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Editorial

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Ubiquitous digital technologies, artificial intelligence and new media are no longer simply tools for communication; they have become an infrastructure that helps shape the way we understand the world, build relationships and participate in community life. Their presence is now so widely taken for granted that it is almost imperceptible. As a result, we tend to lose our critical distance from them, since what is invisible is the hardest to scrutinise. The study of these technologies themselves—and, above all, their impact on people and social relations—therefore requires an interdisciplinary approach combining the perspectives of communication and media studies with sociology, cultural studies, education and political science. None of these disciplines, taken in isolation, encompasses the full scope of a phenomenon that is simultaneously transforming the flow of information, cultural forms, educational practices and the rules of public life.

The anthropological and ethical dimensions must not be overlooked in this research. Questions concerning human dignity, privacy, mental wellbeing and inequalities in access to technology appear to be central. Equally important is the extent to which the individual retains autonomy in the face of systems that are increasingly making decisions on their behalf. Thorough reflection on these phenomena should avoid both technological enthusiasm and alarmist pessimism, drawing on empirical data and well-established theory. Both extreme positions oversimplify reality. The former obscures the costs and risks, whilst the latter overlooks the real benefits and opportunities. Such a balanced approach enables us to understand how digital technologies are transforming contemporary society and to identify ways of using them responsibly.

In this issue, we present four articles that contribute to this scholarly reflection.

In the article *Technology, culture, and values: The ethical dimension of Neil Postman's concept of technopoly in the age of AI*, Krzysztof Marcyński synthesises the ethical dimensions of Neil Postman's critique of technopoly in the context of media ecology, relating his analysis to contemporary challenges associated with artificial intelligence.

The author demonstrates that in the culture of technopoly, the relationship between human and machine is inverted. Efficiency, bureaucracy and scientific procedures ("scientism") become the highest values, reducing the human being to a subject subordinate to technology. Marcyński emphasises the lack of ideological neutrality in digital tools and examines the problem

of information noise, in which an excess of data devoid of a moral framework leads to a loss of the ability to make value judgements. As a humanistic response, the author promotes the attitude of a "loving resistance fighter," who maintains psychological and cognitive distance from technological determinism whilst defending non-quantifiable human values.

Yang Zhoulanxin's article *Three-dimensional paths for content innovation in micro-short drama: IP linkage, niche cultivation, and interactive narrative* presents a conceptual study of content innovation in Chinese micro-dramas (very short video series created for smartphone screens), aimed at overcoming the widespread problems of homogenisation, formulaic storytelling and low artistic quality in these productions.

The author proposes a three-dimensional model of innovation. Its first pillar is two-way IP linkage, which involves treating short series as prototypes on which characters and plotlines are tested before being developed into full-length productions, as well as using them as a means of adapting and revitalising traditional cultural texts. The second pillar is precise niche cultivation, which involves moving away from simple demographic divisions, such as age or gender, in favour of content targeted at specific professional groups, subcultures and regional communities, for example by utilising local dialects and settings. The third pillar is interactive narrative, which engages viewers' agency through narrative choices and the analysis of paratextual elements, such as bullet comments or memes, thereby enabling audiences to help shape the plot without compromising its internal coherence.

Vladimir S. Oskolkov's paper *The use of artificial intelligence when working with first-semester students* analyses the practical opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of artificial intelligence tools (such as Gemini and ChatGPT) in the education of first-year students in Kazakhstan, using the example of political science classes at Caspian University in Almaty.

The author highlights the stringent state regulations and top-down programmes imposed by the Ministry, as well as the low analytical skills and functional literacy of secondary school leavers (as confirmed by PISA studies). The article presents the author's own methodology based on four-stage tasks (including the compilation of bibliographies and structural tables), in which AI is used to support the initial verification of the formal requirements of students' work. Oskolkov emphasises that artificial intelligence is intended to serve as an assistant rather than a substitute for the teacher, whilst the final assessment, plagiarism checks and the detection of so-called generative

'hallucinations' always remain the responsibility of the teacher supervising the public defence of theses.

Jan Szepielak's thesis *Analysis of Donald Trump's political communication on social media regarding the Iran conflict: A comparative analysis with George W. Bush's narrative during the Iraq war* analyses Donald Trump's communication strategy on the Truth Social platform during the first month of the war in Iran in 2026 and compares it with George W. Bush's war narrative from the 2003 Iraq War.

The study shows that both presidents portrayed the enemy as morally evil ("a terrorist regime"), emphasised the need to deprive it of weapons of mass destruction, and highlighted the global dimension of the conflict. Szepielak, however, points to profound differences: Trump completely rejects Bush's rhetoric of a civilising mission, the promotion of democracy and the forging of alliances (criticising, amongst other things, NATO). Instead of pledging post-war reconstruction or the protection of civilians, Trump exploits the direct and emotive nature of social media to loudly glorify absolute military dominance and the total destruction of the enemy.

All four texts are linked by an analysis of the impact of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and new media on communication, culture, education and socio-political life. These technologies are presented as a new environment for human activity, one that is transforming not only ethical reflection and teaching practice, but also the production of cultural content and political communication. Another common thread is the transformation of forms of narration and reception: the compression and interactivity of communication, the emotionalisation of public rhetoric, and information overload, which makes it difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood and fosters the homogenisation of content. Together, the studies emphasise the need to preserve human agency in the face of algorithms and thus the primacy of human judgement in decision-making and evaluation, the impossibility of reducing moral values to technical indicators, and the need for caution regarding the subordination of communication to the logic of click-through rates and immediate stimuli.