

MEDIA AND THE ILLIBERAL TURN CONFERENCE

20
22



**APRIL 28-29 COUNCIL CHAMBER, HAZLERIGG BLDG.
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY**

MEDIA AND THE ILLIBERAL TURN: CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATION IN LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Recent years have seen worrying political developments across both old and new democracies, ranging from the rise of populist leaders and dwindling support for democratic rule to deepening ideological cleavages and growing polarization of public opinion. Many of these trends have been linked to parallel changes in the information environment, and specifically to the growth of social media and digital platforms. These changes have been blamed for the growing societal polarization around key issues of public concern, ranging from immigration policies, abortion and LGBTQ+ rights to the climate change and public health measures. However, traditional media have often been central to these processes as well, whether through amplifying populist and illiberal narratives, or through serving as propaganda channels for governments and other actors.

This conference will provide an opportunity to widen the discussion of media and illiberalism beyond the geographical scope of “The Illiberal Turn” project. Although Central and Eastern Europe has been at the forefront of the illiberal turn, similar trends have been documented in an increasing number of countries across the world, including Brazil, India, the Philippines, as well as Western democracies such as the US or the UK. A key aim of the conference is to map the role of the media in diverse trajectories of illiberalism around the world.

In addition, we are also interested in understanding the interactions between illiberalism, the media, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In several countries, governments abused the crisis to push through illiberal policies, impose further restrictions on free speech, and tighten their grip over the media. At the same time, concerns about the role of the media in spreading misinformation and fuelling vaccine hesitancy added a sense of urgency to debates about digital platform regulation. What do these tendencies mean for the mid- and long-term impact of the pandemic on the global advance of illiberalism?



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Communication & Culture

PROGRAMME

The Media and Illiberal Turn Conference Programme

APRIL 28, DAY 1: Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University

9.30 - 10.00	Arrivals and Coffee	
10:00-10:10	<p>Welcome by the organizers and by the Director of the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture, Loughborough University</p> <p><i>Václav Štětka, Sabina Mihelj, The Illiberal Turn project, Loughborough University</i> <i>Cristian Vaccari, Director of the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture, Loughborough University</i></p>	
10.10 - 11.00	<p>Exploring the concept of illiberalism</p> <p>Keynote by <i>Marlene Laruelle, Director of Illiberalism Studies Program, George Washington University</i></p> <p>Chair: <i>Sabina Mihelj, Loughborough University</i></p>	
11.10 - 12.50	<p>Panel 1: Illiberal turn and populist communication</p> <p>CHAIR: James Stanyer, Loughborough University</p>	<p>Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties on Facebook across 28 countries</p> <p><i>Dan Jackson, Bournemouth University</i></p>
		<p>Illiberalism as Fictiocracy: Fake News and Imitative Genres in the Philippines, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine</p> <p><i>Roman Horbyk, Södertörn University</i> <i>Isabel Löfgren, Södertörn University</i> <i>Yana Prymachenko, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine</i> <i>Cheryll R. Soriano, De La Salle University</i></p>
		<p>Illiberal Charm: The Construction of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Charismatic Authority on Facebook</p> <p><i>Julia Sonnevend, The New School for Social Research, New York</i> <i>Veronika Kövesdi, ELTE, Budapest</i></p>
		<p>Promoting or shattering populism: the case of political comedy and satire in Ukrainian media</p> <p><i>Natalya Ryabinska, Collegium Civitas</i></p>
		<p>Fighting with the French for Fish: Fish, Europe and Populism in the British Press (1960-2020)</p> <p><i>Ana Tominc, Queen Margaret University</i></p>
12.50 - 13.50	Lunch (Elite Athlete Centre and Hotel)	
13.50 - 15.30	<p>Panel 2: Social media as channels of</p>	<p>State Control of Online Political Dissent: Evidence from Turkey</p> <p><i>Juan Morales, Wilfrid Laurier University</i></p>

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	illiberalism?	Arvind Magesan, University of Calgary Arieda Muco, Central European University
	CHAIR: Cristian Vaccari, Loughborough University	Transnational Platforms and the Legitimization of Political Censorship: the case of Instagram content moderation in light of the escalated Iran-US political conflict Seyed Mohamad Sadegh Emamian, IRIB University Hannaneh Akbari Noori, Tehran University
		The role of Facebook influencers in shaping the narratives of the Rodrigo Duterte era Renee Karunungan, Loughborough University
		Online Discussions, Incivility and Selective Avoidance on Social Networking Sites as Pathways to Polarization in Czechia Alena Mackova, Masaryk University Martina Novotná, Masaryk University Lucie Čejková, Masaryk University Lenka Hrbková, Masaryk University
		Political microcelebrity and illiberal communities of belief Michelle Stewart, University of Quebec Maxime Bérubé, University of Quebec
15.30 - 15.45	Coffee break	
15.45 - 17.25	Panel 3: Communication in times of COVID-19 CHAIR: Elizabeth Stokoe, Loughborough University	The illiberal turn is not a shift: Illiberalism and the instrumentalization of science and health in Brazil Thaiane Oliveira, Fluminense Federal University
		QR Rebellion: digital media and protest against mandatory vaccination status QR codes in Russia Aleksandra Raspopina, Middlesex University
		Just like us, yet more than you: The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook Xenia Farkas, Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest Maria Elizabeth Grabe, Indiana University
		Affective polarization and the hybrid media system during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Italy. The combined roles of political experiences in different media environments and economic uncertainty Augusto Valeriani, University of Bologna Mario Quaranta, University of Trento

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	<i>Danilo Serani, University of Bologna</i>
17.30 - 18.45	<p>Illiberalism in CEE roundtable: Lessons from the Illiberal Turn project and beyond</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Václav Štětka, Sabina Mihelj, Katherine Kondor, Fanni Tóth, The Illiberal Turn project, Loughborough University</i> <i>Joanna Szostek, University of Glasgow</i> <i>Wojciech Przybylski, Visegrad Insight / Res Publica Nova</i> <i>Marius Dragomir, Centre for Media, Data and Society, CEU</i> Chair: <i>John Downey, Loughborough University</i></p>
19.30	Conference Dinner at Peter's Pizza

APRIL 29, DAY 2: Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University

9.00 - 10.00	<p>Unusual Suspects: Media and the Illiberal Turn in Brazil Keynote by Afonso de Albuquerque, Fluminense Federal University Chair: <i>Vaclav Stetka, Loughborough University</i></p>	
10.05 - 11.35	<p>Panel 4: The impact of illiberalism on journalism and Freedom of Expression</p> <p>CHAIR: Alena Pfoser, Loughborough University</p>	<p>Foreign Funding for Independent Journalism in the Context of Authoritarianization—The Case of Russia and Hungary</p> <p><i>Konrad Bleyer-Simon, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute</i></p>
		<p>Freedom of press during the COVID-19 pandemic: Press-state relations dissected at three Indonesian newsrooms</p> <p><i>Endah Saptorini, Bournemouth University</i> <i>Xin Zhao, Bournemouth University</i> <i>Dan Jackson, Bournemouth University</i></p>
		<p>The Intertwining of the Covid-19 Pandemic with Democracy Backlash: Making Sense of Journalism in Crisis</p> <p><i>Mojca Pajnik, Peace Institute and University of Ljubljana</i> <i>Majda Hrženjak, Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies</i></p>
		<p>Mapping authoritarian communication networks: Analysis of media owners in Central and Eastern Europe</p> <p><i>Burce Celik, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Melek Küçükuzun, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Marlene Radl, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Marko Ribač, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Gerhard Schnyder, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Fanni Toth, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Tjaša Turnšek, Loughborough University London</i> <i>Lana Zdravković, Loughborough University London</i></p>

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11.35 - 11.50	Coffee	
11.50 - 13.20	Panel 5: Strategic communication, public diplomacy and propaganda CHAIR: Dominic Wring, Loughborough University	RT UK and Its Coverage of the 2019 British General Elections: Ambitious Goals and Modest Results <i>Vitaly Kazakov, University of Manchester</i>
		Framing at a state-sponsored news network: Coverage of the Navalny case by RT DE <i>Katja Klose, OTH Regensburg</i> <i>Katherine Guertler, OTH Regensburg</i>
		Hijacking of Public Diplomacy Issue: Misinformation, Populism, and the International Dispute Over Strategic Narratives of Holocaust Memory <i>Pawel Surowiec, University of Sheffield</i> <i>Philip Arceneaux, Miami University</i>
13.20 - 14.20	Lunch	
14.20 - 15.50	Countering illiberalism: practitioners' roundtable Speakers: <i>Maria Donde, OFCOM / EPRA</i> <i>Ricardo Gutierrez, European Federation of Journalists</i> <i>Sasha Scott, European Broadcasting Union</i> <i>Elda Brogi, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute</i> Chair: <i>Beata Klimkiewicz, University of Krakow</i>	
15.50 - 16.00	Summary and farewell	
19:00	Dinner for those staying until Saturday at Brown's Lane	

MEET THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Marlene Laruelle

Marlene Laruelle is Director of the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, and Director of the Illiberalism Studies Program at the Elliot School of International Affairs, the George Washington University. She works on the rise of populist and illiberal movements in post-Soviet Eurasia, Europe and the US. Trained in political philosophy, she explores how nationalism and conservative values are becoming mainstream in different cultural contexts. She focuses on Russia's ideological landscape and its outreach abroad. She has been also working on Central Asia's nationhood and regional environment, as well as on Russia's Arctic policy.

Exploring the concept of illiberalism

"Illiberal" and "illiberalism" have developed in the academic community to discuss what some others name "populism" or "far right". Yet the term remains unexplored in many of its aspects, and while political science dominates the discussion, political philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies represent key disciplines to assess the term's relevance. Too often, illiberalism is used as synonym for democratic erosion and authoritarianism, and analyzed within studies of political institutions and practices rather than thinking of them as a manifestation of culture. I propose a preliminary definition of illiberalism as an antiliberalism that expresses itself through a backlash against some versions of liberalisms after having experiences them (i.e. positioning itself as a post-liberalism) and that proposes alternatives that are majoritarian, nation-centric, and cultural homogenous. This presentation will explore the different definitions of illiberalism, their conceptual boundaries and under-investigated angles. How do we study illiberalism in a situational relation to different forms of liberalism? Should it be decoupled from literature on regime types? be How is illiberalism traveling across borders? How to investigate its contextual variety? How can we study the demand side of illiberalism?



Afonso de Albuquerque

Afonso de Albuquerque is a Full Professor at the Fluminense Federal University (Niterói, Brazil). He has served as President of the Brazilian Communication Programs Association (COMPÓS) and Brazilian Political Communication Research Association (Compólítica). His research interests include Political Communication, Journalism Studies, Comparative Media Studies.

Unusual Suspects: Media and the Illiberal Turn in Brazil

The rise of illiberalism in the world has been often associated with the ascent of authoritarian, illiberal leaders. According to growing literature, these leaders viciously undermine the institutions that should limit their power, through a check and balances logic. Drawing on Bolsonaro's Brazilian example, my presentation contends that, while this statement is correct, it does not tell the entire story, at least in some cases. Bolsonaro's rise to the presidency has been largely considered the landmark of the Brazilian illiberal turn. But how did a fringe politician who did not rely on a solid political party manage to become Brazil's president? Having the Brazilian legacy media as an example, my presentation hypothesizes that Bolsonaro is primarily a consequence, rather than a cause of the crisis of Brazilian liberal institutions. It is argued that, especially after 2014 – when the Workers' Party (PT) won the fourth consecutive presidential race in a row – the legacy media actively championed removing it from power by any means, and actively associated PT (and representative politics in general) with corruption. By spreading cynicism about the representative institutions, these media opened the way for Bolsonaro, a fringe politician voicing an anti-system discourse.

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Phillip Arceneaux

is an Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication at Miami University. He researches political public relations and public diplomacy, with interests in international law, technology policy, and cybersecurity. He merges political communication and technology policy to develop public policy solutions to disinformation, computational propaganda, and influence operations. His work has been published in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, policy papers, and thought leadership pieces. Arceneaux has consulted on public relations with several agencies across the United States government. He also is a former consultant with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Partnership for Countering Influence Operations.



Maxime Bérubé

is an assistant professor of forensic science at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. His research interests focus on digital data identification, processing and interpretation, mainly with regard to issues related to terrorism, extremism, propaganda and national security. In addition to improving our understanding of criminal/delinquent behavior through the study of digital traces, his research aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of investigative practices when massive amounts of data are involved, as well as the management of digital data in the context of legal proceedings. Maxime is also co-director of the Open Source Analysis, Research and Development Group (GARDESO), and a regular researcher of the International Centre for Comparative Criminology.



Konrad Bleyer-Simon

is a research associate at the EUI's Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), working on the Media Pluralism Monitor and the European Digital Media Observatory projects. He conducted doctoral research in the Human Rights Under Pressure joint program of the Freie Universität Berlin and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He holds a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University. Prior to working at CMPF, he worked for NGOs and news media in Berlin, Brussels, Bishkek and Budapest. In his research he looks at grant funding and other new revenue models for news media.



Lucie Čejková

is a doctoral student from the Media Studies and Journalism Department, Masaryk University (Czech Republic). Her research focuses on news media practices, audiences' perception of news media, and ontological security. She is also interested in media practices of older adults. Currently, she participates in two research projects funded by the Czech science foundation aimed at social media, political polarization, and public service media. Besides her study and research activities, Lucie also participates in various media literacy projects and works as a part-time journalist.



Burçe Çelik

received her doctoral degree from McGill University, Communications with her research on communications history and politics. Her research interests cover a broad range of areas from gender to history, from political communication to political economy of communication, from activism to critical theory. Her latest monograph is called Communications in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey: A Critical History and will be published by Illinois University Press in 2022. Çelik currently teaches at the Institute for Media and Creative Industries, Loughborough University London, and is Co-I in the POPBACK, Populist Backlash, Democratic Sliding (NORFACE, 2020-2023) research project.

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Maria Donde

works for the UK Office of Communications (Ofcom) as the Head of International Content Policy, covering media, content and broadcasting issues. She leads on Ofcom's engagement with other European media regulators, most particularly through EPRA (where is currently a Vice-Chair) as well as international bodies, and represents Ofcom on the full range of media policy questions including media literacy. She oversaw Ofcom's input into the negotiations on the AVMS Directive and oversees Ofcom's relationship with European and global institutions on questions of media and content policy. She recently served as Chair of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Media Environment and Reform. Her regulatory background is in advertising, having spent four years at the Advertising Standards Authority before joining Ofcom's Broadcasting Standards department.



Seyed Emamian

has obtained his PhD from Edinburgh University, UK, in Public Policy in 2014. Then he co-founded the Governance and Policy Think Tank (GPTT) at Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, Iran. Between 2019 and 2022, Seyed was appointed as the president of the Iranian audiovisual media regulatory authority (SATRA), the body in charge of regulating all new media platforms, domestically and internationally, including IPTVs, VoDs and VSPs. Academically, he is currently an assistant professor in Media Policy and Regulation at IRIB University.



Xenia Farkas

is a junior research fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, and a Ph.D. student at the Corvinus University of Budapest. Her research focuses on visual political communication on social media



Ricardo Gutiérrez

Ricardo Gutiérrez is General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the largest journalists' organisation in Europe, representing over 320,000 journalists in 45 countries. Former journalist for the Belgian daily newspaper "Le Soir", he is senior lecturer at Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He is a member of the Belgian Press Council (CDJ) and the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). He has conducted training for journalists on hate speech, ethical journalism and reporting on ethnicity and religion. You can catch a bigger glimpse into his interests (i.e. journalism and media) by following him on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/Molenews1>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/RicardoGutierrezVe>).



Roman Horbyk

Roman Horbyk (born 1985 in Kyiv) works in Sweden as a postdoctoral researcher at Södertörn University (Stockholm). He studied Journalism and Media at the Universities of Kyiv, Aarhus, Amsterdam and Hamburg before defending two dissertations, on illustrated press in the 1920s Weimar Republic and Soviet Ukraine (Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University, 2015) and on media power in representation of Europe in Ukraine, Russia and Poland during Euromaidan (Södertörn University, 2017).

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His published studies are largely interdisciplinary and focus on different aspects of media, history and language; Roman's research interests include postcolonial theory, gender studies, sociolinguistics, media power, history of representations and ideas as well as popular genres during the Interbellum. Roman has also extensively worked as a print and TV journalist with an over decade-long career. His reports and columns were published in Ukraine, Germany, Brazil, and Denmark. Apart from that, he is active as a playwright and a screenwriter whose most notable credits include Pryputni (2017). It is based on Roman's play "The Centre".

Horbyk's current research project deals with how mobile phones and other portable communication devices are used by soldiers and civilians on the frontline in Eastern Ukraine.



Daniel Jackson

is Professor of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University. His research broadly explores the intersections of media, power and social change, including news coverage of politics, political communication, the mediation of sport and the dynamics of civic culture in online environments. He has edited five books and is co-editor of the election analysis reports, published within ten days of major electoral events. Daniel is former convenor of the Political Studies Association's Media and Politics Group and Deputy Director of the Centre for Comparative Media and Politics Research at Bournemouth University.



Renee Karunungan

is a third year doctoral researcher at Loughborough University Centre for Research in Communication and Culture. Her research focuses on the role of influencers in shaping the narrative of the Duterte era. Renee has a decade of experience working with non-profit organisations as a media and communications consultant.



Vitaly Kazakov

is an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester. He obtained his PhD in Russian Studies at the University of Manchester in 2019, with a study of the promotion, mediation, and reception of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. His research interests include media events, social media, nation projection, and soft power. Previously, he has worked as a Visiting Lecturer in Politics at the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester, postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Manchester, and as a journalist and communications specialist in Canada and Russia.



Katja Klose

is currently a Master student of Public Policy and Social Change at the University of Tuebingen in Germany. Her research interest is focused on the connections between media and democracy and their implications for public policy. In her research, she has aimed to understand the construction and usage of framing as a tool to shape public discourse.

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Katherine Kondor

was a Research Associate for “The Illiberal Turn” project at Loughborough University while working on this research. She is currently an MSCA-IF Fellow at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo and a Visiting Fellow in Media and Illiberalism at Loughborough University. Her research is mainly concentrated on far-right social movements and collective action, with a focus on methods of radicalisation and pathways to activism, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.



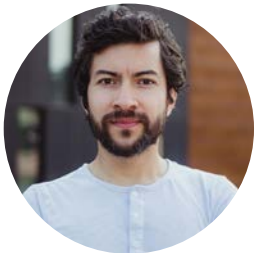
Veronika Kövesdi

is a PhD Student of Institute for Art Theory and Media Studies, Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest. Her research pursued under the Film, Media and Cultural Studies Doctoral program proposes to develop a market-based approach towards religious phenomena in the consumer culture of modern Western societies. She is focusing on marketing communication, brand images and the meaning making process of the creative industries.



Sabina Mihelj

is Professor of Media and Cultural Analysis in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University. Sabina’s research focuses on the comparative study of media cultures across both traditional and new media, with a focus on nationalism, identity, memory, and Eastern and Central Europe. She is currently Co-Investigator of the project “The Illiberal Turn” (2019–2022). Her latest book is entitled *From Media Systems to Media Cultures: Understanding Socialist Television* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).



Juan Morales

is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. He is an applied microeconomist working in the fields of political economy and development economics, with particular research interests in conflict, media, political communication, and legislative behaviour. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Toronto and a BCS (Computer Science) from the University of Waterloo. Prior to joining WLU, he was an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Collegio Carlo Alberto in Turin, Italy.



Martina Novotná

is a PhD student at the Media Studies and Journalism Department, Masaryk University (Czech Republic). She specializes in informal cross-cutting political talk online, emphasizing incivility, intolerance, and selective avoidance activities on social network sites. She is a member of two research projects funded by the Czech science foundation focusing on social media, political polarization, populism, and post-truth. The topic of her dissertation is *Social Media as the Space for Political Expressions and Interactions*, specifically interested in the relationship between democracy and the social media environment as a public space.



Thaiane Oliveira

is Professor of the Graduate Programme in Communication at Fluminense Federal University; leader of the Laboratory of Investigation in Science, Innovation, Technology and Education (SCiteLab); productivity researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq); researcher at the National Institute of Science and

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Technology in Comparative Studies of Conflict Management; and researcher of the UNESCO Chair on policies for multilingualism. She is also an affiliated researcher of the Brazilian Academy of Science.



Mojca Pajnik

is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Media and Communication, University of Ljubljana and senior research counsellor at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana. Her research focuses on communication and media, populism, migration and gender (in)equality. Currently she coordinates the research project Political and Media Populism: 'Refugee crisis' in Slovenia and Austria (SRA, FWF Der Wissenschaftsfonds, 2018-2022), is head of the research program of the Peace Institute Equality and Human Rights in Times of Global Governance (SRA, 2020-2023), and a partner to Populist Backlash, Democratic Backsliding, and the Crisis of the Rule of Law in the European Union (Norface 2021-2023). Her publications on populism and media include Media populism on the example of right-wing political parties' communication in Slovenia. Problems of post-communism (2019) and Populism and the Web: Communicative Practices of Parties and Movements in Europe (2017, Routledge, edited with Birgit Sauer).



Wojciech Przybylski

Political analyst, leading strategic foresight in CEE on European affairs. His expertise includes foreign policy and political culture. Editor-in-Chief of Visegrad Insight and President of the Res Publica Foundation. Europe's Future Fellow at IWM - Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna and Erste Foundation (2021/22). He has been published in, among other places, Foreign Policy, Politico Europe, EUObserver, Zeit, Gazeta Wyborcza, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, Onet, Project Syndicate, Journal of Democracy, Internazionale, VoxEurop, Hospodarske noviny and regularly appears in BBC, Al Jazeera Europe, Euronews, TRT World, TVN24, TOK FM, Swedish Radio and others. Wojciech also co-authored a book 'Understanding Central Europe', Routledge 2017.



Aleksandra Raspopina

is a researcher and lecturer interested in Russian post-Soviet journalism, political communication, alternative media, propaganda, post-truth and 'fake news'; her PhD thesis was on RT (Russia Today). She has taught on undergraduate and postgraduate journalism programmes at Middlesex University and City, University of London, and worked as a journalist and producer at CBS News, Viceland, the Guardian, the Calvert Journal, and others. You can follow her on Twitter: @sasharaspopina.



Natalya Ryabinska

is Associate Professor at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. She published on media systems, media transformations, political and international communication in post-Communist Europe and Eurasia, with a particular focus on Ukraine. Her publications include Ukraine's post-communist mass media: between capture and commercialization (ibidem-Verlag 2017), and Transformation of media in 'in-between' post-communist societies: An interdisciplinary approach. [in:] Eva Polonska, Charlie Beckett (eds.) Public service broadcasting and media systems in troubled European democracies (Palgrave Macmillan 2019). Her current research deals with political humor in Ukraine and its impact on the audience's attitudes towards politics.

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Endah Saptorini

is a PhD candidate in journalism studies at Bournemouth University. Her research explores newsroom cultures in periods of transition and change. Endah is also the Journalism leader strand for the MA Global Media Management at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton. She is a former Editor in Chief at Bloomberg TV Indonesia, having forged her career in the newsroom of a number of Southeast Asian countries.



Julia Sonnevend

is Associate Professor of Sociology and Communication at the New School for Social Research in New York. She is a sociologist of global culture, focusing on the events, icons, symbols and charismatic personalities of public life. She is the author of *Stories Without Borders: The Berlin Wall and the Making of a Global Iconic Event* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and is currently working on a new book entitled *Charm: How Magnetic Personalities Capture Our Hearts, Minds and Politics* (under advance contract with Princeton University Press). She grew up in Budapest and earned her LLM at Yale Law School and her PhD in Communications at Columbia University.



Michelle Stewart

is a professor in the Dept. of Social and Public Communication at the University of Quebec, Montreal. With Pam Wilson, she is co-editor of *Global Indigenous Media* (Duke UP, 2008). Her publications have appeared in various film and media journals, including *JumpCut*, *TOPIA*, and *Film Quarterly*. She has been a Fulbright Scholar, Kempner Distinguished Professor at Purchase, a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Marseille (2013-2014), and a Visiting Professor at the University of Montreal (2015-2016). Her work addresses digital heritage and digital cinema, in particular, the ways in which Internet art and culture complicate our expectations and standards for self and cultural representation. She is currently the principal investigator for the cross-national study: "Viral Populism: The Amplification of Right-Wing Extremism Online" (SSHRC/ Canadian Heritage 2021-2024).



Václav Štětko

is Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University, where he has been working since 2016. His research interests encompass political communication and the role of new media, media systems in Central and Eastern Europe, media ownership and journalistic autonomy. He is currently Principal Investigator of the project "The Illiberal Turn" (2019-2022). His latest book is titled "Social Media and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe" (Routledge 2018, with Pawel Surowiec).



Paweł Surowiec

is Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield, UK, specialising in strategic communication, public diplomacy and political campaigning in the context of European politics.

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Joanna Szostek

is a lecturer in political communication at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on the media's role in relations between states. She has investigated the reception of competing political narratives among audiences in Ukraine, with funding from the European Commission. She is currently studying levels of engagement with local, national and transnational media in Ukraine, funded by the British Academy. Her research is published in leading international journals. Her professional experience includes several years at BBC Monitoring, a secondment with the UK's Foreign Office, and many years of living and working in Russia and Ukraine.



Ana Tominc

is an Assistant Professor in Food, Communication and Media Studies at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, United Kingdom. She has published on contemporary food discourses related to lifestyle and class, veganism and far-right cooking show on social media, construction of culinary identity, and food television in socialist Yugoslavia. Her edited collection "Food and Cooking on early television in Europe: Impact on postwar Foodways" is just out with Routledge. She is also the founder of Biennial Conference on Food and Communication



Fanni Toth

is Research Associate working on the project "The Illiberal Turn" at Loughborough University. Her research interests concentrate on democratisation, political attitudes, Europeanization, public administration and public policy, with a regional focus on Eastern Europe. Since July 2021 she is also Research Associate for the project "Populist Backlash, Democratic Backsliding, and the Crisis of the Rule of Law in the European Union (POPBACK)" (2021-2023), based at Loughborough University London.



Augusto Valeriani

is Associate Professor in Sociology of Communication at the Political and Social Sciences Department of the University of Bologna and Director of the Master Program in Digital Marketing and Communication at Bologna Business School (UniBo). His research focuses on political communication, digital media, and journalism studies. He has authored articles published in Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication; New Media and Society; International Journal of Press/Politics; Information, Communication and Society; Current Sociology; European Journal of Communication; Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication; Sage Open. His latest book "Outside the Bubble. Social Media and Political Participation in Western Democracies" (co-authored with C. Vaccari) was published by Oxford University Press (2021).



Xin Zhao

is a Lecturer of Communication and Journalism at Bournemouth University. She received her PhD in Media from Bangor University. Her research interests cover areas of media representations, newsroom practices, international communication, and digital citizenship. She has published in journals including Journalism, Asian Journal of Communication, and Media and Communication.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1: ILLIBERAL TURN AND POPULIST COMMUNICATION

Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties on Facebook across 28 countries

Daniel Jackson, Bournemouth University

While populism and illiberalism are not synonymous, they do share some characteristics and are both on the rise in certain parts of Europe. Given the power of images to evoke strong emotions (e.g. Coleman and Wu, 2015), and to be processed quickly (Graber, 1996), some argue that there is a natural fit between populists and visual communication (Kriesi, 2014), and given the visual cultures that prevail on such platforms (Larsson, 2020), social media has been central to these debates.

It is therefore important to understand whether a distinct populist visual communication style exists, especially when we consider that, so far, studies on populist communication have largely focused on textual elements which yield only “an incomplete picture of what populism is” (Bucy and Joo, 2021, p. 11). While an emergent body of work examines populist visual communication practices on social media (e.g. Bast, 2021; Mendonça and Caetano, 2021), single-country studies still prevail, and only through further research across multiple national contexts will we understand the dynamics of populist and non-populist visual campaigning styles.

In this paper, we investigate these dynamics through a quantitative visual content analysis focusing on still images on a random sample (N= 997) of the image-based political communication of parties’ Facebook pages from the 28 EU countries in the 2019 European Parliamentary campaign. Despite the expectations of the literature, we find that although populists demonstrated a higher propensity to personalise their leader and use national symbols, these were exceptions to the overwhelming evidence of uniformity in visual campaigning methods. In considering the explanations for this, we argue that visually, populist parties more resemble non-populists than vice versa; a point that opens several reflections on the nature of campaigning on social media, the role of campaign professionalization and on the supposed outsider status of many populists.

Illiberalism as Fictiocracy: Fake News and Imitative Genres in the Philippines, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine

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Isabel Löfgren (Södertörn University)

Yana Prymachenko (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine)

Cheryll R. Soriano (De La Salle University)

We propose to consider “fake news” as a genre with its own conventions and narrative devices dependent on those of mainstream journalism. Departing from genre theory, “culture jamming” practice and Barnhurst and Nerone’s (2002) concept of journalist modernism rooted in Louis Althusser’s idea of form as the principal expression of ideology, we intend to highlight empirically how mainstream media storytelling is hacked, imitated and hijacked by “fake news” in the four countries that are known to have populist leaders and significant circulation of viral disinformation. Focused on empirical cases from the regimes displaying varying degrees of illiberalism: Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro, the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte, Russia under Vladimir Putin and Ukraine under Volodymyr Zelensky, and sampled primarily during the covid-19 pandemic, this paper draws significant comparisons between different cultures and traditions of journalist storytelling in the global peripheries concluding that while “fake news” can be subverting mainstream or integrating with it, even the most distant cases share the common basis of meta-mimesis, imitation of other texts. In order to be perceived as “news” by part of the audience, viral disinformation is forced to demonstrate certain features characteristic of good-faith journalism or other information content. Thus, the very possibility of “fake news” arises within “real news”. “Fake news” therefore draws its narrative power from two sources: the power of imaginative storytelling and the authority of mainstream media forms it imitates. Through weaponising this power, illiberalism manifests itself as fictiocracy (our reconceptualisation of a term coined by Davide Banis). By way of distancing from the overpublicised cases of Donald Trump or Brexit, we also contribute to de-Westernising media studies.

ABSTRACTS

Illiberal Charm: The Construction of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Charismatic Authority on Facebook

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Veronika Kövesdi, ELTE, Budapest

Literature on the relationship between illiberalism and media often focus on media capture, on the ways in which illiberal leaders gain control over independent media outlets worldwide. While these studies are essential in understanding illiberal takeovers, they leave other entanglements between illiberalism and the media untouched. This paper will look at the construction of the mediated personality of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the most popular social media platform in the Hungarian context, Facebook in 2021. We argue that Orbán's Facebook site presented a highly filtered and professionally produced image of the political leader centering on three characteristics: (1) "strongman" masculinity with only rare moments of vulnerability, (2) defender of the nation against a wide variety of "attacks," including the ongoing pandemic and (3) supporter of traditional family values. With its simultaneous translation into English, Orbán's Facebook site also represented him as an international player in the transnational network of illiberalism. He strengthens this image through regular, prerecorded radio interviews and poster campaigns presented across Hungary, but carefully avoids any independent, live interviews, especially on local television. Our paper argues that while Orbán's personal magnetism has elements of traditional charismatic authority, the elusive concept of "charm", oscillating between seduction and deception, might be a better term to capture his personal magnetism. Overall, we argue that we need a deeper understanding of the mediated constructions and authenticity of illiberal leaders to better grasp their international political appeal.

Promoting or shattering populism: the case of political comedy and satire in Ukrainian media

Natalya Ryabinska, Collegium Civitas

This paper deals with the part played by entertainment media, specifically political comedy and satire, in the spread of populist ideas and outlooks in post-communist societies. The studies on media populism, which investigate the relationship between mass media and populism, usually concentrate on soft news and tabloid media (e.g., Akkerman 2011, Rooduijn 2014). Political entertainment media—which may be the source of political knowledge and opinions for a sizable part of the citizenry—remain beyond their attention.

Some of the extant researches show that political entertainment and soft-news media, just like populist politicians, articulate the centrality of ordinary citizens and the disdain of elites and experts, and in this way contribute to the prominence of populist ideas in public discourse (Klein 1998, see also Lichter et al. 2015, Ryabinska 2022). By the same token, several studies demonstrate that "softer" media genres, specifically political comedy and satire, often avoid speaking on serious issues but instead overrepresent politicians' private lives, personal traits and foibles, and focus on the most extreme and scandalous aspects of politics (Niven, Lichter, and Amundson 2003, Ryabinska 2020). The latter can create a fertile ground for the flowering of populist climates within society (Mazzoleni 2008, 2014).

In contrast to these findings, other studies provide arguments that political entertainment, specifically political comedy and satire, can have the opposite effect. For example, a recent study by Mark Boukes and Michael Hameleers (2020) demonstrates that political humor can make the populist rhetoric itself the target of the jokes, and by doing so, become an antidote to populism's success.

This paper uses the above findings and the perspectives of studies on political humor on the one hand and populist communication on the other to look at political comedy and satire in non-EU former Soviet states. The cases under study are two TV programs in Ukraine: a top-ranking Vecherniy Kvartal show whose star Volodymyr Zelensky won the Ukrainian presidency in 2019, and a news satire show with a bizarre name "#@!£? \$0" broadcasted by the public TV. We apply computer-assisted frame analysis (with Atlas.ti) to examine the presence, salience, and forms of populist frames in each show's political humor. We also analyze whether populism, which proliferates in the discourse of Ukrainian politicians, becomes the target of the jokes.

ABSTRACTS

Fighting with the French for Fish: Fish, Europe and Populism in the British Press (1960-2020)

Ana Tominc, Queen Margaret University

Fish (and other foods) has been used in the press as a vehicle to stir an emotional response against the European 'other' before Britain became a member of EEC in 1973 (e.g. cod wars with Iceland), and has culminated in post-Brexit populist Eurosceptic disputes over fishing rights with France. In addition to positioning France and the EU as 'them', these discussion of fish in the British press and political discourse sustain the revival of the myths of a British 'us' which fuse together ideas about diet, morality, politics and economy. The study, which is based on a corpus analysis (all British newspapers, 1960-2020), will demonstrate the changing discussion of fish in the British press interrogating through this relations in which fish and fishing appears with reference to other European countries (and France/Scandinavia) and to self (Scotland and its territorial waters in the North, in particular). In addition, and building on this, it will demonstrate through a cultural-historical analysis how fish as one of the salient identity anchors in the UK (e.g. fish&chips) has been used to further populist (Eurosceptic) discourse building on the assumption that food - as a banal, everyday object - is a handy subject through which complexities of national and international politics can be communicated in a common sense, understandable language. As the role of food in populist (political) discourses is only starting to be addressed (e.g., Irwin and Tominc, forthcoming; Parasecoli 2022; Demuru 2021; Edwards 2019), this presentation will contribute to understanding of the role of food in British (Eurosceptic) populism.

PANEL 2: SOCIAL MEDIA AS CHANNELS OF ILLIBERALISM?

State Control of Online Political Dissent: Evidence from Turkey

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Arvind Magesan, University of Calgary
Arieda Muco, Central European University

We study a legal reform in Turkey which imposed new regulations on social media platforms with the aim of reducing the spread of "offensive" content. The reform required social media companies to open local offices in Turkey and to provide user information to the Turkish government on request. Critics argued that the policy was intended to silence anti-government dissent. To study the response to the policy, we construct a panel of social media activity for almost 1,000 Turkish Twitter users, including a large set of individuals who were critical of the new law when announced. Using a set of interrupted-time-series and difference-in-differences empirical exercises, we find that dissenters (individuals who we identify as publicly critical of the Turkish state in the period prior to the reform) became less active shortly after the new regulation came into effect, moderated their language, and engagement with their tweets decreased. These results provide evidence of the reform being effective at decreasing anti-government expression on social media in the short run. In the long-run, the reductions in engagement and the moderation of language did not persist, but activity remained lower one year after the implementation of the law. Finally, in ongoing work, we study how political protest and arrest and imprisonment of individuals critical of the state was affected by the reform.

ABSTRACTS

Transnational Platforms and the Legitimization of Political Censorship: the case of Instagram content moderation in light of the escalated Iran-US political conflict

**Seyed Mohamad Sadegh Emamian, IRIB University
Hannaneh Akbari Noori, Tehran University**

The rise of transnational online media platforms has led to an explosion in the production and dissemination of user-generated contents. The impact of such an innovative advancement has been widely perceived as a clear sign of the increasing media liberalization and a modern form of public participation. During the early years of development - so-called the "safe-harbor" and "techno-optimism" era, digital media platforms were not only legally safeguarded and publicly admired, they also were literally conceived as the drivers of freedom of speech and the modern heroes of democratic societies.

However in recent years, following a plethora of privacy scandals and political crises, a growing concern over the irresponsibility of transnational platforms regarding the distribution of so-called "illegal", "harmful", and "fake" contents has gradually shifted their approach towards content moderation, from a "responsibility for nothing to responsibility for everything" (Emamian, 2020).

Taking into account the predominant popularity of Instagram in Iran, this paper has studied a few cases of widespread content moderation operated by Instagram over a large number of Iranian users due to the escalation of Iran-US political conflicts during the late years of Trump administration. It shows to what extent such operations were widely understood as a paradigm shift from a substantially liberal approach that had for a long time been promoted by transnational platforms including Facebook, now renamed to Meta, and its subsidiaries like Instagram. Building upon a discursive analysis of mainstream media outlets and popular Iranian social media activists, the study displays that, as the result of such an over-politicized operation, the role of Instagram was largely conceived, by the Iranian elites, not only as a violation of "media sovereignty", but as an American foreign policy instrument and a clear sign of "political censorship". The accusation that was also replicated against media giant by Trump himself, almost a year later on.

The role of Facebook influencers in shaping the narratives of the Rodrigo Duterte era

Renee Karunungan, Loughborough University

In 2016, 16 million Filipinos elected Rodrigo Duterte into the presidency. His campaign was founded on populist narratives and heavily used social media, especially Facebook influencers, who helped shape his political campaign. Similarly, Duterte critics also used Facebook to criticise his populist agenda. With the Philippines having one of the highest Facebook penetration, Facebook has been weaponised for implementing disinformation campaigns and discourse-hijacking campaigns for political agenda (Ong and Cabañes, 2018).

The majority of existing research on the use of social media for political campaigning has focussed primarily on Europe and the United States, with Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines underexplored. Current research on the Philippines' use of social media for political participation mainly tackle mediated populism through paid trolling and fake news (Ong and Cabañes, 2018; Cabañes and Cornelio, 2017). Given the big role of Facebook influencers in the last two elections in the Philippines, this paper tries to fill in this gap in research.

Using quantitative content analysis as a method, the purpose of this paper is to assess how Facebook influencers shaped Duterte's main campaign platforms, and critical political issues like human rights, Philippines-China relations, and COVID-19. The paper looks at the most common rhetorical devices used by Facebook influencers, as well as the use of hate speech and the presence of incivility and intolerance in online political discourse.

The Facebook pages were chosen based on the following criteria: number of following and reach, type of content created (e.g. memes, opinion posts, videos, fake news, etc.), identifying either as a Duterte supporter or critic, and engagement on specific issues. Preliminary data analysis shows that both supporters and critics use similar rhetorical devices, engage in uncivil and intolerant discourse, and use hate speech. It was also found that Facebook posts with uncivil, intolerant, and hate speech get more engagement (reactions, shares, and comments) than posts that are civil, tolerant, and do not contain hate speech.

ABSTRACTS

Online Discussions, Incivility and Selective Avoidance on Social Networking Sites as Pathways to Polarization in Czechia

Alena Mackova, Masaryk University
Martina Novotná, Masaryk University
Lucie Čejková, Masaryk University
Lenka Hrbková, Masaryk University

In our research, we are generally interested in the role of the preferred news reception practices, of the character of (online) discussions and interactions on polarization. We examine this relationship by testing two general assumptions linking the use of the social networking sites (SNSs) with polarization through the selective exposure to pro/counter-attitudinal information. Firstly, we assume that SNSs create a diverse information environment where citizens may interact with those who hold dissimilar views. Such political exchange and cross-cutting exposure can lead to a rise of polarization, because visibility of opposite views can increase perceived social distance. Secondly, although there is little doubt that SNSs provide opportunities for citizens to engage in cross-cutting discussions, they also allow them to re-establish more homogeneous information environments via practices of selective avoidance. Such information environments, where citizens are not exposed to any attitudinally incongruent information, can also magnify distance among groups. We test a set of hypotheses on Czech survey data (N=3763) collected in 2020. The preliminary results indicate that there is no strong and unambiguous pattern regarding the general use of SNSs and polarization in Czechia. On the other hand, we found a weak connection between the practices of social filtering of news, homogenous information environment and politically motivated unfriending, experiencing incivility and polarization. It indicates that there is a weak link between the SNSs practises related to a more homogenous environment and polarization, which is in line with previous findings. At the same time, the analysis reveals a weak connection between the exposure to counter-attitudinal information and polarization (through incivility) - and it thus generally suggests rather an ambiguous (and poor) relationship between the different ways of SNSs use and polarization.

Political microcelebrity and illiberal communities of belief

Michelle Stewart, University of Quebec
Maxime Bérubé, University of Quebec

Literature on the relationship between illiberalism and media often focus on media capture, on the ways in which illiberal leaders gain control over independent media outlets worldwide. While these studies are essential in understanding illiberal takeovers, they leave other entanglements between illiberalism and the media untouched. This paper will look at the construction of the mediated personality of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the most popular social media platform in the Hungarian context, Facebook in 2021. We argue that Orbán's Facebook site presented a highly filtered and professionally produced image of the political leader centering on three characteristics: (1) "strongman" masculinity with only rare moments of vulnerability, (2) defender of the nation against a wide variety of "attacks," including the ongoing pandemic and (3) supporter of traditional family values. With its simultaneous translation into English, Orbán's Facebook site also represented him as an international player in the transnational network of illiberalism. He strengthens this image through regular, prerecorded radio interviews and poster campaigns presented across Hungary, but carefully avoids any independent, live interviews, especially on local television. Our paper argues that while Orbán's personal magnetism has elements of traditional charismatic authority, the elusive concept of "charm", oscillating between seduction and deception, might be a better term to capture his personal magnetism. Overall, we argue that we need a deeper understanding of the mediated constructions and authenticity of illiberal leaders to better grasp their international political appeal.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 3: COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF COVID19

The illiberal turn is not a shift: Illiberalism and the instrumentalization of science and health in Brazil

Thaiane Oliveira, Fluminense Federal University

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jair Messias Bolsonaro has undergone a significant political dispute over the use of hydroxychloroquine as a measure to confront the disease. He also contested scientific and healthcare organisations findings related to the drug's effectiveness as part of his health policy. Despite Brazilian studies showing the prevalence of political instrumentalization of science and illiberal populist practices in the current Bolsonaro government (Silva, Rodrigues, 2021; Parzianello, 2020; Albernaz, 2019), Bolsonaro is not the cause of the illiberalism, but a consequence of it (Albuquerque, 2020). Besides he uses the argument of people to convince his electors, his government attends the elites, which supported him to be a president. Since 2013, Brazil has been facing an institutional and epistemic crisis, in which the political, legal, media and medical spheres were also responsible for these crises. I discuss how part of the legacy media, medical class, law sphere and political actors in Brazil have instrumentalized science, medicine and public health policies during many years before Bolsonaros's government. I will present a prior context about the populism illiberal turn, the growing of fake science in public debate and the political instrumentalization of science and health, discussing how it has affected scientific institutions in Brazil. I will also present research results which understand how an illiberal populist government and the supporters thereof refer to scientific discourse during the pandemic, with a focus on the debates on Brazilian far-right networks on Twitter. Using a mixed methodology with statistical methods, social media analysis, natural language processing and qualitative content analysis, this study seeks to investigate which sources and stakeholders were referenced and the narratives that structured the arguments of far-right supporters who defended the use of hydroxychloroquine. The results highlight the use of sources that are ideologically aligned to the right and a reconfiguration of scientific authority that was supported by illiberal values. Among the main discourses, we observed an epistemic challenge with a partisan bias, which led to the scientific authority legitimising some arguments and discrediting others. We also identified the spread of conspiracy theories that reflected the epistemic challenge, in addition to conservative, revivalist and individualistic postures. Finally, I argue that the illiberal turn is not a change, but the continuation of neoliberal practices in which the state is traversed by market practices.

QR Rebellion: digital media and protest against mandatory vaccination status QR codes in Russia

Aleksandra Raspopina, Middlesex University

In November 2021, Russian government introduced into the Russian parliament several laws that would introduce mandatory QR codes for entry onto the public transport and most public spaces. This move was met with public protests, petitions and wide digital media community organising, all aimed at protesting and preventing the new laws from being officially adopted. The protests brought together liberal civil society campaigners and conservative religious activists in a unique moment of social solidarity in Russia, though it's also important to note that parts of the protests were dominated by anti-vaccine groups and individuals. The discussion of the laws was postponed as a result of public feedback and the protests.

This paper qualitatively examines the coverage of the movement in national and local digital media outlets, as well as the discussions and debates on the topic in online communities on the most popular social media platforms in Russia, VK and Facebook, in order to, on one hand, distil the nature of the social media debates surrounding the law proposals, and, on the other hand, examine how the protests and debates were covered in the media. As a result, the paper's sample includes 89 purposefully selected media articles (including news stories and long-reads) and 27 discussion threads in anti-QR code groups and public pages on VK and Facebook.

This paper is currently a work in progress but preliminary results indicate that the types of themes foregrounded in media differ significantly from those that appear most prominent on social media platforms, with media putting the focus on the political implications and diminishing the role of the anti-vaccine sentiment in the protest.

ABSTRACTS

Just like us, yet more than you: The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

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Populism's anti-pluralist, and exclusionary in-group-centric nature, and its simplistic answers to complex economic, cultural, and political issues represent the so-called illiberal turn, facilitated by social and political polarization that feeds on the construction of enemies. As a successful populist leader, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared, "the new state that we are building is an illiberal state" (Tusványos, 07/26/2014). This project describes his multimodal populist style over a three-year period (2018-2020) that stretches across three distinct news content cycles. These include the emergence and sustained management of the COVID-19 pandemic, election periods (i.e., 2018 Hungarian Parliamentary election, 2019 Hungarian Local election, 2019 European Parliamentary election), and a number of months of slow news – or cucumber time as it is known in the news industry. By designing and testing an instrument of systematic visual and textual measurement based on Moffitt's (2016) theorizing of the populist leadership style, this project aims to contribute to the emerging research area of visual politics. Which dimension of Moffitt's (2016) populist style was applied most prominently in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts? What are the differences in the three periods of the sample? What are the characteristics of populist visual communication during the COVID-19 pandemic? To answer these questions, 47 categories were devised for a deductive multimodal quantitative content analysis of social media image posts and their accompanying verbal posts. The examination of Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts (N=492) over a three-year period (2018-2020) provides a point of traction in building and validating this instrument of measurement while also yielding results about his particular populist style and its stability through different news cycles. Findings of these three periods will be described in relation to (1) Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'; (2) 'Bad Manners'; (3) Crisis, Breakdown, Threat.

Affective polarization and the hybrid media system during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Italy. The combined roles of political experiences in different media environments and economic uncertainty

Augusto Valeriani, University of Bologna
Mario Quaranta, University of Trento
Danilo Serani, University of Bologna

Affective polarization (AP) arises when citizens develop negative sentiments towards their political opponents (fellow citizens, political leaders, and political parties). While AP has been mainly conceived as a threat to the proper functioning of the democratic game, some studies argued that strong political feelings may also have a positive effect on the legitimacy of the political systems, by fostering citizens' active engagement in political affairs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has represented a strong exogenous shock which upset people's everyday life and contemporary representative democracies across the globe. Especially during 2020 (when the pandemic hit Europe), citizens experienced the first mass lockdowns which led to systemic economic instability. In such situation, media diets and experiences, as well as citizens' concerns related to their economic situation, could have been subjected to relevant modifications.

The present study is aimed at understanding whether and how, during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, transformations in the way citizens inhabit contemporary hybrid media systems impacted their levels of AP, and whether an increased perception of economic uncertainty affected such relation.

To answer these research interrogatives, we employ a three-wave panel survey administered to a representative sample of Italian adult internet users between May and December 2020 (Wave 1 N=1,563 with a 77% retention rate across the study). We run fixed-effects models predicting differences within individuals in levels of AP, measured as an index combining spreads of like-dislike scores assigned by respondents to all main parties, leaders, and partisans.

Our findings show that increased political information and discussion in different realms of the hybrid media systems (face-to-face, mass media, social media, and mobile instant messaging platforms), as well as engagement with political content on social media, boost AP in different and specific ways. We also find that increased sense of economic uncertainty is directly associated with reduced AP, while its interaction with some media experiences boosts AP. The study offers new and relevant nuances on our understanding on how AP emerges in contemporary hybrid media systems and, more specifically, on how the pandemic experience has impacted an increasingly problematic phenomenon for democratic life.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 4: THE IMPACT OF ILLIBERALISM ON JOURNALISM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Foreign Funding for Independent Journalism in the Context of Authoritarianization—The Case of Russia and Hungary

Konrad Bleyer-Simon, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute

The proposal is based on the insights of my dissertation that looks at the challenges and opportunities of independent newsrooms in Russia and Hungary—with a focus on financing. Unlike in the past, when authoritarian governments often relied on outright censorship, physical threats and imprisonment to silence the independent media, a shift towards softer methods can be observed in the first two decades of the 21st century. The preferred weapon of choice of authoritarian governments is orchestrating media capture. Grant funding by foreign donors could be a possible remedy to capture, as it provides newsrooms with the financial stability that enables independent watchdog journalism, but it triggers backlash from governments—the most prominent such measure being the Russian “foreign agent law”.

Based on 54 interviews with newsroom representatives, it explores the connection between governmental pressure and the readiness of newsrooms to make use of foreign funds. It shows the downsides and potential risks of media support for independent media in pressured environments and provides a theoretical explanation for the conditions that determine under what circumstances a media organization is willing to live with them. The empirical evidence shows that the major factor that determines this decision is the external position of the given country: While Hungary is a small European Union member state whose government is constrained by community rules and strong dependencies on other EU members, the size and strength of Russia gives its government more opportunities to put pressures on the media—including means that directly violate civil liberties. After describing the country contexts, the inner-country differences and individual decisions of newsrooms whether or not to rely on foreign support are elaborated through the lens of Bourdieu's field theory, emphasizing the role of newsrooms' “legitimacy”.

Freedom of press during the COVID-19 pandemic: Press-state relations dissected at three Indonesian newsrooms

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Dan Jackson, Bournemouth University

Recent studies show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government takes on a central role in the media's crisis coverage (e.g., Price and Harbisher, 2021; Van Aelst and Blumler, 2021). This paper examines press freedom and its relationship to governing elites in Indonesia during the coronavirus outbreak. The press-state theory is used to explain how governments limit the autonomy of journalists while power relations between an independent press and the state are always finely balanced. With press freedom in Indonesia (ranked 113 of 180 in the World Press Freedom Index 2021) still a work in progress, this paper brings attention to how the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed social distancing measures tilted the balance in press-political relations. To do so, we draw on an ethnography of 245 hours of offline and online observations, 35 in-depth interviews, participants' diaries, and documents, all conducted over 15 months in three news organisations, namely SCTV, Liputan6.com, and BBC Indonesia.

Our study found that the pandemic changed relationships between journalists and the government and posed a considerable challenge to press freedom. First, due to the social distancing practice, there is a high dependence on official sources; the press has become more reliant on authority. Second, the consequences of virtual communication, which were supposed to simplify communication, resulted in more official voices, limiting journalists' ability to question and challenge the government. Third, the pandemic erodes journalists' autonomy, as evidenced by increased self-imposed control among journalists confronted with controversial issues. Our study contributes to press-state relations by demonstrating the importance of proximity and that a diminishing physical presence in press-state relations endangers press freedom. The prolonged pandemic gives illiberal political forces more room to challenge journalists' autonomy and, in the long run, threaten press freedom.

ABSTRACTS

The Intertwining of the Covid-19 Pandemic with Democracy Backlash: Making Sense of Journalism in Crisis

Mojca Pajnik, Peace Institute and University of Ljubljana

Majda Hrženjak, Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies

The contested role of the media during a public health crisis corresponds with the different expectations that exist in society on how journalists should perform their work. Periods of health crises intensify the dilemmas around “appropriate journalism”, and they at the same time make media vulnerable to the rise of control by those in power, manifested as political pressure and changes obstructing media freedom. This paper explores how the combination of the public health crisis and the authoritarian government of Janez Janša’s Slovenian Democratic Party, along with its tendency to politically instrumentalize and economically devastate the media, impacted journalism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Of central concern are how journalists understand their roles in communication relating to Covid-19, and how journalistic roles are shaped when the pandemic and trends towards democratic backsliding coincide in time. The analysis is conducted in the theoretical frameworks of crisis communication, authoritarian influences on the media, and journalistic practices and roles, while methodologically it is based on individual interviews in which journalists reflect on their professionalism amidst the pandemic. We have conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with journalists from different news organizations who have reported on Covid-19 in order to analyse journalists’ experiences in Covid-19 reporting and their reflections on the interactions of health, political, and media crises. The findings show that the facilitative role revealed in existing research of media functioning during a public health crisis may be interwoven with a watchdog role challenged by authoritarian tendencies. Indeed, interviews suggested the coexistence of general journalistic roles at a time of dual crisis, when the sense of responsibility to facilitate measures to confine the spread of the disease is coupled with critical monitoring, (self)reflection, and attempts to restore professional standards in both public and private media.

Mapping authoritarian communication networks: Analysis of media owners in Central and Eastern Europe

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This paper aims to explore the ways in which the structure of media ownership and political control has transformed in Europe in relation to, and in the context of the rise of right-wing populism and anti-democratic authoritarian backlash. Applying and using the method of social network analysis (SNA) in the empirical analysis authors focus on five Central and Eastern European countries where illiberal regimes are firmly established or have a strong presence of illiberal political forces in the political and media system: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Turkey. The paper thus shows trends of ownership concentration, capital accumulation as well as interpersonal connections between media owners, powerful capitalist networks (operating in various national and international markets) and political actors in the period from 2000 until 2020. While fully understanding the right-wing populist shift of past two decades we aim to shift the discussion on populist communications, from ‘what populists say through media’ to ‘what populists and populism do to media’ to use it for their own purposes. We avoid adopting a medium-specific approach towards ownership structures in a single media sector, but rather explicate the relationality, concentration and centralization of media/outlet owners in print, broadcasting and online sectors across analysed nation-states. Differing from the studies that mainly concentrate on the cultural aspects of populist communications that treat populism as a performance, style or discourse that articulates the people against the elite, our research emphasizes the substantive, political-economic and institutional aspects of populist politics and communications. Paper thus also articulates and differentiates two things: first, it differentiates between explicitly populist and worrisome authoritarian tendencies in analysed countries; and second, it analyses and compares the differences between various national media histories while it assesses important systemic transformations of national media systems.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 5: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PROPAGANDA

RT UK and Its Coverage of the 2019 British General Elections: Ambitious Goals and Modest Results

Vitaly Kazakov, University of Manchester

The British Intelligence and Security Committee 2020 'Russia Report' has accused RT UK of being a part of a wider Russian campaign aiming to influence democratic processes in Britain. This presents a stereotypical view on the dangers Kremlin-sponsored informational actors pose for social cohesion and democratic institutions in the West. A case study of the mediation of a major political event by the Russian channel RT in the UK may help to assess the validity of such concerns. Relying on the live media ethnography method, I investigate a set of outputs produced by RT UK across its traditional and new media platforms in the period immediately preceding the 2019 UK General Election.

The goal of my paper is to identify and understand the key messages, and the modes of informing and connecting to the audience exhibited in RT's coverage of these elections. I also assess whether RT UK uniformly and noticeably agitate its viewers to favour some candidates whilst discrediting others across its media channels and different outputs. Finally, I trace what kind of technologies, formats, and themes were used in the coverage and how impactful were RT's approaches.

Ultimately, I analyse the extent to which RT UK's work may have impacted the election outcomes and suggest that the perceived dangers may have been overestimated. In the process, I discuss the interrelationship between RT UK and its sister networks, the British media regulators, political establishment, and audiences.

Framing at a state-sponsored news network: Coverage of the Navalny case by RT DE

Katja Klose, OTH Regensburg
Katherine Guertler, OTH Regensburg

The power of media to shape public discourse can induce state-sponsored news organizations, especially those in illiberal societies, to portray their nation in the best light by actively framing prominent news stories. The international criticism following the poisoning of Alexey Navalny in 2020 positioned Russia to instrumentalise their extensive state-sponsored media network, RT, to convey a Russia-friendly narrative to an international audience. Examination of RT's coverage can therefore provide useful insight into the communicative strategies used to promote the Russian state's preferred counter-narrative for the Navalny case. A qualitative content analysis of 19 opinion pieces published on RT's German-language Internet presence (RT DE) from September 2020 to May 2021 reveals that two primary frames have been employed to persuade the audience of a Russia-friendly narrative in the Navalny case.

Firstly, a moral frame paints Russia as the repeated victim of Western Russophobia, presumably to activate feelings of sympathy while also delegitimizing Western reporting as an ongoing pattern of unjust bullying. Secondly, an analytical frame aims to undermine the Western account of events via detailed recriminations, e.g., casting doubt on medical results; calling out perceived conflicts of interest for German authorities such as politicians, journalists and doctors; or speculating about negative consequences for German-Russian political and economic ties.

Notably, the counter-narratives promoted by RT DE disregard the function of remedy promotion (Entman 1993), suggesting that delegitimizing the Western account is itself the desired remedy. It can be concluded that the divisively framed content and propagandistic elements in the reporting by RT DE on the Navalny poisoning aim to delegitimize the German government, reduce public trust, and thus polarize German society. Taken together, this case study presents important insights into how Russia instrumentalises state-controlled media to amplify a counter-narrative internationally, with the ultimate intent of weakening German and, by extension, Western democracy.

ABSTRACTS

Hijacking of Public Diplomacy Issue: Misinformation, Populism, and the International Dispute Over Strategic Narratives of Holocaust Memory

Pawel Surowiec, University of Sheffield
Philip Arceneaux, Miami University

Building on the hybridity approach to soft power statecraft (Surowiec & Long, 2020), this paper answers the following question: how does the governance by populist political actors effect the formation of the Holocaust memory narratives in public diplomacy? Focusing on Poland, we explore how the Law and Justice sponsored (org. the PiS) politics of memory has led to the hijacking of the issue of misinformation about the Holocaust, the international dispute with Israel and the US, and the subsequent public diplomacy crisis. Our study centres on the politics of memory devised at the Polish Ministry of Justice, relying on a populist policy 'innovation' blending the narrative arch of 'Polocaust' with the 2018 legislation criminalising public attribution of any responsibilities for the Holocaust to either the Polish state or the nation (and reported by foreign news media as the 'Polish Holocaust law').

Drawing on an assemblage of interviews with diplomats and public diplomats as well as other policy stake-holders, policy documents, and media artefacts, we find that the hitherto multi-level international advocacy diplomatic game over the misinformation about Holocaust – e.g. so-called 'Polish death camps' erroneous memory code - has been hijacked by the PiS policy makers, putting public diplomacy under severe political strain. We find that the revisionist approach to the politics of memory, and the introduction of criminalising legislation in particular, resulted in an international dispute, the consequence of which was the marginalisation of public diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to aid partisan domestic political gains. In addition, by abandoning a multi-level diplomatic game, the PiS policy-makers adapted a centralised approach to the formation of strategic narratives. Finally, as well as analysing 'schematic narrative templates' and 'specific narratives', we reveal the types of response strategies used by the PiS majoritarian government at various stages of the 2018 international dispute with Israel and the US. Our paper concludes that nationalistic political actors tend to shift the orientation of soft power statecraft towards domestic publics at the expense of international gains, and shift its function towards 'negative soft power', in which public diplomacy advantages are compromised by the politics of memory based on national conceptions enveloped in the populist style of delivery.

CAMPUS INFORMATION

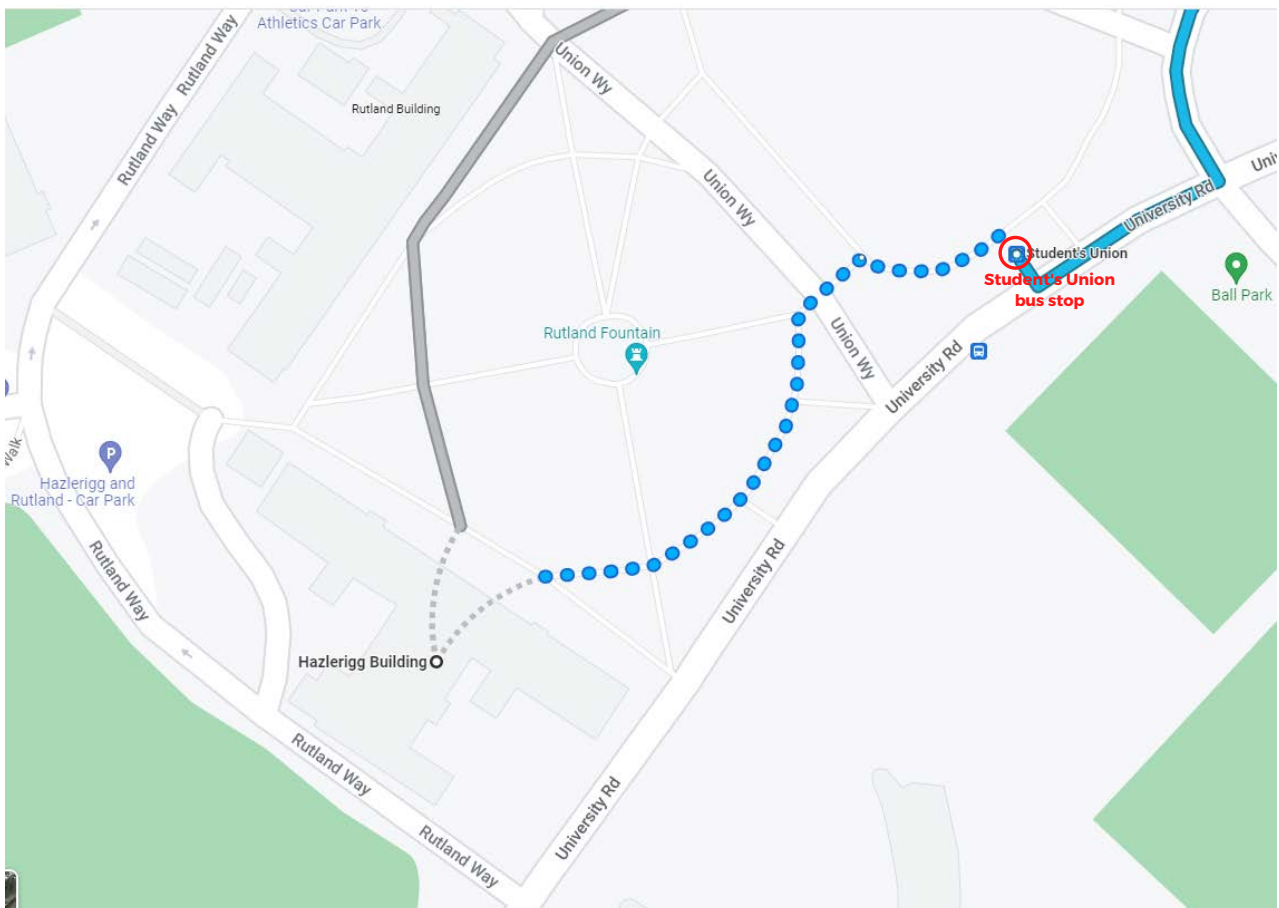
GETTING HERE

The conference will be held in the Council Chamber inside the Hazlerigg Building.

Arriving by train to Hazlerigg Building

From the train station take the “Sprint” bus to the university (£2.10 per journey - just ask the driver 'to the university'; only cards accepted!). The bus goes every 10-15 minutes, see the timetable here <https://www.kinchbus.co.uk/services/sprint/timetable>.

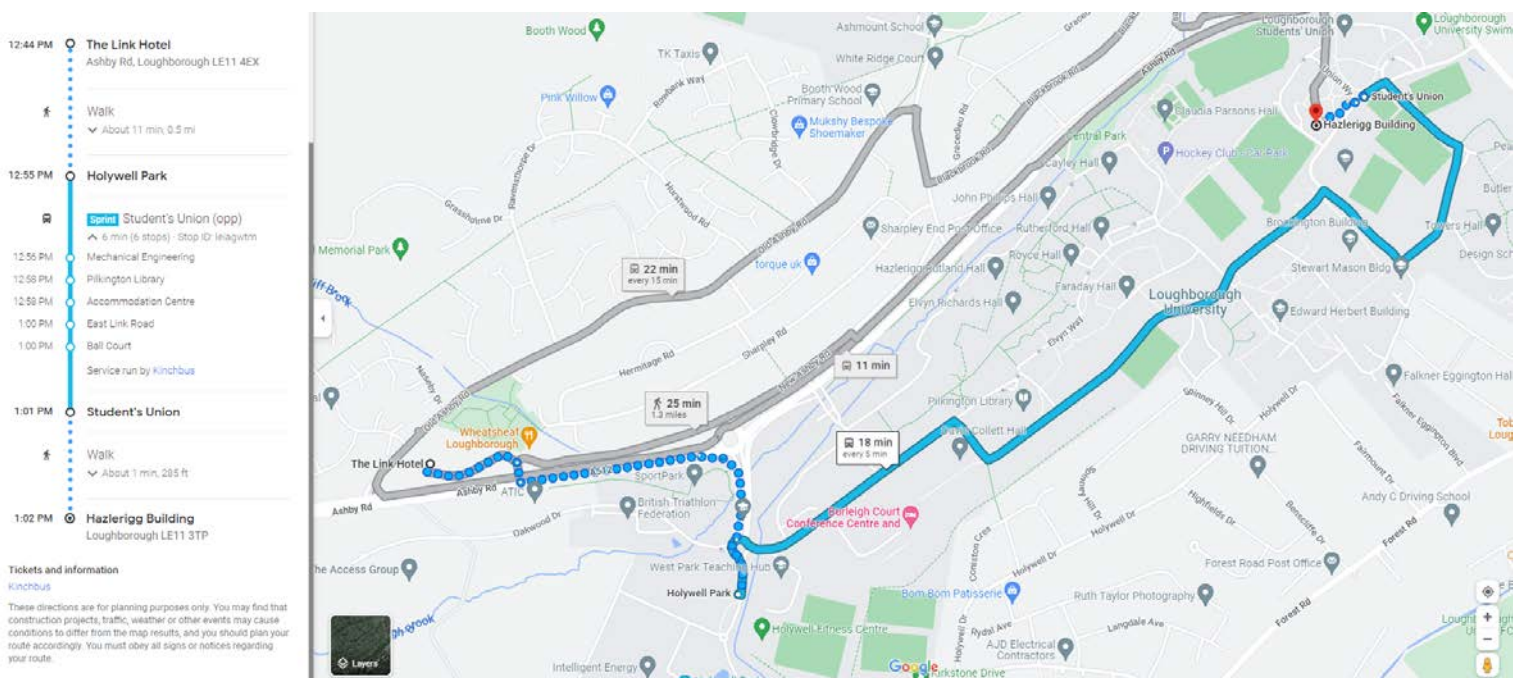
The bus stop is to your right when you come out of the train station. The journey takes approximately 15 minutes. Once on the university campus the nearest bus stop to the Hazlerigg building is the Student’s Union which is the first bus stop after arriving on campus. The bus has an announcement system so it will announce 'the next stop is 'Student Union''. The bus stop is right in front of the Hazlerigg building (see below for map).



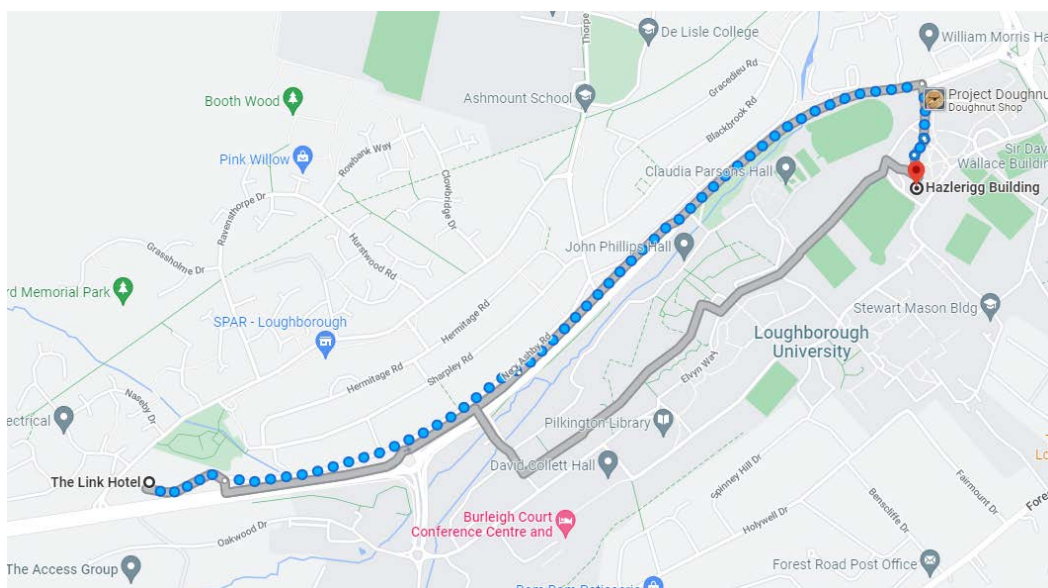
CAMPUS INFORMATION

If you are staying inside the campus

If you are staying at the **Link Hotel**, you can take a 10 minute walk to the Holywell Park bus stop. From there, ride the bus to the Student's Union which is the 6th stop. From the Student's Union, walk to the Hazlerigg building. If you want to have a nice stroll in the morning, it will take 25 minutes to walk from Link Hotel to Hazlerigg Building.



Link hotel to Hazlerigg by bus

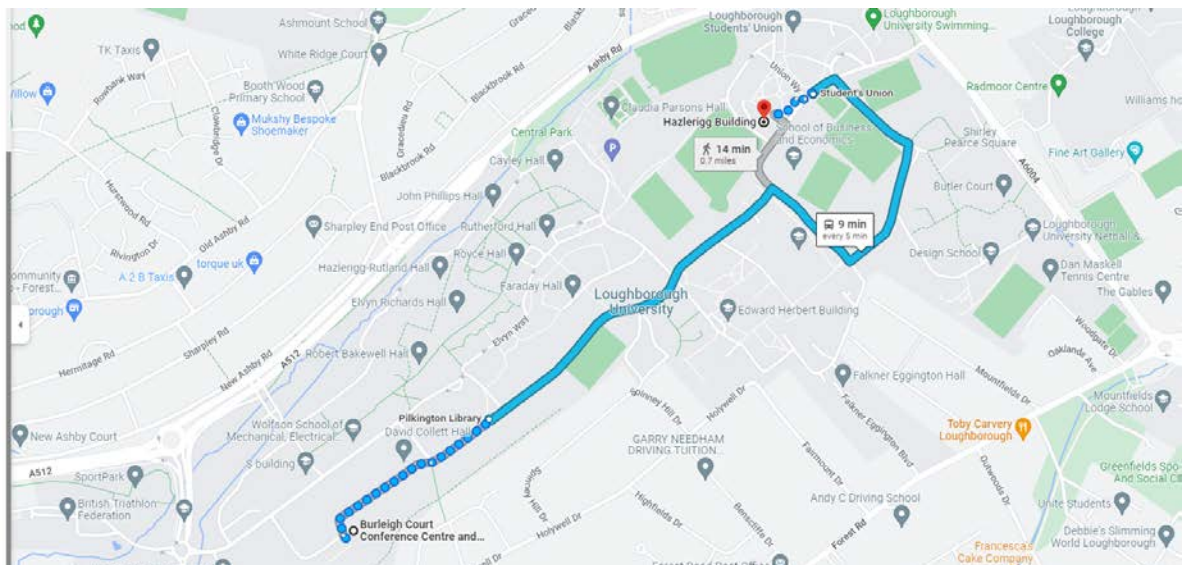
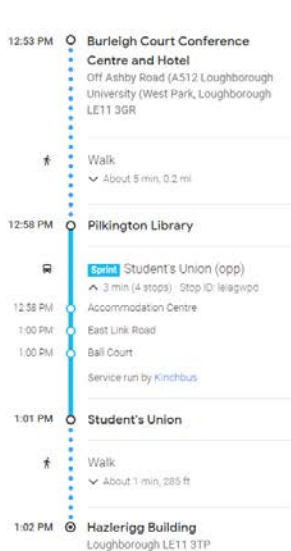


Link hotel to Hazlerigg by walking

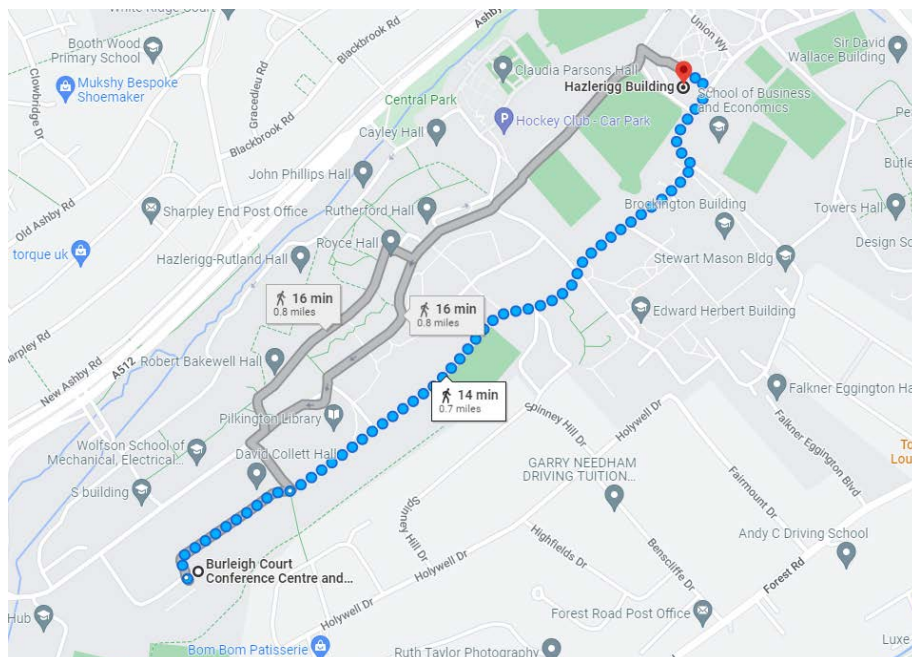
CAMPUS INFORMATION

If you are staying inside the campus

If you are staying at the **Burleigh Court**, you can take a 4 minute walk to the Mechanical Engineering bus stop. From there, ride the bus to the Student's Union which is the 5th stop. From the Student's Union, walk to the Hazlerigg building. If you want to have a nice stroll in the morning, it will take 14-16 minutes to walk from Link Hotel to Hazlerigg Building.



Burleigh Court to Hazlerigg by bus



Bureleigh Court to Hazlerigg by walking

DINNER INFORMATION

April 27, 7:00 PM

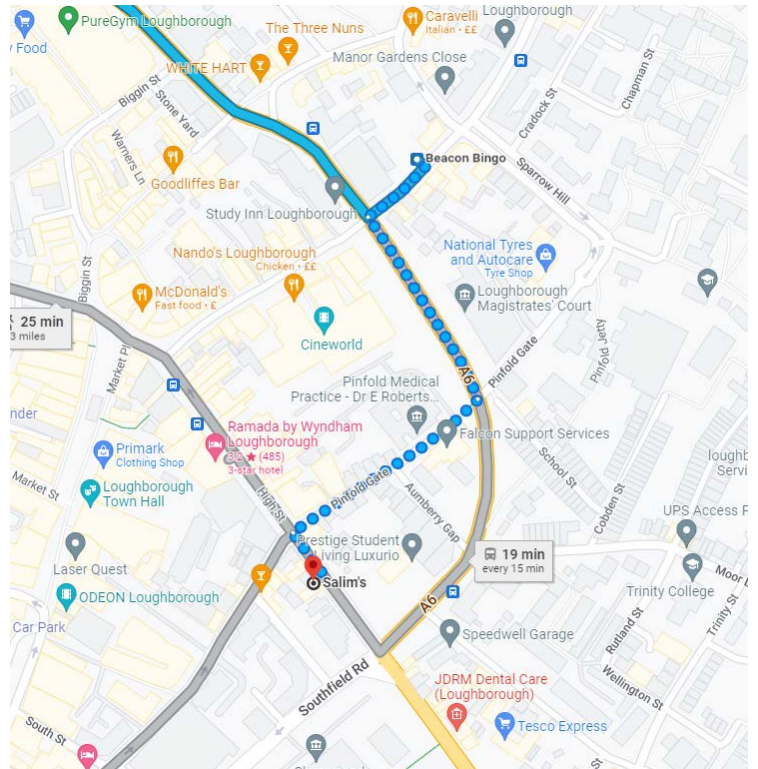
Salim's Indian Restaurant

9 Leicester Road Loughborough

LE11 2AE



Getting there: Take the Sprint bus from any of the bus stops in the university going to the city. Get down at the Beacon Bingo bus stop. From there, walk to Salim's for 5 mins.



April 28, 7:30 PM

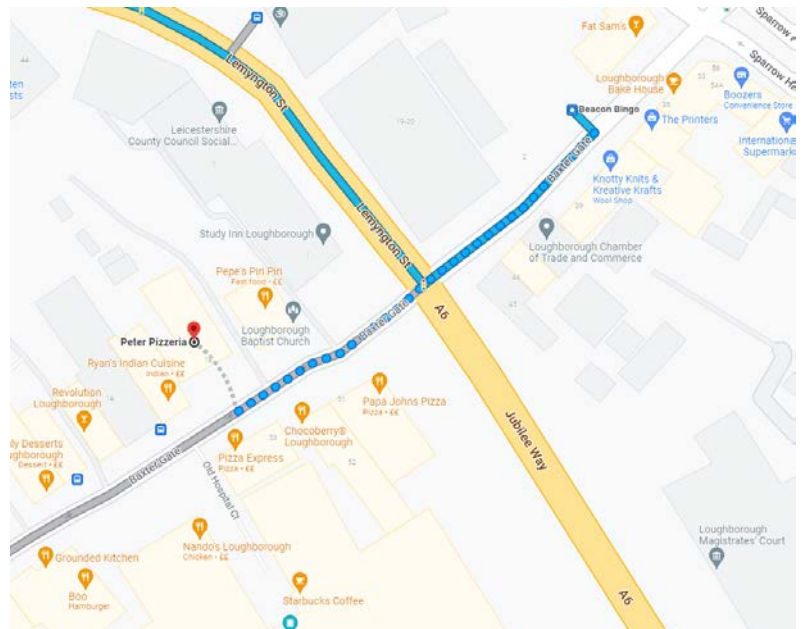
Peter Pizzeria

17-18 Baxter Gate,

Loughborough LE11 1TG



Getting there: Take the Sprint bus from any of the bus stops in the university going to the city. Get down at the Beacon Bingo bus stop. From there, walk to Salim's for 1 min.



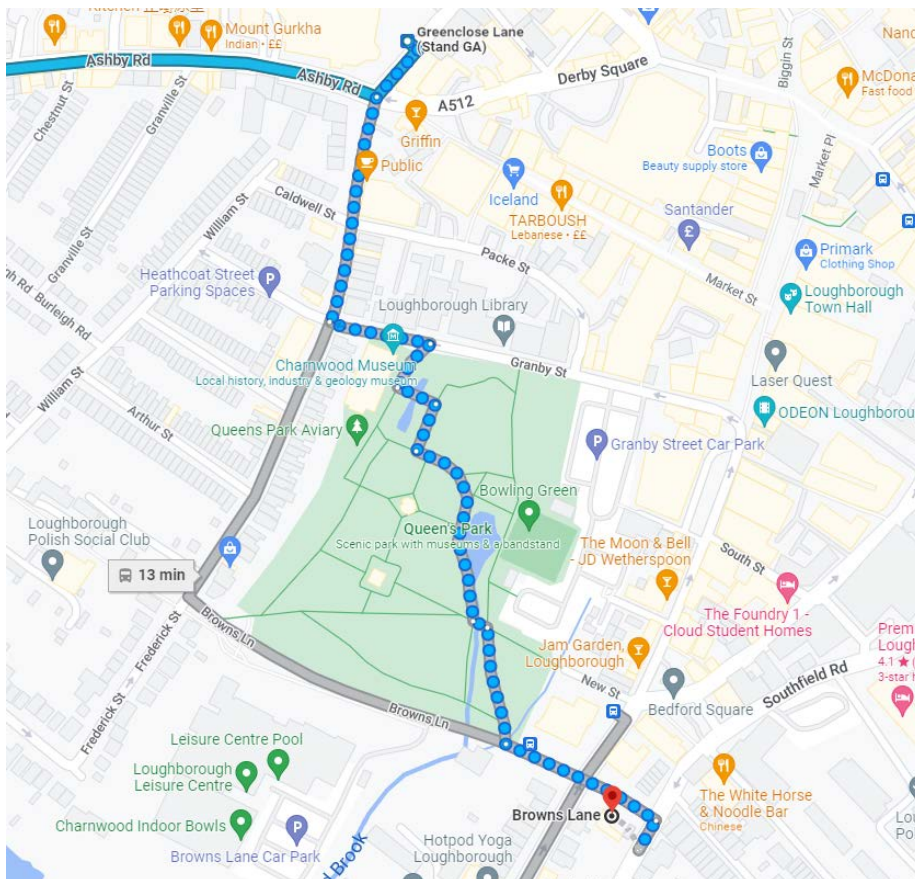
DINNER INFORMATION

April 29, 7:00 PM

Brown's Lane 2A Browns Ln, Loughborough LE11 3HE



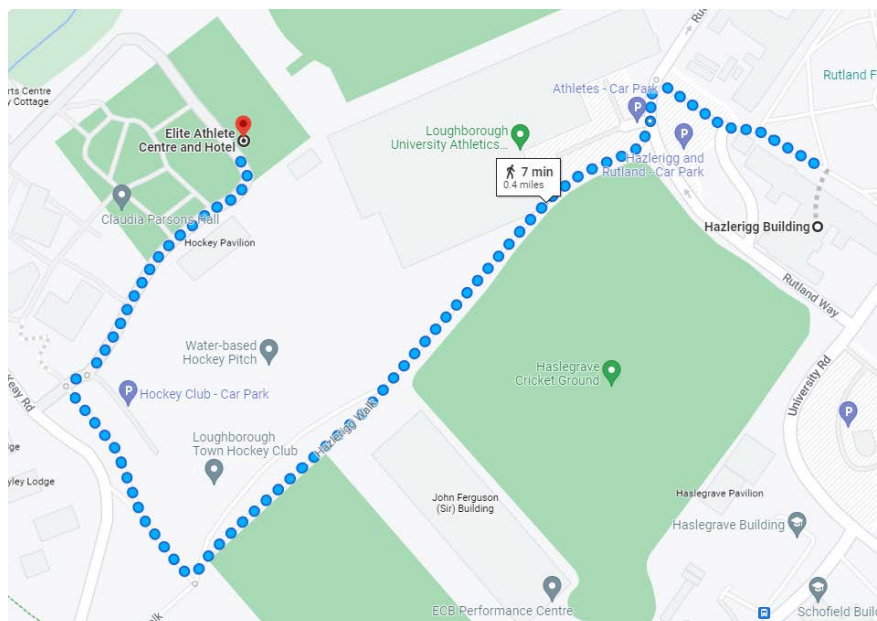
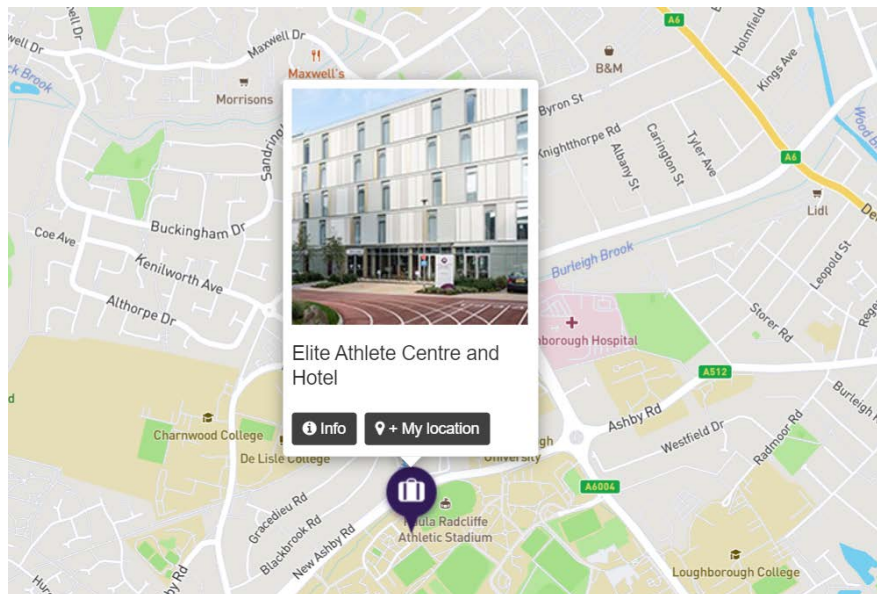
Getting there: Take the Sprint bus from any of the bus stops in the university going to the city. Get down at the Green Close Lane bus stop. From there, walk to Brown's Lane for 9 mins.



FOOD AND DRINKS

FOOD AND DRINKS

If you are staying at the Link Hotel or Burleigh Court, breakfast will be provided at the hotel. If you did not pre-book your breakfast, you can pay an extra breakfast fee at the hotel when you arrive. For lunch, we will be eating at The Kitchen located in the Elite Athlete Centre.



FOOD AND DRINKS

Other places inside the campus to eat/drink:

- **Student's Union** - The Student's Union building is closest to the Hazlerigg Building. Inside the Student's Union there are several shops to buy food drinks: LSU shop, Manchuan (Chinese restaurant), John Cooper's, Subway, etc.
- **Edward Herbert Building** - The Edward Herbert Building (EHB) is situated in Central Park near Herbert Manzoni and Sir Arnold Hall. Inside is a restaurant (EHB Grill), a food shop, a cafe, and a bar.
- **Martin Hall Cafe** - Martin Hall Café offers a noodle bar, cook to order, salad bar and also a selection of freshly made baguettes. The café caters for students and staff who just want a coffee or perhaps a lunchtime meal. There is also a fabulous patio area.
- **Arts Cafe** - Opening times: Mon-Fri 8:30-15:30. Situated on the ground floor of the Edward Barnsley Building, the Arts Café is located across Epinal Way on the left through the main entrance doors.
- **Holywell Cafe** - Located in the Charnwood Wing at Holywell Park, the café offers freshly prepared dishes from jacket potatoes to full main courses. Sandwiches and snacks are available throughout the day. Tex Mex and WokOn alternates each week.
- **Sportspark Cafe** - Located at SportPark, Energy offers a selection of breakfast items, sandwiches, salads and hot snacks; with plenty of healthy options dominating the lunchtime menu.
- **The Pantry: West Park** - Located at the central exhibition zone in West Park Teaching Hub, a food shop where you can get sandwiches, crisps, and other snacks.
- **The Coffee House: Sir David Davies Cafe** - Located in the Sir David Davies building in West Park, this café serves a great range of hot and cold drinks, filled breads, hot pastries, cakes and confectionary items. Everything can be eaten in or taken away.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Illiberal Turn: News Consumption, Polarization and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” is a research project based at Loughborough University and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Launched in May 2019, its main ambition has been to carry out the first-ever systematic, comparative study of news consumption and political polarization in Central and Eastern Europe, at a key point in time when the region is undergoing dramatic changes, both in its political and media systems.

Headed by Dr. Václav Štětka and Professor Sabina Mihelj, the project has been using a novel multi-method analytical framework that combines population and expert survey data, digital tracking of media consumption, as well as media diaries and qualitative interviews with audiences in four CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Serbia. This methodological framework is designed to offer a holistic insight into the political implications of the changing news environment, and into its consequences for the processes of democratic backsliding and the rise of illiberal populism and nationalism in CEE.

Through designated impact activities with the project partners, which include the European Federation of Journalists, European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, or the Centre for Media, Data and Society at Central European University, the project also seeks to contribute to the development of regulatory frameworks and professional standards aiming to counter the negative consequences of polarization and populism, while also enhancing media pluralism and rebuilding trust in journalism.

For more information about the project see <https://www.illiberal-turn.eu>

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

NOTES

