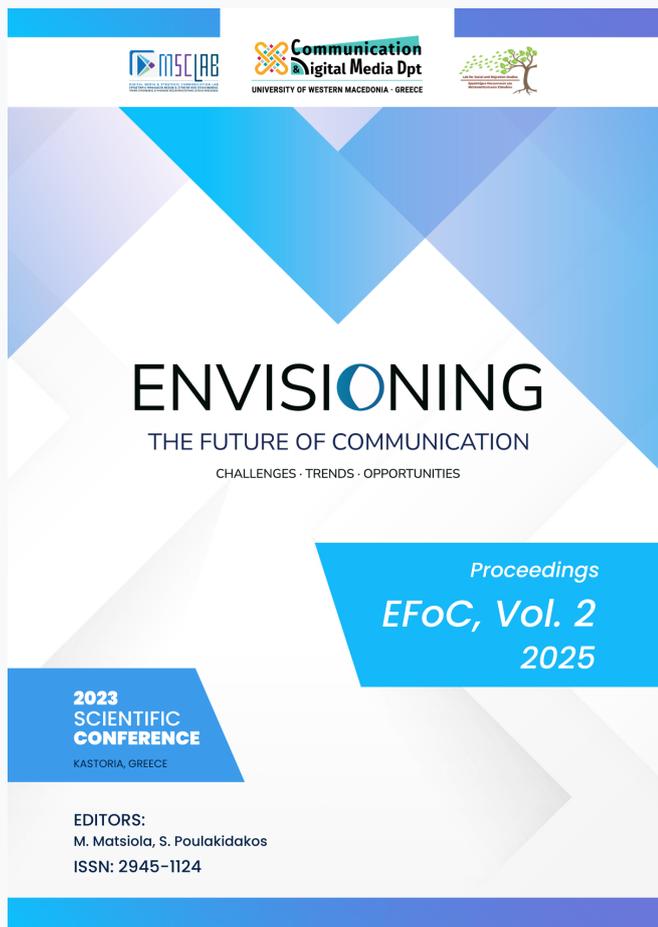


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Foreword to the fourth thematic

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Foreword to the fourth thematic: Public Engagement, Misinformation, and current trends in contemporary journalism

Maria Matsiola *

The fourth thematic under the title of “Public Engagement, Misinformation, and current trends in contemporary journalism” delves into a multifaceted examination of how public interaction with news content is evolving amidst challenges like misinformation and transformative technological trends. Each paper explores a distinct yet interconnected aspect of the theme, providing a holistic view of the interplay between journalism, technology, and societal engagement. The papers offer a comprehensive exploration of contemporary challenges and innovations in journalism, emphasizing the pivotal role of public engagement in shaping the future of news and information.

The thematic begins with the study titled “Misinformation, disinformation, fake news: How do they spread and why do people fall for fake news?” that focuses on fake news about climate change, laying emphasis on the factors that led to the forging, through the press, of the false assertion that climate change does not exist or, if it does, it is due to natural processes and not to humans. Two cases of inaccurate statements detected by Check4Facts news/statements verification platform, which combines investigative journalism and social research, are highlighted. The work of a fact-checker when examining climate news/statements and conclude by proposing appropriate solutions to address climate change related fake news is also described.

The second paper, titled “The Online Communities & the sense of belonging in Digital Journalism” presents online communities as an interactive form of audience participation in the new transformative digital landscape of journalism. The study aims to shed light in this area through a case study that was conducted via a semi-structured interview with the creator of the highly acclaimed column "A, Mpa" on LiFO and founder of the feminist-oriented platform "Womanlandia," which actively encourages reader participation in commenting and selecting article themes. The analysis revealed that user-generated comments play a vital and organic role in shaping articles.

In the third paper, under the title “The public’s active participation in news: The role of the voluntary radio of Thessaloniki” the role of the active participation of citizens in the production of radio content and in the formation of listening options through the case study of the voluntary radio of the municipality of Thessaloniki is investigated. Through semi-structured interviews

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conducted among four individuals and head of institutions that used to host radio shows in the voluntary radio of the municipality of Thessaloniki, the authors explore the concept of public participation in the production of news, concluding that this form of news production process promotes pluralism and citizens' access to a wide range of information.

The fourth paper shifts to an emerging genre of journalism: predictive journalism. The study is titled “Predictive journalism: The case of Greek sports and betting websites” and it delves into predictive journalism as an emerging genre in data journalism that incorporates predictive information such as estimates, forecasts, etc. The study examines the application of predictive journalism in Greek sports and betting websites through an analysis of the volume and the content of articles. The study reveals how predictive journalism leverages forecasts and analyses to engage audiences, particularly in sports, where speculation about match outcomes and strategies has become an integral part of storytelling.

Finally, the thematic concludes with an exploration of public service journalism in the era of platformisation. In the fifth and last paper, under the title “Public Service/Interest Journalism in Transition: Greek media professionals’ perceptions of broadcasters’ mission in the platform era”, the author investigates the operational challenges faced by contemporary broadcasting organizations attempting to serve the public service/interest journalism mission. Considering several transformations, instigated by the platformisation of communication, the study raises the question concerning to what extent is there a policy defense of legacy broadcasting media in Greece against a background of growing competition, thriving in an environment dominated by technology-led companies and Over the Top (OTT) subscription-based models of television content’s distribution.