competition in both domestic and foreign markets, so that countries without the concept of economic diplomacy cannot play a proactive role in relations with other countries, but become the object of economic diplomacy of other countries. How to apply this innovative resource in those countries where it does not exist? Recent empirical research (Bilandžić and Barun, 2012) indicated that there was no system of economic diplomacy in the Republic of Croatia, while in the later period the so-called competition model was initially established, as one of the empirically existing models of economic diplomacy in the world (in addition to the unified model, a partially unified model, a third agency model and a surrender model) (Rana, 2000; Radolović, 2016). The experiences of developed countries (lessons learned) can be a model in establishing an efficient system of economic diplomacy in Croatia. For this, it is first necessary to make objective policy analyses and

then, within the country/case study, to determine the level of development of economic diplomacy in the Republic of Croatia. According to expert analyses, the economic system of the Republic of Croatia is oriented towards imports, borrowing, higher consumption than income, reduction of industrial base, stagnation of agriculture, education not adapted to modern times, backwardness in science, corruption, moral collapse of society (Žirovčić, 2016). These are certainly not factors that create the conditions for competitiveness, where Croatia ranks 63rd in the world. Integration in the Euro-Atlantic context and the introduction of economic diplomacy as an innovative managerial, business and communication resource would certainly raise the level of Croatia's economic power and its role in the world. Successful organization of economic diplomacy enables an increase in competitiveness, which has important economic consequences: it leads to a higher socio-economic position of the national economy with a positive impact on the social dimension of life and better living standards. Positive economic trends, which, after several years of recession and economic disturbances caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic indicate estimates of growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) by 10% for 2021 (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2021), are an excellent incentive to establish efficient and sustainable model of economic diplomacy in the Republic of Croatia.

## LITERATURE

1. Baldwin, David. 1985. *Economic Statecraft*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. Baru, Sanjaya. 2012. A New Era of Geo-economics: Assessing the Interplay of Economic and Political Risk. *IISS Seminar*. 23-25 March, 2012 Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/22677774/A\\_New\\_Era\\_of\\_Geo\\_economics\\_Assessing\\_the\\_Interplay\\_of\\_Economics.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/22677774/A_New_Era_of_Geo_economics_Assessing_the_Interplay_of_Economics.pdf) (20 October 2021).
3. Bayne, Nicholas & Stephen Woolcock. 2007. *The New Economic Diplomacy: Decision-Making and Negotiation in International Economic Relations*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
4. Bekić, Darko. 2016. *Povijest hrvatske diplomacije*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
5. Berridge, Geoff. 2007. *Diplomacija: teorija i praksa*. Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti.
6. Berridge, Geoff & Alan James. 2001. *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
7. Bilandžić, Mirko & Ivona Barun. 2012. Poslovna znanja u funkciji razvoja: gospodarska diplomacija u Republici Hrvatskoj. *Tržište*, 25 (1):77-96.
8. Bilandžić, Mirko. 2008. *Poslovno-obavještajno djelovanje: Business intelligence u praksi*. Zagreb: AGM.



9. Boromisa, Ana Marija, Anastasya Raditya-Ležaić and Sanja Tišma. 2012. *Gospodarska diplomacija Republike Hrvatske ili Zašto Hrvatskoj nužno treba snažna i sustavna gospodarska diplomacija*, Zagreb: Institut za međunarodne odnose, Zaklada Adris, Available at: <https://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/godip-web-hr.pdf>, (8 October 2021)
10. Brewer, Thomas, Stephen Young and Stephen Guisinger. 2003. *Analysis of Multinationals: An Agenda for Management, Policy and Research*. Cheltenham-Northampton: Edward Elgar.
11. Castells, Manuel. 2000. *Informacijsko doba: Ekonomija, društvo i kultura. Uspom umreženog društva*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing.
12. Clausewitz, von Carl. 2010. *O ratu*. Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga.
13. Coolsaet, Rik. 2002. *Historical Patterns in Economic Diplomacy. From Protectionism to Globalisation. The case of Belgium*, <https://rikcoolsaet.be/files/2002/02/10-historical-patterns-in-economic-diplomacy-rikcoolsaet.pdf>, (8 October 2020).
14. Dedijer, Stevan. 2003. Two Intelligent States: Ragusa 1301 - 1806, Sweden 800 - 2003. *Paper for the „Business Intelligence“ seminar*. Zagreb: Chamber of Commerce.
15. Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, FDFA (11.11.2021). *Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23*. Available at: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/implementing-foreign-policy/aussenpolitischestrategie.html> (4 December 2021).
16. Haralambos, Michael & Martin Holborn. 2002. *Sociologija: Teme i perspektive*. Zagreb: Golden marketing.
17. Kim, Hyung Min. 2010. Comparing Measures of National Powers. *International Political Science Review*, 31 (4):405-427.
18. Kinnunen, Jussi. 1996. Gabriel Tarde as a Founding Father of Innovation Diffusion Research. *Acta Sociologica*, 39(4):431-442.
19. Latković, Nikola. 2019. *Ekonomska diplomacija Švicarske Konfederacije u kontekstu globalne obavještajne revolucije*. Sveučilište u Splitu: Ekonomski fakultet.
20. Luttwak, Edward. 1990. From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce, in: Tuathail, G. O.; Dalby S.; Routledge, P. ed. 1998. *The Geopolitics Reader*, Routledge: London and New York.
21. Madunić, Ivan. 2020. Gospodarska diplomacija u poticanju izvozne konkurentnosti hrvatskoga gospodarstva, Tradicionalni skup Hrvatskog društva ekonomista u Opatiji – in: *Ekonomska politika u 2021. godini - Hrvatska poslije pandemije*, ed. Tica, Josip & Katarina Bačić. Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo ekonomista, Available at: [http://www.hde.hr/ekonomskapolitika/hrvatske/publikacija/eph2001/012\\_Madunic.pdf](http://www.hde.hr/ekonomskapolitika/hrvatske/publikacija/eph2001/012_Madunic.pdf), (8 November 2021).

22. Mann, Michael. 1993. *The sources of social power, Volume II, The Rise of classes and nation-states, 1760-1914*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
23. Miočić, Ivana. 2018. Fleksibilnost studije slučaja: prednost ili izazov za istraživače?. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 25 (2):175-194.
24. Moons, Selwyn. 2017. *Heterogeneous Effects of Economic Diplomacy: Instruments, Determinants and Developments*. Doctoral thesis, International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University (ISS), Erasmus University Rotterdam. Available at: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/100817> (8 October 2020).
25. Nünlist, Christian. 2018. Switzerland – A crucial multilateral framework, in *Perceptions of the OSCE in Europe and the USA*, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/wien/14517.pdf>, učitano 8. listopada 2019.
26. OECD/Eurostat. 2018. *Oslo Manual 2018: Guidelines for Collecting, Reporting and Using Data on Innovation*, 4th Edition, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities. Luxembourg/Paris: OECD Publishing, Eurostat, Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/science/oslo-manual-2018-9789264304604-en.htm> (4 December 2021).
27. Okano-Heijmans, Maaïke. 2011. Conceptualizing Economic Diplomacy: The Crossroads of International Relations, Economics, IPE and Diplomatic Studies. In *Economic Diplomacy: Economic and Political Perspectives*, eds. van Bergeijk, A. G. P. Okano-Heijmans, M.; Melissen, J., Leiden/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
28. Perković, Juraj. 2019. *Inovacijska inteligencija i prilagodbene strategije organizacija: Hrvatska tehnološka poduzeća*. Vlastita naklada.
29. Political Dictionary. 2021. *It's the economy, stupid*, Available at: <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/its-the-economy-stupid/> (18 October 2021).
30. Radolović, Sanja. 2016. *Uspostava modela gospodarske diplomacije za razvoj hrvatskog gospodarstva*, doktorska disertacija, Pula: Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile, Fakultet ekonomije i turizma „Dr. Mijo Mirković“.
31. Rana, Kishan. 2000. *Inside Diplomacy*. New Delhi: Manas Publications.
32. Sadžak, Mile, Erol Mujanović and Marko Tutnjević. 2008. *Ekonomska diplomacija - menadžerski pristup*. Zagreb - Sarajevo: Synopsis.
33. Schlegel, Flavia. 2014. Swiss Science Diplomacy: Harnessing the Inventiveness and Excellence of the Private and Public Sectors, *Science & Diplomacy*, 3(1), Available at: [https://www.sciencediplomacy.org/sites/default/files/swiss\\_science\\_diplomacy\\_science\\_\\_diplomacy.pdf](https://www.sciencediplomacy.org/sites/default/files/swiss_science_diplomacy_science__diplomacy.pdf), (11 November 2020).

34. Schneider-Petsinger, Marianne. 2016. *Geoeconomics explained*. Chatham House, Available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2016/12/geoeconomics-explained> (8 October 2021).
35. State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO (31 March 2021). *Location promotion*. [https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/en/home/Standortfoerderung/Exportfoerderung\\_Standortpromotion/standortpromotion.html](https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/en/home/Standortfoerderung/Exportfoerderung_Standortpromotion/standortpromotion.html) (11 November 2021).
36. Stone, Marianne. (2009). „Security According to Buzan: A Comprehensive Security Analysis.“ *Security Discussion Papers, Series, 2009.*, Available at: [http://www.geest.msh-paris.fr/IMG/pdf/Security\\_for\\_Buzan.mp3.pdf/](http://www.geest.msh-paris.fr/IMG/pdf/Security_for_Buzan.mp3.pdf/) (2 September 2021).
37. Švarc, Jadranka & Jasminka Lažnjak. (2017). *Innovation Culture in Crony Capitalism: Does Hofstede's Model Matter?* Zagreb: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar.
38. Švarc, Jadranka. 2020. *Sociologija inovacija, transformacijska inovacijska politika i koronavirus: što ih povezuje?* Hrvatsko sociološko društvo, Available at: <http://hsd.hr/hr/2020/04/29/sociologija-inovacija-transformacijska-inovacijska-politika-i-koronavirus-sto-ih-povezuje/> (4 December 2021).
39. van Bergeijk, Peter. Maaile Okano-Heijmans and Jan Melissen. 2011. *Economic Diplomacy: Economic and Political Perspectives*. Leiden/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
40. Vlada Republike Hrvatske (26.11.2021). „Imamo najveći rast otkad je Hrvatske. To pokazuje brz, snažan, kvalitetan i sveobuhvatan oporavak hrvatskog gospodarstva“, Available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/imamo-najveci-rast-otkad-je-hrvatske-to-pokazuje-brz-snazan-kvalitetan-i-sveobuhvatan-oporavak-hrvatskog-gospodarstva/33446>, (4 December 2021).
41. Vukadinović, Radovan. 2008. *Međunarodni politički odnosi*. Zagreb: Barbat.
42. Vukadinović, Radovan. 2004. *Međunarodni politički odnosi*. Zagreb: Politička kultura, Nakladno istraživački zavod.
43. WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organization. 2021. *Global Innovation Index 2021: Tracking Innovation through the COVID-19 Crisis*. Geneva: World Intellectual Property Organization, Available at: [https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo\\_pub\\_gii\\_2021.pdf](https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_gii_2021.pdf), 11 November 2021).
44. World Economic Forum. 2019. *The Global Competitiveness Report 2019*, ed Klaus Schwab. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
45. Žirovčić, Dubravko. (2016). *Gospodarska diplomacija: Izabrani nacionalni modeli*, Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk i Visoka škola međunarodnih odnosa i diplomacije Dag Hammarskjöld.
46. Yin, Robert. 2007. *Studija slučaja - dizajn i metode*, Zagreb: Fakultet političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

## DIGITALIZATION OF MEDIA - DISPERSION OF VIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE

Maruša Mavsar, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

### ABSTRACT

Due to the global increase in online presence, expert discussions on the consequences of media digitalization for both the media themselves and various publics have predictably intensified during the epidemic years. Changing the work of editorial offices and the journalistic profession due to media convergence, changes of power relations in the information market, commercializing of media forms, involving users as information sources, changes of journalistic ethics and codes, innovation potentials of digital media, modern forms of censorship and fake news are some of the most common topics that have been analysed under the global academic scrutiny for more than a decade. In the conference paper, we examined the presence and content of expert reflection on digital media transformation in Slovenia in the period 2018-2021. This included two "ordinary" years and two years marked by the SARS-CoV-2 virus epidemic. Research and academic discourse on media digitalization are very dispersed among disciplines, each tackling its own field of modern media transformation and we found only a few studies or professional proceedings that would address the current phenomena of digitalization of communication and information channels interdisciplinary. The latter would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges that the 'digital first' imperative of communication and business brings to society on a daily basis.

**Keywords:** media digitalization, online journalism, convergence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Retrieving from our memory how exactly we got our news about the virus during the pandemic or, moreover, who actually produced the news we consumed in this '2019-nCoV infodemic' (WHO 2020, 2), would be a great challenge, not only due to this "over-abundance of information" (ibid.), but because we were faced with a general disruption of our inner selves and society (Ignjatović et al. 2021, 95-102; Eurofund 2021; Dominick et al., 2021; Kennedy et al., 2021; Al-Mansour and Al-Ajmi 2020; Singh et al., 2021; Rožman et al., 2021) and a vast disruption of already hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013). Significant changes happened in our news consumption, whereby some people were highly engaged with news and more than ever before, yet others regularly avoided news (Reuters Institute 2021), but at the same time major impact of pandemic was left on the other side: in newsrooms (Guðmundsson 2020; García-Avilés 2021).

Media outlets are enduring many bad scenarios. Not just significant loss of income through the loss of mutual interdependence with the advertising industry, by a turnaround in the advertising objectives, messages, formats, and vehicles (Siegert 2013, 4-6), but also the difficulties of surviving the media consolidation traps, whereas the acquisitions and media management models differ very fast, which contributes to the fact that the legal regulation of the media market is proving to be ineffective (Hrvatín and Kerševan 1999, 93-114). The problem is being further compounded by different forms of censorship, which became more hidden (Bennet and Naim 2015; Sussman 2000; Oates 2007), and journalism faced with conditions "in permanent flux" (Deuze 2019, 2).

Along with the intensive processes of digitisation (in a technical sense) and especially digitalization (in socio-technical meaning) the ambiguous term of media convergence began to emerge in academic discourses to a greater extent. Media convergence in the sense of new technology synergies in mass media existed at least in the 19-th century, but the term itself found its prolific field in studies after 1980 moving through four historical dimensions – technological convergence in the 1980s, economic convergence from late 1980s to early 1990s, political/regulatory convergence from 1990s and cultural convergence from 2000s (Balbi 2017, 35-43). The research of the evolution of media convergence confirmed the existence of analogue convergence, but the simplifying, also in academic writings, made a special momentum, when "convergence and the assumed association with digital networked media has meant that the term has come to be used as shorthand or even as a synonym for the digital" (O'Sullivan and Fortunati 2021). It seems natural that each more massive transition to some new media technology has intrigued scholars across very different disciplines, for example, information and computer studies, sociology, economy, communication and cultural studies, psychology,

etc., adding a new layer of understanding what the convergent future could hold for us in the field of media production, technology advancement and possible adaptations, various changes in reception and co-creation of communication.

Following fascinating mediation processes to mediatization (McQuail 2010; Lundby 2015), we can get overwhelmed by the "progress" and new formats and forget that the changes in this "post-newspaper" (Anderson 2011) media landscape affect the fundamental building blocks of our society, as

"For the past 100 years, newspapers and traditional media companies have played a critical role as legal instigators and enforcers (...) This neglected threat - which is of nothing less than constitutional proportions - is arguably more serious than the much-discussed threat to newsgathering and dissemination. While new players in the changing media ecology may ultimately fill the investigative and information-dissemination roles of newspapers that have been so important to our democracy, there is no apparent successor to the role of legal instigator and enforcer." (ibid, 559).

Audiences that are exposed to "information surplus" (Chyi 2009, 94) easily enter a special "inflation in political communication and communicative liquefaction of politics" (Splichal 2021, 8) which is "jeopardizing the foundations of democratic debate" (ibid.). These communication developments which shifted the politics "from party democracy" to "audience democracy" and enthroned permanent campaigning and dominance of polls (Papathanassopoulos and Negrine 2015, 158), should present a serious concern to different disciplines that scrutinize media convergence apart from journalism and media studies.

The media industry was forced to overcome the old question of their primary communication channel "whether their organization is a newspaper, TV station, radio" etc., and switch to "Are we in the content business? What are the complementary channels to deliver that content?" (Lawson-Borders 2005, 5). The content helped media consumers and producers to interact, however in a world where media convergence and divergence are happening at the same time (Vukanovic 2018), adaptation must be fast (ibid.) and, we believe, made upon being professionally and academically thoroughly informed about the day-to-day changing roles of specific professions and media systems.

Given the prior mentioned facts and the findings of recent studies (Reuters Institute 2020, 2021; Sumida et al., 2020) suggesting that most of the news today comes to the audience by the means of converged and digital media, the importance of critical assessment of media convergence in our society and digital media is increasing.

Critical assessment of media convergence and media culture itself is not simple as

"Familiarity can blind us to how those various aspects of media culture might appear to others, as well as to how our own values, literacies, and preconcep-

tions have made our own media tastes and practices seem natural and universal. Therefore, the critical analysis of media culture requires us to challenge our initial assumptions about it and to view its different components with fresh eyes so that we can be open to understanding them in new way" (Kearney 2018, 3).

Following the good practice of communication and other social sciences for the necessity of contextualization, since "the questions that emerge from a singular object of study are not infinite but instead limited by the place and time, or sociohistorical context, in which it appears (ibid.)", we garnered our attention to Slovenia. In this conference paper, we reviewed the body (the presence and content) of academic/expert reflection on digital media transformation in Slovenia in the period 2018-2021. The questions that led our research were:

RQ: Is the digital transformation of the media industry of Slovenia present in Slovenian academic writing, expert, and professional reflection? In which forms these contributions to science are published and which are their main characteristics?

## 2. METHOD

To identify and outline the expert reflection on digital media transformation in the period 2018 – 2021 we used a semi-systematic literature review (Snyder 2019). We searched in Slovenian and English language bibliographic databases. Firstly, we searched through the Slovenian Cobiss database. COBISS or so-called Co-operative Online Bibliographic Systems and Services of Slovenia includes bibliographic material in 923 libraries. Secondly, we searched in the Web of Science database (previously Web of knowledge) of Clarivate and lastly completed the results with the search of Scopus of Elsevier, aiming at covering the two most comprehensive and at the same time influential bibliographic databases (Prancukute 2021) for communication studies.

The study was conducted in four stages: firstly, we refined a selection of our keywords by testing different combinations; secondly, we screened the abstracts of research articles and books and other relevant literature and paid attention to inclusion factors and lastly, we made a content analysis of the abstracted articles and other relevant material.

To find the answers to questions that guided our research, we used the following queries and keywords:

a) In the Cobiss database we entered the following queries:

- kw=digitalizacija AND kw=medijev (digitalization AND media)
- kw= konvergenca AND kw=medijev (convergence AND media)
- kw=digitalna AND kw=preobrazba AND kw=mediji (digital AND transformation AND media)

- kw=digitalizacija AND kw=konvergenca AND kw=mediji (digitalization AND convergence AND media)
- kw= digitalno AND kw=novinarstvo (digital AND journalism)
- kw=spletno AND kw=novinarstvo (online AND journalism)

b) In the Web of Science database, we entered the following queries:

- kw= digitalization AND media AND Slovenia
- kw= convergence AND media AND Slovenia
- kw= online AND journalism AND Slovenia
- kw= digital AND journalism AND Slovenia
- kw= convergence AND Slovenia
- kw= transmedia AND Slovenia
- kw= newsroom AND digital AND Slovenia

c) In the Scopus abstract and citation database we entered the following queries:

- kw= digitalization AND media AND Slovenia
- kw= convergence AND media AND Slovenia
- kw= online AND journalism AND Slovenia
- kw= digital AND journalism AND Slovenia
- kw= convergence AND Slovenia
- kw= transmedia AND Slovenia
- kw= newsroom AND digital AND Slovenia

This literature search was conducted between 18. November 2021 and 26. December 2021 and again at the end of January, at the end, we screened the new materials that were entered into databases. To re-check our results, we also included all declensions, because Slovenian nouns are divided into 3 genders and each of them has a different declension pattern.

To make a general overview of the field, we selected additional inclusion criteria. On Cobiss we narrowed our research by searching for expert studies, reports, scientific monographs, and research papers, but also added the screening of master's thesis, diploma thesis, specialist thesis, doctoral thesis, and textbooks. To begin, we looked at the whole span of recorded results, to capture the overall "picture" of the Slovenian recorded expertise participation concerning media convergence (2955 records), then we narrowed it and refined the results by setting the time frame to years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 (942 records) for making it even more topical and recent. Apart from exclusion criteria 'before 2018' we also excluded some types of publications – book reviews, editorials,



and non-academic, non-expert articles. We filtered our results by removing duplicates and from the identification and screening phase 442 records of the Slovenian bibliographic database entered our analysis.

These mentioned limitations and exclusions criteria were also applied to our search in Web of Science (225 records) and Scopus bibliographic database (185 records). Additionally, for our further understanding, we screened if articles and publications have Slovenian authors and if the topic of digitalization or convergence of media in Slovenia is included in their broader or most of the cases international research. A final list was a basis for our analysis.

### **3. AN OVERVIEW OF EXPERT/ACADEMIC THINKING ON MEDIA DIGITALIZATION IN SLOVENIA**

An increase in the volume of research about digitalization in Slovenia is evident in all databases. Entering "digital AND Slovenia" in Scopus resulted in 21 documents in the year 2013 (which we entered only for comparison) and already 39 documents in 2021. Entering "digital AND media AND Slovenia" results in 3 articles in 2013, whereas 5 in 2021.

Thematical narrowing shows that the 3 mentioned articles back in 2013 were all related to the digitalization of journalistic media (deepening digital divide research, digital exclusion, and media literacy in Slovenia), but only 1 article was related to digitalization of media in 2021 (researching the resilience against the disinformation). The same trend was observed among results in the WoS database. Even entering a query as general as "media AND Slovenia" between 2018 – 2021 results in only 5% of thematically corresponding results.

Expert or professional thinking, which "reflects the professional reality as a socio-cultural separate area of activity and relations embodied in the goals, methods of action and functions of the profession" (Gilmanov 2018, 306) concerning the digitalization of news media and mass media convergence is clearly present in a few disciplines: journalism, communication studies, computer and information studies, and sociology.

The domain of digitalised mass media in Slovenia is overshadowed by other changes in society that digitalization builds up.

#### **3.1. Most of the volume in (under)graduate research**

Numerically speaking, the core of writings about changes, enhanced by digitalization, is covered in the work of students. The quality of research, topicality, and potential of the contribution of new insights in these works varies greatly. Notwithstanding that the theoretical basis and the methodology used would be described as rudimentary in most diploma thesis, the expert reflection about the digitalization of media could certainly benefit from the acumen of case studies in

these works. 33 out of 180 diploma thesis are following the steps and results of digitization in companies, e-shops and different institutions. Rather interesting is that digitalization of the financial sector, especially digitization of insurance products and companies (7) obviously intrigued students in the period 2018 - 2021 almost as much as the digitalization in tourism (10). Students are interested in digital marketing, especially e-mail marketing, from the domain of social media marketing the most of interest was attributed to Instagram. Internet of Things, Big Data, Artificial intelligence are gradually taking over the interest of young researchers of different disciplines, but we also notice similar interest for the impact of digitalization on the behaviour of different groups (especially children, teenagers, and elderly generations). Topically students are frequently also addressing the dark web, censorship, hate speech, media control, and fake news. Mentioned topics were studied by social discipline studies, whereas questions of safety in the sense of personal safety while using the web, data security, and different phenomena concerning cybersecurity issues appeal to students of information sciences. Let us conclude this brief observation: 11 diploma thesis (out of 180) and 13 master thesis (out of 204 screened) are approaching digitalization of journalistic media and new digital reality, in which "old media" suffered from erosion "of their preponderance, opening a crisis about its place and relevance in the media system" (Casero-Ripollés 2020).

**Figure 1: Thematic representation of diploma thesis that approach digitalization and media convergence**



Apart from diploma and master thesis concerning digitalization, Slovenian academic writing could be divided into three segments. In the first group we find books or better to say e-books, the second group presents articles in scientific journals, and the third consists of the conference proceedings.

In the period 2018 – 2021 three books, scientific monographs, stood out (of 6 that thematically corresponded our research): *Slovenia on the path of digital transformation* (Bavec et al., 2018), *Scientific Research Trends in the Field of Digital Transformation* (Baggia et al., 2021), and *In the shadow of digital giants* (Kaluža et al., 2021). *Slovenia on the path of digital transformation* offers the thought of five retired university professors of informatics and computer studies (Cene Bavec, Andrej Kovačič, Marjan Krisper, Vladislav Rajkovič, and Mirko Vintar). There are many interesting ponderations in this work, one of them for sure being the analysis of possible national digital development scenarios. The point of departure of the author Mirko Vintar is that our country doesn't have a clear strategy for digitalization: "Nor in key development areas (economy, environment, health, education, foreign policy) we do not know how to express our long-term goals, much less pursue them. Our maximum range is more or less careful compliance with Brussels requirements, often to their own detriment (for example, remediation and bank privatization)" (Bavec et al. 2018, 80). He emphasizes that all organisations are "socio-technological systems", where people are key factors that must be considered when talking about organizational transformation (ibid, 89). It is in this chapter that our topics collide – digitalization and media – when Vintar questions the non-decisive standing point of Slovenian politics also on the topic of the faith of journalists, who are unprotected against the fact that digital media, hand in hand with social media, are ruining their profession (ibid, 103). Authors of the monograph are in most of the work on the same page and the continuity of their discourse works lightly for the reader. If we conclude with one more underlining of Cene Bavec that digitalization is opening many questions, as also "whether the information dominance of certain multinationals and political and other interest groups can lead to a kind of information 'monoculture' when it will be possible to literally impose a certain 'reality' on the broadest masses and kill all other realities" (ibid, 52). This point is of utter importance and consistent with conclusions in communication and convergence culture research (Vreg 2017; Plenkovič and Mustič 2016; Splichal 2021; Jenkins and Deuze 2008, 7). *Slovenia on the path of digital transformation* forms a part of informatics scientific discourse but is special also in a sense that it is crossing the border of a particular university. In the other two cases, as it applies for most scientific collaborations, researchers predominantly stay in the realm of their universities (of Ljubljana, Maribor, Primorska ...) or even only one faculty.

The e-book *Scientific Research Trends in the Field of Digital Transformation* aspires to collect the freshest writings from The Faculty of Organizational Sciences Kranj (Baggia et al., 2021), addressing the topicality of the previously mentioned book in a slightly different way. By mostly using literature review methodology articles offer a detailed presentation of theoretical grounds. 16 different authors build up this work. A very strong point lies in detailed, but for the readers of the corpus of social sciences still comprehensible technology updates of recent phenomena. Among these let us mention for example the simple illustration of the development of blockchain technologies from the first ideas all to Ethereum and Hyperledger who rocketed this technology to easier everyday use, but authors explain also the blockchain consensus and smart contract systems, buzz words of today. Systematically, authors continue with applying these technologies to different sectors apart from finance, like the health and energy sectors (ibid, 128 – 159). This collection of research didn't forget to address the covid-19 situation, especially detailed is also the perspective of cybersecurity issues changing this pandemic within the search of cyber immunity (Brezavšček 2021, 160 – 201).

These two books are the biggest collections of scientific reflection about digitalization in Slovenia in book format in the last four years, nevertheless, they don't address digitalization of media and the future of media landscape that is being abruptly placed in a transformation which intensified during the pandemic. The third book, *In the shadow of digital giants* (Kaluža et al., 2021), is devoted to answering those questions. Also available in open access format and as an e-book, this work comes to the audience as the result of a research project *New ways and global patterns of (re) production of online news*. 10 authors who we can follow, apart from Peter Sekloča from the University of Primorska, as permanent researchers of Center for Social Communication Research at Faculty of Social Sciences Ljubljana. 38 interviews of journalists, editors, employees in the marketing and development department of 5 mainstream media (ProPlus, TSMedia, Večer, RTV Slovenia – Multimedia center MMC and radio Val 202) and representant of the Slovenian Journalists Association and the Journalists Union resulted in the analysis of Kaluža in Slaček Brlek (ibid, 17 – 130) that confirms the current crisis in the media sector, "which is strongly marked by processes of digitalization" (ibid, 11). But the report is one part of this e-book that takes us through the review of major obstacles and challenges of digitalization of Slovenian national media, the second part being consisted of essays of 8 (some at the moment, others already several years) very proactive authors of media, digital journalism and communication studies.

The report confirms the trends that we could follow in western mediatized communities during the last decade or more and present itself as precious in a sense that we can see it as a synthesis of the current state in Slovenia's newsrooms:

- prevail of digital-first imperative;
- media convergence reshaping the newsrooms to integrated cross-media mode of work and the organization of editorial process from a vertical to a horizontal one;
- journalists becoming multimedia journalists, speed and resourcefulness coming to the front of desired characteristics of new journalist;
- office work replacing fieldwork;
- disappearing of specialization and disappearing of the clear line between private and business time (ibid, 27-28);
- minding the economy and the fight for advertisement money;
- generationally specific expectations concerning the use and knowledge of different social media channels and outgoing formats: senior journalists, in general, were not expected to completely master new technologies (ibid, 29-30);
- new desired professions and knowledge in newsrooms, where multitasking is the new normal and desired knowledge is occupied by digital analytics, digital distribution, and social media management (ibid, 31-37);
- metrics becoming an indispensable part of editorial work (ibid, 81 – 108);
- normalisation of the product placement wishes and 'serious' journalism, slowly becoming minority against entertainment trivialization and populism (ibid, 42-48);
- the rise of the awareness of community building and branding;
- fierce battle in the field of consolidation of media and in the same time for advertising money with big digital corporations because "Along with the flight of attention, there is also a flight of financial investments" (ibid, 42), whereas medias are trying to reduce the damage by "mimicking the trends of digital platforms" (ibid.); media are in the same time trying to battle the global game (with Netflix, HBO, etc.) by also producing their original national content, which acts as a creative trigger (ibid, 54 – 56);
- still looking for some model of monetizing the digital in the sense of finding new models of paying walls, because current doesn't really work and don't have support from journalists whose work stays out of the audience's reach;
- media realizing a huge challenge of how to address the young generations;
- building interactions, but battling fake news, a big rise of hate speech, etc. (ibid, 61-84);
- the pandemics pushed the media into an even more threatening situation.

The report finishes with the title that speaks for itself: "How black (dark) is the digital future of journalism?" and observation about commercial media still not finding business strategies that would solve the crisis of media and journalism in Slovenia. With essays from established researchers in the second part of the book, that put even more depth and insights escorting this report, In the shadow of digital giants is in fact the highlight of academic thinking about the intersection of media convergence and media, when other fields of studies in Slovenia superficially tackled these major changes.

All three e-books are not translated in English language, but nevertheless, some of the authors successfully published their thematically related research in different scientific journals in this period (Slavko Splichal, Igor Vobič, Tanja Kerševan Smokvina, Peter Sekloča, Doroteja Vidmar, Alenka Baggia, and others).

We found additional questioning of the unenviable situation of media landscape during intensive digitalization in Slovenia in the collection of proceedings entitled Pandemic society (Ignjatovič et al., 2021). Issued by Slovenian sociological society by occasion of the conference in autumn 2021, 6 articles attribute attention also to wider social aspects and direct consequences of the deterioration of media, most of those thematically dealing with specific discourses of mainstream media, for example, analysis of discriminative discursive practices in reporting about immigrants (Srnrdelj and Učakar in Ignjatovič et al., 2021, 48-53). Adding another important key in the comprehension of the status of work in media today: article "After this experience, I am ready for all circles of Dantee's hell" transcends to journalism studies by presenting the precarisation of working conditions of 9 journalists (Lukan and Čehovin Zajc in Ignjatovič et al., 2021, 65-69). Journalists that answered interviews in 2 different years of the millennial generation invested many years in obtaining the regular job, but reality pushed them to life without a full-time employment contract. Only 1 interviewed journalist obtained full employment in journalism after more than a decade of work. Motivation is falling after years of bad treatment of their employers and the work of these young journalists is described as "hope labor" (ibid, 68). Minority stayed on the path of journalism in so-called "willingly and unwillingly entrepreneurial career types" by classification of Davidson and Meyers.

The book of proceedings Pandemic society was a thorough result of a conference and it appears that conference gatherings are in fact the best illustration to show the diversity of expert thinking about digitalization in Slovenia. In the period 2018 – 2021 the conference proceedings that devoted their attention to digitalization were numerous, for example (we left descriptions or titles of gatherings with a few entries to make the content clearer to the reader) Conference of Modern Information Technologies and Services, International Conference on

the Development of Organizational Sciences, National Conference on Security in Local Communities, Tourism 4.0 and Science, Professional meeting of medical informatics, International Conference on District Energy, International Scientific Conference on Industrial Engineering Development, 49. Day of geodets - challenges in the digital renovation of the cadastre, Strategic meeting Energy Innovation, ROSUS 2020: computer image processing and its use in Slovenia, Hybrid archives in the light of the implementation of the archival public service: 30. meeting of the Archives Society of Slovenia, Social and economic aspects of the use of digitized cultural heritage in Slovenia, Days of Slovenia informatics, Project Forum - Project management in the age of digitalization, Visual Cultures & Communication: Images and Practices on the Move, Slovenian Papermaking Day - Between circular, bio and digital, Conference - Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights and Social Damage; Protection Science Days, Conference on Information and Communication Technology, Electronics and Mechatronics, and among others "ours" - All about people: digital transformation in science, education and arts and others. Many of those conferences were held online and with a broader audience - this being one of the pluses of remote work and, yes, digitalization itself in the time of the pandemic.

The research of digitalization and digitisation in Slovenia is evidently a very popular conference topic, but we can't confirm this for the narrower topic of digitalization of media, related to the digital news ecosystem. Moreover, digitalization and convergence of journalistic media in Slovenia presents a minority of research in scientific journals. Literature review showed no significant difference in pre - (2018, 2019) and pandemic (2020, 2021) periods. Analysing adaptation strategies of journalists, media and journalists value systems (Peter Sekloča, Sašo Slaček Brlek, Jernej Kaleža), employment in digital journalism (Igor Vobič, Tanja Oblak Črnič, Branko Bembič), media regulations and media ethics (Tanja Kerševan Smokvina, Melita Poler Kovačič), media literacy, transmedia encounters, disinformation and digital gap (Mateja Rek, Marko Milosavljevič, Tea Golob), algorithmisation, interactivity (Igor Vobič, Jernej Kaleža), content analysing comparing different channels (Karmen Erjavec), the crisis of public and media scene, gate-keeping, watch-dog positions during the covid-19 situation, power relations (Ksenija Vidmar Horvat, Igor Vobič, Slavko Splichal, Ines Kožuh ...) were some of the topics that build internationally accessible scientific Slovenian discourse and debate.

Authors of scientific articles in the 2018 - 2021 period undertook the methodologies of a semi-structured qualitative interview, ethnography of online newsroom, and content analysis, dominantly staying in the realm of the biggest national media, especially Slovenia's national public broadcasting organization, where, we assume, data is more accessible and nationally specific. Some are

reflecting also upon situations in other countries, for example studying automation in newsrooms of United Kingdom and Germany (Milosavljevič and Vobič 2019), or collaborating in international research projects. Authors gained publication in *Javnost*, *Digital Journalism*, *European Journal of Communication*, *Sustainability*, *Journalism studies*, *Teorija in praksa*, *Journal of Digital Media and Policy*, *Comunicar*, *Convergence*, *International Journal of environmental research and public health* and some other with lower impact factors.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Results of our literature review of three bibliographic databases from 2018 to January 2022 suggest that both digitalization and media convergence are very attractive research themes. Most of the findings are explored in the domain of economy (supply chains, export tactics, innovations, public procurement, updated, circular economy, new business models, industry 4.0), informatics and informational management (indicators of digital transformation, datafication, automatization, autonomous vehicles, augmented reality, digital robots), organisation, regulations (digitalization of administrative procedures, distant learning, remote work, data protection, digital competences), while in average 5% of research is associated with digitalization of media, the convergence of journalistic newsmedia media and media culture, while social media in Slovenian research is omnipresent and passes through the scope of different disciplines, confirming the great shift to attention economy.

What is experienced with networked journalism in Slovenia, new journalist identity and emerging professional ethics (Fortunati et al., 2009) is more than a decade intensive trend in western European countries, which is confirmed also by the fourth wave of research in digital journalism (Steensen and Ahva 2015). This needs to be addressed and included also in the formation of new professionals (Kirchhoff 2021), and the mentioned researchers in Slovenia in majority work also as professors, sharing their precious knowledge with future journalists. These new generations will see today's challenges of audiences changed to users (Jenkins and Carpentier 2013), immersion in the intermedial environment, media literacy discrepancies, transmedia storytelling (Scolari 2009) as a normal part of their professional world.

Deepening the research of journalistic media as never-ending and "eternally social" processes (Silverstone 1999, 4) can be a challenging task. In a time of platformization (Poell 2020) social media studies or social marketing studies seem to be far more rewarding for a young researcher in many ways, for example for gaining citation and impact factors. Many studies of pandemic communication in the future will reveal the real effects of pauperisation of journalism and show that mediamorphosis processes are far-reaching.



As the research in this area is of great interest, we subsequently reviewed the background of the records. Most of research on news media digitalization relates to official research projects of faculties, departments, institutions, or international reports. Research projects indeed function as generators or accelerators of academic work, but, as already mentioned, the work of researchers predominantly stays in the realm of only one faculty or is limited to one university, and rarely achieves interdisciplinary. An implication of this is that knowledge about digitalization in Slovenia is not realizing the potential it carries within, which acts as a drawback in comprehension of changes we witness.

## LITERATURE

1. Al-Mansour, Jarrah F., and Sanad A. Al-Ajmi. 2020. Coronavirus 'COVID-19' - Supply Chain Disruption and Implications for Strategy, Economy, and Management. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 7 (9): 659–72.
2. Anderson Jones RonNell. 2011. *Litigation, Legislation, and Democracy in a Post-Newspaper America*. Washington and Lee Law Review 68(2): 557-637. Available at: <http://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlulr/vol68/iss2/3>. (15. april 2014).
3. Baggia, Alenka, Uroš Rajkovič ed. 2021. *Znanstveno-raziskovalni trendi na področju digitalne preobrazbe*. Maribor: Univerzitetna založba Maribor.
4. Balbi, Gabrielle. 2017. *Media Convergence and Deconvergence – Deconstructing Media Convergence: A Cultural History of the Buzzword, 1980s–2010s*. Palgrave Macmillan 31-51.
5. Bavec, Cene, Andrej Kovačič, Marjan Krisper, Vladislav Rajkovič and Mirko Vintar. 2018. *Slovenija na poti digitalne preobrazbe*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za računalništvo in informatiko.
6. Bennett, Philip in Moises Naim. 2015. 21st-century censorship. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 53(5). Available at: [http://www.cjr.org/cover\\_story/21st\\_century\\_censorship.php](http://www.cjr.org/cover_story/21st_century_censorship.php) (15. August 2019).
7. Brezavšček, Alenka. 2021. Vpliv pandemije COVID-19 na kibernetiko varnost: analiza stanja s priporočili za mala podjetja v *Znanstveno-raziskovalni trendi na področju digitalne preobrazbe*. Baggia ed. Univerzitetna založba Maribor.
8. Casero-Ripollés, Andreu. 2020. Impact of Covid-19 on the Media System. Communicative and Democratic Consequences of News Consumption during the Outbreak. *Profesional de La Informacion*, 29 (2).
9. Chadwick, Andrew. 2013. The Hybrid Media System : Politics and Power, January 2015: 1–21.

10. Chyi, Hsiang Iris. 2009. *Information Surplus in Digital Age. Impact and implications. Journalism and Citizenship: New Agendas in Communication*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi. Routledge: 109-125.
11. Deuze, Mark. 2019. What Journalism Is (Not). *Social Media + Society*. July – September 2019. Sage.
12. Dominick, Whitney, Taylor Elam, Katherine Fraus and Kanako Taku. 2021. Nontraditional Social Support, Core Belief Disruption, and Posttraumatic Growth during COVID-19 *Journal of Loss and Trauma*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2021.1932968>
13. Eurofound. 2021. *Living, working and COVID-19 (Update April 2021): Mental health and trust decline across EU as pandemic enters another year*. Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg.
14. Fortunati, Leopoldina, Mauro Sarrica, John O'Sullivan, Aukse Balcytiene, Haliki Harro-Loit, Phil Macgregor, Nayia Roussou, Ramón Salaverría, Federico De Luca. 2009. The Influence of the Internet on European Journalism. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 14(4): 928–963
15. García-Avilés, Jose A. 2021. "Journalism as Usual? Managing Disruption in Virtual Newsrooms during the COVID-19 Crisis." *Digital Journalism* 9(9): 1249–70.
16. Gilmanov, S. 2018. Conference paper - Professional Thinking and Types of Professionals. *KnE Life Sciences*, The Fifth International Luria Memorial Congress.
17. Guðmundsson, Birgir, and Birgir Guðmundsson. 2020. "Icelandic Newsrooms in a Pandemic Mode." *Stjórnmal Og Stjórnslá* 16 (2): 147–66.
18. Hrvatin B. Sandra in Tanja Kerševan. 1999. Where are the Borders of Media Capitalism in Slovenia?, *Javnost - The Public* 6(2): 93-114
19. Ignjatović, Miroljub ed., Aleksandra Kanjuo-Mrčela ed. and Roman Kuhar ed. 2021. *Pandemična družba*. Ljubljana: Slovesko sociološko društvo.
20. Jenkins, Henry, Nico Carpentier. 2013. "Theorizing Participatory Intensities: A Conversation about Participation and Politics." *Convergence* 19(3): 265–86.
21. Kaluža Jernej, Sašo, Slaček Brlek. 2021. *V senci digitalnih velikanov*. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.
22. Kearney, Celeste Mary. 2018. *The Craft of Criticism*. Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.
23. Kennedy, Kathryn E. R. and Michael A. Grandner. 2021. Sleep, Dreams, and Nightmares During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 35(8): 1168–73.

24. Kirchhoff, Susanne. 2021. Journalism Education's Response to the Challenges of Digital Transformation: A Dispositive Analysis of Journalism Training and Education Programs. *Journalism Studies* 23(1): 108–30.
25. Lawson-Borders, Gracie. 2005. *Media Organizations and Convergence - Case Studies of Media Convergence Pioneers*. London: Routledge.
26. Lukan, Tinca, Jožica Čehovin Zajc. 2021. »Po tej izkušnji sem pripravljen na vse kroge Dantejevega pekla« – karierne poti prekarnih novinarjev milenijske generacije« in *Pandemična družba*. Ignjatović ed. Ljubljana: Slovensko sociološko društvo.
27. Lundby, Knut. Mediatized stories in mediatized worlds. 2014. In: Hepp and Krotz eds. *Mediatized worlds*, 19-37. London: Palgrave Macmillan,
28. McQuail, Denis. *Mass communication theory*. London: Sage, 2010.
29. Milosavljević, Marko, Igor Vobič. 2021. Our Task Is to Demystify Fears': Analysing Newsroom Management of Automation in Journalism. *Journalism* 22(9): 2203–21.
30. O'Sullivan, John, and Leopoldina Fortunati. 2021. Media Convergence. *Digital Roots*, August, 41–58.
31. Oates, Sarah. 2007. The Neo-Soviet Model of the Media. *Europe-Asia Studies* 59(8): 1279-1297. Milton park: Taylor & Francis.
32. Papathanassopoulos, Stylianos in Ralph Negrine. 2015. A Crisis in Political Communication?. *European Media in Crisis: Values, Risks and Policies: 147-158*. New York. ECREA Routledge.
33. Plenković, Mario and Daria Mustić. 2016. The new paradigm of participatory communication as a result of participatory culture of digital media. *Media, Culture and Public Relations* 7(2): 143-149.
34. Poell, Thomas. 2020. Three Challenges for Media Studies in the Age of Platforms. *Television & New Media*, 21(6): 650–57.
35. Prancutė, Raminta. 2021. *Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus: The Titans of Bibliographic Information in Today's Academic World*, 9 (12).
36. Reuter Institute in Oxford University. 2020. *Digital News report 2020*. (25. June 2020).
37. Reuter Institute in Oxford University. 2021. *Digital News report 2021*. (5. November 2021).
38. Rožman, Maja, Simona Sternad Zabukovšek, Samo Bobek, and Polona Tominc. 2021. Gender Differences in Work Satisfaction, Work Engagement and Work Efficiency of Employees during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Case in Slovenia. *Sustainability Switzerland* 13, 8791.

39. Scolari, Carlos Alberto. 2009. Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production. *International Journal of Communication* (3): 586-606.
40. Siegert, Gabriele. 2013. From "the end of advertising as we know it" to "beyond content"? Changes in advertising and its impact on journalistic media. *Journalism and Media Convergence* (5): 29-40. Berlin: De Gruyter.
41. Silverstone, Roger. 1999. *Why Study the Media - The Texture of Experience*, 1-12. London: SAGE Publications.
42. Singh, Sube, Ramesh Kumar, Rohit Panchal, and Manoj Kumar Tiwari. 2021. "Impact of COVID-19 on Logistics Systems and Disruptions in Food Supply Chain." *International Journal of Production Research* 59(7): 1993-2008.
43. Smrdelj, Rok, Tjaša Učakar. 2021. Marginalizacija intersekcijske perspektive: tujci na slovenskih spletnih portalih in *Pandemična družba*. Ignjatović ed. Ljubljana: Slovensko sociološko društvo.
44. Snyder, Hannah. 2019. "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines." *Journal of Business Research* 104 (November): 333-39.
45. Splichal, Slavko. 2021. *V senci digitalnih velikanov - predgovor*. Jernej Kaluža in Sašo Slaček Brlek ed. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.
46. Steensen, Steen, Laura Ahva. 2015. Theories of Journalism in a Digital age. *Digital Journalism* 3(1): 1-18.
47. Sumida Nami, Mason Walker, Amy Mitchell. Pew Research Center. 23. April 2019. The role of social media in news. Available at: <https://www.journalism.org/2019/04/23/the-role-of-social-media-in-news/> (2. February 2020).
48. Sussman, Leonard. 2000. Censor dot gov: the Internet and press freedom 2000. *Journal of Government Information* 27(5): 537-545.
49. Vreg, France. 2017. Political communication and social change in pluralist society. *Media, Culture and Public Relations* 8(1): 26-34
50. Vukanovic, Zvezdan. 2018. The Influence of Digital Convergence/Divergence on Digital Media Business Models. 17th IFIP TC 14 International Conference, Held at the 24th IFIP World Computer Congress, WCC 2018, Poznan, Poland, September 17-20, 2018, Proceedings: 152-63.
51. WHO. 2. February 2020. *2019-nCoV infodemia*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200202-sitrep-13-ncov-v3.pdf> (4. April 2020).

# BLOG AS A MEANS OF INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CITY OF ZAGREB

Maja Popović, University of Zagreb, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

Persons with disabilities often need to be well informed about the architectural adaptations of cultural, artistic and heritage institutions in the city before the planned visit in order to check whether they can access the building on their own and if they can move freely through that space. Information and possibly photos of the places they want to visit can be obtained by visiting the website of these institutions or through Internet browsers, but the requested information isn't always specified, and when it is, it can be incomplete or inaccurate.

Since there isn't a single web site at the level of the city of Zagreb that would contain such information, and since the author works in one such institution and practically experiences the problems of persons with disabilities and difficulties in obtaining accurate information, a draft of a blog was made, where all the information they need could be found in one place. In order to gather information for the needs of the Blog, a survey was made in which it was required to fill in the necessary data. Data is collected by e-mail and a visit in person. The collected information is immediately published on the blog and is permanently supplemented with data on new online events and activities of the requested institutions in Zagreb. Information on other adaptations can also be found, for example for persons with sensory impairments, if they exist.

For the purposes of this paper, a detailed analysis of what these institutions of the city of Zagreb offer to persons with disabilities will be made in terms of space adaptation but also all other necessary information for the needs of persons with disabilities.

**Keywords:** persons with disabilities, architectural and other adaptations, cultural, artistic and heritage institutions, information through a blog for persons with disabilities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The accessibility of cultural institutions for persons with disabilities has been discussed in the Croatian cultural space for years, especially after the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), ratified in the year 2011 and according to which all EU Member States need to ensure persons with disabilities the ability to live independently and to fully participate in the society<sup>1</sup>. To achieve this, persons with disabilities need unobstructed access to the physical environment, transportation and information and communications technologies and systems<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the Convention, Croatia has also implemented the *Zakon o suzbijanju diskriminacije* (engl. Anti-discrimination Law) which recognizes the failure to enable persons with disabilities, among other, the use of publicly available resources and participation in cultural and public life, as a form of discrimination<sup>3</sup>. *Pravilnik o osiguranju pristupačnosti građevina osobama s invaliditetom i smanjene pokretljivosti* (engl. Ordinance on ensuring the accessibility of buildings for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility) was passed in 2009 which prescribes the conditions for ensuring access, movement, residence and work of persons with disabilities and reduced mobility in public and business buildings<sup>4</sup>. *Zakon o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku i ostalim sustavima komunikacije gluhih i gluhoslijepih osoba* (engl. The Law on Croatian Sign Language and Other Communication Systems for Deaf and Deafblind Persons)<sup>5</sup> was passed in 2015, which recognizes the right of blind and deafblind persons to use, be informed and be educated in Croatian sign language and other communication systems that meet their individual needs, in order to equalize access to social, economic and cultural environment.

To determine the state of accessibility in the museum environment a research was conducted on the level of accessibility of museums in the city of Zagreb (Sušić, 2012)<sup>6</sup>. The Croatian capital was chosen for the research because the assumption was that that's where the accessibility of the museum would be best implemented best. Research intended to include 28 institutions but 6 didn't provide any feedback, so in the end the research was conducted on 19 institutions. Data were collected using a questionnaire that contained 31 questions and those questions were grouped into 4 categories. While the first category con-

---

1 A brief but detailed description of the obligation EU Member States need to implement published on the European Commission official website: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1138&langId=en>

2 The entire Convention is available on the United Nations official website: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

3 As stated in the article 4 of the Law: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/490/Zakon-o-suzbijanju-diskriminacije>

4 As stated in the article 1 of the Ordinance: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013\\_06\\_78\\_1615.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_06_78_1615.html)

5 As stated in the article 1 of the Law <https://www.zakon.hr/z/815/Zakon-o-hrvatskom-znakovnom-jeziku-i-ostalim-sustavima-komunikacije-gluhih-i-gluhoslijepih-osoba-u-Republici-Hrvatskoj>

6 Sušić, Željka. *Istraživanje prilagođenosti muzeja i galerija za osobe s invaliditetom*, 2012., magistarski rad, Filozofski fakultet, Zagreb

tained general questions about the museum, questions in other four categories referred to the accessibility of the museum entrance, general accessibility of the space, the existence of pictorial signs informing about access for different categories of persons with disabilities and the accessibility of the museum exit in case of danger and possible tactile orientation plan<sup>7</sup>. Also, questions referred to the movement through the museum space and availability of aids for disabled persons, as well as the possibility for their independent usage. The working hypothesis that Zagreb's museums were adapted proved to be wrong, because the results of the research show the opposite. The data obtained showed that out of 19 museums, only 2 were accessible for persons with disabilities and only according to the "basic" criteria, while no Zagreb museum, according to received answers was fully accessible. The results presented indicate that accessibility hasn't been implemented in accordance with the existing legal framework and further work needs to be done.

Obviously, the awareness of the need to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities has been recognized, but the question is how much has been done in terms of adaptation. Are persons with disabilities really able to participate in the cultural life of the city of Zagreb and do information and communication systems available serve as a good support in gathering the information needed to plan a visit to such an institution? Unfortunately, with all legal framework in place and additional efforts made to help bring equality into the cultural environment, many institutions to this day, remain inaccessible and fail to offer basic information on accessibility to persons with disabilities.

## 2. EXISTING INFORMATION IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Persons with disabilities will often turn to a simple Internet search about the architectural adaptations of institutions they want to visit in order to discover if they can independently enter the building and to see if they can move freely, once inside. This information can be obtained by visiting official websites of these institutions, but in many cases the requested information isn't always specified, and when it is, it can be either incomplete or even inaccurate. At the level of the city of Zagreb, a website *Pristupačni Zagreb* (engl. Accessible Zagreb) was created with the intention of providing information on accessibility in public city facilities, but this page provides only basic information on physical barriers in the form of visual icons and does not provide any information for persons with other types of disabilities<sup>8</sup>.

---

7 The part of the questionnaire concerning physical barriers was created according to the main provisions of the Pravilnik o osiguranju pristupačnosti građevina osobama s invaliditetom i smanjene pokretljivosti (engl. Ordinance on ensuring the accessibility of buildings for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility)

8 Website is available on: <https://pristupacni.zagreb.hr/#>

### 3. BLOG AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATING NEEDED INFORMATION

Since there isn't a web site that would contain much needed detailed information about accessibility and adaptations in cultural institutions, a blog *Kulturom na kotačima* (engl. *Through Culture on Wheels*) was created for persons with disabilities, where all the information they need could be found in one place. Data is collected both by a personal visit to the institution and by visiting the official web site. Access to the institution is recorder, so are adaptations such as elevators and ramps, and also adaptations for persons with sensory impairments are noted. Information is immediately published on the blog and is regularly updated with new data on adaptation of these institutions<sup>9</sup>. Blog has proven to be a great option for this type of content. The basic package of the platform is free and easy for interactive content creation and publishing. Communication is provided from several sides: visitors can comment on posts, subscribe to the blog via email address or contact the blog administrator / author directly via email.

The blog appeared as an online form back in early 1990s and according to a survey conducted in the year 2005, up to 8 million people were blogging at that time and up to 25% of Internet users were reading them regularly<sup>10</sup>. According to a more recent survey, there are now more than 600 million online blogs across different platforms in the United States alone<sup>11</sup>. When talking about blogging, it's important to notice the main difference that separates it from a standard website. Blog is the property of the individual and blogging can be divided into four groups: personal online journals, informative and interpretive blogs, public relations and advertising blogs and other (spam blogs)<sup>12</sup>.

As can be seen, a blog is a popular platform that allows an easy way to create and publish content and is equipped with innovative and useful tools that greatly facilitate this process.

### 4. METHOD

In this research the method of content analysis was used for the analysis of the official websites of cultural institutions. Ten criteria were developed to determine whether the website offers basic information (phone number, address, e-mail) and whether it has the option of instant messaging. Several criteria also referred to the activities of institutions on other social networks. Other criteria served to

---

9 The purpose of the blog is to see whether there's a need for a website like this online, whether persons with disabilities and cultural institutions staff would find it useful and whether a communication between the two sides could be sparked online. The blog is available here: <https://kulturomnakotacima.wordpress.com/>

10 Good illustration on how popular blogs are: Tomašević, Nives, Kovač, Miha. 2009. *Knjiga, tranzicija, iluzija*. Zagreb : Naklada Ljevak, str. 294-295

11 Published on the official FinancesOnline website: <https://financesonline.com/number-of-us-bloggers/>

12 As noted by Vobič, Igor. 2007. The normalization of the blog in journalism : online newspapers pf Slovene traditional media. *Medijska istraživanja : znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije* 13 (2007), 2: 59-83



determine if the site offers disabled persons information on the accessibility of their spaces, whether it offered the option to blind and partially sighted persons to adjust text size and background color, and finally whether virtual exhibition sites (another way of providing services to persons who are, for whatever reason, unable to physically enter the space).

**Table 1: Ten criteria**

Basic contact information	Physical address	Can the institution be contacted?
	Telephone number	
	E-mail address	
Direct contact	Instant messaging	Does it offer an instant communication channel?
Online content	Online exhibitions	Does it offer online content for viewing?
	Online collections	
Social media platforms	Facebook page	Is it active on social media?
	Instagram page	
	YouTube channel	
Information for disabled	Information on accessibility	Is the institution accessible, has it implemented adaptations for different types of disabilities?
Options for blind and visually impaired	Website accessibility helper	Can blind and visually impaired persons change the font size, contrast or background color?

Representative sample included nine institutions whose official websites were included in this research. This research examined official websites of ten cultural institutions: 3 museums, 2 library networks, 1 independent library and 3 art theaters. The main goal was to determine whether these websites offer useful information about accessibility to persons with disabilities. Other goals were to determine whether this information is well presented, whether they provide virtual exhibitions that can be accessed online, through the website, and whether these sites have communication channels set up through which persons with disabilities can contact them, if they need help or guidance when planning a visit to their institutions.

**Table 2: List of institutions**

Museums	Etnographic Museum
	Zagreb City Museum
	Museum of contemporary art
Libraries	National and University Library in Zagreb
	Zagreb City Libraries
	Library of CASA
Art theaters	The Croatian national theatre in Zagreb
	The Zagreb city theater "Komedija"
	The Zagreb youth theater

## 5. PURPOSE AND GOALS

The aim of this paper is to create and maintain a useful and reliable blog that will contain all the necessary information for persons with disabilities (accessibility, other adaptations, contact list, interactive content) about cultural, heritage and artistic institutions. In order to achieve this, a detailed analysis of what these institutions in the city of Zagreb offer online to persons with disabilities will be made in terms of information available online about space adaptation but also all other necessary information for the needs of all persons with disabilities, which is also the purposes of this paper.

The research question is: Is the information on accessibility and other adaptations in cultural institutions for persons with disabilities in the city of Zagreb available online? Following the research question, two hypotheses are set:

H1: The much needed information isn't available online for persons with disabilities

H2: More attention needs to be paid to the transparency of information available online that persons with disabilities need in terms of accessibility

## 6. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS

What the results of this study show is that even though certain institutions recognize the importance of providing persons with disabilities the necessary information about accessibility and adaptations, many still avoid doing so. When the existing legal framework and efforts done to help provide necessary adjustment to persons with disabilities are taken into account, we come to a conclusion that much more work needs to be done in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are rightfully into the society.

**Table 3: Museums – information available on official web sites**

	Physical address	Telephone number	E-mail address	Instant messaging	Online exhibitions	Facebook page	Instagram page	YouTube channel	Information on accessibility	Website accessibility helper
Ethnographic Museum	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-
Zagreb City Museum	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
Museum of contemporary art	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+/-	+

The official website of the Ethnographic Museum offers almost all the information a user would need to plan a visit to this institution. Basic information such as physical and e-mail address, telephone number and information on how to get to the museum by public transport are clearly stated. There's even an option to view virtual exhibitions. The museum is also active on Facebook and YouTube where it offers not only useful information on upcoming events, but also educational multimedia content. Although the museum has an active Instagram profile, it is not featured on the official website and can be reached by additional search. Instant messaging (text based communication in real time) isn't available, and the website lacks an accessibility menu that offers blind and partially sighted persons the option to change the font size and background color of the page. The site also offers a detailed description of the museums layout written specifically for persons with disabilities, but it is difficult to reach because the document isn't placed in a visible place where a user could easily find it. It is also worth mentioning that the document in question isn't even available in the English language.

Zagreb City Museum website contains almost all the information included in this research. Physical and email addresses are clearly displayed, phone numbers as well. Instant messaging isn't available. The museum is active on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram and all these services are easy to access through the official website. Users also have the option to view virtual exhibitions. Basic information for the blind, visually impaired and persons with physical disabilities is clearly stated and visible, but is not available in English. An accessibility menu is also available on the site, offering blind and partially sighted persons the option to increase the font and change the background color.

The Museum of Contemporary Art has clearly stated addresses and telephone numbers on its official website but lacks the option of instant messaging. Although the museum is active on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, the website doesn't have the option of viewing virtual exhibitions. An accessibility menu for the blind and visually impaired is available on the site, but when it

comes to the description of the space for visitors with disabilities, the information is scarce. Only one sentence about the entire museum being wheelchair accessible can be found under visitor information. There is no other information available.

**Table 4: Libraries - information available on official web sites**

	Physical address	Telephone number	E-mail address	Instant messaging	Online collections	Facebook page	Instagram page	YouTube channel	Information on accessibility	Website accessibility helper
National and University Library in Zagreb	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+
Zagreb City Libraries	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+/-
Library of CASA	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+/-

The official website of the National and University Library in Zagreb has a well-structured and easily accessible basic information displayed on their site. Along with the telephone number for each department, the e-mail addresses are also stated. The address of the library building is clearly stated as well. Instant messaging, as in the examples before, isn't available. The library also has an online portal *Digitalna* that functions as a central gathering place for digital collections. The portal exists as a separate website and is clearly highlighted on the official website. Users can clearly see it and can access all the digitized projects so far in one click of a mouse. The library is very active on social networks, so in addition to Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, it's also active on other social platforms. There is an accessibility menu for blind and partially sighted persons on the page, but unfortunately information on other adjustments for persons with disabilities is not provided.

Zagreb City Libraries have clearly highlighted basic information on their official website, the telephone numbers, along with the addresses of each individual library are listed. Instant messaging isn't available. Zagreb City Libraries are also active on Facebook and YouTube. It is also worth mentioning that users can access an additional web portal *Digital collections* where they can view digital and digitized material deposited at the Zagreb City Libraries' repository. Each library has information on its subpage about whether the facility is accessible to wheelchair users, but there is no information on other adaptations. When it comes to the accessibility menu, the blind and visually impaired can only make a color inversion and read white text on a black background, other adjustments are not available.

Library of Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences has clearly stated addresses and telephone numbers on its official website, and just like the two libraries before, doesn't offer the option of instant messaging. Users can also access through the main website a portal *Digital Collection and Catalogue* where they can view libraries' virtual collections. The Library is active on Facebook and Instagram, but not on YouTube. Blind and partially sighted persons can only change the font size on the page, and there is no information on accessibility and other adjustments in the library building on the website.

**Table 5: Art theaters - information available on official web sites**

	Physical address	Telephone number	E-mail address	Instant messaging	Online content	Facebook page	Instagram page	YouTube channel	Information on accessibility	Website accessibility helper
The Croatian national theatre in Zagreb	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-
The Zagreb city theater "Komedija"	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-
The Zagreb youth theater	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-

The official website of the Croatian National Theater in Zagreb contains mostly information on the repertoire and season listings. Phone numbers and e-mail addresses are clearly stated. Address is also available, accompanied by a link to Google maps, showing the exact location of the building. The theater is active on Facebook and Instagram. It should be noted that a YouTube channel, where users can find announcements of performances, is also available, but the link is not on the official website. Unfortunately, there is neither an accessibility menu nor any information for persons with disabilities on the website.

The theater "Komedija" (engl. Comedy), just like the Croatian National Theater, offers basic contact information. Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels are easily accessible on the website. As before, the accessibility menu has not been set up, and there is no information on accessibility and adaptations for persons with disabilities.

The Zagreb Youth Theater has listed telephone numbers of all theater services, including their e-mail addresses. Of course, the address is also listed. The theater is active on social networks, so in addition to Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, they are also active on other social platforms, and all the links are easily reachable on the main site. The accessibility menu is not present here either, nor is the accessibility information for persons with disabilities.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The working hypothesis that cultural institutions do not properly communicate important basic information about the accessibility of their spaces to persons with disabilities proved to be accurate, as can be read from the results of this research. According to the results obtained, libraries and museums tend to provide the most information on accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Museums offer all the basic contact information on their websites but none of them have the instant messaging option. In addition to detailed contact information, links to virtual exhibitions and collections are also available. Some use social media platforms not only to promote activities but also provide educational and informative content (Ethnographic Museum). Even though Zagreb City Museum and Ethnographic Museum both offer information for persons with physical disabilities and sensory impairment, that information is very hard to find on the Ethnographic Museum official website because it is not in a visible place and a user needs to search the entire website to retrieve it. The Museum of Contemporary Art only stated that the "museum is fully wheelchair accessible" and doesn't offer any additional information. When it comes to the website accessibility helper for blind and visually impaired, only Ethnographic Museum doesn't provide that option.

While Zagreb City Libraries offer basic information about the architectural barriers in their spaces, National and University Library in Zagreb and Library of CASA don't provide this kind of information. All the libraries included in this research provide their users with online access to digitized collections, online catalogue and e-book lending services (Zagreb City Libraries), unfortunately, there's no information about adaptations or services for persons with sensory impairment. When it comes to the website accessibility helper for blind and visually impaired, only National and University Library in Zagreb offers a complete service on the website allowing people to change font size, contrast and background color. Even though each library has all communication services listed, from telephone numbers, to e-mail addresses, none of them offer instant messaging option.

When it comes to art theaters, even though they have all the contact information listed and are active on social media platforms, they offer no information for persons with disabilities and haven't included website accessibility helper into their official websites. It is also important to notice that, even though all the institutions included in this research are active on social network platforms (Facebook, YouTube and Instagram), none of these platforms offer any kind of information on accessibility. They mainly revolve around promotional activities, and only very few offer interactive/educational content.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Regardless of the existence of a legal framework that guarantees unobstructed movement in public spaces, persons with disabilities still face problems when visiting cultural institutions in the city of Zagreb because they are generally not accessible. The purpose of this research was to examine the extent to which these institutions are aware of the fact that these persons need detailed information on accessibility and other adaptations, as well as direct communication channels through which they can request help or additional information. According to the results, unfortunately, a small number of institutions post such information on their official websites and social network platforms. In the online environment as it is today, more effort is needed when it comes to posting accessibility information for persons with disabilities and communication channels need to be available for any questions these persons may have. This way cultural institutions can ensure persons with disabilities the ability to in their activities, not just in the physical, but also online form.

## LITERATURE

1. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. Dostopno na: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> (22. december 2021).
2. Kulturom na kotačima: kretanje kulturnim institucijama Grada Zagreba za osobe u kolicima. Dostopno na: <https://kulturomnakotacima.wordpress.com/> (04. januar 2022).
3. Number of US Bloggers in 2021/2022: Demographics, Revenues, and Best Practices. Dostopno na: <https://financesonline.com/number-of-us-bloggers/> (10. Januar 2022).
4. Pravilnik o osiguranju pristupačnosti građevina osobama s invaliditetom i smanjene pokretljivosti: NN 78/2013. Dostopno na: [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013\\_06\\_78\\_1615.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_06_78_1615.html) (03. januar 2022).
5. Pristupačni Zagreb. Dostopno na: <https://pristupacni.zagreb.hr/#> (03. januar 2022).
6. Sušić, Željka. 2012. Istraživanje prilagođenosti muzeja i galerija za osobe s invaliditetom: magistarski rad. Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet
7. Tomašević, Nives, Kovač, Miha. 2009. Knjiga, tranzicija, iluzija. Zagreb : Naklada Ljevak.
8. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Dostopno na: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1138&langId=en> (22. december 2021).

9. Vobič, Igor. 2007. The normalization of the blog in journalism : online newspapers pf Slovene traditional media. *Medijska istraživanja : znanstveno-stručni časopis za novinarstvo i medije* 13 (2007), 2: 59-83
10. Zakon o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku i ostalim sustavima komunikacije gluhih i gluhoslijepih osoba u Republici Hrvatskoj: NN 82/15. Dostopno na: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/815/Zakon-o-hrvatskom-znakovnom-jeziku-i-ostalim-sustavima-komunikacije-gluhih-i-gluhoslijepih-osoba-u-Republici-Hrvatskoj> (22. december 2021).
11. Zakon o suzbijanju diskriminacije pročišćeni tekst zakona: NN 85/08, 112/12. Dostopno na: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/490/Zakon-o-suzbijanju-diskriminacije> (22. december 2021).



## THE UNDEFINED NATURE OF THE INFLUENCERS' PROFESSION IN CROATIA

Astrid Mušura Kaučić, In Medias Res Communications LLC, Croatia  
Ljubica Bakić-Tomić, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

### ABSTRACT

We live in the digital age where the changes in lifestyle and, inherently ways of communication, are swift. Social media development gave way to utter change of the manner in which people communicate. New generations provide new ideas and thus some of the youngsters, thanks to digital platforms at their disposal, commenced posting their every-day-life moments. Depending on the appeal of their stories, videos, and ways of addressing the public, they gained followers. And so came into existence – the influencers, people who, depending on their creativity, honesty, and appeal, acquired influence over their followers. The greater the number of followers the greater the influence. Therefore, those with powerful influence over their audience – followers, stirred the interest of companies which, via the influencers' stories, desired to present their brands. The influencers saw this fact as a lucrative opportunity to turn their fun into a business often rewarded with high profits.

To better comprehend which profession they belong to, according to the attitudes and reflections of the influencers in the Republic of Croatia, how they see themselves in this line of work, we shall use the anonymous interview method. We expect the research to result in contributing to defining their profession which will have dual significance: professional-scientific definition and work and competence structuring of the latest influencer profession. This represents a new communication profession, and the legal regulation thereof in the Republic of Croatia.

**Keywords:** influencer, profession definition, influencers' competencies, legal regulation of influencers in the Republic of Croatia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Influencer, in the realm of social media and digital environment, represents an influential person who can influence the decision-making process of people who follow him/her through social networks. This term is frequently used to depict renowned publicists on the Internet who possess large audiences. Influencers, at times, operate as part of marketing campaigns for their aptitude to skillfully impact Internet users' behavioral patterns. Influencers regularly focus on specific topics. The consumers trust their opinions of and their experience with certain merchandise. The research into undefined nature of the influencers' profession in the Republic of Croatia has been triggered by the knowledge that there have influencers on social networks in the recent years. At first, they addressed their followers for fun or for ego boosting purposes, however, in time, they became outstandingly sought after by corporate companies to promote their brands and products. Aside from that, their popularity has shown that many of them make considerable amounts of money. The data from January 2022 (possibly not more than a few days ago) show how new and appealing this topic is. In January 2022 a new platform, **Dovetal (1)**, which inherently drives the American market, and it serves as a payment method for influencers' services but also as tax indetermination for such services. That is an assistance tool for corporations seeking influencers' services for their marketing. There are also digital tools for search and analysis of certain influencers' impact (2) that corporations find interesting at a given time. These tools (nine of them) provide statistical tracking of a certain influencer as well as the number of his/her followers which, again, appears to be crucial for the corporations willing to hire them. Influencers work with Twitter, Instagram, You Tube and Facebook. There have only been a few studies on influencers in the past four years and they, however, did not question their profession's determination but their work, possibilities, and results. These few researchers were more interested in the reasons why the influencers' jobs "began to flourish" in the world of business and who hires them, and, of course, how much exactly they made, and the number of followers, etc.

Given that this is no longer fun but an actual job, we have decided to conduct research into who these people are in the Republic of Croatia, which qualifications they have, and how they regulate their business. Besides, since there have been news articles claiming that this is a new profession, we were interested to find out what actual influencers think of it. Do they consider it a profession or just a hobby? "The influencers' marketing industry has achieved a fast growth in the past few years, and its global net worth in 2017 was estimated at \$1.07 billion" (3). The article: *New Age Profession: Influencer* (4), which is one of the older articles on this very topic; elaborates on how influencers do not see themselves as people of business but rather as ones who enjoy placing their services on Instagram seeking a more creative form of publicizing their way of life. Based on

the number of their followers they have become involved in marketing in various ways and thus connected with companies, for advertising and many other obsolete methods of marketing activities became rather dull. Besides, it all got rerouted in the different direction. While companies once sought ways to reach their consumers, nowadays the consumers reach the companies via social networks. The article also contains an interview with a then famous influencer, Isabella Rakonić who had 270.000 followers on Instagram. She pointed out it was a great hobby that grew into a lucrative business. Another article that referred to the issue of business of influencers entitled *How much do domestic influencers earn?* (5), in the 2019 issue of *Moj Posao ( My Job)* magazine. Albeit there is a certain pricelist depending on the number of followers, and the ones who profit the most are the ones who are the most famous and have the most followers, more than 200.000. One of the articles that came closest to the issue of the profession is entitled: *"Influencers start businesses, but according to the Croatian Employment Service (CES) their job does not exist."* The article was published in January 2020 (6). The article states that the profession of influencer is not defined in Croatia. One of the indicators of this is that there is no influencer option on CES stationery, where you need to register your occupation and work on social networks. Also, the profession and activities of influencers are not registered in the National Classification Framework (NQF). In addition, the CES reports that there is no classic supply and demand for workers in jobs such as influencers. Influencers are mostly registered for activities such as promotion, advertising, or propaganda. The article lists influencers who have either started their businesses as trades, or work under the copyright laws or through a student contract. The emphasis of the article is that influencers pay taxes. No scientific articles have been found in Croatia or in the world dealing with the profession of influencer. Therefore, with this paper we have tried to give our modest contribution to this topic.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

Throughout this research two methods were applied: digitally mediated survey questionnaire which was anonymous and a nonstructured interview on a certain topic in form of a telephone conversation.

## 3. RESEARCH AIMS AND PURPOSE

A new form of communication in digital media is represented by the influencers. They work with brands that they use in their posts and presentations to their followers. This new form of communication requires defined guidelines of business conduct (formally and legally). The influencers became people who work from their homes and who, thanks to their profits, should have their business status regulated and, consequently, pay their taxes.

**Research inquiries:**

- 1 Are influencers a new profession and are they formally and legally regulated as such?
- 2 Which competencies should influencers possess if they are, indeed, a new profession?

The purpose of this research is to clarify the issues which influencers encounter in their work so as to have their business conduct regulated (formally and legally). The aim of the research is to examine the attitudes of influencers about their work, knowledge, and abilities that they should have in performing the work of influencers. This would contribute to the launch of much more precise research to ultimately define the competencies of influencers necessary for their work, and to define the profession of influencer, as such.

**4. RESPONDENTS AND MEASURING INSTRUMENTS**

According to the data of the regional platform for influencer marketing, Millennial in the Republic of Croatia, "the most influencers are between the ages of 20 and 30 (63%). There are 20% between the ages of 14 and 20, 14% between the ages of 30 and 40, and 3% over the age of 40. According to gender, Croatian influencers share 2: 1 in favor of women, although male influencers have on average almost twice as many followers. The most popular social network of influencers is Instagram, which is used by as many as 83% of them. They are followed by Facebook with 27% and YouTube with 10%. Least influencers use Twitter (5%), LinkedIn (1%) and Pinterest (1%). YouTube has the most followers by profile (32,000 on average)" (7).

There are not many influencers in the Republic of Croatia, at least not those who are known and easily accessible. Precisely because of the vagueness of many elements of their work, many of them were not ready to fill out the survey questionnaire offered to them, even when anonymity was guaranteed. Some, on the other hand, suggested an interview on a given topic over a telephone conversation. Although anonymity was not ensured in this way, they wished not to leave a written mark. So, 6 influencers filled out a survey and 5 agreed to talk about a given topic, which ultimately boiled down to highlighting the problems they face in their influencer work. Although the number of respondents in the sample is rather small (a total of 11 influencers) of perhaps over thirty of them from different areas, they are better known in the Republic of Croatia. This will be enough for the initial research of the indicated problem, that is, gathering answers to research questions. This is preliminary research that needs to be deepened in the future to gain correct knowledge for defining the profession of influencers and for defining their competencies.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, 6 of which were dedicated to the profession of influencers and their formal legal regulation, and the rest referred to knowledge, skills and experience, or competencies of influencers.

Absolutely all respondents understand their work as a copyright work. As many as 83% claim that they enter into service contracts with clients according to their requirements, and 16% of them claim that they leave the regulation of legal and financial services with clients to an intermediary. Their business is most often registered as a trade, approximately 66.70%, while approximately 33.30% have a registered L.L.C. These percentages indicate that most influencers, according to these responses, have certain parameters that indicate that they are closer to establishing the conditions for determining their profession.

However, most respondents still agree that the profession is not clearly legally regulated, which someone in the Republic of Croatia should certainly do for them. They are still uncertain as to who it should be, because for the time being they do not have their own official association, which was confirmed by 66.70% of respondents while 16.75% have no knowledge of it, while other 16.70% state that they have an informal association. They share the opinion that the official association could address all undefined issues for this new profession, if it exists at all, as most influencers claim that they do some of the marketing, public relations, advertising and even propaganda work. Respondents believe that the reputation of the influencer profession would certainly contribute to the definition of the profession, which includes the formal legal regulation of their services, and they would then be safer and more protected in relation to clients and the state (taxes and other obligations). That would be a few steps closer to the determination of the influencer profession, and it would help them boost their reputation, which is claimed by 66.70% of respondents, while others think that it would be enough to regulate their services, and 16.70% do not know what else this could be. In any case, it is confirmed that the profession would be extremely important for establishing it as a legitimate occupation.

For influencers to be determined as a profession, certain competencies are also required, such as a college/university degree. When asked what the most important thing for a good and successful influencer is, 50% of respondents said that it is creativity and wit, 33.30% communication skills, 16.70% that popularity alone is enough, but none of them stated college/university degree. This suggests that this research into the most popular influencers shows that they are not familiar with the fact that they need this aspect for their profession to be determined as such. When it comes to the area that influencers deal with in their work, then they define that their work mostly falls into the category of marketing, around 70%, then there is content and activities that fall into the category of public relations, around 15%, and around 15%

believe it falls into the category of advertising. None of them categorized it as a new area of expertise that specifically influencers deal with. According to influencers, those who are in this line of work, need to possess the following competencies: job experience, overall knowledge of communication skills, and growing popularity with followers. Most influencers do not have a university degree, while about 1/3 have completed some of the related social studies at colleges that give them certain knowledge and skills necessary for quality performance of this job (marketing, public relations, digital media or journalism). The most common problems they encounter in this business are the ignorance of clients about the possibilities of influencers, the need to do the job in a certain way. They often require only quantity - the reach of the message, and they are not aware of and do not accept the suggestions of influencers that something else would be much more effective, work on the quality of the message and acceptance thereof by the targeted public. They do not know the possibilities of social networks and often the quantity is important to them, not the quality of the message, thus consequently the success is lacking.

Influencers see their opportunity with small businesses, developing business, start-up entrepreneurs for they can assist in building their reputation and inform the public of their existence, quality, and efficiency. However, for that relationship to come to fruition, an organization or association would have to be established and run towards their effectuation in an organized fashion for the issues will not resolve themselves. There is still plethora of unidentified issues, through definition of content for their competencies, definition of skillset, development of specific abilities and, as it was pointed out in the research question: definition of their profession, if it is indeed a profession!

## 6. CONCLUSION

Answering two fundamental research questions:

1) Are influencers a new profession and are they formally, legally regulated as such?

According to the results of this research, a very important one due to its subjects being the most famous influencers in the Republic of Croatia who have been active for several years, we reach the conclusion that, for the time being, influencers are still not a profession, but rather a new occupation based on self-employment.

2) Which competencies should influencers possess if they are indeed a new profession?

"Occupation becomes a profession when it encompasses a set of developed and systemized theoretical knowledge and techniques required for providing certain professional services." This means that influencers should possess higher education degree and professional association as well as the ethical code of conduct with which they would regulate their work. The research makes it evident that the Republic of Croatia still lacks above mentioned.

## LITERATURE

1. Dovetale Influencer, *Influencer Marketing Platform* at <https://www.influencer-city.com> accessed on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022
2. Best tools for marketing impact research for 2022 at <https://influencer-city.com/influencer-marketing-platform/analyze-influencers/> Accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022
3. Influencer marketing in Croatia [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influencer\\_marketing](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influencer_marketing) accessed on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022
4. *New age occupation: Influencer*, from the magazine "**Work and family**" (**Posao i obitelj**), issued on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at <https://zena.hr> accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022
5. *How much do influencers earn?*, from the magazine "**My job**" (**Moj Posao**) 2019 issue <https://www.moj-posao.net> accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022
6. *In Influencers start trades, but according to the Croatian Employment Service (CES) their job does not exist*. The article was published in January 2020 available at: <https://www.globalnovine.eu>. accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022
7. The age of Influencers (research report) <https://www.influencer.com/research-report-influencer#download-report> accessed on 20.01.2022.
8. Influencer marketing in Croatia (Influencer marketing u Hrvatskoj) at [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influencer\\_marketing](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influencer_marketing) accessed on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022
9. Occupation or profession at [www.enciklopedija.hr](http://www.enciklopedija.hr) accessed on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022
10. *Melda Yilmaz, Hakan Sezerel i Yıldız Uzuner (2020) Sharing experiences and interpretation of experiences: a phenomenological research on Instagram influencers (Razmjena iskustava i interpretacija iskustava: fenomenološko istraživanje o Instagram influencerima), "Current issues in tourism" (Aktualna pitanja u turizmu), 23:24, 3034-3041, DOI: 10.1080/136203200.*
11. *Influencers (Influenceri)* at <https://direktno.hr/zivot/zabava/tko-su-influencerig-kako-zive-od-drustvenih-mrezag-132360/> from December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019
12. *Influencers (Influenceri)* at <https://pvzg.hr/blog/tko-su-influenceri-buducnosti/> accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
13. *Young influencers (Mladi influenceri)* at <https://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/novosti/biznis/clanak/id/579519/sto-tocno-rade-influenceri-i-zasto-hrvate-tako-ljuti-njihov-uspjeh-tupavi-plebs-se-buni-jer-djeca-zarauju-na-internetu-ali-oni-nece-ovisiti-o-politici-i-uhljebljivanju-samo-nebo-im-je-granica> accessed on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

# INNOVATIVE DIGITALIZATION OF INTEGRATED ARCHITECTURE

Vesna Delić Gozze, University of Zagreb, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

The capacity for digital visibility of construction plans for compliance with regulations and for the monitoring of construction so as to protect the environment is a condition for high quality people-environment relations. The digital programme proposed would be an innovation that would enhance the visibility of building plans and would constitute an effective means to prevent unplanned construction with no sustainable architecture-context relationship and for the creation of a space suitable for all citizens. The mandatory establishment of a public digital register of planned development could effectively assist the prevention of further irreparable devastation of landscape with the attendant loss of character. Transparent digital data would be provided by support staff of the natural and heritage conservation department, with the collaboration of competent county and city departments.

The research problem addresses the possible digital establishment of sustainable development, particularly in areas of the cultural heritage of Dubrovnik. The research plan drew on qualitative methodology and discourse analysis, using the methods of observation and documentation along with semi-structured interviews. The results were expected to indicate the absence of criteria for the planning of development. From this theme of digital corrections to local building planning, an important corrective role for digital possibilities of sustainability can be derived, particularly close to cultural monuments or the maritime domain, establishing integrated architecture as necessity, a green belt and making the coastal zone reachable to all.

**Keywords:** integrating architecture, space, landscape character, accessibility of information, devastation



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research topic is the possibilities inherent in the implementation of digitalization for the purpose of protection and for increasing the on-site compliance of construction activities. Digital visibility is meant to mean that all or most of the materials necessary for the issue of a building permit are publicly accessible. Building interventions into the Dubrovnik urban texture within the walls and in the former summer residence areas, around the city and on the nearby islands, show elements of visible devastation as compared with examples of the same subjects in earlier documents.

The complex relations of spatial capacities require an attentive approach in each segment of it, from unhampered transportation links to protected heritage values, like, Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge see, "shaping place images" (Graham et al 2004, 167). Preserving a space, particularly when it has heritage properties of natural and cultural value, requires a cautious approach and enhanced care in the planning of any kind of intervention. In the preparation of documentation, architectural plans and their building, the competent departments should take into consideration not only the viewpoint of the client but the explained opinion of the local community, for proven experts and members of the community to have a part in the design, as participatory design of their lives. In an area of a complex spatial phenomenon, the protection of the existing as against new practice should be carried out in an as great and as faithful as possible transmission of memory onto the newly established situation.

Since space is a field of active processes, in all interventions, and in any representation, including in that via reconstruction, there will inevitably be a certain degree of interpretation, sometimes at the level of materials used as substitute for those employed earlier, but also as incursions into the space in the immediate vicinity of some heritage interest, which according to research results is most often just a nuisance to clients. And so Foucault's claim that we do not live in "a homogeneous and empty space" (Foucault 1984, 2) and Kirmayer's idea about a "culturally constructed landscape of memory" (Kirmayer 1996, 173), should be understood as stimulus to the semantic acceptance of differing stylistic and temporal strata. The obviation of further contamination of a space by poor quality interventions could be achieved with the innovative techniques of an easily available digitalised programme.

Difficulties in the broader conception of the role of heritage and its context, as a sort of located theory, as well as the topic of the city and the need for knowledge about it, are shown most direly in the irresponsible designing in which narrow and short-term economic reasons prevail. This situation corresponds to the ideas of Campkin and Duijzings about construction as a kind of "hacking strategy",

where there are different builders of housing estates “dominating the production of narratives about an area” (Campkin et al. 2016, 9). An innovative digital program could change the practice of repeatedly neglecting heritage values in a sensitive area of heritage practice and the theme of ‘authenticity’, while creating relationships to find the best solution for the complexity of spatial needs and a logical demand for multiple evaluations.

Although there are many examples of the use of heritage as a cultural industry in the development strategies of the local economy, most notably in tourism with an emphasis on tourists seeking the authenticity of other identities – many examples of actual individual sites show dubious architectural and urban solutions that threaten or completely destroy authenticity. Doubts about the method of protection have intensified in the wake of postmodern hybridity, so conservators and architects are offering solutions to restore or preserve cultural monuments that reflect their own relationship to the past. Without a multi-layered experience of the heritage, concrete spaces remain without understanding, like the Foucaultian significance of heterotopia, which the author interprets as “a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (Foucault 1984, 4). Massive standardization of procedures without heeding to the space, creates uniform solutions, in repetitions of the same in different places, like Foucault’s unrealistic utopias that are “sites with no real place” (Foucault 1984, 3). Putting stereotypical items together in unimaginative combinations of new buildings as standardized conventions of visual code has become a frequent mode of expression, sometimes in the area of active influence of standardised ready-made parts on the condition and appearance of the heritage; therefore for Brett “constructing ‘heritage’ is a form of structuring the present, albeit in a fantastic or displaced form” (Brett 1996, 157), and for Hughes it is “a pastiche of the past” (Hughes 2004, 22). Unfounded decisions about construction by the administering authorities can significantly distort the appearance and meaning of the building site, especially when such a space is a kind of victim of overbuilding, in terms of plot ratio and the sizes of individual buildings. There is no doubt that heritage sites have gained their current meaning through rhetorical means, so Lafrenz Samuels speaks of heritage “as a kind of strategy (‘heritage as persuasion’)” (Lafrenz Samuels 2015, 8), using “rhetoric and redescription” (ibid., 9). Unreal and prettified images created for the needs of the tourist industry, unscrupulous development that does not take into consideration the space as found is a stage flat that covers up the situation and does much to destroy the previous, well founded values of a maintained space, the earlier visual code derived from sustainable activity, harmonised and adapted to the scale of the environment.

An inseparable part of the quality of life in some inhabited space is concern for public spaces, how present they are, the unhindered access to places of general

interest and their constant accessibility; thoroughfares with appropriate vehicular density and the numbers and suitability of pedestrian paths and zones. An uncontrollable hunger for quick profits in tourism in unattended conditions for the use of the most valuable resources of the space (precisely because of which the tourists mainly come to this destination) is one of the most aggressive threat to the previously carefully achieved balance of the life of the space and the people. Creating a digital network a model emerges that, through communication technology and the Internet, enables the local community to respond and to have a significant impact on community life. A digital planning program easily accessible to citizens would provide an opportunity for the community to become a corrective and architect of the space around it.

The tools of this research are founded on an observation of the space and of its changes, using documents about the earlier state to evaluate the appropriateness of construction changes and achieved adjustments to new needs and conditions with the method of walking around and observing places of interest for the research through the means of building. In the much-ravaged features of the space as it was, the role of archival and other historical sources is important for the sake of the documentation of the earlier condition, for example in photography and the old maps. The way in which memory of earlier places is maintained, and the loss of memory of place via the obliteration of material and other traces can have a crucial impact on the quality of life today. For a serious evaluation, then, it is advisable to test out the relation of old and new as demand for balance in the incorporation of a new architectural operation into the existing situation.

## 2. METHODS

The foundation is **the research question** that deals with the possibility of a programmatic visual representation, or the questions:

1. Can digital presentation effectively control and ensure a sustainable manner of building?
2. The second, auxiliary, research question is: In areas of special cultural value, considering the monumental and natural heritage of the state as found, what would a stricter prescribed approach to construction be like?

**Three research methods were used:**

1. **Observation in the field as visual method** has been carried out in places of the area of the old nucleus of Dubrovnik and of parts of it just outside the walls and on the wider area of which the city is the focus. The research plan founded on the method of observation was especially focused on areas protected as cultural heritage, and in those of special interest in view of the green cover, and along the maritime zone and in zones of vigorous development with new construction in

the immediate vicinity of examples of the cultural heritage, for example, building in protected zones and in the coastal zone, as for example in the environment of the Gothic-Renaissance and Baroque villas in the area of Rijeka dubrovačka. The observations were carried out most intensely in the period from August to December 2021, with notations of the spatial qualities of the environment.

**2. Analysing historical and other documents**, like reliable sources and data: accessible archival maps and ground plans of areas, old photographs of motifs that correspond to the observed space, the Dubrovnik Statute of 1272, and the authoritative legislation. Such documents have enabled a comparative approach to the topic, the comparison of the situation before construction interventions. An analysis of archival documents was employed, primarily of archival visuals, maps and old photographs, which note the earlier state of the space, via which by a comparative technique it was possible to determine the difference; in the example of Dubrovnik and surrounds, one of a series of valuable documents consists of preserved details of a map of the area, like that from the Austrian cadastral map of 1837-1877, and historical panoramas and close ups.

**3. A semi-structured interview and research sample**: four questions were posed to a target group of respondents who, because of their professional activities or interests in the topic of the heritage, architecture and space, constitute appropriate conversation partners about this topic. Identical questions were asked in individual messages online, via e-mail, with the author's guarantee of the anonymity of reply; fifty-six respondents gave answers; the procedures were carried out in November 21 to January 22. It should be noted that identical questions were sent to eight e-mail addresses of heads of responsible departments related to spatial protection, construction planning and licensing in the city and county, but an answer came from only one department. Everyone who answered did so on all four questions.

The first question was: How do you see the possibility of the public digital visibility and the production of computer generated architectural appearances of individual planned buildings after the issue of a building permit?

The second question, which picks up from the previous one, about whether changes to the design should be digitally visible before and during construction.

The third question referred to building in places that have specially prescribed conditions for development. "What is your opinion about building in zones of natural and cultural heritage, in the green belt and the coastal belt, then in locations where building would impair and prevent the view, for example, from the main road, the view of the city and the surrounding, and your stance about buildings that make access to the narrow coastal strip from land and sea impossible?"

The fourth question put to all the respondents connected to their opinion about the possibility of establishing transparency in good time for the purpose of the easier enforcement of the provisions of the laws relating to the topic (references to the Construction Law; Spatial Planning Law; Protection of Culture and Nature Law; Matters and Activities of Spatial Planning and Construction Law).

### 3. RESULTS

In the research into the adequacy of such a digitalised project, the results, using three methods, justified expectations. In terms of the experience of observation, the results of the method of observation of urban changes because of the tendency to overbuild, of mistaken activities of refurbishing, to examples of historical valuable buildings, and demolition – showed various degrees of active ongoing destruction, the cause of which might lie in poor and unprofessional reconstruction. The contact zone of the city of Dubrovnik considerably affords an example of lack of planning and devastation, either through dimensions being exceeded or by the appearance of the given building. The multiple daily dockings of oversized cruisers contribute to the congestion of the traffic, the problems of which have not been solved, turning the city into a passive backdrop for a consumer destination. The attitude to culture of living and transportation needs, marked by commercialisation and the quick buck, is an expression of behaviour without vision or long-term projection, which trashes and erodes the benefits of the city and the immediate vicinity, destroying resources that are worth saving. The city, whose old town is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has more cultural monuments of the protection category, has, according to the results of the monitoring of construction activity, especially in the zones of the most vigorous development, which are often in the attractive coastal zone, a difficulty in acknowledging the need to protect cultural and natural properties.

Results of the method of analysing documentation showed that interventions in the urban space differed very considerably from what is laid down by a number of authoritative laws. For comparison, the area that was familiar in detail with the provisions of the Statute of the city of Dubrovnik drawn up in 1272; the milieu adhered to it consistently including in its provisions about building. According to a comparison of the cartographic representations of the area from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and photographs of previous periods, a qualitatively considerable changed picture of the space was visible.

The results of the semi-structured online questionnaire arising from questions to fellow citizens and those who are residing in the space temporarily, and related to the topic, showed that they did not differ in the kind of answer. To the first question 100% respondents answered that it would be a positive new departure, ranging from it being desirable and a very useful opportunity for building

properly and according to social needs to the imperative for advancing the quality and conditions and to prevent possible irregularities, as well as the rash of illegal construction. There was including the assertion that this kind of visibility would affect the quantity of devastation, and it would probably influence on political elections. The viewpoint of the great majority, 96,43% in all, was that the publication of full details would absolutely enable the public, and particularly experts who do not take part in the decision-making process, to be able to make a contribution to the quality of them by expressing their view. Of the remaining 3,57% of respondents, one was partially sceptical about the possibility of its implementation, for it seemed to him unreal because of the usual public opacity of the preliminary part of the procedure, and the second claimed that there was a usual practice for the preparation and building, in spite of the planned ruling, larger building areas.

To the second question out of all respondents, 77% answered in the affirmative, without referring to any possible lack of justification for the changing of plans. The majority, therefore, answered that all changes before and during the construction of the project should be digitally visible, because with transparency and public availability, according to one respondent, "there are no surprises when projects are completed", while for another "the public has the right to react and express their opinions." On this issue, there is a significant minority of respondents, 23%, who were of the opinion that changes should not deviate from the project during construction at all and that only changes that have already been reviewed just before the issuance of a building permit, should be shown digitally. According to others, such changes should not occur in the strict implementation of issued building permits. All the respondents stated that the quality of life of the inhabitants is closely connected to the procedures for obtaining architectural and other construction permits and the quality of plans accepted as well as the adherence to plans that have been adopted and the activities of the competent authorities who should be the more responsible in areas of an existing cultural heritage and places of memory. The research showed that at the root of the problem is the lack of transparency in the conduct of the procedure for obtaining building permits, and as from the questionnaire was administered one answer went: "The damage has already been done, and it's irreparable".

The third question all the respondents, 100% of them, came out in favour of respecting the given conditions of building. All in their answers were for zero tolerance for unlawfully made buildings that make it impossible to have access to the coastal strip and areas of social interest, and the proposal was even expressed for the purchase and demolition of such structures as well as the resolute answer that each such building that stands in the way of the said amenities should not be given a permit. There was a prevailing view that in the natural and cultural her-

itage zone nothing should be built anew, only the existing being reconstructed with the utmost care. One answer went that "building that prevents a neighbour or all in the vicinity having a view of the city and the environment is immoral and accordingly impermissible".

All of the respondents, 100%, to the fourth question were of the opinion that a digital programme while building permits were being obtained and the monitoring of the building phases would provide a better insight into events that, according to one of them, "are today conveyed, accurately or not, only by other media." Digitalization would considerably assist in the handling of a more detailed spatial planning, and like every tool, the success of a digital programme depends on those participating in the procedure of obtaining licenses.

The need for the digital mapping for the sake of the prevention of harmful development stems from the demand for learning about the protection of local memory, so as to be able as effectively as possible to act in response to the incursions of the construction industry and forms in which public space is being privatised. A digital application would make up for the shortage of building inspectors and would additionally serve as an audit of existing procedures and would indirectly affect the updating of the solving of citizens' problems and tend to reduce any possible corruption. Digitalization and visualisation in alterations of the state of an area before and after would certainly be a useful tool and one of the factors that would prevent the wilfulness of, as one respondent called them, "various self-styled architects in the space".

The research confirmed that the current state of care for heritage and the associated space, as far as Dubrovnik is concerned, is inadequate. It would be necessary to have a complete and detailed picture of the space and to apply the proclaimed guidelines consistently; accurate, easily accessible and up-to-date digital programs would help significantly, with detailed results from 3D laser scanning technology. Computer drawing, computer modelling, to provide direct visual analysis of the spatial layout, a precondition for making data easily searchable, would create opportunities for citizens to adopt an active attitude towards their space. Whether it is new building from the ground up or any kind of remodelling, it is necessary to respect the integral ambient space of the cultural heritage as a rounded whole, its coherence not being allowed to be distorted.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

In the dynamism of changes in the environment, often to the detriment of its previous ecological and aesthetic features, the research results show that digital possibilities of visibility that precedes any planned intensity and kind of development or building can contribute to the detailed obviousness and transparency

of the plans and of all phases of building, effective possibility of correcting and forestalling results of construction that are inappropriate. Although through the public media it is possible occasionally to track examples of this kind of abuse and of the inability of the local government to put a stop to it, various illegal modifications or closure of parts of the coastline pass unpunished, and still more disastrous for the environment are structures that even after the ban placed on their building are not returned to the original condition. The neglect of natural characteristics and failure to take into consideration the historical meanings of the place by all who in their kind of building tend to give rise directly to changes in spatial relationships: all of this results in a vitiated and distorted landscape that has lost a great part of its character as place of belonging, lastingly impairing the quality of living in the area.

The memory of place of the Dubrovnik area in contemporary operations, the research has shown, is minimally and inconsistently carried out. By concealment and the methods of the *fait accompli* any insight into planning is frustrated, nor are there any records that document the demolitions due to the planning of new building. In the city in which today there are streets where pedestrians and drivers have difficulty in communicating safely, because the exterior dimensions of new houses have occupied space to the maximum, there was once a statute that contained laws defining urban plans in detail. The statute determined precisely and concisely the building regulations for real estate in the city and in the suburbs, as well as regulations about the use of public areas, so the ways to the vineyards "must be wide enough for two laden donkeys to pass if they meet." (Statute, 2002, 307).

Remaining green areas as buffer zones in the city and in the contact zones are increasingly few and far between. Uncontrolled development and inconsistent urban planning not only make any possible revival infeasible but also affect the habits and behaviour of people, in the sense of narrowing their needs, increasingly becoming distanced from what Simon Schama thinks important, the rediscovery of, "what we already have but which somehow eludes our recognition and our appreciation", and should be "instead of being yet another explanation of what we have lost, ... an exploration of what we may yet find" (Schama 1996, 14). And so it is up to the guardians of the heritage to take the responsible role of consistent custodian and promoter of values of space, along with giving a chance to a nature faced with the dilemmas of utilitarian handling of building. This is to advocate a quest for urban planning solutions painless to the heritage and for a creative interpolation of old and new. As protection against aggressive onslaughts of construction it would be advisable to draw up a kind of environmental study of the whole region resulting in a report. As well as staff involved in the approval of building plans in the competent departments, independent lo-



cal connoisseurs and internationally acknowledged experts should be involved, who with their knowledge and ideas could have a crucial effect on the quality of the decisions.

Computer software visualising the current and the future situation would make a contribution to the easier understanding of the overall project by the general population and more importantly, timely insight into it if it is a modification that is concerned, as well as the appearance and relationship to the environment of each new building. Although certain software is already in use, the systems of those who create the legal documents should be adapted to the use of such software and the interface through which the results will be visible. The aim would be to provide access to users without the use of special programs that require more expertise and without special computer upgrades; this would allow most users to review progress easily via existing computers. The digital visibility of plans in the phase predating the start of building, as efficient means of prevention, would help in accomplishing the effort to preserve and to create a space pleasant for the life of all.

The pressure of uncontrolled development is particularly striking in lucrative tourist destinations of the kind that Dubrovnik and its environs still are. Advocacy of making information easily accessible to all stakeholders, in an area of space that is a kind of narrative topology, means bringing in interdisciplinary knowledge, including that in digital form. In the interaction of the current situation and the historical sources, every building, particularly any in the vicinity of a space of special natural and cultural value, requires in its manner of planning and building individual and circumspect solutions. The components of the space are signalled semantically in multiple ways, and cannot be replaced by a virtual surrogate, but the digital world and the Internet can assist in support of the world of space full of meanings.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The current situation on the ground is the outcome of several factors. These include the plot ratio being exceeded; the oversized and aesthetically dubious appearances of architectural structures; the role of opaque procedures in the process of issuing building permits; the kinds of approaches to building that disrupt the setting and its valuable resources long-term. The digital visibility of the whole course of the kind of decisions involved would be a valuable contribution to making proper protection of the space a usual practice. The problem of the lack of transparent insight into architectural and urban design plans that have been approved on existing parcels of planned constructed could be, according to results obtained from the respondents, satisfactorily overcome if there were digital visibility of the plans. Digitalization understood in this way according to

the research results, would be an innovative and important step towards making visible what today is mainly prepared outside the sight of the public. In this case citizens would have time to react promptly to the approaches offered. The great possibilities of 3D digital visibility and various applications should be used, particularly in physical planning. Although it is not a full solution to the problem of non-planned building, easily accessible digital application of a visual and technical programme would be an important step towards enabling sustainable life in the area. What the technique of digitalization as resource cannot settle by itself, visible from some of the interviews of the respondents, is the composition, in terms of expertise and dedication, of the personnel of those involved in the physical planning processes. Further research should be directed towards the multiple effects of the opaque manner of obtaining and granting building permits and in consequence of the attitude to the shared space. There should be some endeavour to do research into the maximally effective manner of employing in practice a transparency that is not declarative but could be actually achieved with an affordable digitalization.

## LITERATURE

1. Brett, David. 1996. *The Construction of Heritage*. Cork: Cork University Press, Ireland.
2. Campkin, Ben and Ger Duijzings. 2016. Introduction. *Engaged Urbanism: Cities & Methodologies*. Eds. Ben Campkin i Ger Duijzings, London, New York: I. B.Tauris & Co. Ltd. 1-20.
3. Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Preface in The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Science*. New York: Vintage Books Edition, a division of Random House. xiv - xxiv.
4. Foucault, Michel. 1984. Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, October 1984. 1-9.
5. Graham, Brian, G. J. Ashworth and J. E. Tunbridge. 2004. *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture & Economy*. London: Hodder Arnold.
6. Hughes, George. 2004. Tourism and the semiological realization of space. *Destinations: Cultural Landscapes of Tourism* Ur. Greg Ringer. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 17 – 32.
7. Kirmayer, Lawrence J. 1996. Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative and Dissociation. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. Eds. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek. London and New York: Routledge. 173-198.
8. Lafrenz Samuels, Kathryn. 2015. Introduction: Heritage as Persuasion. *Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage*. Ed. Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels & Trinidad Rico. Boulder: University Press of Colorado. 3 – 28.

9. Psarra, Sophia. 2016. "We thought we were making the car but it was the other way around" in *Engaged Urbanism: Cities & Methodologies*. Eds. Ben Campkin i Ger Duijzings, London, New York: I. B.Tauris & Co. Ltd. 164-170.
10. Schama, Simon. 1996. *Landscape and Memory*, London: Fontana. *Statut grada Dubrovnika: sastavljen godine 1272*. 2002. Na osnovi kritičkog izdanja B. Bogišića i K. Jirečeka priredili A. Šoljić, Z. Šundrica i I. Veselić. Dubrovnik: Državni arhiv.

## POST TOURIST COMMUNICATION PARADIGM

Božidar Veljkovič, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

Daria Mustić, University of Zagreb, Croatia

### ABSTRACT

The modern world, globally, is defined by the processes of environmental change, digitalization, and pandemic of the covid-19 virus, which thus change the communication paradigm and thus the ways of communicating in tourist destinations. In addition, these processes, each in its own way goes into the very essence of the phenomenon of tourism. Therefore, the problem of "imposing" technical and alienation ways of communication arises, which influence the very essence of tourism, which is expressed in the phrase: tourism is people. The article presents results, reviews of literature and certain practices related to the research problem or the divergence of theoretical scientific views and emerging practices of tourism communication processes in destinations. The aim of the article is to analyze theoretical sources and certain experiences or practices to show that the traditional understanding of the content or essence of tourism, due to the process of digitization of channels and methods of communication, has matured for critical assessment and appropriate renewal. So, it is a matter of establishing the facts of strengthening the alienation role of digitalization in the communication process in a tourist destination. Just like the "medicine" or solution, we offer the application of the principles of assertive and especially deliberative communication in all contexts of symbolic interaction between stakeholders in a tourist destination. With this article, we want to encourage the thinking of a wider circle of researchers in the field of communication and tourism science about the alienation impact of digitalization and the related, new understanding of the phenomenon of tourism.

**Keywords:** Digitization, De/alienation communication, deliberative communication, tourism, tourist destination

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The importance of conceptual distinctions of the research question

The processes of "design" or planned managed changes with the help of innovative material and managerial communication technology, greatly improve the operation and development of most sectors or areas in society. However, it should not be overlooked that there are activities whose digitization processes influence their very essence, thus creating the need to redefine the content of these phenomena. In theory, there are a number of unavoidable decisions that must be taken into account when defining the most widespread social events in practice, namely tourism. In short, there is a need to "reconcile" theoretical starting points with the practice newly established by the process of digitization in the tourist environment.

So, time and time again, practice and theory prove to be an important connecting process of cognition, explanation and interpretation of reality. "Theory is a set of ideas that explain how something works (Haralambos, M., Holbron M., 1999: 15)," and means not just an abstract interpretation of objective reality, but much more. Theory has the ability to penetrate beyond objective reality itself. "Theories are also closely related to the succession of dominant paradigms from different time (historical) periods (Čović Đ, 2013: 40)." As Dale Spender(1980) states in his work *Language made by human*, to live in this world, we must name it (Dale Spender, 1980). We need names to build reality, because without them it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, an event, an emotion. Practice, however, has a key impact on testing and correcting theoretical knowledge.

The fundamental research question of this paper is the question of how the modern practice of digital transformation alienates the service provider from the service itself and thus changes the basic contents of tourism - tourism is people. Indirectly, it implies an additional question, how do the external effects of the alienation nature, affect the perception of the changed content of tourism in times of special social circumstances during the covid pandemic?

### 1.2 Interdependence of covid conditions and digitalization in tourism

The covid-19 situation has (in)directly affected human social existence in many places, but it has also significantly accelerated the development of information and communication technology (ICT). In the circumstances or conditions of limiting physical interactive social relations, this accelerated development of ICT was in fact a response to the challenges of the covid "crisis". The so-called "lock down" and the impossibility of direct communication, as a consequence of the introduction of anti-epidemic measures by governments of most countries, has contributed to intensifying scientific research in the field of vaccine search and

also in the search for communication methods and channels (models), which would compensate for the physical communication deficit. Thus, many communication platforms were created or innovated, which enabled the continuation of the work of many companies, organizations and societies in the field of management. Also in tourism.

The field of digitalization of business processes has also accelerated, all the way to the level of artificial intelligence. However, the fact is that technical development has gone faster than the process of applying the achieved development results, both ICT and new communication principles and paradigms. Simply, new and wide possibilities of using media convergence or, in other words, multimedia techniques have opened up: individual or simultaneous transmission of images, videos, sound and real-time feedback. Thus, we can say that the period of the so-called new normality is essentially the period of digitalization in the broadest sense, which, thanks to science, changes all areas of human existence. It seems that thanks to advances in science, everything around us is changing faster compared to our willingness to keep up with these changes. Many questions arise in this regard. The answer to the question of whether the process of digital transformation and the introduction of new communication technologies correspond to human nature, his moral and aesthetic existence was best covered by E. Kusturica, who says: "The biggest problem is that technology knows neither morals nor aesthetics, however, people are adapting to technology more quickly than necessary. Thus, films that have good premises become boring" (Emir Kusturica, 2021, 6). Technological processes that result in the erosion and disintegration of human aesthetic and emotional structure as the basis of cultural sensibility do not leave without consequences even the field of tourism, and the content, which is summarized in the slogan, tourism is people.

However, the trends of digital transformation are increasingly covering the field of tourism in such a way that the achievements of quantum technology and artificial intelligence are built into the organizational or communication structure of tourism. This raises the question of the impact of digitalization on the traditional understanding of tourism and its phrase "tourism is people". Namely, if you always put the same data in a computer formula, you always get the same results. This is the content of all electronics, but neurons are not like that. Even though you always give them the same stimulus, their response will only be about the same, but never exactly the same (Delo, 07. 08. 21, SP Gašper Tkačik). In short, in addition to technical and biological differences, it is necessary to add the processes and effects of intrapersonal communication or autopoiesis. "The impact of information and communication technology (ICT) in tourism (e-tourism) has changed the way tourism services are approached. Ubiquitous and highly innovative ICT provides consumers with a variety of channels for use of tourism

services. Therefore, research on e-tourism is numerous and fragmented. Various factors explain how users use these channels". (Dandison C. Ukpabi, Heikki Karjaluoto 2017, 618).

### **1.3 Tourism in conflict between covid measures and the process of digitization**

According to its content and characteristics, tourism is a specific area that must abandon some of its identity characteristics during the period of "coexistence" with the covid-19 epidemic and the digitalization process. Both the epidemic and technology, by their characteristics for the social environment, force people to escape to privacy. Privacy and individuality are behaviors that contradict at least one of the characteristics of tourism, which is to be in direct (physical) communication with a person. The fact that we have seen a tremendous increase in travel in tourism this year tells us that changes in the form of adaptation to environmental conditions are the right solution. It seems that the mutations of the basic virus will continue, which makes the so-called anti-epidemic measures of the state authorities on the one hand and the measures of destination crisis communication management unavoidable. We are aware of the fact that all dimensions of reality are the product of global processes, science, epidemics and geopolitics, which further complicates the search for solutions. Tourism as a travel phenomenon does not only mean freedom of movement, but above all freedom of choice, when, where and how to use your free time? So, the values and at the same time the identity characteristics of tourism are now under threat.

Postmodernism, in contrast to the modernism period, recognizes and accepts the diversity of styles and diverse aesthetics. In addition, postmodernism is a time of dismantling, a time when social ties are loosened and shattered. A multitude of personal truths emerge as technology validates hitherto recognized scientific claims of Ethics and Aesthetics, thereby dramatically changing the perception of the world. Lyotard (2003) argues that postmodernism is characterized by constant change and the constant search for the unattainable. He does not see the postmodern as a passing epoch in the historical sequence, but believes that postmodern legitimacy has been achieved at the level of a new way of expressing thought, both in philosophy and in architecture, literature, politics and all areas of public life, especially techniques and sciences mediated by modern high technology ( Lyotard,2005). Cultural tourism is also an expression of this fact. A cultural tourist seeks change in other cultures, learns about new ways of life, new relationships and ways of communication, wants to discover and create new knowledge. This is helped by experiential learning, which is more common on trips than in the lecture hall.

### 1.4 State intervention in the characteristics of tourism

The media field is changing structurally due to new technologies, due to the increasing commercialization of the media and due to the global concentration of the media industry. Tourist communication is a convergent process in which the sender and the recipient exchange information. The promoter must respond to the needs of the audience. The tourist must feel that the tourism project will meet his needs. It is a situation of interactional dependence. Persuasion is interactive and tries to meet the needs of both parties in communication - the one that convinces and the one that needs to be persuaded. By issuing tourist vouchers, the state has become involved in the "destruction" of some of the fundamental characteristics that define tourism in its original and traditional meaning of the term, such as voluntary travel and freedom of product choice. By granting vouchers, which are realized under certain conditions (in what amount and what services and products we can use and until when, how we transfer the value of vouchers to family members) the state significantly interferes with man's free will to choose the time, place and way of travel especially the possibility to create the composition of an integral product or service at a specific destination. With this action, the state intervened in the basis of one of the many characteristics of tourism, which is, free will as the foundation of understanding freedom and free choice of man to travel. So we have the phenomenon of "forced" free will !? One is faced with the choice of where and how to spend the gift of the state, although for various reasons he has no will to travel. In short, the motives do not now stem entirely from the will of man, but are imposed by the "carrot" of the state from the outside of the political environment.

## 2. METHODS

We explore tourism as a socio/cultural, ie interdisciplinary phenomenon in an interactive space in which different communication cultures meet, as well as different means of communication and ways of communication. Regarding the set research goals, which will give us an answer to the research question, in our work we envisage the use of both secondary (meaningful processing and use of existing data) and primary data collection methods (direct acquisition of data from the research environment or subject of research). So, in our work we will use both theoretical and empirical methods. For the needs of our work, we used a survey as a research technique (tool), namely the Likert scale. In the part of theoretical research, we used the following scientific methods: methods of induction and deduction, methods of analysis and synthesis, methods of comparison and methods of generalization. We will use the observation method with special care. In short, we intend to review the specific relevant material and expose it to the mentioned methods in the research process in order to obtain data. The re-



search sample consists of two groups. The first group includes providers of tourist services (55) in the Posavje region and randomly selected and surveyed users of services (165) in the tourist destination Posavje.

### 3. HYPOTHESES

There are several hypotheses or mental answers to the questions in the research problem that need to be tested. We decided on two hypotheses that will lead us in the researched process to the necessary answers. With regard to the period of intensive digitalization of society on the one hand and the expectations of tourists, which is reflected in the growing demand not only to see but increasingly to experience a certain destination, to breathe its socio/cultural nature, we set two hypotheses:

H - 1 Communication, understood as an interactive symbolic social process, is an important element of tourist travel and the relationship between guests and providers at a tourist destination.

H - 2 The development of ICT and the accelerating processes of digitization are influencing the change in the content and essence of tourism, which is manifested in the phrase - tourism is people.

### 4. RESULTS

Based on the results of analysis of theoretical sources that define the concept of tourism and by observing tourist practice in tourist destinations, we found that there is a big discrepancy between theory and practice in the field of tourism. Analyzes have shown that tourism as an activity will have to adapt to changes in the environment in which it operates. In the conditions of automation of operations, which are now performed in tourism by man personally, verbally or by actions (tourism is people) and new opportunities to replace personal service with robots or offer them on the principle of "self-service" or "IKEA concept", certainly goes beyond the current theoretical conceptual features to determine tourism as we know it. The time has come when we can talk about the post-tourist period, which, in its own way, requires changes and adjustments to the concept of using the communication functions of communication management (at destinations) in tourism. In short, based on the observation and analysis of practices, we found that digitalization in the field of tourism has alienation consequences among stakeholders in the communication process in tourist destinations. The research sample included 55 providers of tourist services in the tourist destination Posavje and 165 random consumers of tourist services.

How do tourism service providers assess the importance of communicating at a tourist destination?

1. People, companies (enterprises), public and civil sector organizations communicate with each other in the field of tourism and exchange knowledge and other information, which is essential for making business decisions and creating an innovative offer.
2. Communication at the destination enables cooperation and exchange of information, knowledge and experience between the creators of the tourist offer.
3. For mutual quality cooperation and exchange of knowledge and information in the process of creating tourist products, communication is the most important factor in the destination.
4. Communication connects all stakeholders (direct and indirect), all creators of the tourist offer in a dynamic organizational network, which we call a tourist destination.

**Table 1: The attitude of providers in a tourist destination to the role of communication**

	1	2	3	4	5	$\Sigma$	Average	Standard deviation
1	0 %	13 23%	13 23%	26 48%	3 5%	55 100%	3,45	0,91
2	1 2%	6 11%	16 29%	25 46%	7 13%	55 100%	3,6	0,91
3	1 2%	3 5%	10 18%	29 54%	13 21%	55	3,9	0,88
4	0 %	2 4%	8 14%	27 50%	18 32%	55	4,1	0,78

Source: authors own empirical research

Based on the obtained results, we see that stakeholders (service providers) in a tourist destination assess the general importance and role of communication at the destination as quite necessary and important. This average assessment of the importance of communication, we also expected. Namely, the question did not refer to a more concrete role of communication. When it comes to mutual communication between providers, the average importance of communication is slightly better. The hypothesis that communication has the most important connecting role at the destination was best assessed by the respondents. In the following, through three questions (Table 2), we present a summary of the attitudes of tourists in the destination Posavje towards the changes brought by digitalization.

1. Modern tourism as a travel phenomenon deviates from the original meaning of "tourism is people".
2. Direct contacts between people, providers and guests of services shall be reduced and replaced by technical devices.
3. Modern digital technology is successfully replacing man as a service provider in tourism.

**Table 2: How do consumers of tourism services experience digitalization in tourism?**

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
1	3 1,81%	18 10,9%	58 35,1%	50 30,3%	36 21,8%	<b>3,6</b>
2	6 3,6%	24 14,5%	57 36,5%	54 32,7%	24 14,5%	<b>3,3</b>
3	39 23,6%	30 18,1%	60 36,2%	15 9,6%	21 12,7%	<b>2,1</b>

Source: authors own empirical research

From the results of the opinions of a group of respondents (tourists, consumers of services) it can be concluded that respondents are convinced that the concept, logic and philosophy of tourism deviate greatly from the identity basis found in the proverb, tourism - we are people. Respondents think that direct contacts between people, providers and consumers of services are declining and are being replaced by technical devices. However, the majority believed that technology and digital services cannot replace the importance of personal contact with the person who provides the service.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on the obtained research results, it makes sense to conduct an analysis. If we compare the basic theoretical findings from the scientific approach to tourism by Jost Krippendorf, with practices defined by the impact of anti-covid measures, modern practice in tourism has deviated from the basic characteristics of tourism. In the part of the mentioned book "Complex world of incentives to travel and what is expected from travel", Krippendorf lists the content elements (properties) that determine travel as a synonym for tourism. He says, "Travel is rest and renewal; restoration of physical and spiritual strength expended in daily life, at work, at school and in the family. Charging the batteries, p. 43 /... /. Travel is compensation and social integration. Traveling helps to make up for what a person lacks and what they give up in life. It is looking against the weight of one-sided demands of the work environment. /... /. The journey is an escape. This unequivocally most stated assumption says that man travels because he has a need to escape. The modern industrial world is likened to a prison that arouses the desire to escape. Tourism is an expression of an escape from reality into an imaginary realm of freedom. /... /. Travel is communication.

An important desire for a holiday is a connection with people, as opposed to anonymity and loneliness in everyday life. It is mainly about relationships in your own small circle, a relationship with a partner, family, friends and acquaintances. Have time for others too. But equally to be together with others and to conclude new

sciences. /... /. The journey is a spread of views. /... /. Traveling means freedom and self-realization. Freedom ultimately means man's disposition to himself. Travel frees from obligations. Finally a man can do what he wants. But he can do nothing. /... /. Traveling is discovering yourself and experiencing yourself. It is an old truth that man knows himself right where everything is new and unknown to him. /... /. Traveling is happiness. According to some tourism research, happiness is described as a relaxed, not disturbed state of balance with a certain discovery of one's own needs. /... /. The list of motives does not deceive: even if one does not go on the path out of the desire to escape, the motivation to 'leave from' still clearly prevails. It is not as important where one travels as it is important to get away from everyday life" (I. Krippendorf, 1986, 43-47)". In short, these definitions of the characteristics of tourism are found in many world authors dealing with the theory of tourism. We can ask ourselves where and how the theoretical definitions and modern practice of tourism are separated. This distance is best seen in the development of communication in tourist destinations.

Today, we already have new trends and practices that are motivated by ICT solutions and are certainly acceptable in the world of traditional material industries and profit-making technologies, which are not entirely acceptable in the field of tourism. In other words, the modern spirit of the time has called into question the understanding of tourism as travel or, as Jost Krippendorf puts it, "traveling humanity" in the title of his 1986 capital book.

Tourism is no longer a time of rest. Namely, people travel to other places and thanks to online possibilities, they continue to work, so free time is no longer as important factor for travel as it used to be. ICT has made it possible for people to be independent from holidays, from leisure time outside of work in terms of work commitments, because they work regardless of whether they travel. A new concept of "working tourist" is emerging, which fundamentally destroys the concept of tourism as a time in which people use free (from work) time for experiences. That is why new offers of sophisticated accommodation, hotels and the like are appearing, which enable "working tourists" (on-line nomads) to travel. Of course, the traditional understanding of the concept of tourism presupposes a trip that is not related to employment or work or work obligations, otherwise we cannot talk about tourists and tourism.

ICT has made it possible to travel without interrupting active communication with the domicile environment and the social environment, as technologies enable voice, image, and video communication, albeit without physical contact. This fact also changes another of the foundations of the traditional understanding of tourism, which is "escapism", fleeing or leaving a specific environment to experience something else, something new. In short, ICT enables traveler to change the environment, but fundamental communication with the local or domicile environment is not affected.

Likewise, the development of ICT is now breaking down another traditional element of understanding tourism, which is to be with others, to be among people, to be with the masses and at the same time tourism provides boutique hotels, accommodation that allows tourists to be alone but not lonely and outcasted. However, we cannot ignore the fact that tourism is primarily an active communication outside the work process and outside the local environment, and increasingly also outside the family environment, if we understand the family in a broader sense.

The most important definition and characteristic of tourism, which is found in work of all authors in the field of communication, is called into question by the development of ICT and digitalization. We are talking about the fact that tourism implies a trip that lasts a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of 365 days.

Through digital technologies, especially the use of cameras, tourists can be virtually present somewhere away from their environment, but tourism cannot be virtual without travel. Travel, physically in the real world, is the foundation of tourism, which digitalization is trying in every way, if not to remove at least to make a hybrid. Where there is no physical presence, we can say we can talk about post-tourism. For example, shipowners can constantly monitor the security of their vessels at a certain distance in a marina, not to mention apps that allow tourists to compose their own tourist menu, with guides being almost unnecessary.

According to its content and characteristics, tourism is a specific area that, during the period of "coexistence" of the covid-19 virus epidemic and the digitalization process, must abandon some of its identity characteristics. Both the epidemic and technology, by their characteristics for the social environment, force people to escape to privacy. Privacy and individuality are behaviors that contradict at least one of the characteristics of tourism, which is to be in direct (physical) communication with a person.

The fact that we experienced an extraordinary increase in travel in tourism last season (2021) tells us that changes in the form of adaptation to environmental conditions are the right solution. It seems that the mutations of the basic virus will continue, which makes the so-called anti-epidemic measures of the state authorities on the one hand and the measures of destination crisis communication management unavoidable. We are aware of the fact that all dimensions of reality are the product of global processes, science, epidemics and geopolitics, which further complicates the search for solutions. Tourism as a travel phenomenon does not only mean freedom of movement, but above all freedom of choice, when, where and how to use your free time? So, it is about the values and at the same time the identity characteristics of tourism that are now under threat.

Reception, as the first point at which the essence of hospitality, man to man, is revealed, has been digitized long time ago. The machine is waiting for you, when

you enter the password under which you are recognized as a guest, the device wishes you a "welcome", directs you where to get the room key and where the elevator is. Man in tourism, what is it? Hospitality is the first feature of tourism that is constantly under the impact of the digital threat. "The mythical elements of hospitality and mobility are linked to the essence of tourism, where hospitality is the connecting thread and act of tourism. Hospitality is becoming a lasting and universal value of modern tourist existence, located on the path of free choice of hospitably civilized tourist space. Given that hospitality in tourism is constantly changing and transforming its constitutive forms, it is becoming the meaning of sublimated communication in tourism, we can conclude that hospitality as a cultural, anthropological and communication phenomenon really becomes the soul of tourism" (Plenković, 2015).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The results of our research work have shown that there is a connection between the processes of digitalization in tourism and the abandonment of the basic identity characteristics of tourism as a special communicative environment. In all its aspects, tourism is communication at all levels and in all contexts of stakeholder meeting at a tourist destination. The fact is that digitization processes continue to change the communication environment, and new and unpredictable circumstances such as the health crisis are having a major impact on strengthening the digitization process. We find that the dialectic against pandemic measures restricting freedom and promoting digitalization as a "liberator", intensifies the evolution of tourism as a phenomenon we have known. In other words, the health crisis and the acceleration of digitalization are forcing new approaches to communication in tourism. Based on the research results, we concluded that it would be good to have a selective approach in the practice of the digitization process. This means that certain contexts of the communication meeting at the destination should be excluded from digitization. Recommended communication contexts include all forms of direct service delivery, with assistance manual (therapy), verbal (guidance, storytelling, animation, life-seeing, life-participating). Hospitality cannot be digitized, but unfortunately, there are many such attempts, which means the dehumanization of relations in favor of pragmatism, rationality and profit, which all coincide with the prevailing processes of neoliberal ideology. Digitization processes will certainly have similar effects, even if there are no anti-pandemic measures by governments, which leads us to realize that tourism is facing a major substantive reform, which can be guided by the results of scientific research. It is a broad field of engagement of researchers and the contribution of tourism science to the development of this important area of life of modern society.

## LITERATURE

1. Jean-Francois Lyotard, 2005, *Postmoderno stanje*, Ibis grafika, Zagreb.
2. Jean-Francois Lyotard, 2003. *Navskrižje*, Filozofski inštitut ZRS SAZU, Ljubljana
3. Plenković, Mario (2015) Sublimirana multimedijaska komunikacija u turizmu. *Medija, Culture and Publice Realties*. Hrvatsko komunikološko društvom Zagreb.
4. Viktor E. Frankl, 2010. *Biti človek pomeni najti smisel*, Novi svet Ljubljana, Natisnil Stanislav Peklaj, s.p. Ljubljana
5. Gašper Tkačik, Delo, 07. 08. 21, SP str.
6. Čomić, Đorđe, 2013. Postdisciplinarni pristup proučavanju turizma, *Hotel-link, Journal for theory and practice of hotwel industri*, Beograd.
7. Dale Spender, 1980. *Man Made Language* publ. Routledge & Kegan
8. France Vreg, 2010. Globalni turistički diskurz, *Informatologija*, Hrvatsko komunikološko društvi, Zagreb.
9. Božidar, Veljkovič i Dinko Bilić, 2020. *Turizam – fenomen putovanja*, Sveučilišna tiskarna, Zagreb.
10. Haralambos, M. & Holbron M. (1999). *Sociologija*. Teme in pogledi, NUK. Ljubljana.
11. Emir Kusturica, 2021. Dnevni časopis *Politika* 12. 12. 2021. Beograd
12. <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-HIJ3COFE/> dostopno 13.12.2021 Navskrižje, Filozofski inštitut ZRS SAZU
13. Dandison C. Ukpabi, Heikki Karjaluoto, Consumer acceptance of information and communication technologies in tourism: an overview; *Telematics and Informatics* 34 (2017) 618-644, University, Jyvaskyla, Finland
14. Jost Krippendorf, 1986. *Putujuće čovječanstvo*, SNL Zavod za istraživanje turizma, Zagreb.

## COMMUNICATION IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE SUBJECTIVITY OF VOTERS

Toni Čabraja, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

### ABSTRACT

The topic of the paper is an analysis of the role of democratic political participatory communication in the local communication community, with the aim of finding new ways to improve the political subjectivity of voters. Our research question is how to apply certain communication values from the theory of communicative action to a system that should enable an "ideal speech situation" in the communication community. The basic hypothesis is that voters in the local community do not feel like subjects of political decision-making. For the needs of research work, we will use quantitative and qualitative methods using surveys as a research tool or technique for empirical research, as well as the method of analysis of existing sources. Namely, communication is the process of constituting the human community of various levels of social organization and the way of functioning and ensuring their existence. Power is also established, operated and legitimized communicatively. In this sense, technological advances in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) enable new forms of political voter participation in the decision-making process. Deliberative communication includes both political representatives in representative bodies and voters and is important in the process of building an "ideal speaking situation" or environment.

**Keywords:** communication, deliberative communication, participatory communication, electoral system, political subjectivity, democracy



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most important act of any democratic society is certainly the election of representative bodies or the election of individuals who perform the functions of power. In Slovenia, the year 2022 is the "Super" election year, because voters will first elect deputies to the National Assembly (NA), then we will elect the president and in the autumn members of municipal councils. In short, the topicality of this paper is evident. This is a period in which, in addition to asking about elections, we are wondering about the actual role and power of voters in deciding on various policies. By reviewing the headlines in the leading Slovenian newspapers *Delo* and *Dnevnik* on the role of voters in the electoral process, it can be concluded that the role of voters in the process of communicative formation of power is not satisfactory. "It is enough for the voters to vote for something in the elections, but to get something completely different after the elections" (Kovač 2021, 12 - 13). "The electoral system is also in crisis, which should enable people to participate as much as possible in the electoral process" (Ribičič 2021, 11). In any case, the Slovenian media show that voter turnout is falling, while distrust in politics is growing (Svetlik 2021, 8-9). A new role of voters is indicated through non-governmental or civil associations (Kos 2021, 2), which all leads to the assumption that voters are not satisfied with their role as a subject in the Slovenian democratic space. Due to the large discrepancy between what voters expect from politics and what they get, politics is below the level of the tasks that time has brought (Turk 2020, 14-15). The lack of political subjectivity of the electorate results in the strengthening of authoritarian political systems to the detriment of democracy (Rizman 2020, 6-8). Democracy is an environment in which voters can be subjects or "forgers of their own destiny" and also their happiness. Research by the Business School Center Celje College has also shown that voters are dissatisfied with their influence on the decision-making of representative bodies (Mlinar and Regoršek 1997). Also at the state level, deputies, like members of municipal councils, do not decide according to the expectations of voters but according to the will of their parties (Malič et al. 1996). At least one article on the issue of political subjectivity of voters is published in the mentioned media every day, which additionally motivated us to start researching this topic.

Communication is a central concept, defined by Stewart Tubbs as the exchange of experiences, as interpersonal communication is possible precisely because of a person's ability to create and use the symbols through which these experiences are transmitted. (Tubbs 2013, 35). Toma Đorđević believes that communication is a phenomenon of socio-psychological nature and represents a process of exchanging ideas and messages, transformed into a certain structure of schematic signs (Đorđević 1993, 493). Given how Đorđević understands the role of commu-

nicative exchange, communication is a process that projects future social states of latent reality, including organizational ones, based on existing social experiences and consciousness (Đorđević 1993, 494). "Human communication is communication through symbols, which separates it from animal communication" (Vreg 1990, 19). Communication is a way of human existence as an individual and also a social being. The integrative function of communication is the foundation for creating social groups and organizational structures. Communication is also about connecting the elements of the electoral system. In a political organization, territorial communities of different sizes and levels of the social hierarchy are most often discussed. The problem of our research work is participatory political communication in the basic (basic) self-governing territorial and political community or in the municipality. Article 139 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (URS) stipulates that a municipality is a self-governing community, while the Local Self-Government Act (ZLS) stipulates in the first article that municipalities are basic self-governing local communities.

Municipalities are the best environment for promoting democracy through participatory political participation using a preferential vote. The general theory of democracy states that the closest to the original meaning of the phenomenon of democracy is a situation in which people or voters are the ones who perceive problems, propose answers to questions within the problem and ultimately decide which answer is best. The fact is, however, that the basic or fundamental local political communities or municipalities are the environments that best suit the approach to the just mentioned ideal of democracy. Here we do not take into account the lower territorial community or local communities, where this basic democratic principle can be brought closer to direct democracy. This means that the subjectivity of voters in political processes is most prevalent at the level of basic local self-governing communication communities. The point is that voters in basic local self-governing communities actually decide things that concern themselves.

In addition to the above, there are a number of other factors in the electoral process (the nature of the electoral system, electoral geometry, etc.) that in their own way influence voters' decision-making and not just decide who will decide on their behalf. When we talk about the electoral process in basic political and communication communities or municipalities, there is also the question of introducing and respecting the preferential vote, party political management, the role of civil society, and the media as the fourth branch of government (of course, executive and judicial). In the continuation of this research project, we will try to provide answers to some of the questions and, of course, that contribute to the greater subjectivity of voters.

## 2. GOAL AND PURPOSE

Our research goal is primarily socio-pragmatic. Through research activities, we want to determine whether voters today feel the subjects or objects of political processes, especially in the electoral process. It is also our intention that the results of this research will be information and guidance in organizational communication for the preparation and conduct of the electoral process. So they should contribute new insights that would be useful for new elections. We also dedicate our research activities to determining the state of political participatory culture and the culture of voter communication.

## 3. HYPOTHESES

The main hypothesis or mental (assumed) answer to the research question in this research is: most citizens in the local communicative community do not feel like a subject of political decision-making, which can significantly influence decision-making in the municipality. Or else, we are of the opinion that the existing communication model or the way of elected bodies in the local community can be improved and thus enable the greater influence of voters on decisions in the municipality. We also set the following associated hypotheses: members of the municipal council perform their work in accordance with the expectations of those who were elected by the majority; those for whom we voted for the majority came to the municipal council; when voting in the elections, I proceeded mainly from whether I know and trust the candidates on the list.

## 4. METHODS

In order to evaluate our hypotheses and thus come up with an answer to our research question, we used both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative method, we used the survey technique as the most common technique of empirical research, followed by the analysis of existing sources (secondary method), primarily relevant literature and data. In the qualitative method, we mainly used the technique of description and interpretation. In short, like a measuring instrument, a practical approach came in handy. The survey was conducted at the Center for Public Opinion Research in the company AB Eduka d.o.o., based in Brežice. A short public opinion poll was conducted in February 2021 in the municipality of Brežice. The research was conducted electronically and through interviewers. The municipal elections in 2018 were attended by 50.83% or 10,435 of all eligible voters.

## 5. RESULTS

The results of our research project on the political subjectivity of voters confirmed our hypotheses. The majority of citizens or eligible voters in the local communicative community do not feel like a subject of political decision-making. Confirmation of this main or cardinal hypotheses were obtained by sublimating the answers to most of the survey questions. We are of the opinion that the existing communication model or method of electing representatives of bodies in the local political community can be improved and thus enable the greater influence of voters on decisions in the municipality. It is necessary to emphasize the necessity of introducing the principles and principles of deliberative communication in the process of local elections. This form of communication is the best way to enable the so-called "ideal" communication environment. Collateral or more concrete hypotheses were also confirmed.

**Table no. 1: Opportunities for effective participation in decision-making**

1	Do you think you have the opportunity to actually participate in the decision-making of your municipality?	F %	M %	Average%
a	Yes, at all	3,6	4,5	4,05
b	No, I can't influence at any decision	24	30	27
c	Yes, in some	72,4	65,5	68,9

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

Based on the results obtained in the empirical research using the questionnaire, we obtained the expected results when asked "Do you (in your opinion) have the opportunity to actually participate (participate) in decision-making in your municipality?" One-quarter of the respondents are of the opinion that they cannot influence any decision or events in the municipality with the elections. The percentage of those who are convinced that they influence all decisions through elections is negligible. The largest number of respondents answered vaguely that they participate in some decisions. The conclusion that this is a group of respondents who know the least about the political decision-making process in the municipality is being forced.

**Table no. 2: Use of preferential vote in local elections**

2	Did you know that you were able to circle the name of the candidate on the list of the party you voted for?	F %	M %	Average %
a	Yes, and I did	38,4	44,2	41,4
b	No, I didn't know	40,8	36,0	38,3
c	I do not think that this is a good way of voting	20,8	19,9	20,3

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

The next question was, "Did you know that you were able to circle the name of the candidate on the list on the list of the party you voted for? A good 41 percent of respondents said they knew about the possibility of using a preferential vote. However, almost the same percentage (38%) were those voters who did not know about this possibility. Interestingly, a good 20% of respondents said that such a way of voting is not good and probably did not even take it into account. The female part of the electorate or voters were less aware of the possibility of using a preferential vote (around ten percent).

**Table no. 3: How, by whose will do the elected to the municipal council work?**

3	Elected candidates to the Municipal Council of the Municipality of Brežice will be in their work	Ž %	M %	Average %
a	They worked on their own	36	34,8	35,4
b	They will take into account the will of the voters	19,2	19,8	19,5
c	They will follow the instructions of their political party	44,8	45,3	45,05

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

According to the majority of respondents, the elected candidates for the municipal council will perform their work in accordance with the program of their party or according to the instructions of the party, thus renouncing their voters. More than 35 percent of respondents are convinced that those elected to the municipal council will work on their own or in accordance with their conscience (probably). Only one-fifth of the respondents believe that the elected representatives of the people in the municipal council will work (decide) in accordance with the expectations and interests of the voters. There are no noticeable differences between the respondents in terms of their gender.

**Table no. 4: Voter criteria in voting in elections**

4	Did you select the candidates for the municipal council by circling	F %	M %	Average %
a	The ones I know	33,2	27,3	30,2
b	Those I trust	45,2	50,6	48
c	I circled the party list without choosing a person on it	21,6	22,1	21,8

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

In the local communication community, at a certain level of knowledge, more or less everyone knows each other. Therefore, 4/5 of the respondents in the elections chose those candidates they know or trust. Only one-fifth of voters circled the candidates by instinct, probably because they did not know the candidates. This data also shows that local elections are important because people can choose candidates they know, or at least find out quickly about those candidates who are on the electoral rolls.

**Table no. 5: The level of realized expectations of voters**

5	How did your expectations after the last elections in 2018 come true?	Average % Female and Male
a	Fully	7 %
b	In part	56 %
c	They didn't come true at all	37 %

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

Understandably, voters expect post-election pre-election promises to come true. Unfortunately, based on the results obtained, we can conclude that the expectations of only seven percent of voters were met. More than half of the voters' expectations were partially met. There is also a small share (37%) of those who are convinced that their expectations have not been met by councilors.

**Table no. 6: The contribution of elections to changes in the municipality**

6	Do you believe that the upcoming municipal council elections will change anything in the municipality?	F %	M %	Average %
a	Yes, for the better	21,6	16,5	19,1
b	Yes, for the worse	20	19,5	19.6
c	They will not change anything	58,4	64	61.2

Source: Center for Public Opinion Research AB, Eduka, d.o.o.

We obtained an interesting result on this research or survey question. Just under two-thirds of respondents are convinced that the upcoming local parliament elections will not change anything. An additional question would be interesting: Why? Is it because the same parties are winning, or because the same people are running, or because there are many solutions in the system of local self-government that only ensure the reproduction of politicians?

## 5. DISCUSSION

In theory, there is a general consensus that power is acquired, constituted, maintained, and exercised communicatively. Elections are just one element of the communication process of gaining power in the community. Especially at the local level. We should not overlook the fact that the most important element of the electoral system is the right to vote, which is the foundation of political rights, on which the character of the electoral system and the political system in the country, in general, depends to a large extent. "The regulations on the right to vote to determine the circle of persons who have the right to vote in representative bodies and the circle of persons who have the right to be elected members of these bodies" (Grad et al. 1996, 256).

As can be seen from the research results, our hypotheses have been confirmed, which is of course the reason for further research. Namely, in political life in communities, people have two basic possibilities to be subjects or objects of political processes. In the democratic tradition, people are considered to be subjects of politics or bearers of sovereignty and those who give legitimacy to any authority. The established dissatisfaction of voters with their decision-making power in the election process raises the question of the quality of the communication environment in which the oblate is formed. Voters' responses lead us to consider that following the principles of deliberative or discursive communication is a highly recommended contribution to improving the effect or strengthening the subjectivity of voters.

"According to proponents of deliberative democracy, political decision-making is legitimate as long as policies are shaped in a process of public debate in which citizens and their representatives go beyond their own interests for the common interest and the common good" (Bohman 1996, 5). Deliberation is necessary because in a democracy, political decisions are not simply imposed on citizens, but are shaped - in some models of democracy more, in others less - by consensus. Deliberation is "a dialogical process of exchanging reasons for resolving problematic situations that cannot be resolved without interpersonal coordination and cooperation" (Bohman 1996, 27). It is important for deliberation that citizens and their representatives reflect on their interests and reasons in a public forum before reaching a decision (Bohman 1996, 5). Deliberative communication is a way and form of communication based on ethical principles and moral principles, which are very inspiring in research at the time of the digital transformation of society. Deliberation is supposed to take place in three stages: from government to citizen, from citizen to government, and from citizen to citizen. "Deliberative democracy as a plan for information age policy includes various channels of communication: communication between citizens or "G2C", as well as communication between citizens or communication "C2G" and communication between citizens or "C2C" (Siedschlag 2005, 6). So deliberation involves both political representatives in representative bodies as well as citizens. Every citizen must have equal access to speech, equal access to deliberative forums, as well as equal opportunities and position in the decision-making process (Bohman 1996, 36) of party programs (pre-election period), as well as voting in elections.

He understands the deliberative understanding of politics as conducting political debates, and practice has shown that it is a monologue of political parties, especially in the pre-election period. As a result, there is no questioning of positions in the public debate. However, the process of public debate allows for a change of opinion, which applies to situations in which better proposals are encountered. The presented results of the research show that this two-way process of public debate does not exist, nor is there a full use of the preferential vote, which jeop-

ardizes the subjectivity of voters. When it comes to the effects and contributions of digitalization, Zuboff, S., (1988) has already found that computer technology provides a fascinating amount of power in re / configuring the nature of work and social relations as a whole. The achievements of digitalization have great power in excluding people from production processes in the form of surplus labor, and there are currently no special achievements in political processes such as elections. We would like to add that the new communication paradigm is based on the assumption that communication is a form of cooperative interaction, which latently includes the process of conjunction and disjunction or the preservation of identity and personal interest (Vreg 1998, 11/5). Our view of the process of preparation and conduct of the last elections shows that the principle of cooperative interaction within the activities of party leaders was visible in part and selectively. We also did not detect new models of communication in the electoral process. "Models are ways of seeing a certain phenomenon and process, more or less successful mapping of the real due to accurate knowledge of the main structural characteristics, and more importantly, the relationship between elements and parts of one phenomenon as a whole (Plenković 1993, 37). "Communication models are, as stated by State et al., Abstract creations, ideas and ideas of individuals or groups of authors on the conceptualization of content and communication functions (State et al. 2015, 310), which aim to address certain issues related to development problems organizational communications.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on everything found in this research, we can conclude that local elections or elections to municipal councils are acts of participatory communication that are closest to the original principles of democracy. In addition to electing members of the municipal council, voters also participate in the direct election of the mayor of the municipality and in elections to local community bodies, etc., but this time these activities were not the subject of our research work. Small communities have the advantage of having direct and most original information about candidates for both positions at the municipal level. We found that voters are convinced that their elected representatives in the municipal council decide in accordance with the "instructions" of the parties and NOT according to their conscience, or that they do not take into account the will of the voters. The survey also showed that elected members of the municipal council only partially meet the expectations of voters. A slight relative majority of voters were aware of the possibility of using a preferential vote in elections and so they voted. Confidence in the candidate is the first criterion on the basis of which voters chose the candidates for the municipal council. The most surprising finding of this survey, however, is that two-thirds of voters do not believe that elections could change anything.



The results of the research showed that it is necessary to increase the information and education of voters about the importance and course of the electoral process, especially about the use of the preferential vote in elections. Practice has shown that this is usually done by municipalities, the only question is in what way and how effective is this acquaintance (teaching about elections) of voters. As the research also showed, in political marketing of parties and individuals and pre-election promotion, it is necessary to individualize or personalize this activity (promotion). This will make the promotion more effective. This is especially true when designing a party promotion, which will make a particular candidate more prominent and thus gain more trust. Namely, a concrete promise also brings with it a concrete responsibility. It is also necessary to emphasize and use media of local importance that best inform the electoral public. As a proposal to improve the electoral environment, we propose the use of the principles and principles of deliberative communication by parties and candidates on electoral lists. Assertiveness is a communication principle that needs to be used in conjunction with the principles of persuasive communication.

Our research has shown that there is enough room to continue research on this topic: using the power of media divergence in political marketing with a focus on local traditional media, which still enjoys greater trust compared to modern digital (Delo, 30.11. P. 1). As far as elections are concerned, it is necessary to provide better logistics for the expansion of electronic voting or remote voting. The life of society is a process and elections are the companions of this process. Therefore, further research is needed in the pre- and post-election period in order to be able to identify challenges and achievements in the field of democratic political participation in the basic communication community using the comparative monitoring method. municipality. Opportunities for further research in the "super" election year 2022 will not run out.

## LITERATURE AND SOURCES

1. Bohman, James. 1996. *Public deliberation: pluralism, complexity, and democracy*. The MIT press.
2. Đorđević, Toma. 1993. *Komunikacija*. V Enciklopediji političke kulture, 493-496. Beograd: Savremena administracija.
3. Grad, Franc, Kaučič Igor, Ribičič Ciril in Kristan Ivan 1996. *Državna ureditev Slovenije*, ČZ Uradni list Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana.
4. Plenković, Mario. 1993. *Komunikologija masovnih medija*. Zagreb: Barbat.
5. Plenković, Mario. 2016. Strateški komunikacijski menadžment i kreativne vizualne komunikacije. *Media, culture and public relations* 7(1): 1-4.

6. State, Cristina, Dan Popescu, Antonio Garcia-Sanchez in Livia Toanca. 2015. *Experimental Research Regarding, New Models of Organizational*.
7. Siedschlag, Alexander. 2005) *Digital Democracy and Its Application to the International Arena – From "Deliberation" to "Decision."* <http://www.esci.at/eusipo/digitaldemocracy.pdf>, preverjeno dne 10. 12. 2021, str. 6
8. Tubbs, Stewart. 2013. *Komunikacija – principi i konteksti*. Beograd: Clio.
9. *konferencije*, Regionalni razvoj i demokratski tokovi jugoistočne Evrope.
10. Vreg, France. 1998. *Humana komunikologija*, Hrvatsko komunikološko društvo & Nonacom, Zagreb.
11. Vreg, France 1990. *Demokratsko komuniciranje*. Maribor: Založba Obzorja.
12. Zakon o lokalnih volitvah, Uradni list RS, št. 94/07 – uradno prečiščeno besedilo.
13. Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o lokalni samoupravi – ZLS-N, Uradni list RS, št. 60/07 z dne 6. 7. 2007.
14. Ustava Republike Slovenije, Uradni list Republike Slovenije 2001.

#### **Newspapers and research papers**

15. Nika Kovač 2021. Ljudje imajo dovolj tega, da volijo eno, dobijo pa drugo, *Dnevnik, Objektiv, Ljubljana* 9. 10. 2021, str. 12 in 13.
16. Ciril Ribičič, 2021, Volilni sistem in kriza – učinkovitost in legitimnost vladanja, *Dnevnik, Objektiv, Ljubljana*, 16. 10. 2022.
17. Ivan, Svetlik 2021. Za več demokracije in manj (ob)lasti, *Delo, Sobotna priloga*, Ljubljana.
18. Suzana Kos 2021. Politična moč, ki jo ima glas ljudstva, *Delo*, Ljubljana.
19. Danilo, Turk. 2020. Politika je pod ravnijo nalog, ki jih je prinesel čas, *Dnevnik, Objektiv* 2020. Ljubljana.
20. Rudi, Rizman. 2020. Rakova pot slovenske demokracije, *Delo, Sobotna priloga*, Ljubljana.
21. Malič, Sašo, Gošnik, Aleš, Ercek, Primož. Parlamentarna demokracija in subjektiviteta volivcev [*raziskovalna naloga*]. Celje: Srednja trgovska šola, 1996. 43 str., graf. prikazi [COBISS.SI-ID 3515189].
22. Mlinar, Kristijan, Regoršek, Robi. Volivci v sistemu parlamentarne demokracije. [*raziskovalna naloga*]. Celje: Srednja trgovska šola, 1997. 54 f., [14] f. pril., ilustr., graf. prikazi [COBISS.SI-ID 3696949]

# PRIMARY HEALTHCARE AND DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION AT COVID TIMES IN THE AGE OF DIGITALIZATION

Dubravka Jakšetić, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

## ABSTRACT

The paper's topic is healthcare communication in the age of the digital revolution and during the Coronavirus epidemic. As a result of the pandemic's circumstances and the significant effect of Information Communication Technology (ICT), the communication environment is changing in terms of communication methods and media (i.e. means of communication). It is essential to affirm the principles of deliberative communication as a communication that signifies and implies mutual respect among communicators. Our research objective is whether current communication practices in primary healthcare institutions satisfy all stakeholders, particularly patients, at the time of COVID, and what can be done to change and enhance it. How does new information technology affect the quality of communication? It is essential to adapt rapidly to changes by constantly monitoring and listening to the demands of employees and end consumers, which includes patients. Our main idea is that both service providers and consumers are dissatisfied with the current communication system. This is the primary hypothesis from which we will develop additional secondary or collateral hypotheses to answer our research question. We will use the quantitative method of empirical research as well as the method of analysis, synthesis, with the use of a survey as a research technique.

Although it is a subjective experience, patient satisfaction with clinic communication is being considered as an indicator of healthcare quality. The patient desires and requires an approach that places him in the spotlight, which means that he expects not only examination, diagnostics, and therapy from the family medicine team, but also a method of communication that includes not only information, but also understanding, consideration, solidarity, and empathy. Deliberative communication incorporates all of these aspects of communication.

**Keywords:** communication, deliberative communication, healthcare, communication technology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The covid pandemic worldwide has resulted in a significant overload of the healthcare system. Despite the fact that scientists have long anticipated a pandemic, health systems have differed in the level of preparedness, management, and monitoring. The most serious issues revolved around the deployment of the necessary resources and equipment to stop the virus's spread (McCloskey & Heymann 2020, 148). Looking at the period from 25 February 2020, when the first case of infection in Croatia was reported, a total of 749,455 people infected with the new coronavirus were recorded by January 2022, of whom 12,805 died (koronavirus.hr, 2022). As events changed on a daily basis, this influx of patients had an impact on health-care organization and communication, which was kept at the level of crisis communication. In these circumstances, it was critical to create effective and quick communication as well as improve teamwork.

Successful communication is the cornerstone of patient and medical staff satisfaction, as well as successful treatment. Thus, health care comprises not only the delivery of technical-professional services, but also the establishment of an appropriate and supporting relationship based on self-awareness and another person. (Đorđević & Braš 2011, 12). A well-organized and successful team is vital in the organization of the health service, as it enhances the quality of professional activity, which leads to improved patient and family satisfaction while also lowering the level of stress in healthcare professionals (Hall & Weawel 2001, 867).

In Croatia, the computerization of the health system began in the 1990s. (Mrkuš et al., 2006), and the use of information and communication technologies became inevitable in communication between healthcare workers, as well as with patients. Therefore, nowadays it is impossible to discuss communication in any sector without the use of information and communication technology (Stevanović & Pristaš 2011, 32).

Primary health care is on the first "line of defence" in triage, the organisation of testing, vaccinations, but also the care of populations in need of healthcare. For this reason, effective organization and communication in primary care are the basis of meeting the needs of the population. One of the newer concepts in the field of communication is deliberative communication, which is increasingly being imposed as an alternative to the existing model of communication. Primary health care is the first "line of defense" in triage, testing, vaccines, and the treatment of people in need of healthcare. As a result, excellent organization and communication in primary care are essential for satisfying the population's demands. Deliberative communication is a relatively new notion in the field of communication that is rapidly being offered as an alternative to the current model of communication. This deliberative procedure is based on a rational and mu-

tually respectful debate. This method of deliberation is based on a rational and mutually respectful discussion. The notion behind deliberatization as a method of putting deliberative principles into practice is that a choice obtains legitimacy when it is the outcome of a consensus established via free and equal conversation among all participants. The typical paternalistic approach toward the patients prevailed in the past.

This relationship is part of a more complex interpersonal relationship that implies complete legal and ethical equality and is divided into two parts: contractual, which corresponds to the legal relationship, and partnership, which implies ethical autonomy. One paradox arises as a result of establishing a partnership in which the doctor and the patient cooperatively decide, namely that the doctor renounces his competence. This can create ambiguity in a doctor's professional conscience, but the more important matter is whether it threatens to the doctor's authority. Technical and technological advancements in contemporary medicine, as well as the rising variety of value systems, impacted the change from paternalistic to partner model. Nevertheless, respect for the patient's autonomy and engagement in the treatment process is a key factor for promoting the partner model.

Deliberation refers to the mutual and serious consideration of many options. Deliberative communication implies communication in which opposing points of view are confronted, and evidence for these opposing points of view is given time and space to articulate and present itself, as well as tolerance and respect for the other, and participants learn to listen to the evidence of the opposing side. Deliberate communication is a must-have for both healthcare practitioners and patients. Deliberative methods involve communication in which (a) different points of view meet and the arguments for these points of view are given time and space to articulate and present themselves, (b) there is tolerance and respect for the concrete other, and participants learn to listen to the other person's argument, and (c) elements of collective will formation are present. attempting to reach an agreement, at the very least an interim agreement, or drawing attention to discrepancies (Englund 2016, 58).

Deliberative communication makes a qualitative step ahead in comparison to direct forms of communication, in which participation is often reduced to a binary "yes/no" response to an a priori inquiry, thanks to these standards.

## **2. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

The objective of the research is to determine how satisfied healthcare professionals and patients of healthcare users are with the Gospić Health Center's communication practices.

The research issue is about current covid communication practices in primary care healthcare institutions and their impact on participant satisfaction. Above all, this raises the issue of new information technology's impact on communication quality. Research hypothesis: Providers (healthcare professionals) and users (patients) of services are not satisfied with the existing way of communicating.

### Working methods

The survey was conducted in December 2021 at the Gospić Health Centre, which included 112 patients and 71 healthcare staff.

**Table 1 Healthcare staff and patients by gender**

Gender	Healthcare staff		Patients	
	Number (n)	Structure (%)	Broj (n)	Structure (%)
Male	18	25,4	47	47,0
Female	53	74,6	65	53,0
Total	71	100,0	112	100,0

Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

**Table 2 Healthcare staff and patients by age**

Age	Healthcare staff		Patients	
	Number(n)	Structure (%)	Number (n)	Structure (%)
-30	18	25,3	16	14,3
31-60	46	64,8	52	46,4
61+	7	9,9	44	39,3
Total	71	100,0	112	100,0

Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

**Table 3 Healthcare staff and patients by education**

Education	Healthcare staff		Patients	
	Number(n)	Structure (%)	Number (n)	Structure (%)
Primary school	1	1,4	27	24,1
Secondary school	40	56,3	63	56,3
University Bachelor	10	14,1	6	5,4
Professional master's degree/faculty	18	25,4	16	14,3
Master of Science	1	1,4	0	0,0
Doctorate	1	1,4	0	0,0
Total	71	100,0	112	100,0

Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

The study was completely anonymous, and participants were given the option of abandoning the questionnaire if they did not want to participate. The Ethics Committee of the Gospić Health Centre gave its approval for the study. The paper employed a quantitative approach of empirical research using questionnaires as a survey instrument. Questionnaires are designed for this study and contain basic data: gender, age, level of education and 10 questions for patients and 10 questions for employees.

In the questionnaires, the answers are ranked on the five-stage Likert scale in a way: I absolutely agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4) and absolutely disagree (5).

The responses are scored on a five-stage Likert scale in the following order: I completely agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), and completely disagree (5).

Microsoft Office Excel was used to process the statistical data. The data is presented in a graphical and image format. The frequency distribution was described using descriptive statistical methods.

### 3. RESULTS

The following results (Table 1) were obtained from the study of patient questionnaires: At response to the statement that it is feasible to arrange an examination in a family health –care centre quickly and easily by phone or email, 44 percent of respondents said yes (I agree or totally agree), while about the same number (41 percent) said no. Similar results in the affirmative responses (43%) were to the statement that family medicine clinics can quickly, easily and simply arrange PCR/BAT (polymerase chain reaction/rapid antigen test) testing by phone or email. However, the statement that in family medicine clinics it is possible to quickly and easily order medicines by phone, email or message on automated answering service was positively answered by 21% of respondents while 66% responded negatively (I disagree or absolutely disagree). Furthermore, 30% of respondents agree or absolutely agree with the statement that communicating with a doctor is clear and understandable, and that they get all the answers to the questions that interested them while 41% deny the stated claim and as many as 29% are undecided. The statement "Communicating with a nurse is clear and understandable, and I get all the answers to the questions that I was interested in" – more than half (57%) of the respondents answered yes, while 26% disagreed with the stated statement. Almost half of respondents (47%) absolutely disagree or disagree with the statement that they fully understand how to leave a message after answering the automated answering service.

The majority of respondents disagree or absolutely disagree (60%) with the statement that the feedback they receive through new communication channels (voicemail, email) is fast enough, while 24% of respondents are satisfied with communication through new communication channels. Furthermore, only 26% of respondents believe that it is possible to talk to a doctor by phone while almost half (45%) gave a negative response and 29% were undecided. To the claim: "I find that work overload and lack of time affect good communication." respondents gave answers in approximate negative (33%), positive (37%) and neutral (30%) ratios.

**Table 4**  
**Communication of patients with the healthcare staff**  
**(patients;n=112)**

	1 I Absolutely agree	2 Agree	3 I neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 I absolutely disagree
1. An examination may be scheduled quickly, simply, and easily at family medical clinics via phone or e-mail.	5 4%	45 40%	21 19%	32 29%	9 8%
2. In family medical clinics, pcr/bat testing may be scheduled quickly, simply, and reasonably through phone or email.	2 2%	46 41%	29 26%	24 21%	11 10%
3. Medicines may be ordered quickly, simply, and conveniently in family medical clinics through phone, email, or message at the automated answering service	2 2%	20 18%	16 14%	43 38%	31 28%
4. I can communicate with a doctor in a straightforward and comprehensible manner, and I obtain all of the answers to my queries.	9 8%	25 22%	33 29%	31 28%	14 13%
5. I can communicate with a nurse in a straightforward and comprehensible way, and I obtain all of the answers to my inquiries.	13 12%	50 45%	20 18%	19 17%	10 9%
6. I get fast enough feedback through new communication channels (voicemail, email).	3 3%	23 21%	19 17%	48 44%	19 16%
7. I completely comprehend how to leave a message after answering the automated answering service.	10 9%	33 29%	16 14%	15 13%	38 34%
8. It is possible to talk to a doctor by phone	4 4%	25 22%	33 29%	40 36%	10 9%
9. I assume that a work overload and a lack of time have an impact on effective communication.	10 9%	31 28%	34 30%	25 22%	12 11%
10. The channels through which I contact with the family medical clinic are tailored to provide high-quality and efficient service (phone, voice-mail, e-mail)	6 5%	29 26%	37 33%	28 25%	12 11%

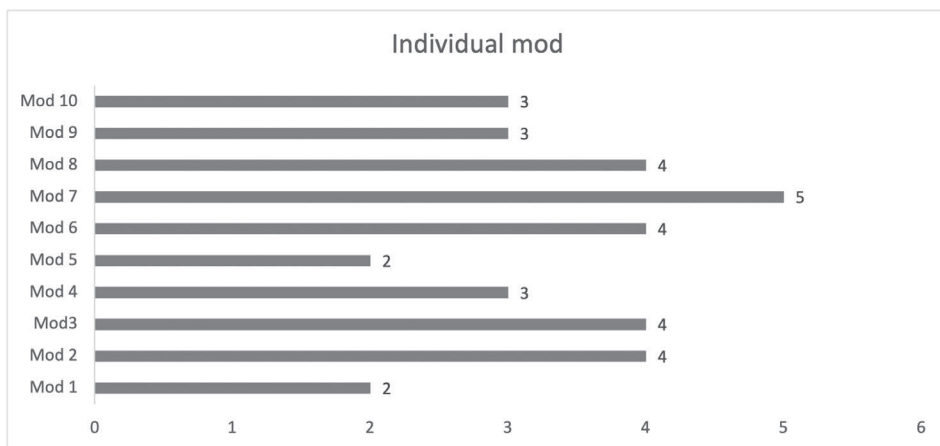
Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.



In the calculation of the individual manner for each question, it is obvious (Graph 1) that they are question 1 (In family medical clinics, it is feasible to swiftly, conveniently, and readily organize an examination by phone or email and question, question 5. Communicating with a nurse is simple and straightforward, and I obtain all of the answers to the things I'm interested in (mode 2) question 7, on the other hand I know just how to leave a message when the answering machine gets the lowest rating (mode 5).

The overall Modza all responses was 4, indicating that "I disagree" was the most common response of patients to positive statements.

**Chart 1. Patients**



Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

The research outcomes (Table 2) were obtained from an analysis of employee questionnaires:

The majority of respondents 82 percent said yes (I completely agree or agree) to the statement "At the time of the COVID epidemic, management and employees at the Health Center had a strong exchange of information and unrestricted communication," while a small percentage (7 percent) said otherwise. The majority of employees (84%) believe that communication in the Health Center allows participation, exchange of experiences and mutual assistance between employees. Similar positive responses (88%) were obtained for the statement: "For mutual quality cooperation between employees in the health care process, communication is the most important factor in the Health Center" and 83% for the statement "The channels by which I communicate with my superiors at the time of the pandemic are adapted to the work I do."

Furthermore, respondents rated horizontal and vertical communication in the Health Centre as positive (69 percent), communication channels that receive all COVID pandemic-related information and instructions on time, and the claim "I receive feedback on my work done through communication channels" as positive (69 percent) (67 percent). Furthermore, employees are mostly satisfied with the quality of media communication at the Health Center (77%) and informal information (67%) as well as the superior's willingness to new ideas (71 percent).

**Table 5**  
**Communication between employees**  
**(employees; n=71)**

	1 I Absolutely agree	2 Agree	3 I neither agree nor agree	4 Disagree	5 I absolutely disagree
1. During the Covid pandemic, the Health Centre's administration and employees exchanged information and communicated effectively.	26 37%	32 45%	8 11%	2 3%	3 4%
2. Employee engagement, sharing of experiences, and mutual support are all possible through communication at the Health Centre.	25 35%	35 49%	7 10%	2 3%	2 3%
3. Communication is the most important factor in the Health Center for quality cooperation between employees in the health care process.	31 44%	31 44%	4 6%	2 3%	3 4%
4. The channels by which I communicate with my superiors at the time of the pandemic are adapted to the work I do.	22 31%	38 52%	6 8%	1 1%	4 6%
5. Horizontal and vertical communications in the Health Center are made possible by modern information and communication technology (ICT)	20 28%	29 41%	14 20%	5 7%	3 4%
6. I receive all information and instructions regarding the COVID pandemic on time through communication channels.	24 34%	32 45%	9 13%	3 4%	3 4%
7. I obtain feedback on my work via communication channels.	20 28%	28 39%	14 20%	6 8%	3 4%
8. I am satisfied with the quality of the Health Center's communication media.	22 31%	33 46%	8 11%	6 8%	2 3%
9. I'm satisfied with the information that was given to me informally.	19 27%	28 39%	14 20%	7 10%	3 4%
10. My supervisor is receptive to new ideas.	28 39%	23 32%	14 20%	2 3%	4 6%

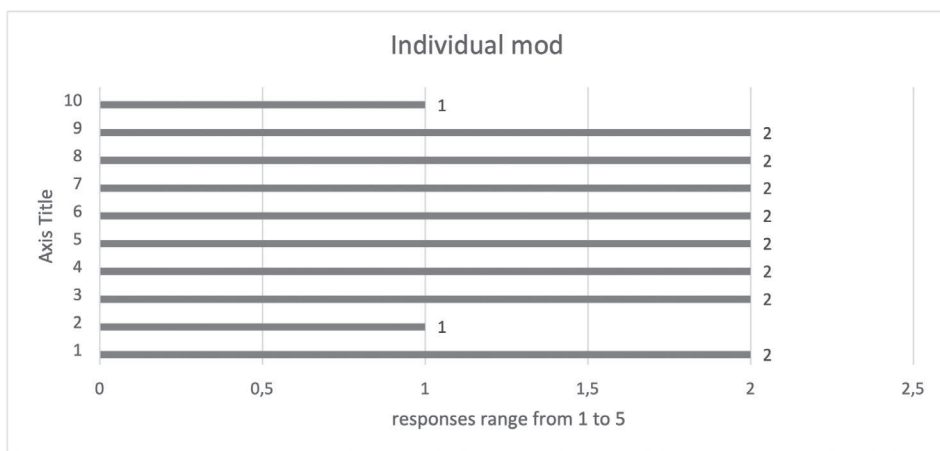
Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

By calculating the Moda of employee response to agreeing with the statements., it is visible ( graph 2) in the calculation of the individual mode for each question that the employees absolutely agree (1) or agree (2) with the above statements.

because the individual Mod for each question has a score of 1 or 2. The total Mod for all responses is 2 which means that the most common responses of employees to statements(which are affirmative) were "I agree".

The employees definitely agree (1) or agree (2) with the following statements, as calculated by the Moda of employee reaction to agreeing with the statements (graph 2) in the computation of the individual mode for each question. since each question's Mod is a 1 or 2 on a scale of 1 to 2. The total Mod for all responses is 2, indicating that "I agree" was the most common response of employees to affirmative statements.

**Chart 2. Employees**



Source: For the purposes of this paper, I conducted my own research.

Patients are most dissatisfied (66 percent) with the option to order drugs immediately and easily, according to the responses they provided to questions in the questionnaire (by phone, email or message on the automated answering service.). Furthermore, the analysis of feedback gained through new communication channels and telephone chats with doctors were among the most common negative comments (60 percent) (45 percent ).

The best grades (I absolutely agree/ agree), patients gave communication with the nurse (57% of the subjects), about half of the subjects. Looking at the overall representation of patient responses, it is evident that negational responses that are associated with dissatisfaction with communication are the most common.

Patients gave communication with the nurse (57 % of the subjects), approximately half of the subjects, the best grades (I totally agree/ agree). After looking at the overall representation of patient responses, it's obvious that negative responses related with communication dissatisfaction are the most frequent. Re-

garding the satisfaction of employees in the Health Center, it is evident from the responses that employees strongly agree (1) or strongly disagree (2) with the above statements about the effectiveness of communication and communication channels, though there is still a large percentage of those who are dissatisfied or who do not show a particular attitude toward certain situations that occur in the workplace.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In the scientific literature, there are a variety of research with varying outcomes. For example, in 2020, the Tomislavgrad Health Centre performed a survey to evaluate satisfaction with the quality of health care. More than half of the participants (Jurii et al, 2020) are largely or entirely satisfied with the institution, doctor, nurse, and healthcare facilities.

According to a similar surveys undertaken at the Livno Health Center, almost 95% of patients are satisfied with communication with a doctor, and just over 96% of people regard the communication and collaboration of nurses as extremely favorable (Livno Health Center, 2016).

In a survey of 400 Saudi Arabian patients, more than half said they were dissatisfied with communication and primary care services, while only 20% said they were satisfied (Tabekhan et al, 2018). Possible discrepancies can be linked to the peculiarities of the sociocultural settings, which vary in challenges and expectations, patient health literacy, education, and satisfaction with specific activities all within primary care.

For example, a survey of 3,567 patients in Serbia found that patients were most satisfied with health care provided by general practitioners (86.8%), whereas the majority of dissatisfied patients were involved in gynecological practice (Radovanovi et al., 2011).

Thus, although overall satisfaction with primary health care was highly rated, some activities received a low score, suggesting the need to conduct research by individual activities, not in primary care in general.

The present study in the hospital and ambulatory systems suggests that communication satisfaction is mainly favorable. Thus, in the research: "Internal communication in primary care" examining the satisfaction of employees through internal communication within primary care in the area of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County showed that employees are most satisfied with horizontal communication.

Feedback and corporate information showed the lowest degree of satisfaction (Sokler 2020). The team's communication satisfaction survey, which was done in 2018 on a sample of 137 nurses at the Novi Marof Extended Treatment and Palliative Care Facility, found that communication and teamwork were both

rated as very important in the study. Communication was not affected by gender or professional qualifications in a statistically significant way (Vincek 2018). Furthermore, our research showed that at the time of covid, all information and instructions were provided on time and that there are no barriers to communication (8% of respondents disagree with this statement, while almost 80% either agree or absolutely agree). U sličnom istraživanju "Job satisfaction of healthcare professionals during the covid pandemic" (Toki et al, 2021), which included 498 healthcare professionals from all counties in Croatia, shows that more than half of the participants (57 percent) report no change in job satisfaction or communication as a result of the pandemic compared to the previous period.

In our research, the problem of insufficient communication of doctors with the patient can be justified by a large number of patients, especially those in old age whose health needs are relatively high and on whose satisfaction it is necessary to spend more time.

Furthermore, health documentation requires the commitment of resources, which includes the recording of history and status, the preparation of referrals and other certifications, remittances, and simply prescribing therapy (prescriptions, medicines for use in the office, etc.). The causes for patients' discontent with communication originate from the fact that a greater number of patients communicate via phone calls, which are frequently unavailable owing to the doctor and nurse's busy schedules and patients' misunderstanding of the option of leaving messages on voicemail. In addition to staff overwork, the reason is technological, since information technology frequently prevents you from receiving and responding to such communications.

Certain dissatisfactions in the organization and provision of services to patients can in many ways improve the application of the principles and principles of deliberative communication, which implies communication in which different points of view and evidence for these views are faced with each other and are given both the time and space to articulate and present themselves, as well as the existence of tolerance and respect for the concrete other and the different, and participants learn to listen to evidence from the opposite side.

Deliberative communication requires a comprehensive approach to the problem (Potter, 2007), which involves holistic philosophy, theory, and ethics, as well as holistic care, communication, and education and research (Mariano 2007, 165). The public's role is also important, and it should be involved in the process (Degelnik et al, 2015). Citizens' decision-making as healthcare users on all relevant topics, with a specific focus on health objectives, is an element of the deliberative process (Murphy 2005, 172). The outcomes of public participation in the Washington study led to the establishment of health priorities in their community (Pesce et al, 2011).

Stronger involvement of all healthcare participants, as well as mutual respect can be the predecessors and outcome of successful communication (Beauvais 2020, 4). It is important to involve participants in different fields in these processes and to make decisions based on consensus (Rahimzadeh et al, 2021).

One area where deliberative communication can be used is to address ethical issues at the junction of pharmacogenomics and primary care (Longo et al, 2016). The diagnosis of juvenile brain tumors, for example, can serve as an example of deliberative communication in healthcare, where six specialists made conclusions guided by a thorough and methodical approach based on medical evidence. The concept of so-called assertive communication, which is considered the healthiest approach to communicate since it allows all parties involved to successfully solve difficulties, has a unique position within deliberative communication. It generates a "win-win" situation in which everyone involved in the dialogue feels successful. This method assumes a very clear and transparent communication of its criteria.

#### Research limitations and implications for future research

This survey's practical value can be used to improve the quality of primary care health services at the Gospić Health Center. The study's limitations are mostly in the scope of the subjects, as it does not include a greater number of patients, i.e. Gospić Health Centre health care users, but simply a sample, as well as all personnel, which can affect the results.

In addition, for communication satisfaction analysis, a more extensive analysis of specific activities, worksites, and workplaces should be performed, providing a more full picture of the deficiencies at individual levels of primary care. An yearly evaluation of employee satisfaction with communication and information transmission at work should be conducted for a more systematic overview of communication satisfaction.

This research may be the basis for other research that will raise other research questions and provide answers and guidance to improve communication and satisfaction of patients and employees in primary care.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Measuring patient satisfaction with communication has become part of the whole health system's social participation. It was proven by studying the responses of health care users, i.e. patients, that they are dissatisfied with the current mode of communication at the Gospić Health Centre. This is the most noteworthy source of dissatisfaction with the new communication channels' responses.

Furthermore, the research found that a large percentage of patients do not know how to leave a message after speaking with a automated answering service,

indicating the need for education in the development of these forms of health literacy, as well as the need to adapt more forms of available communication between patients and healthcare providers.

The results of the analysis of the responses of healthcare providers (employees) in response to communication in a medical institutions were favorable. During the covid pandemic, the majority of employees confirmed good information exchange and smooth communication between management and employees at the Health Center, as well as general satisfaction with horizontal and vertical communication within the Health Center, according to survey questionnaires. The latest results partially confirmed a hypothesis that healthcare providers and users are dissatisfied with current communication methods. Our research revealed that the majority of patients are dissatisfied with communication at the Health Center, whereas the majority of employees are satisfied with it. Furthermore, evaluating the responses of the subjects reveals that both kinds of responders have a need to enhance their work. Although the majority of employees have expressed good attitudes, there are still a considerable number of people who are dissatisfied or who do not have a specific attitude toward certain events that occur in the workplace. It's important to pay attention to individuals who stated "neither agree nor disagree" in addition to dissatisfied employees. These "neutral" attitudes are an important aspect of the curve that can be used to effect a positive shift in interaction and communication.

The latest results among patients who are Health Center health-care recipients reveal some flaws and omissions in appropriate communication that must be resolved. The modern patient expects and desires an approach in which he/she is the center of attention, which means that he/she expects from the family medicine team not only an examination, diagnostics, and therapy, but also a means of communication that includes not only information, but also understanding, empathy, and solidarity with patients. Deliberative communication encompasses all of these communication features.

## LITERATURE

1. Beauvais, Edana. 2020. Deliberation and Non-Deliberative Communication. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 16(1): 4-13.
2. Carman, Kristin L, Mallery Coretta I Maurer Maureen. 2015. Effectiveness of public deliberation methods for gathering input on issues in healthcare: Results from a randomized trial. *Soc Sci Med* 133: 11-20.
3. Degelnik, Christopher J, Carter Stacy M i Rychetnik Lucie. 2015. Which public and why deliberate? - a scoping review of public deliberation in public health and health policy *Soc Sci Med* 131: 114-121.

4. Livno Health Center. Patient satisfaction survey of the Livno Health Center. 2016 Available at: <http://www.dz-livno.com/>
5. Djordjevic, Veljko and Marijana Braš. 2011 Basic concepts about communication in medicine. *Medix* 92: 12-14.
6. Englund, Tomas. 2016. On moral education through deliberative communication. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 48(1): 58-76.
7. Hall, Palmer I Linda Weavel. 2001. Interdisciplinary education and teamwork: a long and wind in the road. *Media I Education* 35: 867-875.
8. Jurišić, Matijana, Vlašić Andrea and Bagarić Ivan. 2020. Satisfaction of health care users with the quality of health care in the Health Center Tomislavgrad. *Health Bulletin* 2020;6(1):60-70.
9. Coronavirus - statistics for Croatia and the EU. Available at: <https://www.koronavirus.hr/> (03.01.2022.)
10. Longo, Cristina, Rahimzadeh Vasiliki, O'Doherty Kieran I Bartlett Gillian. 2016. Addressing ethical challenges at the intersection of pharmacogenomics and primary care using deliberative consultations *Pharmacogenomics* 17(16): 1795-1805.
11. Mariano, Carla. 2007. Holistic nursing as a specialty: holistic nursing - scope and standards of practice. *Nurs Clin North Am* 42(2): 165-88.
12. McCloskey, Brian I David Heymann. 2020. SARS to novel coronavirus - Old lessons and new lessons. *Epidem Infect* 5:148.
13. Mrkuš, Sebastijan, Martina Udovičić, Ksenija Baždarić, Lidija Bilic-Zulle, Galibedin Galijašević and Mladen Petrovečki. 2006. Electronic health record - the central part of the medical information system. *Medix* 62/63: 48-51
14. Murphy, Norma Jean. 2005. Citizen deliberation in setting health-care priorities. *Health Expect* 8(2):172-181.
15. Pesce, Julianna E, Kpaduwa Chinwe S i Danis Marion. 2011. Deliberation to enhance awareness of and prioritize socioeconomic interventions for health. *Soc Sci Med* 72(5): 789-797.
16. Potter, Pamela i Frisch Noreen Ann. 2007. Holistic assessment and care: presence in the process. *Nurs Clin North Am* 42(2):213-228.
17. Radovanović, Dragana, Lazarević Vladan, Banković-Lazarević Dušica and Radovanović Goran. 2011. Customer satisfaction in primary care in the Maritime District. *Health care* 40(1): 25-33.
18. Rahimzadeh, Vasiliki, Longo Cristina, Gagnon Justin, Fernandez Conrad I Bartlett Gillian. 2021. Assessing the quality of deliberative stakeholder consultations involving allied health professionals in pediatric palliative care and hematology/oncology in Canada. *BMC Palliat Care* 20: 189.



19. Sokler, Danielle, 2020. Internal communication in primary care, Graduate thesis, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Health Studies in Rijeka.
20. Stevanović, Ranko and Ivan Pristaš. 2011. New information and communication technologies and communication in medicine and health. *Medix* 92: 32.
21. Tabekhan AK, Alkhalidi YM, Alghamdi AK. 2018. Patients satisfaction with a consultation at primary health care centers in Abha City, Saudi Arabia. *J Family Med Prim Care* 7:658-63.
22. Tokić, Andrea, Pirate Ivana, Nikolic Ivanisevic Matilda. 2021. Job satisfaction of healthcare professionals during the covid pandemic, *Social research* 30(2): 401-421.
23. Vincek, Valentina. 2018. The importance of communication in the health team. Final work. University of the North, University Center Varaždin.

# RESEARCH OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH DISTANCE LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION OBSTACLES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Karla Kardum, University of Zagreb; Spread Agency, Croatia  
Daria Mustić, University of Zagreb, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction** - Now days we are witnessing accelerated technological progress applied in almost all areas of human activity. The global pandemic has led to the need of moving from traditional, face-to-face classroom teaching to hybrid learning model and online tutoring.

**Methodology** - The aim of this research is to examine students' satisfaction and attitudes about the quality of distance learning, hybrid teaching and learning through various online teaching platforms, by conducting an online anonymous survey among students. The set hypotheses are: students prefer traditional "face to face" teaching in relation to the hybrid model and students prefer traditional "face to face" teaching in relation to the online model.

**Research**- The results of this research showed that the surveyed students believe that the platforms for conducting distance learning are easy to use, for the most part they believe that teaching in the future could be conducted partly live and partly online.

**Discussion** - A large percentage of surveyed students believe that teaching during the pandemic was well designed, but poorly conducted. It is concluded that distance learning corresponded to the necessity of a situation caused by a pandemic, but that in the future live classroom teaching will always have priority, so that the overall study experience is complete.

**Keywords:** higher education, distance learning, digital transformation, communication

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, we are witnessing accelerated technological advances that are changing many areas of human activity. It is the development of new technologies that is increasingly influencing various areas of contemporary life, including education. External circumstances have resulted in more intensive use of a number of distance learning platforms, and some of them, such as Merlin or Microsoft Teams, have become an everyday tool in higher education. Due to the lack of unique guidelines, usage of many different platforms has become part of the daily lives of both students and professors, and the recognizability of certain platforms is due to certain aspects of UX and UI design. The global pandemic, which began in late 2019, led to the need to move from traditional, face-to-face classroom teaching, to a combined or hybrid learning model, and soon to full online teaching that transformed the concept of higher education. According to the data of the Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), in the winter semester of the academic year 2019/2020, 155,939 students were enrolled in higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia. Of the total number of students enrolled in higher education, 79.0% were enrolled in universities, 15.1% in polytechnics and 4.2% in colleges, while 1.7% were enrolled in art academies. Although some forms of e-learning in Croatian higher education have been used for many years, in 2020 almost all students and higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, regardless of previous experience and degree of digital transformation, were forced to switch to hybrid or online models of teaching and thus adapt to new circumstances and start or intensify learning in a virtual environment, with the help of digital technologies. Croatian universities are continuously developing online and combined forms of learning and teaching, but from the spring of 2020 this development unplannedly grew into the so-called ad hoc online teaching (so-called urgent online teaching) whose unplannedness has certainly affected the quality standards that higher education institutions guarantee to their users.

While in the previous period the digitization of educational content and the use of new technologies was a choice, a kind of added value in education, now the upgrade has become a base for learning and successfully fulfilling the set learning outcomes. The National Council for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development adopted in 2016 Criteria and procedures for the evaluation of online studies that clearly define the criteria related to study programs in which at least 50% of courses are taught online. An online course is a course in which at least 50% of the lessons are taught online, and students enrolling in such study programs may only have the status of part-time students, given the nature of online study (National Science Council, 2016). It is interesting to emphasize that, for example, the largest Croatian university, the University of Zagreb, has not accredited any online study program in its entirety since joining the Bologna Process (University of Zagreb, 2022).

From these facts arises the research problem we dealt with - online teaching in higher education took place ad hoc, so not all guidelines and criteria that exist from before were applicable, which consequently led to the need to examine student satisfaction with such unplanned forms of teaching. Given that, research related to student satisfaction with online teaching appeared very soon after the outbreak of the pandemic, so our research is focused on the technological aspect of this form of teaching, ie the research focus is on the user experience.

### **1.1 Purpose and goals**

The aim of this research is to examine students' satisfaction and attitudes about the quality of distance learning, hybrid teaching and learning through various online teaching platforms, by conducting an online anonymous survey among students. The set hypotheses are: students prefer traditional "face to face" teaching in relation to the hybrid model and students prefer traditional "face to face" teaching in relation to the online model.

## **2. TRADITIONAL LEARNING AND E-LEARNING: DEFINING CONCEPTS AND DIFFERENCES**

Traditional learning, which is basically brought down to the acquisition of ready-made knowledge, with the help of which students then try to solve already known problems and situations, is actually a type of learning aimed at an existing system and its permanent maintenance (Rodek, 2010). In classical, classroom teaching, the activity of teachers or lecturers stands out the most, while students are mostly passive participants who learn and listen the lecture and lessons. However, over time, attempts are made to change the status of a passive student who is present in the classroom and only absorbs information, today students are increasingly expected to be proactive and participate in classes to acquire the skills expected of them in the future business environment. In addition to the physical presence of the participants, the space is also the important factor that marks the "face to face" teaching. Teachers and students can see and hear live and thus hear and understand body signs and body language, which makes much better feedback in communication and thus more purposeful direction of the communication process by teachers.

The organization of the world is moving from the horizontal - command and control model, to the horizontal - connecting and cooperating model. All of this has a huge impact on education.

There are many advantages that technology itself brings to the learning process: faster access to information, interactivity, the possibility of independent and personalized learning, the possibility of instant, rapid assessment of knowledge, etc. But the introduction of technology, especially information and com-

munication technologies (ICT) in the process, however, has some shortcomings in learning (Čukušić, Jandrić, 2012).

The main problem in the implementation of the e-learning process is the assumption that the application of modern technologies is the automatic achievement of all planned goals and learning outcomes. However, when using different aspects of modern technology to conduct distance learning, e-learning processes and strategies need to be well thought out in order to obtain the desired results within a given time frame.

E-learning covers various aspects of the use of ICT in education:

- from the simple use of computers in the classroom for traditional teaching (PPT presentations, computer process simulations, multimedia presentations, use of web content, etc.),
- through "mixed" or "hybrid" (blended, mixed-mode) teaching that uses both direct contact in the classroom and online activities,
- to fully online organized teaching in which all teacher and student activities take place remotely without physical contact (Host et al., 2018).

The online model of studying has many advantages, but also certain disadvantages.

The benefits of e-learning can be classified from the perspective of students and from the perspective of teachers (Host et al., 2018):

1) This model of teaching allows students time and space flexibility in learning with the availability of learning materials anywhere and anytime, and thus education becomes available to those who would not be able to come to the classroom. Learning becomes personalized, and all relevant learning materials are quickly available. The interaction (communication) between the student and the teacher that takes place through the computer is often more direct and intense than the communication in the classroom. In addition to communication, students' group work on joint projects is encouraged, which develops social and communication skills.

2) The teacher is also provided with time and space flexibility in teaching, easier communication with students and directing their work (individually and in groups) and providing a better and more creative way to achieve educational goals.

The disadvantages of online study are the reasons for technical difficulties with the equipment needed for implementation, non-socialization of students, lack of concentration and motivation and problems in communication with professors. Also, as a lack of e-learning and online study is the problem of presenting and acquiring appropriate ICT skills by professors that are necessary for the quality implementation of distance learning.

The hybrid form of teaching enables the combination of certain elements of the traditional form of learning with the elements of distance learning.

Hybrid learning systems combine several different methods of presenting learning content, and often the traditional form of live personal teaching is combined with the use of collaboration platforms, online courses, communication tools, etc. However, the question arises how to methodically choose the optimal ratio of these two ways teaching (Čukušić, Jandrić, 2012).

In modern society, technological development stimulates the educational process and represents an information revolution, because in this context students improve their knowledge, understand it and make decisions, where lifelong learning becomes a goal and obligation (Kovačević, Lazić-Lasić, 2016). New media in education are often associated with new cultures and new forms of learning. These new reflections on the culture of learning have been stimulated, above all, by intensive changes in society, which are increasingly developing in the direction of the knowledge society. The traditional learning culture is gradually being transformed into a new learning culture that is more in line with the needs of the new society (Rodek, 2010). At the beginning of the 21st century, it is becoming clear that distance learning (synonyms: online learning, e-learning, learning in a virtual environment, etc.) will be an important element of future education and training systems in both developed and developing countries (Host et al., 2018). Two important reasons for the growing shift to distance learning are the ever-present need for lifelong learning and skills development, and the rapid technological advancement and digital transformation that, although taking place for some time, is experiencing a strong acceleration with the global pandemic. There are many definitions of e-learning which, depending on their character, can generally be classified into one of two groups: technical and pedagogical. The first group includes those that emphasize the technical component. According to them, e-learning is any form of education based on the use of modern technologies, especially computers and computer networks. Information and communication technologies are considered a key factor in the educational process. The second group of definitions emphasizes the pedagogical component (Dukić, Mađarić, 2012). The authors distinguish between the concepts of e-learning and distance learning, emphasizing that there are forms of e-learning that do not take place at a distance (eg the use of computer presentation in traditional teaching), and there are also forms of distance learning that do not use information and communication technologies (eg mail correspondence courses). Consistent with such understandings, online learning is defined as the intersection of e-learning and distance learning, drawing attention to the fact that distance learning based on the application of information and communication technologies can also be offline (Host et al., 2018). We can distinguish

several forms of e-learning according to the intensity of using the possibilities of modern technology. Its simplest form is the use of computers to prepare classes. In advanced forms of e-learning, the educational process is largely supported by modern technologies. In this sense, we are talking about hybrid or combined teaching. The most developed form of e-learning is one in which teaching is completely based on the application of information and communication technologies (Dukić, Mađarić, 2012).

Also, the terms e-learning and e-education differ where the term e-learning emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge, while the term e-education refers to combining certain computer technology and Internet capabilities in order to, in a pedagogically adequate way, conduct distance education. E-learning is computer-mediated online education. These are the exchange or transfer of knowledge skills and the use of computer applications in e-learning processes: computer-based learning, virtual classroom teaching, digital collaboration, e-learning, where e-learning consists of teachers, teaching content, technology and students, which is a didactic quadrangle of e-learning (Kovačević, Lazić-Lasić, 2016). Online technologies enable active participation in which learning becomes a social experience, exchange of ideas via e-mail, forums and other platforms, where e-education enables forms of face-to-face education (classroom education) and distance education (virtual classroom) (Kovačević, Lazić-Lasić, 2016). There are different models for managing communication within an e-learning system; models for evaluating the knowledge that results from e-learning, and other, similar models that focus on a specific component or purpose of the e-learning process. However, a holistic model, ie a model that would include planning, organization and control of the entire e-learning process, to our knowledge, has not yet been defined.

### **2.1 E-learning in higher education – Croatian example**

Today, there are many different available platforms through which it is possible to conduct distance learning and use them for e-learning purposes, and users are the ones who will choose the one that best suits their needs. Most educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia use Moodle - CARnet's non-commercial teaching management system. The word Moodle is an abbreviation of the term Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment and is related to the educational theory of social constructivism. It is a free open source tool, which means that access to the program code, its modification and adaptation is allowed, but provided that it is offered to the community for use under the original license. Moodle is a tool for creating electronic educational content and conducting distance learning. It is a modular system which means that it consists of smaller units that users can add and change as needed. The

tool also enables lesson planning, user management, knowledge testing and assessment, activity monitoring and communication (National Distance Learning Portal "Nikola Tesla", 2017). Just some of the features of the Moodle system are: a large group of users and developers, the ability to create e-courses, upload teaching materials to the server, forum and chat, e-submission of tasks, knowledge testing and records of grades ... Moodle is based on the LMS system, which consists of a series of functionalities that include "delivery", monitoring, reporting and administration of learning content, student progress, as well as the interaction of students and mentors and students with each other. LMS can be applied in very simple systems such as the school environment, all the way to government and large companies. Merlin is an e-learning system that was established, developed and maintained at the Center for e-learning of the University Computing Center of the University of Zagreb as a common, accessible platform for e-learning projects in university teaching. Merlin is based on the open source software system Moodle, and the current version of the Moodle system on which the Merlin system is based is 3.7. (Brkić et al., 2010). Merlin provides the opportunity to conduct courses in a virtual environment to teachers, students and institutions that are part of higher education. This system was used even before current mass distance learning, as part of traditional, classroom teaching to provide students with access to materials, presentations and all additional content online. This system is connected to the Higher Education Information System (ISVU), whose administrators put courses at Merlin, along with data from students and teachers. Applications to the system take place via an electronic identity, provided to the user by the parent institution, from the AAI @ EduHr system. As part of the Merlin e-learning system, there is also a webinar system and e-portfolio.

Also, another current platform, actively used in Croatia for the implementation of further teaching and e-learning, is Microsoft Teams.

## **2.2 User experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design**

There are many definitions of user experience. In a broader sense, user experience is the creation and synchronization of elements that affect the user experience with a particular company, with the intention of influencing user perception and behavior. The user experience design defines all aspects of user interaction with the project, and only one phase of that interaction includes the website or its interface. The user experience encompasses many dimensions, such as the brand and project discovery process, ways of interacting with the user interface, user feelings as they try to achieve their goals on our website and their impressions after using the website (Hrnjak, 2018). Understanding the user shows how well the design team is familiar with the needs, tasks and environments of the people



for whom the product is designed, and how learning about the user has affected the product itself. An efficient design process shows whether the product is the result of a thoughtful and well-executed design process, what design problems arose during the process, and what the method of solving is. It also shows which methods were used, what the calculations were and other practical issues. Needs show whether a product or service meets the needs of users, whether it has a significant social, economic and environmental contribution. Easy learning and use, answers questions such as how easy the product is to learn to use and how well the product allows for different ways users will access and use it, taking into account different levels of experience and skills. Suitability shows whether product design solves the right problem at the right level, whether the product serves users in effective and practical ways and how it contributes to the solution with regard to the cultural, economic and technical aspects of the problem. Aesthetic experience shows whether the use of a product is aesthetically satisfactory, whether the product cohesively displays continuity through graphic, informational and design interactions, and whether the design behaves well within technological constraints. Variability shows whether designers have considered product variability in design, whether the product can be adapted to the needs and preferences of individuals and groups, and whether design allows product change and use for, perhaps, unforeseen purposes. Feasibility shows the ability of a product to focus not only on functionality, but the overall context in which it is used, whether the product helps users with installation, training or maintenance (Alben, 1996).

When designing a user interface (UI), it is important to decide which screens the system will display, what will be on each screen and what it will look like. It also decides what the user can click and what happens when they do. It is the responsibility of the interface designer to ensure that the system has the right usability - that it can do what is needed and that it is easy to use. Two key factors are highlighted during user interface design:

- Design tone: refers to the most important point of user engagement; visual appeal of the product.
- Design revision: The UI process always serves as a point of repetition, giving designers a look back at all (including UX) aspects of the work done.

Each well-designed user interface has certain features to allow users to use the platform smoothly. A very important item is the ease of use of the interface, ie the speed at which the user will learn to use the commands he needs. Closely related to the previous feature are the speed of use and recall of the user interface. The speed of using the user interface tells how fast users can execute certain tasks, and the time required for them should be minimal in

order to be able to execute commands as quickly as possible. The recall speed should be maximum because it tells us how fast users can remember the process of selecting a particular command. A well - designed user interface will create its own style and expression of the website, ie the ideal ratio of color, elements and typography.

### **3. HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH METHODS**

The accelerated development of new technologies is increasingly affecting various areas of life, including education. The availability of modern technology today allows us completely new methods of learning and mastering new concepts, assessment and education using different platforms. The global pandemic, which began in late 2019, led to the need to move from traditional, face-to-face classroom teaching, to a combined or hybrid learning model, and eventually to online teaching that completely changed the concept of higher education. It is believed that in the future, new teaching methods, which are closely related to technology, will be maintained in most educational institutions through the application of a hybrid model of teaching and assessment. The aim of this research is to examine students' satisfaction and attitudes about the quality of distance learning, hybrid teaching and learning through various online teaching platforms, by conducting an online anonymous survey among students. The primary goal was to examine the user experience of using Merlin, a system that is predominantly used for e-learning in the higher education system of the Republic of Croatia. In the experimental part of this paper, students were asked for their opinion on the design of the Merlin interface itself and its elements. The appearance of the user interface is similar throughout the system and consists of two columns. The left column contains blocks, and the central part shows the content of the e-course organized through topics or weeks. The navigation bar (breadcrumbs) shows the current position in the system and allows easier navigation through the system and easier return to hierarchically higher pages (Brkić et al., 2010). Blocks are modules used to organize e-courses or display the desired content, and are placed in the left column. On the My Home page, in the E-Course Overview block, there is a list of e-courses in which the user is enrolled. There are three menus in the block through which it is possible to sort e-courses.

Research hypotheses:

1. Students prefer the traditional "face to face" teaching in relation to the hybrid model.
2. Students prefer the traditional "face to face" teaching compared to the online model.

### 3.1 Research sample

According to the scientific and artistic fields covered by the study programs, the field of social sciences is the most represented (43.5%), followed by the field of technical sciences (26.3%), the field of biomedicine and health (11.5%), the field of humanities (6.4%), biotechnical sciences (4.8%), natural sciences (4.0%), arts (1.9%) and interdisciplinary sciences (1.6%). Our research sample consists of students from different faculties of the University of Zagreb, Osijek, Rijeka, Zadar, Dubrovnik and students of the Polytechnics of Vukovar, Koprivnica, Algebra and HKS. The research was conducted using a questionnaire, ie a survey made in the Google Doc program and forwarded in an online version to students of all academic years in the period from April to June 2021. Participation in this research was entirely voluntary, and the survey was anonymous, in which the students were explained the goal of the research, and general data and information on previous experience with conducting distance learning through various platforms were requested. In the last survey question, students were able to express their final thoughts on online studying and e-learning. 147 students participated in the research, the data were processed in Microsoft Office Excel, and the results are presented in graphs.

This study, conducted in a two-month interval, involved 147 students, 78% of whom were female and 22% male. In relation to the gender structure of students in the Republic of Croatia, in our sample the female population was significantly more represented. The largest number of surveyed students attends the University of Zagreb (46%), followed by the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (31%), the Croatian Catholic University (7%), the University of Rijeka (4%), and the other 12% are respondents from other Universities, Polytechnics and Universities.

The majority of participants in the research were undergraduate university students (40%), followed by students of integrated undergraduate and graduate studies (37%), graduate studies (18%), undergraduate professional studies (4%) and specialist graduate professional studies. (1%) Also, 28% of respondents are first-year students, 25% second-year students, 22% fifth-year students, 14% third-year students, 10% fourth-year students, and only 1% sixth-year students, which is acceptable because the smallest number of study programs in Croatia and lasts six years.

### 3.2 Results

53% of students answered that in the past year, teaching at their faculty was conducted according to a hybrid model, while 34% of students answered they used only a distance learning model. The rest, which makes up 12% of students, offered different answers, they combined distance and live teaching (online lectures - exams, colloquia and live exercises, winter semester online - summer

live, etc.) or they answered that the model of teaching depended on the course and the lecturer. Students listed the platforms they used as part of their distance learning. The largest number of students used the Moodle system (Merlin), 122 and 83% of them, respectively. Also, a significantly used platform according to the respondents is Microsoft Teams, which was used by about 80% of students to conduct distance learning. In addition to the above, students also used Zoom (71%), YouTube (25%), Office 365 (25%), Skype (9%), Google Meets (5%), Google Classroom (2%), Yitsi meet (2 %), Loomen (1%), Adobe Connect, LMS, Omega, Foi Moodle, Discord, Big Blue Button, Facebook Meetings and Webex Meets. 36% of students agreed with the statement "I believe that distance learning through various platforms is a useful way of learning", while 30% of students disagreed with this statement. "I don't know" answered 15% of surveyed students, "Completely agree" with the statement of 11% of respondents, and "completely disagree" with the statement of 8% of surveyed students. 44% of the surveyed students fully agreed with the statement "I believe that traditional face-to-face teaching is better than distance learning through different platforms", and 37% of the respondents agreed with it. 5% of students completely disagreed with this statement, 8% disagree, and 5% of surveyed students said "I don't know". 30% of the surveyed students fully agree with the statement that "traditional face-to-face teaching is better than a hybrid model of teaching", and also 30% of them gave the answer - I agree. I do not know the answer to this statement, said 17% of students, while 18% disagreed, and 5% completely disagree with the statement. 26% of students fully agreed, and 29% of students agreed with the statement that "distance learning takes more time than traditional learning." 27% of surveyed students disagree with this statement, 6% completely disagree, while 12% of students "do not know." We can conclude that a majority of 55% believe this statement is true and that e-learning took more time during the pandemic than traditional learning. 32% of students fully agreed, and 41% agree that "professors actively and regularly gave lectures through some of the distance learning platforms". 19% of students disagree with this statement, 2% of surveyed students completely disagree, and 6% of students answered - I don't know. Most respondents disagreed with the statement that "distance learning has improved communication with colleagues". 45% of students answered that they disagree, and 40% that they completely disagree with this statement. It is these percentages that make up the majority of 85% of respondents who believe that distance learning has actually worsened their communication with colleagues. Only 6% of respondents answered - I agree, while 8% of respondents answered "I do not know". About 1% of surveyed students fully agree with this statement. 42% of them completely disagree that distance learning has improved communication with professors, and 37% of students also disagreed with this statement. 12% of

students agreed with the statement, 2% completely agreed and believe that this way of teaching has improved communication with professors. 35% of surveyed students disagreed with the statement that "distance learning has deepened interest in a particular subject in college", 36% completely disagreed with this statement, which makes up the majority of 71% of students who think otherwise. 17% of students said "I don't know", while only a minority of 12% agreed with the statement. In the 16th survey question, students expressed their opinion regarding the quality and availability of online learning materials. 41% of students agreed with the statement that "the quality and availability of online learning materials is great", and 17% of them completely agreed. However, as many as 18% of students gave the answer "I do not know", while a total of 24% of students disagreed with this statement. ". A total of 66% agree with this statement, while 15% of students "do not know". Only 19% of the total number of surveyed students disagreed with this statement.

A large overall percentage of as many as 89% says that most students agree with the statement that distance learning platforms are easy to use. 6% of students said "I don't know", and only 5% of the total number of surveyed students disagree with this statement.

Starting with the 19th survey question, students expressed their opinion regarding the user interface design of the Moodle platform on which the Merlin system is based, which, as we could see, is the most used platform for online teaching and e-learning in this research. A total of 47% of students agree with the statement that Merlin is adequately designed for e-learning purposes. However, a large percentage of 30% of students answered "I don't know", while a total of 23% of students disagreed with this statement. In total, as many as 59% of students surveyed disagree with the statement that they "actively used various features of the Merlin system such as a chat or repository to connect with colleagues and more easily master exam material. 28% of students agree with this statement, while 13% of students gave the answer "I do not know".

A total of 56% of the surveyed students agreed with the statement that the "Merlin navigation menu is aesthetically and logically well designed", while 25% of them disagreed with this statement. 18% of students said, "I don't know". A large percentage of the 67% of students stated that they are "satisfied with the functions and design of the blocks for organizing e-courses on the Merlin system". A total of 15% of students are dissatisfied with the functions and design of the mentioned blocks, while 18% of the total number of surveyed students answer, "I don't know". A large percentage of 66% of students said they do not agree with the statement that "distance learning through the Moodle platform can completely replace live teaching", while 12% chose the answer "I do not know". A total of 18% of students agree with this statement and believe that distance learn-

ing via Moodle could completely replace live teaching. The penultimate survey question focused on the implementation of teaching in the near future and on students' thoughts on whether it should take place partly through different platforms, and partly live "face to face" in the traditional form of classroom teaching. The answers to this question are strongly divided and 26% of students agree, and 19% of students completely agree with the statement. 17% of surveyed students "do not know", while 20% of students completely disagree, and 18% disagree with this statement.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Most respondents stated that distance learning platforms are easy to use and that they have adapted well to using Merlin, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and other platforms. Also, what extends through many of the answers is the fact that students, especially freshmen, found teaching and distance learning difficult due to a lack of communication, collaboration, and socializing with colleagues. Students believe that sitting at a computer every day and doing all the accompanying tasks and responsibilities for college online adversely affects their mental health and will cause depression and anxiety in the long run.

The last survey question in this research refers to the overall opinion of students on the implementation of distance learning through different platforms. It was given as an open-ended question, where students could arbitrarily describe their experience with online teaching in a few sentences. A total of 71 students answered this question, and the answers themselves are quite different. The total answers to the last question were divided into three categories:

**POSITIVE ANSWERS** - out of the total number of answers received, 25.3% of respondents believe that distance learning through certain platforms is well implemented and organized. One of the most frequently mentioned benefits is the time savings that students lose on leaving or coming from college. Also, students are satisfied that they can often follow the lectures and materials later (at any time).

**NEGATIVE ANSWERS** - out of the total number of answers received, 30.9% of respondents believe that distance learning through certain platforms is unsatisfactory and that it is poorly implemented and useless. Most believe that the problem is that it is difficult to follow exercises and seminars from demanding subjects at a distance, in addition to the problem is the evaluation of acquired knowledge (colloquia and exams) because cheating is often present.

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ANSWERS** - out of the total number of answers received, as many as 43.6% of respondents believe that distance learning through various platforms has certain positive and negative aspects. What has often been mentioned through different answers is the opinion of students that the online learn-

ing system is well designed but poorly implemented. Also, many answers were related to questionable computer knowledge and literacy of professors because due to lack of previous training in this area, many failed to form quality courses online and adequately conduct distance learning.

In addition, here are some of the answers from students:

"With platforms almost completely satisfied. Sometimes dissatisfaction arises due to the irresponsibility of some professors."

"In my experience, the professors did not try to present the materials in an interesting way that will intrigue students for further learning/research. Ex cathedra teaching is not the same as distance learning and cannot be held as such, and the professors applied the same principles and held online classes as they would in live. As for the platforms themselves, Merlin is well-designed and appropriate for posting materials and eventual communication with colleagues/professors, but for anything more than that - no. Microsoft Teams is a horror."

"Personally, the system is not motivating enough for me because most professors do not actively involve students in teaching, professors need to be better at using platforms ...."

"For me personally, distance learning is more suitable because I manage to save more time that I would otherwise spend on transportation and the trip to college. I think that lectures can be conducted in approximately the same quality online, although I think that for some courses it is necessary to conduct live classes."

"All platforms are well designed and have easy-to-use options."

"Merlin is awful, and Google classroom is a great app we've used before."

"Incomparable with normal teaching. Professors read presentations, it is tedious, boring, there is no normal professor-student communication. There is no point in holding four-hour seminars with half of the group normally, and a lecture where there can also be two groups, at once is held online. The social distance is certainly not maintained and if we can go to exercises/seminars/exams in groups of 35 then it could be the same for lectures that have become boring and a waste of time because it is more useful to sit and study alone."

The results of this research showed that:

1. Students find that distance learning platforms are easy to use.
2. Students for the most part believe that in the future classes could be conducted partly live and partly online.
3. A large percentage of 66% of students agree with the statement that teaching through the Moodle platform can by no means completely replace traditional live teaching at the university.

4. Students believe that the user interface of the Moodle platform on which the Merlin system is based is satisfactorily designed and useful for the use and implementation of e-learning.

5. A large percentage of 43% of students believe that distance learning during the pandemic was well designed but poorly conducted due to various parameters. (computer (ill)literacy of professors, technical problems related to modern technology, insufficient mutual engagement of professors and students, etc.)

## 5. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the new situation of coexistence with the pandemic brought a whole new chapter in higher education, which required a great adaptation of both professors and students, to a new and different system of teaching, hybrid and online. It is this way of teaching that has resulted in different opinions about its quality and success. Although many platforms that enable distance learning, study and teaching are logically designed and of adequate design for most users, the respondents of this research believe that they cannot completely replace traditional live teaching. It is concluded that distance learning through different platforms corresponded to the necessity of the situation caused by the pandemic, but that in the future priority will always be given to live classroom teaching, so that the quality of higher education is at a higher level and the overall study experience is complete.

## LITERATURE

1. Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske. 2020. Studenti upisani na stručni i sveučilišni studij u zimskom semestru ak. g. 2019./2020., Available at: [https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2020/08-01-07\\_01\\_2020.htm](https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2020/08-01-07_01_2020.htm) (18 January 2022)
2. Sveučilište u Zagrebu. 2022. Akreditiranje studijskih programa i online nastava. Available at: <http://www.unizg.hr/o-sveucilistu/sveuciliste-jucer-danas-sutra/osiguravanje-kvalitete/sveucilisni-dan-kvalitete/prilozi4sveucilisnomdanukvalitete/akreditiranje-studijskih-programa-i-online-nastava/> (22 January 2022)
3. Nacionalno vijeće za znanost, visoko obrazovanje i tehnološki razvoj. 2016. Kriteriji i postupci za vrednovanje online studija. Available at: <https://www.azvo.hr/hr/vrednovanja/postupci-vrednovanja-u-visokom-obrazovanju/inicijalna-akreditacija-studijskih-programa> (11 January 2022)
4. Rodek, Stjepan. 2010. Novi mediji i nova kultura učenja, Napredak; Časopis za interdisciplinarna istraživanja u odgoju i obrazovanju, Vol.152, No. 1.



5. Ćukušić, Maja, Jadrić, Mario. 2012. E-učenje: koncept i primjena, Školska knjiga, Zagreb
6. Host, Alen, Antolić Jardas, Jelena, Jelenc, Lara, Skender Pavlić, Helga, Rački, Željko, Sokolić, Danijela. 2018. Uvođenje novih tehnologija u nastavni proces: kako uvesti online studijske programe u nastavni kurikulum u visokom obrazovanju, Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci
7. Kovačević, Snježana, Lasić-Lazić, Jadranka. 2016. Informacijska tehnologija u obrazovanju, Znanstvena monografija, Društvena istraživanja 25(2): 269-284.
8. Dukić Darko, Mađarić S.(2012), Online učenje u visokom hrvatskom obrazovanju, Tehnički glasnik 6(1): 69-72.
9. Nacionalni portal za učenje na daljinu "Nikola Tesla", (2017), Što je Moodle?, Available at: Moodle dizajner: Što je Moodle? (carnet.hr) (14 June 2021)
10. Brkić, Tamara, Golen, Kristina, Kučina Softić, Sandra, Martinović, Zvonko, Radobolja Tona, Zemljak Pećina, Ana. 2019. Sustav za e-učenje Merlin, priručnik za studente, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Sveučilišni računalni centar, Centar za e-učenje Srca
11. Hrnjak, Marko. 2018. Produkcija web sjedišta, Zagreb: Algebra d.o.o.
12. Alben, Lauralee, 1996. Defining the criteria for effective interaction design. Interactions. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/10605014/Quality\\_of\\_experience\\_defining\\_the\\_criteria\\_for\\_effective\\_interaction\\_design](https://www.academia.edu/10605014/Quality_of_experience_defining_the_criteria_for_effective_interaction_design) (5 May 2021)

# TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Marko Mikša, Alma Mater Europaea – ECM, Slovenia

## ABSTRACT

With the new situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 year, many schools and universities around the world were forced to use some kind of online learning and some of them have been closed for the semester to avoid physical contact. The research includes issues in the schools and universities around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic that are caused by a fast switch to online. Online learning and teaching can be challenging because they ask for a greater engagement of teachers and students. The inclusion of many ICT technologies can demotivate students and decrease learning output because they feel overloaded. Besides this, new problems occur such as lack of connection, students cheating in exams, increased workload and permanent gaps in knowledge among students. Normal teaching and learning is now a relative term because paradigms about teaching and learning have changed in a way we did not expect.

**Keywords:** online learning, COVID-19, ICT, issues

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every education delivered with the help of information and communication technology (ICT) can be called e-learning (Hoić-Božić 2020). E-learning can be blended learning or purely online learning. Blended learning includes distance learning with some of the online learning technology and traditional learning in the classroom, but online learning is without a traditional classroom (Hoić-Božić 2020). Online learning is challenging and ask for a greater engagement of teacher because of the inclusion of many ICT technologies, but too many included technologies can demotivate students and decrease learning output because they feel overloaded (Cronje 2021).

### 1.1 Overview of teaching and learning during COVID-19 pandemic

With the new situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools and universities around the world were forced to use some kind of online learning and some of them have been closed for the semester to avoid physical contact (Peters et al. 2020, 2; Freeman et al. 2021, 2). This situation is still valid during the year 2022. Chinese universities were the first to move all of their schools online. After them, in the United Kingdom and in the United States most universities have moved to online learning, including most of their highest-ranked universities (Peters et al. 2020, 2). All European countries follow this trend and moved to online learning (Bušljeta Kardum 2021). This fast switch to online learning causes good and bad issues, which are the subject of this paper.

## 2. METHODS

The research methodology is a review of various sources of literature around the World for teaching and learning during the new situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, within the last two years. This research identifies the problems and benefits that appear with turning to online teaching and learning.

## 3. RESULTS

In the last two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning continued in the new way with the support of ICT, but new challenges arose, as well as many issues and benefits (Watkins 2021, 16).

### 3.1 Positive features of the e-learning

Throughout the pandemic, e-learning had some positive features because many teachers improved the quality of teaching and upgraded their teaching skills by participating in professional development online webinars (Sahin and Shelley 2020). Students behave differently in online classes than in traditional learning in the classroom. They offer different and more successful feedback

when online because they usually have more time to think (Sahin and Shelley 2020). Group discussions and project work are more effective because of the many useful online tools (Sahin and Shelley 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had unexpectedly developed the use of e-learning tools and it seems to be possible so that the positive change could continue even in a post-COVID time (Freeman et al. 2021).

### **3.2 Negative features of the e-learning**

With this fast switch to online learning a big problem occurs with a lack of students' skills and knowledge and because of that schools will need to take a large benchmark testing to identify how such e-learning environments have affected student learning and how to repair these gaps (Sahin and Shelley 2020, 2-3). Other common problems are connected with cheating students, lack of connection, increased workload, stressful uncertainty about program continuity and the problem with motivation (Watkins 2021, 16; Gurr 2020, 4). Most of these problems are mutual for students and teachers. E-learning workload caused some teachers to feel stressed because they are more present in an online classroom than they were before in a traditional classroom (Sahin and Shelley 2020). Common problems can also be accessibility to a home computer, disruptions in the home environment and lack of cooperation in independent tasks by students (Dotan et al 2021). The COVID-19 caused more stress than traditional learning on students of all ages, especially to the students from a low socioeconomic background (Pompilus & Pompilus 2021). Such a condition of stress decreases student motivation and academic performance such as intellectual level, personality, skills, interests, study habits, self-esteem and the teacher-student relationship (Pompilus & Pompilus 2021). Regardless of the difficulties and inconveniences of online learning, the motivators and inhibitors that encourage it are important because they are tightly connected with the use of e-learning.

### **3.3 Motivators and inhibitors**

Motivation for use of e-learning tools is very important because of the exploitation of the potential they offer. On the other side, inhibitors stop the desire to use e-learning.

By Watkins (2021, 16) there are the following motivators and inhibitors that affect the acceptance of e-learning:

- Intrinsic motivators
- Extrinsic motivators
- Intrinsic inhibitors
- Extrinsic inhibitors

The most commonly cited extrinsic inhibitors among teachers and students that cannot be controlled are problems with technology, concerns about workload and more administrative tasks (Watkins 2021, 25). Teachers commonly have even the following extrinsic inhibitors: fear of losing a job and frequent overtime work, even on the weekends (Watkins 2021, 25).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

With the support of ICT, teaching and learning continued in the new way, but new challenges have arisen. One of them is a struggle with self-motivation, which is very important because it empowers the use of e-learning tools and solving daily tasks. Many students don't have a strong enough intrinsic motivation, and they need a big extrinsic motivation to complete school assignments (Watkins 2021). Many papers say that the use of e-learning is increasing, but the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend a lot. Although nobody was fully ready for that kind of teaching and learning, in a short time students and teachers get along with how to use ICT tools properly. Everyone fights with online learning in their own way because they were forced to. Of course, everything caused a lot of stress, lack of motivation and the biggest problem is the permanent gaps in knowledge among students. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, normal learning and teaching is today a relative term because paradigms have changed the way we did not expect (Bozkurt and Ramesh 2020, 1).

#### 5. CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the many pre-existing concerns and lack of acceptance about online learning have increased. With this fast switch, nobody knows what to expect and this causes a lot of stress within students and teachers. The education paradigm has changed and now we have new normal, with many e-learning tools included. Teachers and students must invest a lot of effort to fill the gaps in their knowledge because e-learning can offer many positive features. Powerful teaching and learning with the support of ICT can raise the level of collaboration, communication and critical and creative thinking. Lack of intrinsic motivation can cause stress and bad results, but a useful and proper extrinsic motivator can fix this.

#### LITERATURE

1. Bozkurt, Aras, & Ramesh C. Sharma. 2020. *Education in normal, new normal, and next normal: Observations from the past, insights from the present and projections for the future*. Asian Journal of Distance Education, 15(2), i-x. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4362664>

2. Bušljeta Kardum, Rona i Dunja Jurić Vukelić. 2021. *The Challenges and Issues on the University of Zagreb during COVID-19 Crisis*. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 19 (3), 357-365. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.7906/indecs.19.3.1>
3. Cronje, Johannes. 2021. *A decision framework for Blended Learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic*. *Academia Letters*, Article 275. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL275>
4. Dotan, Shahaar, Tami Katzir, Orly Lipka, & Shelley Shaul. 2021. *Elementary School Literacy Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges During COVID-19*. *Academia Letters*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL898>
5. Freeman, Brigid, Ian Teo, Leihy, Peodair & Dong Kim. 2021. *Higher education research as preparation for emergencies*. *Academia Letters*, 2. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL937>
6. Gurr, David. 2020. *Educational leadership and the pandemic*. *Academia Letters*, 29. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL29>
7. Hoić-Božić, N. 2020. *Mješovito učenje*. SRCE: Tjedan Centra za e-učenje 2020. Retrieved from: [https://www.srce.unizg.hr/files/srce/docs/CEU/Dogadanja-u-ceu/Tjedan-CEU\\_2020/panel\\_kvalitetnija\\_nastava/srce\\_ceu\\_webinar\\_natasa\\_hoic-bozic.pdf](https://www.srce.unizg.hr/files/srce/docs/CEU/Dogadanja-u-ceu/Tjedan-CEU_2020/panel_kvalitetnija_nastava/srce_ceu_webinar_natasa_hoic-bozic.pdf)
8. Peters, Michael. A., Fazal Rizvi, Gary McCulloch, Paul Gibbs, Radhika Gorur, Moon Hong, et. al. & Lauren Misiaszek. 2020. *Reimagining the new pedagogical possibilities for universities post-Covid-19: An EPAT Collective Project*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-44. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1777655>
9. Pompilus, Ernst-Stephen & Analie Pompilus. 2021. *The Impact of Stress on Academic Performance*. *Academia Letters*, Article 3326. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL3326>
10. Sahin, Ismail and Mack Shelley (Eds.). 2020. *Educational Practices during the COVID-19 Viral Outbreak: International Perspectives*. ISTES Organization. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED608253>
11. Watkins, Pete. 2021. *How Did Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Crisis Affect Faculty's Attitudes and Beliefs about Online Teaching?* Temple University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2540459948/35795FBCF0B14BCDPQ/1?accountid=163837>



## REVIEWS

### COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION

In the search for new but also innovative forms of communication that would benefit social communities, the monograph, among other things, analyzes economic diplomacy in the context of just such innovative communication. It is trying to show the necessity of moving from the usual bureaucratized 'state' forms of communication to innovative communication that comes from the competitive economy and even from non-state private sector. "Edward Luttwak: Trade methods replaced military methods, with capital instead of armed forces, civilian innovation instead of military-technical progress, and trade breakthroughs instead of accumulating military bases and garrisons (1998)." The study also analyzes innovative approaches in the field of digital media. The digital age is an age of convergence, which allows for the innovative use of content in different forms that bring different accents to the used materials. Two years of pandemics have significantly affected the development of digital forms of communication and thus the development of convergence of media forms. "The media industry was forced to overcome the old question of its primary communication channel" is media organization a newspaper, TV station, radio ", etc. and move on to "Are we in the content business? What are the complementary channels for delivering that content? (Lawson-Borders 2005, 5)".

The study sheds some light on the influencer phenomenon. This is the phenomenon of the one-man band of the digital age: "How new and attractive this topic is, is shown by data from January 2022. In January 2022, a new platform, Dovetal, which inherently monitors the US market, serves as a platform for paying for influencers. It's an auxiliary tool for corporations seeking the services of influential people for their marketing."

The attitude towards the environment in the digital age has taken on a new dimension. The availability of data should significantly help the sustainable development of each city, region and even wider communities. Issues of architecture, devastation, spatial planning and even the policy of building a city or cities, become transparent common information and concern in the same: "A digital planning program, easily accessible to citizens, would give the community the opportunity to become a corrector and architect of the space around them."

In the context of the changes that come with the digitalization of our time, there are also analyzes of the necessity of changes in tourism. The monograph rightly emphasizes the need to change the tourist communication paradigm. It has already changed in part due to the pandemic, but its roots are the digitization of every human act or intention. To that extent, tourism is doomed to failure with-



out changing the way it communicates. However, any approach that precedes the needs of tourism without thinking and communicating the relationship between people and space is doomed to failure, which all coincides with the prevailing processes of neoliberal ideology. "

Communication in the digital age can be successful, innovative, but also significantly alienating. Among other things, in politics and health. It is also the subject of analysis. The importance of deliberative communication is emphasized: "It is necessary to emphasize the necessity of introducing the principles of deliberative communication in the process of local elections. This form of communication is the best way to provide a so-called "ideal" communication environment".

This is especially important in a medical environment where the pressures on the psyche and behavior of both medical staff and patients during a pandemic are enormous:

"Deliberative communication means communication in which opposing points of view are confronted, and evidence for these opposing points of view is given time and space to articulate, as well as tolerance and respect for others, and participants learn to listen to the opposing party's evidence."

Of course, there is also the need to question the quality and success of distance learning, so-called online learning, which has proved to be a practical substitute in the days of pandemic isolation, and which sheds new light on the process of digitizing our daily lives: "It is concluded that distance learning through different platforms corresponded to the urgency of the pandemic situation, but that in the future priority will always be given to live teaching in the classroom, so that the quality of higher education is at a higher level and the overall study experience is complete."

These are all segments of the questioning deliberative democracy. At the heart of the analysis is Habermas' idea of civil society engagement, which, to put it simply, influences but does not replace the policies and power of society. This monograph is covering very different areas. The authors seriously and scientifically question the fundamental changes conditioned by both digitalization itself and the strengthening of digitalization in various spheres of society due to the pandemic. This is an approach necessary for self-analysis of society in various segments, and I recommend the monograph for publication.

Prof. Dr. Sc. Sead Alić

## SCIENTIFIC MONOGRAPHY REVIEW

The book edited by doc.dr.sc. Bozidar Veljkovic represents a scientific contribution of thirteen authors in the field of theoretical and empirical research of communication, as a dynamic scientific field that is experiencing constant changes under the influence of the process of digitization and development of new communication and information technologies.

In terms of content, the book is structured in ten separate chapters: 1. Economic diplomacy as a form of innovative communication, 2. Digitalisation of media - dispersion of views and knowledge, 3. Blog as a means of innovative communication for persons with disabilities in the city of Zagreb, 4. The undefined nature of the influencers' profession in Croatia, 5. Innovative digitalisation of integrated architecture, 6. Post tourist communication paradigm, 7. Communication in the local community and the subjectivity of voters, 8. Primary healthcare and deliberative communication at covid times in the age of digitalization, 9. Research of students' experience with distance learning and communication obstacles during the Covid-19 pandemic and 10. Teaching and learning in the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first five chapters of the book are dedicated to researching innovative forms of communication in various areas of social life and activities - diplomacy, maintaining two-way communication through new forms of communication and technologies that promote social inclusion, new forms of entrepreneurship that have emerged due to new information and communication technologies, systematization of knowledge and data and detailed and comprehensive analysis of literature and scientific sources dealing with the digitization of the media. The next two chapters deal with communication in two social spheres: one chapter deals with the phenomenon of tourism and the changes brought by digitalization, further intensified by the current pandemic, and the second chapter deals with communication in local communities and its impact on voters in the run-up to elections. The last three chapters deal with the impact of the pandemic on communication in the public sector - health and education.

Although the chapters are seemingly separate thematic units, what connects them all is the empirical research of the phenomenon of communication exposed to the dynamic changes of social and technological reality.

## CONCLUSION AND PROPOSAL

The presented publication shows that the (co)authors have successfully realized quantitative methodological research tasks (context and purpose of research, hypothetical research and theoretical assumptions, definition of research terms and selection of relevant source and study material), as well as qualitative re-

search project tasks in terms of correctly defined research problems, and showed the purposefulness of the studies in the interpretation of research results in the field of communication .

We can conclude that the scientific and professional public with this book was given the opportunity to reflect and impose new questions, as well as to present new research findings that will lead to the development of communication science and its contribution. The presented book scientifically contributes to solving many social issues and challenges imposed on us by intensive changes in communication technology.

From all the above, I am free to recommend this valuable book to a wider circle of readers, especially communication scientists, educators, entrepreneurs, politicians, media professionals, as well as students at all levels of secondary, higher, and postgraduate education.

Dr. Dragana Stockel,  
Assistant Professor Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade

## **REVIEW OF THE MONOGRAPH COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION**

The thematic framework of the scientific monograph covers two current areas of social life, namely digital transformation, and deliberative democracy.

We live the process of digital transformation of all spheres of society, even in the sphere of scientific fields, areas, and disciplines. Digital transformation is not just an innovation but a new strategic reflection on the environment in which we operate. According to that, this monograph examines many areas of digital innovation and the changes it has caused: innovative communications in the field of economic diplomacy; transformation of digital media; digital technologies for help people with disabilities; structuring the competencies of the "influencer" profession that has gained its scope with digital platforms; the problem of establishing sustainable development especially in cultural heritage of Dubrovnik; problems of critical consideration of digital communication processes; ways and methods of communication in the field of tourism; processes of participatory and deliberative democracy in the local community because, as the authors rightly point out, power is established, managed and legitimized communicatively; communication technologies on the example of health care in the crisis period; online teaching and students' attitudes about the quality of distance learning.

All chapters belong to the field of information and communication sciences, most of them investigate the relationship between information and communication technologies and the effects of digital communication.

All chapters are written in accordance with the requirements of scientific research and in methodological terms abound in various research techniques and research methods.

I fully support and give a positive opinion on the publication of the texts in the monograph.

I am pleased that the publisher of this valuable publication is Alma Mater Europaea in Maribor and the Department of Strategic Communication Management, especially because the recently deceased Head of the Department, Prof. Emeritus Mario Plenković, was the organizer of over 20 highly visited scientific conferences with topic of relationship between society and technology. So, this monograph thematically fits into his efforts to scientifically question the relationship between society and technology, and digital transformation.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Sc. Slobodan Hadžić



ALMA MATER  
EUROPAEA  
E C M

ALMA MATER PRESS

**COMMUNICATION IN THE LIGHT OF  
INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION**

Editor:  
Božidar Veljković

Alma Mater Europaea - Evropski center, Maribor  
Slovenska 17, 2000 Maribor  
[www.almamater.si](http://www.almamater.si)

Maribor, 2023



# ALMA MATER EUROPAEA

ECM

ALMA MATER PRESS

This monograph is covering very different areas. The authors seriously and scientifically question the fundamental changes conditioned by both digitalization itself and the strengthening of digitalization in various spheres of society due to the pandemic. This is an approach necessary for self-analysis of society in various segments.

*Prof. Dr. Sc. Sead Alić*

Scientific and professional public with this book was given the opportunity to reflect and impose new questions, as well as to present new research findings that will lead to the development of communication science and its contribution. The presented book scientifically contributes to solving many social issues and challenges imposed on us by intensive changes in communication technology.

*Doc. Dr. Sc. Dragana Stockel*

I am pleased that the publisher of this valuable publication is Alma Mater Europaea in Maribor and the Department of Strategic Communication Management, especially because the recently deceased Head of the Department, Prof. Emeritus Mario Plenković, was the organizer of over 20 highly visited scientific conferences with topic of relationship between society and technology. So, this monograph thematically fits into his efforts to scientifically question the relationship between society, technology, and digital transformation.

*Doc. Dr. Sc. Slobodan Hadžić*

