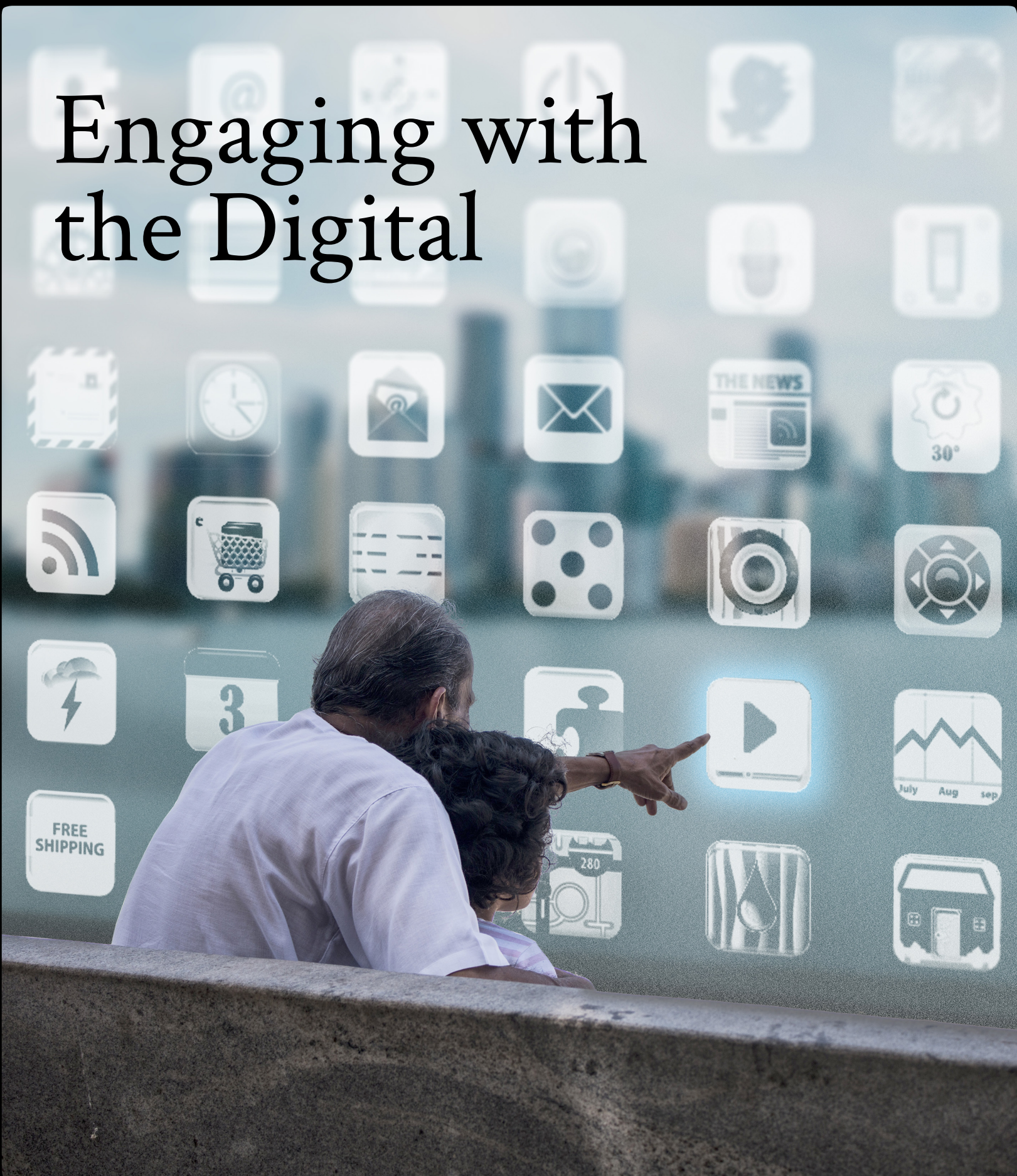# Media Development

Engaging with the Digital

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WACC is an international organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community. Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication, and promotes open and diverse media. WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

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Media Development

VOL LXV 4/2018

In the Next Issue

The 1/2019 issue of *Media Development* will continue the debate around ethical questions posed by today's world of digital communications and their impact on people and societies.

WACC Members and Subscribers to *Media Development* are able to download and print a complete PDF of each journal or individual article.

WACC communication for all

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EDITORIAL

Digital communication technologies have become ubiquitous and policymakers are still struggling to respond with appropriate infrastructure and governance models.

It is critical, therefore, to move beyond celebrating greater accessibility and affordability in order to tackle the fundamental questions about ownership and control, regulation, privacy, security and surveillance that are central to conversations about the ethics of digital technologies.

As *The Global Risks Report 2017* published by the World Economic Forum notes:

"A new era of restricted freedoms and increased governmental control could undermine social, political and economic stability and increase the risk of geopolitical and social conflict. Empowered by sophisticated new technological tools in areas such as surveillance, governments and decision-makers around the world are tightening control over civil society organizations, individuals and other actors."[1]

On the positive side, for the first time in the history of communications, people have the chance to seize a form of democratic expression that could improve their lives and livelihoods. And, clearly, when it comes to such lofty ideals as Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, it is clear that this can only be achieved through the simultaneous implementation of communication rights that enable people to express their needs and concerns and to advocate solutions that are locally relevant and appropriate.

Seen from this perspective, Agenda 2030 ought to include taking steps to advance the availability, transparency and accountability of the 21st century's digital infrastructures. Failure to do so will have political and ethical consequences ranging from the outright subversion of democracy to the spread of misinformation and extremist views to intrusion into and control over peoples' lives. This may ultimately undermine the legitimacy of digital platforms, as the scandal around privacy practices at Facebook in 2018 has demonstrated.

The Global Risks Report 2017 goes on to warn:

"Technological tools are also being used to increase surveillance and control over citizens, whether for legitimate security concerns or in an attempt to eradicate criticism and opposition. Restricting new opportunities for democratic expression and mobilization, and by consequence the digitally enabled array of civil, political and economic rights (such as the right to work and education; freedom of expression) just as citizens have become more connected and engaged – creates a potentially explosive situation."

A role for digital communication ethics

Communication ethics is a well-worn academic discipline. Journalism ethics a vital professional discipline. Yet, digital technologies have opened up the proverbial "can of worms" with regard to social ethics – with which today's youth in particular are struggling. As Allan Luke and Julian Sefton-Green ask in their article in this issue of *Media Development*:

"How do today's young people and children deal with right and wrong, truth and falsehood, representation and misrepresentation in their everyday lives online? How do they anticipate and live with and around the real consequences of their online actions and interactions with others? How do they navigate the complexities of their public exchanges and their private lives, and how do they engage with parental and institutional surveillance? Finally, how can they engage and participate as citizens, consumers and workers in the public and political, cultural and economic spheres of the internet?"
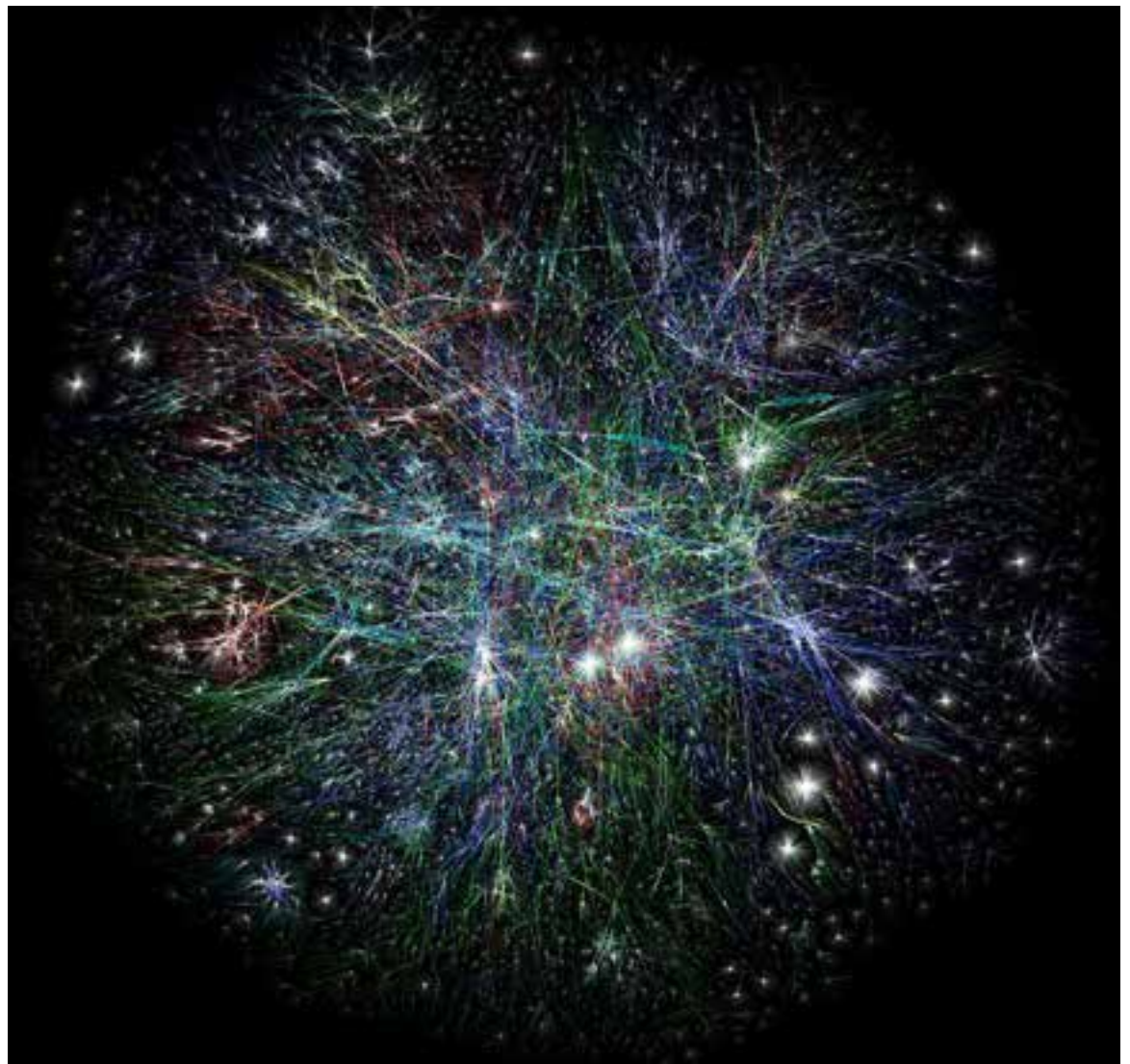
It is not just a question of digital media literacy, but of using digital platforms and new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to bring about greater equity and inclusion. This can only occur within a framework of rights that generate genuine opportunities for free and informed participation in order to create more ro-

bust societies and meet the sustainable development goals.

Digital communication platforms are vital tools for people to influence political and social policies in favour of their interests, to help communities to organize for positive change, and to foster active citizenship. In this respect, WACC and its partners are urging governments and international institutions to:

* Build the capacity of civil society organizations to participate in policy-making processes related to communication infrastructure, policy, and digital rights.
* Support community-initiated efforts to develop and/or manage telecommunications infrastructure in order to increase access to mobile telephony and internet services
* Promote initiatives that link established community media platforms to ICTs, especially in ways that promote interactivity and participation.
* Promote digital solutions that help enable community participation in decision-making.
* Advance research about the relationship between access to ICTs, community participation, and development.
* Promote inter-sectoral partnerships to address violations to human rights online, such as online violence and illegal surveillance
* Help strengthen networks of citizen communicators and journalists belonging to marginalized communities and social movements so that they can use digital communication platforms in their advocacy work.
* Provide digital media production training for marginalized and excluded communities, including women and girls.
* Advance digital media literacy among marginalized and excluded communities, and espe-

cially among young people.
* Build the capacity of marginalized and excluded communities, including women and girls, to develop and use open-source software.

As WACC's own principles make clear:

"Only if communication is participatory can it empower individuals and communities, challenge authoritarian political, economic and cultural structures and help to build a more just and peaceful world." ■

Note
1. *The Global Risks Report 2017,* 12th Edition is published by the World Economic Forum within the framework of The Global Competitiveness and Risks Team.

Critical media literacy and digital ethics

Allan Luke and Julian Sefton-Green

Wikileaks and false news; an American Presidency run via Twitter; Charlie Hebdo; hackers manipulating elections, stealing corporate secrets and shutting down public utilities; mass surveillance via the internet of things; 24/7 news, information and disinformation cycles broadcast continuously on public and personal screens; wall-to-wall cultures of celebrity and political bullying and libel via social media; social media supplanting face-to-face relations at dinner tables and in bedrooms; conspiracy theories overriding peer refereed science ... No wonder many young people are checking out into worlds of videogames, comic superheroes and pharmacologically altered realities. While schools and school systems stand frozen in the headlights.

Our current situation is stark and simple, and probably can't be understated. We live in an era where governments and political culture are modelling and exploiting the unethical, immoral and destructive use of digital media, and attacking the longstanding practices and criteria of print journalism, broadcast journalism, and peer-refereed science. Children and young adults inhabit an online environment where new forms of exchange, creativity and community sit alongside new forms of criminality and bullying, real and symbolic violence.

We are increasingly shaped and ruled by powerful corporations that are profiting from the reorganization of everyday life by social media and digital tools, making business deals with autocratic and theocratic states to suppress, control and surveil citizens, engaging in dubious labour practices, are implicated in forms of production and manufacture that are environmentally unsustainable, and who bury profits to avoid taxation responsibilities that might fund improved education, health care and communities.

And there is a multinational secret state/ corporate nexus that monitors and surveils communications and exchange at all levels for their own commercial and political purposes. Nor is this all idle ideological debate: many communities have to contend with the stark realities of everyday poverty, violence and warfare, unstable policing and public security, the effects of environmental decay and climate change, public health and large-scale mental health crises, and the unavailability of meaningful and skilled work.

Digital technology per se didn't cause these problems, nor does it in and of itself have the capacity to solve or fix them. But the current situation requires a remaking of citizenship, ethics, and a renewed social contract. This will require an ongoing "problematicisation", to use Freire's (1970) term, of these conditions as focal in the curriculum, thematically crossing social studies, the arts and sciences. Our view is that critical media literacy, multi-literacies and digital arts can be a staging ground for that new civic space – where critique and technical mastery can led to "transformed" and, in instances, "conserved" practices.

The curriculum challenge is about setting the grounds for rebuilding of community relations of work, exchange and trust – while at the same time giving young people renewed and powerful tools for weighing, analysing and engaging with truths and lies, representations and misrepresentations, narratives and fictions, residual and emergent traditions, competing cultural epistemologies and world views.

The everyday challenges for youth
How do today's young people and children deal with right and wrong, truth and falsehood, representation and misrepresentation in their everyday lives online? How do they anticipate and live

with and around the real consequences of their online actions and interactions with others? How do they navigate the complexities of their public exchanges and their private lives, and how do they engage with parental and institutional surveillance? Finally, how can they engage and participate as citizens, consumers and workers in the public and political, cultural and economic spheres of the internet? These questions are examined in current empirical studies of young peoples' virtual and real everyday lives in educational institutions and homes (e.g. Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Quan-Haas, 2004).

On the ground, the everyday issues faced by digital youth are prima facie ethical matters. This is a key beginning point in an era where the ethical/moral implications of all forms of literacy are at once educational imperatives for informed, critical citizenship, civic participation and everyday social relations.

In this regard, the push towards a critical digital ethics and critical media literacy is the central educational challenge. It is not new, with prototypical work on media literacy initiated in Canada as early as the 1970s, evolving from broadcast TV and print advertising to current work on digital media internationally (C. Luke, 1990). But it has largely been seen as an adjunct to the core curriculum – this result is a relegation of new media into the category of popular culture, as neither part of the educational "basics" nor of longstanding school subjects of literature and scientific disciplines.

There are now almost continuous public calls for heightened child protection and surveillance in response to widespread moral panic around digital childhood (e.g. Havey & Puccio, 2016). To refer to this as a moral panic is not to understate the very real challenges and difficulties that digital technology raises for parents and families, schools and teachers. It is however, to acknowledge popular discourses and widespread generational frustration about the effects of digital technology on everyday life. These range from concerns about the displacement of embodied activity, physical play and face-to-face verbal exchange by compulsive online messaging and gaming, to online harassment, bullying, real and symbolic violence, from sexual and commercial exploitation of young people and children, to exposure to violence, pornography, ideological indoctrination and outright criminal behaviour.[1]

Their power to generate fascinating new expressive forms and relationships, to reshape the arts and sciences notwithstanding, digital media are amplifiers of the best and the worst, the sublime and the mundane, the significant and the most trivial elements of human behaviour, knowledge and interaction. How could it be any other way? It is all here online: statements, images, sounds, and acts of hatred and love, war and peace, bullying and courtship, truth and lies, violence and care, oppression and liberation – and every possible third or fourth space, in ever proliferating redundancy, cut through with noise and clutter.

The policy response
In the meantime, educational systems continue to pursue business as usual: a neoliberal consensus whereby human capital, standardization and commodification of the curriculum, and accountability via transnational testing regimes narrow the parameters of what will count as knowledge and schooling to human capital for economic competitiveness. If there is an unintended effect of the emergence of nationalist and xenophobic backlash, it is a reconsideration of the movement across OECD countries – aided and abetted by PISA[2] – to a curriculum consensus that, in effect, reduces knowledge to a technical and measurable commodity for the "new economy". What has been lost is the focus on what Delors (1996) called "learning to live together" and models of "active citizenship", which, fortunately, have defied measurement and standardization but, accordingly, have been left by the side of the road in models of education for human capital job skills.

At the same time, the appropriation of digital multi-literacies (New London Group, 1996) into the official curriculum has been fertile ground for neoliberal educational policy. Our view is that there are three forms of the colonization of digital multi-literacies: (1) Digital multi-literacies have been incorporated into the human capital ration-

ale, the very heart of corporate neoliberalism: re-defined as requisite job skills or "tools" for the new economy. This strips it out of a broader critical education, it can silence classroom debate over the morality, ethics, and everyday social consequences of communications media, their ownership and control.

(2) Digital multi-literacies have been re-defined as a measureable domain of curriculum for standardized assessment: digital tasks will be included in the current PISA testing. This has the effect of normalizing, controlling what officially 'counts' as digital creativity, critique and innovation; (3) Digital multi-literacies have been the object of commodification, with curriculum packages, approaches, methods and materials offered by publishers, corporations and consultants. This has the effect of eliminating the local, idiosyncratic, cultural play and interaction with new media and supplanting it with formulae and scripts, inevitably aligned with (1) and (2) above.

The alternative is to view critical media literacy as an "open" curriculum space for students and their teachers to explore, critique and construct texts, identities, forms of social and community actions (Share, 2009). This is about as new as Dewey's (1907/2012) discussion of the project or "enterprise". In Australia, digital multi-literacies and critical media literacy have "worked" precisely because there wasn't an official curriculum definition, or even a formal academic/scholarly doxa around it.

But over the last decade of Neoliberal governance, the move has been to put all curriculum and pedagogy in the box of standardization, assessment, accountability, control and surveillance – aided by government initiated and corporate-sponsored work in the "learning sciences" to measure and assess digital practices. This is an appropriation of multi-literacies into the same system of standardization and commodification that defined and delimited print literacy and traditional curriculum. And it sets the terms for systems to replicate yet again the core problems with the teaching of print literacy: a "closed" curriculum that yields differentiated and stratified achievement.

Critical media literacy and digital ethics
How we can enlist and harness these media to learn to live together in diversity, mutual respect and difference, addressing complex social, economic and environmental problems while building convivial and welcoming, just and life-sustaining communities and societies is the key educational problem facing this generation of young people and their teachers. This is an ethical vision and an ethical challenge.

Our case is that a digital ethics – indeed, an ethics of what it is to be human and how to live just and sustainable lives in these technologically saturated societies and economies – is the core curriculum issue for schooling. Nor do we believe that is it an adequate educational or philosophic or political response to current cultural, geopolitical and economic conditions and events for this generation of teachers and scholars, parents, care-

givers and community Elders to simply document or celebrate the emergence of new digital youth cultures without an attempt to call out ethical parameters and concrete historical consequences for communities, cultures and, indeed, human existence in this planetary ecosystem.

This is a generational and pedagogic responsibility as we stand at a juncture where residual and emergent cultures meet, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous, historically colonized and colonizing, settler and migrant communities attempt to reconcile and negotiate new settlements, where traditional, modernist and postmodern forms of life and technologies sit alongside each other, uneasily, often with increasing inequity and violence. Our view is that this is a moment that requires more from researchers, scholars and educators than descriptions of instances of local assemblage or student voice. Following on from Naomi Klein's (2015) analysis of the effects of capitalism, technology and modernity on the planetary ecosystem – our view is that this historical convergence of forces and events has the potential to "change everything".

The question of who owns, regulates and controls, and indeed profits and dominates from control and use of the dominant modes of information comes centre stage, shifting from religious authorities to the state and, ultimately, to the industrial and post-industrial, national and transnational corporation (Graham, 2017). Some regimes burn books, others write, print and mandate them; some governments censor the internet, all use it and monitor it; disputes over hate speech, libel and what can and cannot be said in the media-based civic sphere are now daily news – alongside of revelations of the profit structures, labour practices, environmental consequences and taxation schemes of those media and technology corporations that have become arguably the most profitable and dominant businesses in human history. Note that this political economy of communications typically is not studied in schools – even as this corporate order competes for the edubusiness of what counts as knowledge, how it is framed and assessed within these same schools (Picciano & Spring, 2012).

To begin to set a curriculum agenda for teaching and learning digital ethics, then, we outline three key foundational claims. These set the curriculum contents for digital ethics as a field or area for teaching and learning.

Our first claim is that digital ethics must operate at two analytically distinct but practically interwoven levels: it must engage at once with now classical questions about ideology (Kellner, 1978) and with questions about social actions and relations. As we have argued, the core concerns of educators about student digital lives relate to the ideational and semantic "stuff" – the ideologies, beliefs and values that learners must navigate online. This raises key questions about the truth, veracity, verification and belief, and, indeed, consequences of the information represented online. A recent article by a senior editor of *The Guardian* put it this way:

"For 500 years after Gutenberg, the dominant form of information was the printed page: knowledge was primarily delivered in a fixed format, one that encouraged readers to believe in stable and settled truths. Now, we are caught in a series of confusing battles between opposing forces: between truth and falsehood, fact and rumour, kindness and cruelty; between the few and the many, the connected and the alienated; between the open platform of the web as its architects envisioned it and the gated enclosures of Facebook and other social networks; between an informed public and a misguided mob. What is common to these struggles – and what makes their resolution an urgent matter – is that they all involve the diminishing status of truth" (Viner, 2016).

At the same time, truth claims and representations are themselves social actions – consequential assertions about what is. Hence, our simultaneous and equivalent ethical concern is with the interactional pragmatics of life online. In response to the aforementioned concerns of educators and the public, digital ethics must focus on the use of online social media as a primary site for

everyday social relationships with peers and others. To speak of ethics, then, refers simultaneously to both the ideational contents – the semantic stuff – of online representations, and the social and interactional relations of exchange between human subjects. Hence, our first foundational claim:

1) On ideology and social relations: That digital ethics must address questions about ideological contents – the values, beliefs, ideas, images, narratives, truths, that one produces and accesses online – and questions about social relations that are lived and experienced online, specifically the interactional and material consequences of individual and collective actions.

The ideational contents (M.A.K. Halliday's (1978) "field") and the interactional relational protocols and consequences (Halliday's "tenor") may appear analytically distinct, but are always interwoven in practice. What we say, write, speak, signify, how we speak, write, gesture, sign and to whom are ethical actions – no matter how conscious, unconscious or self-conscious, explicit, tacit or implicit the intentions and decisions of the human subject may be. In educational terms, then, digital ethics by definition engages both the "classification" of knowledge qua ideational content (whether construed as disciplinary, thematic, artistic, scientific) and the "framing" of knowledge via social relationships and actions (Bernstein, 1990).

Accordingly, our case is that schooling needs to introduce two interwoven strands of digital ethics:

* The teaching and learning of a performative ethics that enables the evaluation and anticipation of real and potential human and cultural, social and economic, bodily and environmental outcomes and consequences of digital actions and exchanges, their real and potential participants and communities; and,

* The teaching and learning of a critical literacy that enables the weighing and judging and critical analysis of truth claims vis a vis their forms, genres, themes, sources, interests and silences (Luke, 2018).

Our second claim focuses on the political economy of communications (Graham & Luke, 2013): that is, the relationships between state regulation and control, corporate ownership of the modes of information, and their ideological and economic effects. Following the prototypical work of Stuart Hall (1974) on broadcast media, the field of cultural studies has focused variously on audience positioning and responses to media texts ("decoding"), on the actual economic ownership and control of dominant modes of information (political economy) and how these are manifest in ideological message systems ("encoding"). Of course, digital exchanges operate on radically different dimensions of scope and scale, speed and interactivity than the broadcast media studied by Hall and colleagues. Digital tools have the revolutionary effect of altering the monologic and linear relationships of production/consumption, encoding/decoding established through broadcast radio, television and cinema, leading to claims that social media enables new community, agency and democratisation in ways that were intrinsically more difficult in an era of network and studio-based broadcast media (Isin & Ruppert, 2015; Jenkins et al. 2016).

For our present purposes, what remains powerful and relevant from Hall's ground-breaking work is the acknowledgement of the ideological interests at work in the production and reception of screen and image. Where it takes up the challenge of digital content, the tendency in schooling has been to focus principally on student and teacher responses and uses of media texts (through models of viewer and reader response), on the semantic content (through models of comprehension, literary and, to an extent, ideology critique) – and, far less explicitly if ever, on the relationships between ideological content, relationships of institutional control and power, and the corporate ownership of the modes of information.

Consider this analogy. This would be very much if we were to teach – recalling Innis' prototypical analysis of the "bias of communications" (1951) in pre-industrial mercantilism and industrial capitalism – how to read newspapers or how to use the railroad, without raising questions about who owns the press and transportation infrastructure, whose interests these structures

of ownership and control serve, who benefits and who is exploited by these configurations of political economy. As Innis' (1949) discussion of the relationships between "empire and communications" argues, all emergent communications media and transportation systems effectively reshaped human/machine and political economic and geographic ecosystemic relations as well.

The basis of economic rule (and plutocracy) has shifted from those of colonial trade documented by Innis (e.g. the Dutch East India Company, Hudson's Bay Company) to the owners of elements of the dominant transportation infrastructure (e.g. the railways, steel, oil and auto industries), to the emergence of media empires (e.g., telephone, wireless, newspapers, television networks) – to the current situation, where the world's economy is dominated by digital hardware/software /information corporations (e.g. Apple, Facebook, Google/Alphabet, Oracle, Tesla, Samsung), and producers of military and advanced technological hardware (e.g. Boeing, Airbus, arms manufacturers).

Hence, our second foundational claim:

2) **On the political economy of communications:** That in digital culture the political and economic are always personal, with every personal digital action an interlinked part of complex and often invisible economic exchanges that by definition support particular corporate and class interests and by definition have material and ecosystemic consequences.

The educational lesson here is simple: that the media that we use are not "neutral" or benign but are owned, shaped, enabled and controlled, capitalized upon and managed in their own corporate interests (Pasquale, 2015). These interests, social scientists, ecological scientists and community activists are increasingly realizing, have reshaped the transnational and domestic divisions of wealth, labour and power, and have broad, previously unexamined, effects on the use and sustainability of finite planetary resources and ecosystems (cf. Klein, 2015).

Our point is that the curriculum should entail both the study of the sources of information and their apparent distortions and ideological "biases" – but that such study can be extended to understanding the relationships between knowledges and global, planetary interests, including the corporate ownership, capitalization and profit from dominant modes of information. There are, furthermore, persistent questions about the complex relationships between digital work and culture and its relationship to carbon-based economy and resource utilisation (e.g., Bowers, 2014).

Our third claim is core to the establishment of any set of ethics. As argued, for many schools digital policy and practice tends to be both prohibitive in reaction to "risks" posed by digital technologies and simultaneously silent about the reconstructive institutional uses of digital technology. Ethics is by definition a normative field: like all education and schooling, ethical systems and claims are predicated upon a vision of what should be, of how human beings can and should live together.

The central message of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (1999) is that everyday judgments about right and wrong are grounded on visions of what might count as the "good life". Ethical judgments are the prerequisite philosophic and practical grounds for civility and justice. Habermas (1996) refers to this as a "counterfactual ideal" that is presupposed in each speech exchange. Therefore, our third foundational claims is:

3) **On a normative model of digital culture:** That ethics cannot exist as a set of norms or procedures for everyday life in digital cultures without a shared normative vision of the good life.

In terms of digital ethics, this means that any set of ethical injunctions taught to youth and children by definitions presupposes a vision of "what should be": a lifeworld where digital communications are used for ethical purposes for "the good". Further, this version of "the good", following Behabib (2002), must acknowledge the moral imperatives and challenges raised by diverse communities in pluralistic democratic societies, whether online or face-to-face. Our view, then, is that any school-based approach to media literacy and digital ethics must move beyond silences, prohibitions and negative injunctions (which, in-and-of themselves, are less than effective with adoles-

cents) to the reconstructive project of modelling and enacting digital citizenship, convivial social relations, and action for social justice in education, economy and culture.

Our aim, then, is to reframe critical media literacy and digital ethics as part of a larger inclusive and decolonizing educational project that refuses to relegate diversity and difference (including childhood and adolescence) to "second class moral status" (2002, p. 2) and pursues a vision of sustainable forms of life for all.

Digital media as tools for conviviality

All communications media reorganize and alter our sense of space and time. They enable and constrain epistemic and cultural stance, the building, conservation, critique, and transformation of cultural forms, meanings and identities. And digital media has expanded exchange between students, teachers and citizens beyond the confines of embodied and geographic place. Successful work with young people shows how digital arts and culture can provide "tools for conviviality" (Illich, 1973): means for learning to live together within and across diversity and difference, space and time, in ways that don't destroy environments and communities – particularly in the face of those who would build walls and recreate borders.

Unfortunately, we live in a dystopian media spectacle (Kellner, 2012) – where traditional authoritative sources of knowledge and cultural standpoints of print journalism and broadcast media have been left gasping for air, where science, truth and experience are but more competing texts, where relationships between figure and ground, sign and signified, celebrity opinion and scientific truth, real event and its representation have become blurred. This is the "implosion of meaning" (Baudrillard, 1994) predicted two decades ago – but, like global warming and planetary desecration, it seems to have occurred faster and more totally than anyone predicted. Digital ethics, multi-literacies and citizenship should be at the core of the curriculum for all.

The political events of 2016 have changed everything: in technology, media and communications, politics and culture, geopolitical and civic order, and, for many communities, the sustainability and survivability of everyday life. Any reconnoitring of critical media literacy, multi-literacies and digital ethics has to begin from an educational engagement and critical analysis of these new economic and cultural, civic and media conditions. For many students and communities have to contend not just with poverty, joblessness and inequality, but also the stark effects of autocracy and plutocracy, renewed racism and sexism, ideological distortion and untruth, unethical and unjust social relations and conditions, and fundamental issues around freedom, policing and public safety, control and surveillance.

Now, more than ever, schooling, education and literacies have to be about "reading and writing the world" – to return to Freire (1970). Lives and futures are on the line. ∎

Notes
1. For example: http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/Home.aspx
2. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations intended to evaluate educational systems by measuring 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading.

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Gender and human rights in the digital age

José Peralta

Is it possible to translate human rights into code? Joana Varon and her NGO Coding Rights intend to do so. Through innovative solutions, they hope to build bridges between gender, technology and human rights.

Information is power. This oft-repeated phrase is true, even if the way we share information changes over time. It is this very concept that inspired a group of women to use their intelligence, passion and knowledge in the service of "translating human rights to code."

This is the leitmotif of Coding Rights, an organisation created in 2015 that describes itself as a "think and do" tank. It focuses on strengthening human rights in the digital realm.

How can human rights be strengthened online? For Coding Rights, it can be done by considering the use and understanding of technology when shaping public policy. It can also be achieved by denouncing companies who use technology to violate digital privacy.

While this may sound like a mishmash of ideas, one thing is clear: Coding Rights walks the walk, and their work extends beyond far publishing statements. "We create apps, produce content, and break down complex ideas so that they are accessible to everyone," Joana Varon, founding director of Coding Rights, told IFEX.

Varon is a Brazilian researcher and activist, focused on technology, digital rights, and privacy. She's also a lawyer, and holds a degree in International Relations. In 2017, she was selected, amongst 15 others, for a fellowship dedicated to "building a more humane digital world" by the Mozilla Foundation.

Varon seeks to "reach people through accessible, easy-to-understand mediums" and to discuss "topics like surveillance and digital security." For Varon, this presents "a constant challenge."

"We take a three-pronged approach to our work: The first is to research the state of technology, its implementation, and the effects it has on fundamental human rights. The other is to translate the findings of our research so that more people and other movements can understand it. We want them to know that digital issues are cross-cutting and relate to almost all existing social movements (environmental, gender equality, etc.). The third aspect of our work occurs after we've conducted our analysis, and after we've informed and mobilised people. At this point, we think of the type of code we'd like to create that encompasses alternate values to the ones we currently see reflected in technology," said the researcher and activist.

It's a significant challenge, raising awareness about human rights in the digital age.

"It's a complicated issue. From the moment we created Coding Rights, we chose not to use the typical images of eyes and cameras to represent digital security. We wanted to make something that created more of a personal connection with people, and we continue to do so," says Varon.

She believes that things have changed "for the better" in Latin America over the past year; that people are more aware of issues related to personal data, privacy, and the internet. The Cambridge

Analytica case - in addition to other potential influences on the electoral results in countries like the United States - allowed people to "understand that their data is valuable" and to "pay more attention" to their online presence.

Translating to create understanding

The key concept that Varon works with is that of "translating" the complex mechanisms of digital security and surveillance into "concrete actions, where people can feel an impact."

"People often think that human rights and digital rights don't affect them directly, so we have to find innovative ways to discuss these topics," she said.

This is how Coding Rights was born - based on the aim to "translate human rights into code."

Right from the start, Coding Rights' work stood out as original and controversial. "SaferNudes", for example, is an initiative that informs people about how they can take all the nude photographs they like, while still safeguarding their anonymity (if that's what they want). The project offers a guide - complete with concrete examples - on how to take safe nude photographs.

"We would dare to say the vast majority of us yearns to send and receive nudes all day long, every day. We believe the privacy of your communications is a right, and that the decision to have them published or not should be exclusively yours," the project states.

This is the perspective that Coding Rights takes with each new project. Another example of their work is a newsletter on surveillance and digital security. The project started in 2015, and it continues to run today. Its primary focus? How the use of big data can affect elections.

Chupadatos – The data sucker

Something sinister moves through the shadows of the darkest nights - a being that terrorizes even the most remote towns of Latin America. It's a macabre, mythological being who sucks the blood out of farm animals. Known as the Chupa Cabras, it's been the worst nightmare of children and adults alike for decades.

Using this name as inspiration, Varon and her team created Chupadatos, a virtual being who – instead of sucking blood – sucks data from all of its victims (in other words: us).

"Chupadatos is yet another initiative that allows us to tell stories and share them on a large scale. It's a very effective way to make the link between gender and technology. It translates the problem and tells it in a way that people can understand. In this way, we're using technology as a tool to defend human rights," Varon says.

The link between gender and privacy is also made in "Menstruapps", a project that researched fertility and menstruation apps. The initiative uncovered that an enormous amount of data is collected from app users.

"It's detailed information about our bodies, sexual activity, and feelings. In most cases, the apps also use very traditional language that conveys a pro-fertility, traditional family model. These are all issues that we sought to raise awareness about and change," she said.

Other topics discussed by Chupadatos include: public transport in Rio de Janeiro, dating apps, apps for taking care of children, and marketing that targets mothers. "We hope that people become aware of this business model, and understand the risks that come with it. These risks can include leaked data, or the inappropriate use of data by the company that collects it," the researcher explains.

Currently, Coding Rights is working on "Safer Sisters", a feminist digital campaign that shares advice, via GIFs, on how women can stay safe online.

"We love it when people read an entire guide on digital security and become well-versed in the risks. But we understand that not everyone will read an entire guide. So, we like to share concrete steps, and tips that only require one click for people to take action."

Coding Rights' vision is clear. It sets out to approach pre-existing issues - such as surveillance, extortion, personal data misuse, and human rights violations - from new angles, using unique communication platforms.

This is why Coding Rights is made up of a small team. There are only six full-time employees. Depending on the projects they're developing, they "may look for the ideal candidate to see the project to fruition."

"We try to build bridges - to simplify the discourse of privacy and surveillance and apply it to everyday scenarios," Varon said.

The future: Creating codes to guarantee human rights

For Varon, the future of Coding Rights lies in honouring its name, and creating codes to develop technology based on "a different set of values." Values that "defend human rights" and that are rooted in "feminist and egalitarian" thought.

"I visualize this as the possibility to guaran-tee rights by conceptualizing technology that is different from the paradigm we currently live in," Varon said.

"The technology that we use nowadays, even the internet itself, was developed under the principle of connectivity. While this is an important value, we realized that we can't conceptualize it without relating it to other values, such as the right to privacy and data protection," she added.

Coding Rights has developed projects related to these issues. One example is radar legislativo (legislative radar).

Allyship, courage, and inspiration

Coding Rights also likes to work with other organisations who are strategic partners on the continent, and with whom they can develop innovative ideas. "We are always looking for partners to develop ideas, and who can help share them with more people," said Varon.

"We like to work on hot button issues, such as fake news, or the use of personal data in elections, but with a regional approach, and in a way that applies to our geographic area," Varon explains.

Several IFEX members have worked with Coding Rights, including Asociación de Derechos Civiles (ADC), from Argentina, Fundación Karisma, from Colombia, and Derechos Digitales, from Chile.

We asked representatives of these organisations about what it's like to work with Coding Rights:

"We've worked with Coding Rights on multiple occasions. I think the best way to describe the work of Joana and Coding Rights is 'courageous.' They aren't afraid to explore new perspectives or ways in which to discuss human rights and technology. And that, I think - in a community that is often far too self-referential - is very important and inspiring," said Vladimir Garay, Advocacy Director at Derechos Digitales.

"Coding Rights is one of the most interesting projects in the region when it comes to activism and digital rights. They take a fresh approach on how to communicate complex issues. Their communication style is straightforward and sprightly.

They offer an interesting perspective on gender. We worked together on Chupadatos, and another project that analysed government websites," said Carolina Botero, of Fundación Karisma.

Working with Varon and Coding Rights is "stimulating," Botero added, noting that the organisation "acts very quickly" and has "very fast" reaction times.

To Eduardo Ferreyra, public policy analyst for ADC, Coding Rights "does very good work regarding the use of personal data. They are very professional, but what makes them stand out the most is how they disseminate information in original ways. They often use art as a means of sharing their findings."

Both ADC and Coding Rights are researching how personal data is used by political parties during elections.

Coding Rights' projects have gone viral, and their impact continues to grow in the region and on the continent. It's in the energy and dedication of groups like Coding Rights that we can find hope for a freer, egalitarian and more tolerant Latin America. ∎

José Peralta is a Regional Editor for IFEX, a network of organisations connected by a shared commitment to defend and promote freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. Article reprinted with permission.

"Vulnerability" as the key concept of a communicative ethics for the 21st century

Hugo Aznar and Marcia Castillo-Martín

At a recent IAMCR Conference (Eugene, Oregon),[1] the authors presented a paper proposing that vulnerability could – or should – be the key concept of what they call the second generation of media or communicative ethics. This second generation began to appear during the last decade of the past century, but they propose that its development and dissemination are just now one of the most crucial tasks for the ethics of communication.

Before presenting this new generation, we will go briefly over the past generation. This can help us to understand better the task that we now have to confront. Setting precedents aside, this first generation was born during the beginning of the 20th century as a consequence of a series of events which occurred during its three first decades. These events are well known and we can look back on them in a schematic way.

The first was political democratization: a process which took place during the 19th century, and was completed in the first decades of the new century with universal suffrage, including the vote for women. This gave unprecedented relevance to electoral processes, and to mass parties and their leaders, competing for people's votes. Because of all this, public opinion, and political communication and advertising became a matter of huge interest.

The second was the First World War and, closely related, the Soviet Revolution. Both

placed at the top of the public agenda worries the questions of the impact of propaganda and misinformation, and their influence for conducting democratic societies in a globalized world.

The third was the appearance or, better still, the awareness of the appearance – because this event was also taking place from the middle of the 19th century as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution of what Graham Wallas and Walter Lippmann after him called the "Great Society". The Great Society was characterized by the power of the big corporations, the influence of remote and very complex effects, and what we now call globalization. A world in which people's lives were affected by remote facts, quite beyond the local proximity that had dominated people's experience until then. This made the information carried by the media crucial for understanding and managing this new, distant and complex world.

The last event was the consolidation of the industrial press, which sold millions of copies, earned huge quantities of money, and became extremely powerful. This was the first straight evidence of the nascent century of mass media, with illustrated magazines, cinema, radio and TV following the press. All this also placed the question of the power and behaviour of mass media at the very centre of the concerns of the new century.

Walter Lippmann can be considered the most representative author of this crucial moment because in his works of the 1920s he grasped with great sagacity the problems related to these changes and the giant challenges they posed to the naïve conceptions of democracy, public opinion and information of the two previous centuries (Lippmann and Merz, 1920; Lippmann, 1920, 1922, 1927). For the first time, he sited journalism and public opinion, and their relationship with contemporary democracy, at the centre of public preoccupation and at the very heart of two nascent disciplines: political sciences and journalism studies.

The crucial role of journalism and the principle of truthfulness

Under these new conditions – Lippmann insisted – a society needs valid information to evaluate its challenges and tasks, and to be able to take efficient decisions in complex situations. All the more so in a democracy in which public opinion plays a central role. Consequently, journalism became crucial for such a society. But, what kind of journalism?

Instead of propaganda, editors' ideology, manipulation or the crude ignorance of news workers of that time, at least three things were essential for the new emerging world and the press that it needed: i) to define the criteria of truth and objectivity in journalism, in order to make the information that flows in society more valid and useful; ii) to improve the professional qualifications of journalists; and iii) to increase the responsibility of media and journalists' performance (Lippmann, 1920).

These became the subjects of the nascent study of journalism and of emerging media ethics. Accordingly, the principles, criteria and norms for establishing journalistic truth, honesty and responsibility were formulated in the first decades of the 20th century. These moral criteria tried to assure the informative function of journalism, essential for a democracy and well formed public opinion. Norms to assure truthfulness, accuracy and objectivity; testing of information; verification of facts and testimonies; attribution of information and identification of the sources; fair methods of collecting information and materials; separation of facts and opinions; distinction between news and advertisement or propaganda, and so on, became the common content of the first codes of journalism ethics that appeared in those decades. These codes would be disseminated all over the world during the rest of the century.

This moral content and these codes of ethics of journalism would shape what we have called the first generation of communicative ethics. Nowadays these norms of journalism ethics are well established. They are recognized by all, journalists and media outlets, and indeed by many educated people in our developed societies. So, these basic journalistic norms are beyond doubt and we do not need to work on them in regard to their sense, content and function.

Obviously, we do not want to say that the ethical questions related to the information func-

tion of journalism are out of date. On the contrary, these questions are as crucial for our societies today as they were a century ago. Problems as serious as the effects of new technologies, like the Internet or bots; new uses, like Photoshop or Twitter; or news forms of propaganda or disinformation, like fake news. It is no surprise that our times have been declared the era of post-truth. These problems are quite fundamental, but none requires changing the established norms of journalistic ethics. They only need to be adapted to the new contexts, technologies or processes.

We do not want to suggest that these new challenges are easy to confront and resolve. They are quite complex and they test journalism as we have known it up to now. But they are not questions of principle: they form part of the same first generation of journalistic ethics, which related to the information function of journalism. They really present us with difficult tasks, but not in a different sense from those posed in the past century.[2]

A new task for communicative ethics

What we would like to suggest is that another big task faces us for the communicative ethics of our time. We need to complement the basic principles and norms of journalistic ethics concerning the truthfulness and reliability of information with a more broad communicative ethics, what we call a second generation of communicative ethics.

Why do we consider this new generation so necessary? In this case, the answer can be found in the mass media field itself: because of the role and importance that social communications have attained after a century of evolution. What was discovered at the beginning of the 20th century was that the role of the media was crucial to our contemporary political life, especially for democratic societies. As a response, the first generation of communicative ethics was developed. But what has been increasingly acknowledged since the end the past century is that the role, importance and influence of social communications have jumped to a new level. Social communications now occupy the centre of our societies and these increase the capacity to influence (sometimes to deter-

mine) other social systems: not only politics, but also culture, education, economy, sport, art, and many more (Bourdieu, 1998; Luhmann, 2000).

In addition to being a social agent and a social power between others more, social communications have become the environment in which a vast part of our personal and social life takes place. This being true, we have to provide a new response from communicative ethics in this new situation. As occurred at the beginning of the past century, we need to develop a second generation of communicative ethics which complements the first one.

The first generation established the ethical requirements to make the information provided by the mass media fully reliable. This information function is the specific social function that they have to perform in our societies. Now we have to look at the second function that every social system has to fulfil to exist and to win legitimacy as such: the principle of beneficence. This means that every social system, in addition to its specific function – to provide information in the case of mass media – also has the duty to contribute to a better society, to social justice, to the good of the people.

The principle of beneficence in social communications

This principle of beneficence can be performed at two different levels. In a minimum or "negative" sense, in which it is made equivalent to the principle of non- malfeasance. At this level it only demands that the activities of the social system do not harm the people or increase any of the wrongs of the society.

In the field of social communications this principle is embodied in norms of omission of bad practices like not practising harm discourse, not promoting violence, not contributing to discrimination through gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation, and avoiding stereotyping. These basic norms were progressively incorporated to the codes of ethics of journalism from the last two decades of the past century, as a transitional step between both generations of communicative ethics.[3]

But there is also a positive way of accomplishing the principle of beneficence: that the activities of the social system, in our case social communication realized by media and journalists, contribute to make society better and fairer. To some extent, this positive performance is not so demanding, so compulsory as are the norms of omission and the previous norms concerning the informative function of journalism – what we have called the first generation of communicative ethics. But we would like to suggest that realizing this most demanding version of the principle of beneficence is – or has to be – the guiding principle of the second generation of communicative ethics.

The question is what does this positive principle of beneficence imply in the field of communicative ethics. And we can find the answer in the very same historic moment in which was raised the necessity of the first generation of communicative ethics. But we have also to look at another proposal: the one made by John Dewey (Dewey, 1927).

Dewey considered the cited works of Lippmann very visionary, provocative and challenging, but he proposed an alternative role for social communications because he also had a different view of democracy.[4] The aim of democracy was not only to assure an efficient political way of resolving collective problems. True democracy had to be also a way of bringing about a more full realization of the individuals themselves. And for this social communication has to be a way to build an effective community through the communicative participation of the individuals. Social communication through the media should be the principal means to articulate an effective social community on a large scale.

If we understand the aim of the social communications in this broader sense, we need another principle of ethics in correspondence with it. The criteria of this broader communicative ethics have to be oriented to make the participation of the people easier, to promote their sense of being a part of the public debate, a part of the social community in dialogue. As this requirement could be too extensive in big societies like ours, Dewey formulated it in a more limited way. That in public debate over a social question, over a matter in which a decision has to be discussed and adopted, the equal participation at least of those affected by the situation or by the decision to be taken has to be a requirement of justice.

And this should be the way in which we can establish a new principle of communicative ethics for the media: to give voice to those affected by a situation, and especially to those in a situation of vulnerability, because this is the prime way in which they can make their voices heard and improve their situation.

In this way, we can make the proposal of vulnerability the crucial key of a second generation of communicative ethics. To make visible and to give a voice to those in the worst situations, in vulnerable conditions. In fact, this has been the ultimate motivation of a notable number of codes of communicative ethics formulated in the last two decades. Codes with recommendations about how the media and journalists have to behave regarding questions such as violence against women, terrorism and its victims, protection of minors, immigrants, the elderly and people living with disabilities, and so on (Aznar, 2005). In all these codes, the core aim is always the protection and improvement of people in a position of vulnerability.

Thus, the nascent second generation of communicative ethics has vulnerability as its key concept. And it can be as effective as the first generation was in setting the norms of reliable journalism. We can conclude with a recent example: how making the cries of immigrant children at the US border audible through mass media – the voices of the most vulnerable in this situation – forced the most powerful man on the planet to change his position. ∎

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Notes

1. The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) is a worldwide professional organisation in the field of media and communication research.
2. We have dedicated most of our work in the field of communicative ethics to investigating and promoting what we consider the best response to confront the majority of these challenges: media and journalist accountability systems or, as we prefer to call them, the mechanisms of self–regulation (Aznar, 2011).
3. We can consider as one of the first and most representative examples of this incorporation the seventh article of the IFJ Code of Ethics, added in 1986: "7. The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins".
4. Recently this interchange of ideas has been presented as a "debate" between both authors, although in fact it was not such. The most informed work on this, Jansen, S. C. (2009).

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Marcia Castillo-Martín is Teacher of Language of the Advertising (Esic Marketing and Business School, Valencia) and of Production of Texts (European University of Valencia). She has published a series of articles and books on the image of women in the first third of the 20th century and on gender violence such as Las convidadas de papel. Mujer memoria y literatura en la España de los años XX (Alcalá de Henares, 2001); or, as co-editor, Marcadas a ferro. A violencia contra a mulher, uma visão multidisciplinar (Brasilia, 2005). Nowadays she is co-directing the documentary Seven Leagues, which narrates the experience of a company of dance for children with cerebral palsy.

Digital poison or digital balm

Phil Haslanger

As Christians struggle with social media ethics, where are the guideposts?

At first, the requests were below the radar. A group of LGBTQ people of colour and some of their white allies sent emails to interfaith groups and other organizations in Madison, Wisconsin, asking them to withdraw their support of the annual Pride Parade if contingents of armed law enforcement officers – many of them also gay or lesbian – were allowed to march.

This is not the kind of controversy that typically divides Christian churches, where some see gays as living a sinful life and others see them as living out the way God created them. This was a divide within the LGBTQ world that caught many people in liberal congregations off guard.

Then the controversy ignited on Facebook. A public meeting brought together 90 people for a face-to-face discussion. There were news stories, letters to the editor and guest columns in the local news media. The debate swirled around issues of sexuality and race and views on the role of police in a contentious time. Ultimately, local police did not participate in the Pride Parade in uniform.

On so many levels, the debate raised issues about whose voices get heard in which kinds of forums. It also posed questions about how people engage in the often volatile world of social media. Those are questions pose challenges to faith communities as well as to the broader society.

Some of the online posts caused fractures in long-time relationships. Others offered healing in the midst of anger. This became a microcosm of amplified behaviour in the digital age.

Church folks were not the only ones engaged in this debate, of course. Numerous churches in the Madison area have been deeply involved in welcoming LGBTQ members and standing with them. But since Madison and its churches are

predominantly white, a real gap emerged in the awareness of the concerns of LGBTQ people of colour. And the specifics of those concerns were only really visible to the wider public through social media.

Who had access to the debate?

On Facebook, people in some church communities picked up on the concerns. There was a news story in the daily paper six days before the parade. Gradually, more people became aware of the issues. If you were not on social media, however, you probably had little awareness of the debate at all.

But for the LGBTQ people of colour, it was the use of social media that allowed them to engage the wider community in the issue when they did not have access to the more mainstream media outlets. They told the story of their particular fears of the police. As one straight white woman posted

on Facebook, for people like her and her family and friends and church – people she described as "more empathetic and connected than many – this was one of the first times this became more known."

It was the storm on social media that helped bring people to the face-to-face meeting. And having raised the issue to some degree of prominence, the letters to the editor and opinion columns that followed kept widening the circle of those engaged in the issue.

As Alys Brooks, a free-lance writer in Madison, noted in a column for *The Capital Times* on Aug. 15, "Listening to queer and transgender people of colour is vital for white members of the community like myself."

The activity on social media opened up that opportunity for expression and for listening. And, as is the reality of social media, it also opened up the opportunity for harsh judgments, misunder-

standings, and damage to old alliances.

It seems to me this is the place where church communities have a particularly useful and important role to play. Whether the issue involves sexuality, climate change, race or any other volatile issue, churches are a place where folks can explore both the possibilities and the poison within the ever-emerging digital world.

Whatever the hot issue of the day, it does not take long for social media to light up, whether with the brief comments made on Twitter or the rants that appear on Facebook. Vivid examples through the summer of 2018 involved a prominent Southern Baptist leader who had made inappropriate comments to a woman dealing with domestic violence and to young women he encountered as a minister.

Then there were more recent developments in the on-going revelations about predatory behaviour by Catholic priests and the lack of accountability by their bishops. Digital media amplified the reactions to all of this.

As Christians try to navigate the choppy waters of social media, what might be the ethical guideposts that can light the way? There is, of course, that fundamental guidepost offered by Jesus to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. That's a good starting point. Beyond that, though, are some of the distinctive elements that come to play in a digital world.

One is to spend the time assessing the veracity of the information we consume and that we pass along. That means paying attention to the sources of the information. For news sources, look at what steps were taken to verify the information. Is the information put in a wider context? Consider whether multiple people were involved in reviewing the story. Take note of whether the news outlet routinely runs corrections as warranted. See whether other news sources support or debunk the original story.

The Associated Press, one of the largest and most reliable of news sources, says in its 2018 Stylebook, "Fluency in social media takes time and effort…On social networks, credulity is gained through consistency and by building connections through interaction and sharing."

The time and effort any user on social media puts into assessing what they read or view in turn affects their own credibility with what they post. Too often, people read a headline that catches their attention and share the story or comment on it without having any idea what is in the story. Over time, that reduces the credibility of the one making these random posts.

This is particularly important in this era when essentially anyone can function as a journalist. As Marty Baron, the editor of *The Washington Post*, told CNN's David Axelrod on a recent podcast, "I think the public has a greater challenge in front of it, to decide who is trustworthy and who's not." Paying attention to the veracity of facts matters. So, too, does assessing the source of opinions.

In the debate over the Pride Parade, some people seemed to be just shooting from the hip. But when an African-American lesbian wrote about the double fear she felt from her dual identities, it made the issue personal. When a gay police officer wrote about the advances the Madison police had made in dealing with both LGBT people and communities of colour, he added nuance to the discussion. When a lesbian pastor wrote about how wearing a clerical collar in the Pride Parade was her way of showing that church people were part of this, she asked why have police in uniform could not send the same message.

These opinions came from people who spoke from their own experiences. Those reading their opinions may not agree with them, but they could have empathy.

That gets to another ethical imperative in dealing with social media, this time for the one doing the posting. Bringing empathy to a debate is not only a way to engage those who might disagree with you, but also reflects that spirit of Christianity that regards all people as created in the image of God.

The idea of paying attention to the sources of facts and opinions is a pretty standard guidepost for navigating the digital world. Bringing empathy to what is posted, while not something unique to Christians, is something that ought to be a hallmark of people who seek to be followers of Jesus.

That does not mean accepting the kinds

of hateful comments that can generate so much attention in the digital world. It means responding to them in ways that recognize the humanity of those making those comments even while disagreeing with them.

Yes, it's true that there are places in the Gospels where Jesus unloads a stream of invective on the religious authorities who are challenging him and making life difficult for ordinary Jews. Calling opponents a "brood of vipers" would sell well on Twitter. But for the most part, Jesus engaged people with questions, he sat down for meals with those who doubted him, he had empathy for those who were suffering.

It's true that the scope of ethical questions in the digital universe extends far beyond how individuals behave. Questions of privacy, of the scale and power of digital corporations, of the role of governments, of the access communities have to the benefits of technology and the controls that freeze people out all are important issues as we move forward in the 21st century. There is certainly a role for religious institutions in those debates.

Where churches may have the most important role, though, is in these closer-to-home issues where they can provide a forum for people to examine the role of social media in their own lives, to help create the ethical guideposts that can anchor people more closely to the way of Jesus.

The experience of the debate over the Pride Parade in Madison did not end once the parade was over. There were folks connected to church communities who used social media to invite people into continued conversation – more of it face-to-face than digital. They used the tensions as an opportunity to reknit the frayed relationships.

It is that mix of the digital world and the face-to-face world that offers a digital balm to a hurting world. ∎

Rev. Phil Haslanger worked for 34 years as a journalist at *The Capital Times* in Madison, Wisconsin, USA,and then for a decade as a United Church of Christ pastor. He is now retired and chairs the advisory board of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Challenges facing Albania's media landscape

Klea Bogdani

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom of expression is the right of every individual to hold opinions without interferences and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of any barriers.[1] In practice, freedom of expression is often restricted through tactics that include censorship, restrictive press legislation, and harassment of journalists, bloggers and all others who voice their opinions.[2]

In Albania, the leading legislative document pertaining to freedom of expression is Article 22 of the Albanian Constitution. It guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press, radio and television and considers them a part of fundamental human rights and freedom.[3] The Constitution also guarantees the freedom and right to information about the activity of state institutions and about persons exercising public functions.[4]

Despite being enshrined in the Constitution, freedom of speech is heavily politicized. Newspapers often reflect political tendencies of "including who they support" and the party holding the political majority controls the public broadcasters.[5] The U.S Department of State wrote in April 2018 that pressures from political affiliations and large corporations, namely self-censorship and harassment, are some of the most significant human rights issues in Albania.[6]

The beginning of traditional Albanian media can be traced back to the end of communist rule in the country. Beginning in 1990-1991, as Albania was transitioning from communism to democracy,

the country slowly began expanding its media landscape, as evidenced by the increase of newspapers, magazines and TV stations.[7] Though the expansion brought about a greater number of news sources, the growth of media in Albania, from the very beginning, was a result of political groups producing "free-media" in a post communist country as a way to maintain their respective power.[8] As a result, the emerging model of a free press in Albania was one of journalism exclusively dictated by the approved views of the party in power.

In 1994, journalists began appearing as actors in the media and made an effort to detach the media from political parties, but the task was made difficult as the concept of "freedom of the press" was mainly confined to "freedom of political debate", serving to restrict the media landscape to a tool of political representation. In 1998, large corporate interests began infiltrating Albanian media.

Investment in television stations and newspapers became a way to strengthen the interests of corporations, where today 90% of the news is controlled by four families owning all of the top media companies.[9] The top four are owned by Dritan Hoxha; Klan Group, owned by Aleksander Frangaj; Panrama Group, owned by Irfan Hysenbellio; and Media Vizion, owned by the Dulaku brothers.[10]

Today, the interests of political parties and large corporations has led to a diversified media landscape consisting of 20 daily newspapers, 71 radio stations, 70 television stations.[11] With the rise of the Internet and the expansion of news sources, the opportunities for disseminating news seems promising. But the control of the media by these four large companies shows that overtime, business owners have become such important media owners while also maintaining close relationships with politicians and other high officials of the country.

The control of the media by political and corporate interests is not only detrimental in that it exacerbates the issue of who can control what can be said, but it also makes the work of journalists difficult, who often have to choose between reporting in favour of large corporations and pol-

itical affiliations or reporting on events that run counter to their interests. The Media Institute Albania, an instrumental civil society actor in promoting media and journalistic rights, noted that:

"It seems impossible to find owners who don't exert influence on the media in the name of their private interests. Media leaders… continually adjust editorial policies and news content to serve their economic and political interests".[12]

According to a 2015 report by the Balkan Investigative Journalism network (BIRN) Albania, media professionals in Albania act under strong pressures from public institutions, through state-sponsored advertising, from big advertisers and also from owners' economic interests and political links.[13] In doing so, media and information become reduced to private property rather than a publicly shared asset, which over time has severely undermined the ability of civil society to receive objective reporting.

Not only are the pressures from self-censorship high due to elitist interests, but they are also caused by the nature of insecure work Albanian journalists face. Ninety percent do not have contracts according to a 2014 study conducted by the European Parliament on media in the Western Balkans and up to 70% have worked unpaid or faced delayed salary payments.[14] The head of the Albanian Journalists' Union, Aleksander Cipa, considers employment contracts a trap for journalists, stating:

"These contracts are often unilateral and are often imposed… they are formulated in such a manner that they often have no legal value… [where] media bosses in most cases do not give journalists a copy of the contract".[15]

Because of these kinds of pressure, investigative journalism, where reporters deeply investigate a single topic, is quite rare for fear of publishing content contrary to political or corporate interests. Many journalists adapt to the owners' interests and implement their agendas, often self-censoring their work. They often resort to these practices to avoid violence and harassment and as a response to pressure from publishers and editors seeking to advance their own political and economic interests. For those reporters who do decide to speak out, the consequences are often grave, such as for Elvi Fundo.

A respected Albanian journalist who specializes in covering corruption, he was badly beaten by two men in Tirana Square in May 2017. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) wrote about the attack on Fundo and found that he had recently investigated the funding of several media outlets including Ora News TV, a privately owned news channel.16 Fundo declared to Balkan Insight, the news portal of Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, "I don't believe it's a political attack but the work of criminals financed by corrupt media clans tied to drug trafficking", suspecting that the incident was an attempt to silence him and the information uncovered on the drug trafficking ring.[17]

Like Fundo, many other journalists, in fact 80%, report a negative work environment consisting of job insecurity, the pressure of self-censorship, as well as physical and verbal assaults.[18] Evidenced by high staff-turnover among journalists and the frequency of cases where external forces such as the police, government, publishers and political parties interfere, it is clear that the work environment for journalists is not always easy.

Alfred Lela from Mapo Newspaper spoke of this when he said, "If you don't have a contract, you are not as free because you always have to think: If I do this, will I fly out? So I think this has an indirect effect on the freedom of the press."[19] Similarly, Artan Rama, an investigative journalist, was barred from appearing on television after attempting to report on the precarious work conditions that left a 17-year old boy badly injured.[20]

Journalists often feel unable to express information that is unbiased and factual, which severely hinders Albania's ability as a democratic society to circulate news, such as information which holds authorities and large corporation accountable for their actions. It further marks a lack of transparency and corruption in the political elite that serves the oligarchs who use the media to fur-

ther their personal interests. Freedom of expression in Albania is at risk then because of the rise of self-censorship, where many journalists are opting to abandon professional ethics and are forced to work for the personal interests of executives and owners of TV channels rather than reporting objectively. While self-censorship in the short-run allows most journalists to keep their jobs and remain free from harassment, in the long-run, it severely compromises a journalist's ability to report objectively and thus for civil society to receive crucial information on influential groups in society.

Importance of journalism training
Current legislation in Albania does little to address the issue of objective reporting. However, the Albanian Media Institute (AMI), an NGO formed in 1995 committed to communications issues, remains at the forefront of training journalists.[21] This is especially important as many media outlets are unable to adopt their own formal guidelines.

AMI seeks to implement short-term programs in journalism training for students and mid-career journalists, where they are educated in the use of digital skills with the aim of improving workers' abilities to use different forms of expression.[22] AMI goes further in that it substantially engages in media policy issues such as improving media legislation, and emphasizing the importance of freedom of expression for journalists.[23]

AMI's initiatives mirror those of Media Aktive Center, another organization which implemented a major project in 2013-14 called "Intensive Practice of Multimedia Journalism" where 90 students from journalism and other departments came together to form citizen journalism start-ups in the form of blogs, YouTube channels and WebRadio.[24] In both cases, the projects enabled young people to become familiar with the nature of the job that takes place in radio, television and print, and urges them to use digital tools as an influential product in society.

With the massive spread of the internet and online communication, the intern creates the opportunity for political actors to enter into direct communication without the need for media-tion via traditional media. In this way, they reach a younger demographic and internet users of all age groups can participate more than through traditional media. AMI and Media Aktive use a journalistic platform as an opportunity for young workers entering the field to overcome obstacles such as violence and pressure.

The situation of Albania's media landscape and the impact on journalists' freedom of expression is important to note when considering the consequences for Albanian democracy. Without transparency and objective reporting of those most influential in society, it becomes difficult to assess their actions and seek redress. While this human rights issue is pervasive in Albania, it also holds true for many other countries worldwide, making it a pressing issue for all concerned. ∎

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Recuperar la utopía de la democratización de las comunicaciones

José Luis Aguirre Alvis

El informe de la Comisión Internacional para el Estudio de los Problemas de la Comunicación (CIC), o conocido también por el nombre del Presidente de esta comisión como el Informe MacBride, en alusión al jurista Irlandés, Premio Nobel de la Paz (1974) y Premio Lenin de la Paz (1977), Seán MacBride, se completó en diciembre de 1979, y así se sabe que él presentó dicho documento al Director General de la UNESCO, el senegalés Amadou-MahtarM'Bow, en 1980 en oportunidad de celebrarse en Belgrado la 32ª Sesión de la Conferencia General de la UNESCO.

L a tarea de esta Comisión, integrada por 16 miembros, quince expertos más la conducción de Seán MacBride, se había iniciado en diciembre de 1977, siendo un trabajo realizado por encargo de la Conferencia General de la UNESCO reunida en su XIX Sesión realizada en Nairobi en 1976. Esta Conferencia "encargó al Director General de la UNESCO, efectuar un estudio de la totalidad de los problemas que plantea la comunicación en la sociedad moderna" (Schenkel,1981: 81).

Fue así que para hacer efectiva esta vasta y ambiciosa tarea, como habría indicado el mismo Director General de la UNESCO, decidió formar el grupo de trabajo de expertos de distintas regiones del mundo dando origen así a la CIC, Comisión Internacional para el Estudio de los Problemas de la Comunicación. La Comisión dentro del contexto de la llamada Guerra Fría en que

operó daba también continuidad a la presencia de nuevas demandas en el debate mundial como fue el caso del surgimiento del Movimiento de Países No alineados operado desde inicios de la década de los 70.

La presencia de este nuevo conjunto de actores y que se colocaba en medio de los intereses de occidente, sobre todo de Norteamérica, y los de la Unión Soviética introduciría a diferencia de anteriores debates referidos al libre flujo de la información impulsados por los Estados Unidos dentro de la UNESCO el tema del equilibrio y equidad en el aprovechamiento de los recursos de la información y así de los intereses dentro de la relación entre los estados.

Así, según refieren Quirós y Sierra: "… la incorporación de un gran número de países al Sistema de Naciones Unidas – como consecuencia del proceso reciente de descolonización – cambió la correlación de fuerzas. Desde 1973, el Movimiento de Países No Alineados (MPNA) actuó de forma concertada en la ONU y sus organismos especializados, introduciendo en la agenda dos polémicos proyectos: el Nuevo Orden Económico Internacional(NOEI) y el Nuevo Orden Internacional de la Información (NOII)" (Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 12).

El horizonte del Nuevo Orden Internacional de la Información (NOII) – abierto como escenario de observación, debate y fuerte incidencia política – sería rebautizado, a decir de Bulatovic, por la entonces recién constituida Comisión MacBride por el nombre de Nuevo Orden Mundial de la Información y la Comunicación (NOMIC) "… al considerar que la demanda debía abarcar la totalidad de la comunicación de masas y no solo la información" (Bulatovic, 1978 en Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 12).

Según Schenkel, la misión específica de la Comisión fue "…estudiar la totalidad de los problemas de la comunicación en las sociedades modernas, con especial atención a los problemas relativos a una circulación libre y equilibrada de información, el establecimiento de un nuevo orden económico e informativo y a la solución de los grandes problemas que confronta el mundo" (Schenkel, 1981: 82). Este autor continúa señalan-

do que: "Desde su acepción en 1976 este reclamo tercermundista fue motivo de apasionadas controversias entre los países occidentales, la Unión Soviética y los países en desarrollo" (Schenkel, 1981: 82).

La versión en inglés titulada *Many Voices, One World* publicada en 1980 fue traducida en por lo menos ocho idiomas diferentes, y así en español se la conoce como *Un Solo Mundo, Voces Múltiples, comunicación e información en nuestro tiempo*. Lo relevante de esta Comisión fue que estuvo integrada
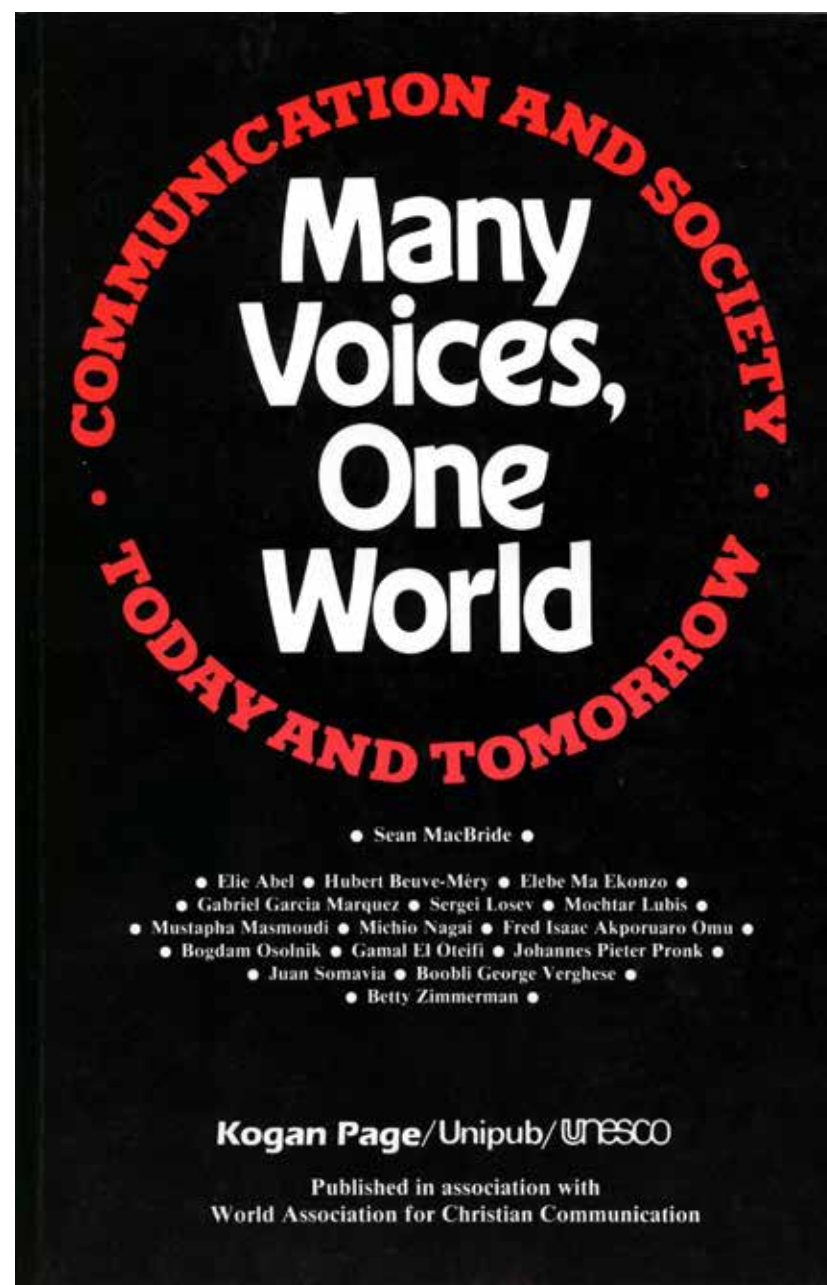
por representantes de las distintas regiones del mundo con destacados intelectuales o prominentes actores de la vida pública. Los que a decir del mismo MacBride no necesariamente estuvieron en consenso en algunos temas pero que por su buena voluntad y alto espíritu emitieron este diagnóstico de modo conjunto. Según Márques de Melo, "…a pesar de esas divergencias, no hubo un solo miembro de la Comisión que no estuviese

convencido de la necesidad de efectuar reformas de estructura en el sector de la comunicación y de que el orden actual es inaceptable"(Márques, Comunicación y poder en América Latina, p.9).

Para el caso de América Latina entre los actores directos de la construcción del Informe Mac-Bride figuran un escritor renombrado, el literato colombiano Gabriel García Márquez, quien habría años después recibido el Premio Nobel de Literatura (1982), también aparece el diplomático y comunicador chileno Juan Somavía. Y se sumaría desde esta región como parte del equipo de colaboradores el diplomático chileno Fernando Reyes Matta.

Once constataciones sobre el derecho a comunicarse

Los elementos centrales del Informe MacBride según refiere José Márques de Melo se encuentran en la Resolución de Belgrado de 1980, y comprenden 11 puntos:

* Eliminación de los desequilibrios en el sistema internacional de información.
* Eliminación de los efectos negativos de determinados monopolios, públicos o privados, así como de las excesivas concentraciones de los medios.
* Superación de los obstáculos internos y externos para un libre flujo y una más amplia y equilibrada difusión de información e ideas.
* Pluralidad de fuentes y canales de información.
* Libertad de prensa y de información.
* Libre ejercicio del derecho a la información en el ejercicio responsable de los periodistas y profesionales de los medios.
* Preparación de los países en desarrollo para lograr mejoras en sus propias situaciones, sobre todo en lo que respecta a la adquisición de equipamiento propio, capacitación del personal, recuperación de la infraestructura, además de tornar sus medios de información y de comunicación sintonizados con sus propias necesidades y aspiraciones.
* Compromiso real de los países desarrollados para ayudarlos a alcanzar dichos objetivos.
* Respeto a la identidad cultural de cada pueblo

y el derecho de cada nación para informar y participar en el intercambio internacional de información, con criterios de igualdad, justicia y beneficio mutuo.
* Respeto al derecho de todos los pueblos para participar del intercambio internacional de información, basándose en la igualdad, justicia y beneficio mutuo.
* Respeto al derecho de la colectividad, así como de los grupos étnicos y sociales, para tener acceso a las fuentes de información y participar activamente en los flujos de comunicación.

Este conjunto de constataciones y las consiguientes recomendaciones naturalmente no se las podía pensar como de adopción inmediata ni menos obligatoria para los estados, pues no eran como señala Márques de Melo (Comunicación y Poder, p. 2) una serie de preceptos mágicos sino que más bien se constituían en elementos visualizados para un avance gradual y deseablemente constante. Los principios que sostenían estos preceptos eran: mayor justicia, mayor equidad, mayor reciprocidad en el intercambio de información, menor dependencia en relación a las corrientes de comunicación, menor difusión de mensajes en sentido descendiente, mayor autosuficiencia e identidad cultural y mayor número de ventajas para toda la humanidad.

Sobre el Informe MacBride, muchos coinciden en señalar que representa el mayor y más serio esfuerzo de diagnóstico nunca antes realizado sobre los problemas fundamentales que se enfrentaban en su tiempo en materia de comunicación e información. Y también se señala que su mérito fue hacer comprender que abordar el estudio de la comunicación social no podía desprenderse de la discusión política, económica, social y cultural, desplazándose así de cualquier mirada instrumental o únicamente difusiva.

El informe plantea que la comunicación está ligada de modo inseparable a los espacios tensionales del poder, así señala que: "…la comunicación, y así el mismo informe, puede ser tanto un instrumento de poder como una arma revolucionaria, un producto comercial o un medio de educación. Puede servir al progreso, a horizontes cada vez

más amplios de libertad, democracia y bienestar o a la guerra, al mantenimiento de dictaduras reaccionarias o de escandalosos desigualdades y atropellos a los derechos humanos" (Schenkel, 1981: 82).

Sobre el Informe MacBride, y desde el espacio del análisis académico como de los interesados en las dinámicas de la comunicación social en la esfera global se han operado reiterados esfuerzos de revisión, recuperación y redimensionamiento. Así, se han realizado balances a los diez años, a los veinticinco y a los treinta años, para ahora en 2018 correspondería realizar desde la conclusión de este Informe en 1980, una revisión estando próximos a alcanzar sus cuarenta años. La coincidencia mayor de cada una de estas oportunidades previas ha sido la de señalar que: "…el Informe MacBride permanece actual. Sus tesis continúan siendo válidas. Sus metas persisten vigorosas. Sus utopías aguardan terreno fértil para florecer" (Márques de Melo. Comunicación y poder, p.1).

Sin embargo, las transformaciones esperadas no pudieron ser alcanzadas, así, Márques de Melo afirma que: "Bajo el ropaje de un nuevo orden comunicacional permanece el viejo orden informativo, en escala menor, pero poco diferente de los artificios populistas vigentes a mediados de siglo" (Márques de Melo. Comunicación y poder, p. 7). Por tanto, junto a estas constantes que de uno u otro modo se mantienen, reproducen y amplían, especialmente entre regiones periféricas y aquellas políticamente menos gravitantes, e incluso al interior de los mismos estados entre sus sectores sociales más ricos y aquellos menos favorecidos se suman las condiciones propias de la exponencial evolución tecnológica alcanzada en el siglo XXI donde las oportunidades de un acceso universal a estos recursos no se hacen efectivas.

Nueva orientación en cuanto al desarrollo social

Las propuestas del Informe MacBride también implican una nueva orientación en las líneas de orientación del planteamiento de la comunicación para el desarrollo social. Juan Somavía (Quirós y Sierra, 2016 :31) señala a este respecto, tres principios a sostenerse:

* La información dejará de ser considerada una simple mercancía. La función de informar no es un negocio cualquiera. Antes bien, se trata de un derecho y un bien social y una función comunitaria preeminente.
* La estructura de la información se vinculará además al sistema educativo. Superando la visión formalista del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, se plantea superar la discordia abierta entre escuela y medios de comunicación social desde una perspectiva integradora.
* La transformación del sistema informativo se vincula además con la necesaria participación de las mayorías nacionales en la gestación y ejecución de las políticas de desarrollo nacional.

En este sentido, según Juan Somavía, se propondrá una mayor promoción, a futuro, de la "función participatoria y los derechos del receptor en el proceso de la comunicación, más allá del derecho teórico de comprar o no comprar un periódico o una revista, y de encender o apagar la televisión y la radio, como formas de expresar opiniones a un determinado medio de comunicación" (Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 33).

El NOMIC fija en los conceptos de acceso y participación social los ejes de una alternativa radical al modelo vigente de estructura dominante de la información. En palabras de Reyes Matta, generar el acceso y la participación en los procesos informativos es abrir paso a una forma de acceso y participación en el desarrollo. En otros términos, la participación activa en el proceso de comunicación implica el derecho a participar en las instancias de decisión donde los contenidos y características de los mensajes se resuelven, a la vez que el derecho a influir en los niveles de decisión de la política general de comunicaciones que una
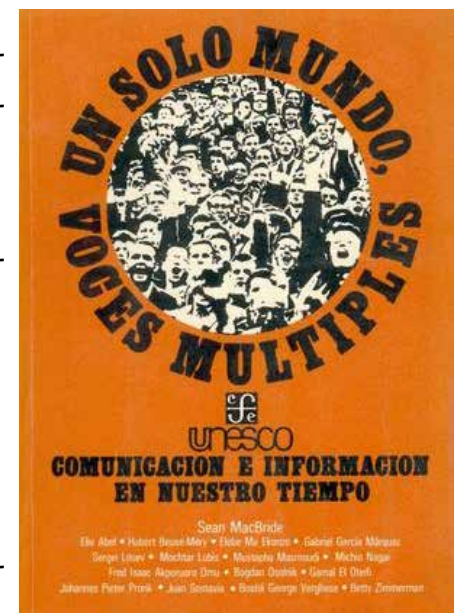
comunidad se dé, tanto para sí misma, como para su relación con el exterior (Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 31).

Mastrini y De Charras (2004), sintetizan así el nuevo escenario desde el cual se podría observar la continuidad del Informe MacBride, tras las últimas dos décadas de neoliberalismo:

* El concierto de naciones que naturalmente debatía en el seno de la UNESCO hoy tiene un nuevo espacio de discusión en la UIT (organización netamente técnica), transformando ciertos conceptos como "Acceso" y "Participación" en nociones meramente técnicas de "acceso digital".

* Por las propias características de la organización convocante, existen nuevos interlocutores para los Estados que ya no se constituyen solo en otros estados nación, sino que se agregan las corporaciones del sector privado y, en menor medida, la sociedad civil.

* El desequilibrio de la información ahora se denomina "brecha digital".

* La realización de un programa internacional para el desarrollo de las comunicaciones ahora se denomina "Fondo de Solidaridad Digital";

* Los países periféricos no han dejado de serlo, pero no se presentan en bloque como los "no alineados" (Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 60).

Continuidad del espíritu del Informe MacBride

A la verificación de la permanencia de ciertas constantes del Informe MacBride hoy se impone acompañar el balance con la mirada autocrítica sobre todo desde Latinoamérica y a partir de sus esfuerzos comunicativos. José Márques de Melo insta a detenerse para instalar revisiones, por ejemplo, para abandonar el espacio eminentemente retórico asumido desde el Informe MacBride y así poder analizar elementos como observar la misma formulación del campo de las políticas nacionales de comunicación las que al no poder ser comprendidas en su real alcance más bien dejaron una sensación estatizante.

Sobre esta dimensión, y que es un rasgo esencial de las propuestas operativas para acercarse

al nuevo orden de la comunicación e información hará falta hoy introducir mecanismos de fortalecimiento y participación de la sociedad civil. De este modo se podría cambiar la percepción y la tendencia de asignar a los gobiernos al papel protagónico central de las nuevas relaciones. Pues, como indica Márques de Melo, "La propia historia se encargó de demostrar que las iniciativas de apropiación de los Medios por los gobiernos nacionalistas o populistas del continente redundaron en proyectos manipuladores de la opinión pública, al servicio de los ocupantes del poder" (Márques de Melo, 1990:6).

Esta perspectiva estatizante incluso podría haber tenido que ver con la afirmación de que: "En realidad, las ideas contenidas en el documento producido bajo el liderazgo de Seán MacBride nunca fueron combatidas en esencia. Sólo fueron rechazadas por la apariencia, provocando un huracán que casi desestabilizó a la UNESCO" (Márques de Melo, 1990:1).

Otro elemento que se advierte como necesario observar críticamente del Informe MacBride es su postura de omnipotencia de los medios masivos. Esto entendiendo que si entre sus alcances también se aspiraba contribuir a alcanzar un Nuevo Orden Económico Internacional habría que haberse notado que la comunicación o el uso de los mismos medios de difusión no serían capaces de lograr por encima de su dinámica de reorientación y esfuerzos aquellos impactos en la esfera económica, y quizás menos aun en la esfera global.

Un tercer aspecto a revisar sería su marcado posicionamiento discursivo, así como de la atención académica sobre fenómenos que no agotan la complejidad de la misma experiencia comunicacional e informativa. El mismo Márques de Melo advierte que sobre todo en los núcleos intelectuales de América Latina se adoptó casi mecánicamente la postura de las ideas frankfurtianas rechazando de modo cerrado lo masivo y así dirigiendo la atención de modo preferente a experiencias que se tornaron en abundantes en el campo de la comunicación popular.

Aquí, según Márques de Melo existe la necesidad de ser muy críticos e intelectualmente

altamente fiables para observar, por ejemplo, qué ocurre cuando las experiencias de la comunicación de base operadas en distintos puntos de sociedades en desarrollo las que perviven mientras tuvieran la posibilidad de percibir el apoyo de patrocinadores. En esta línea de revisar el propio camino recorrido también se podría observar quién y bajo qué interés se sientan las agendas para las líneas de los proyectos de una comunicación diferente, la determinación de sus actores, o con qué cercanía a la realidad se opera sabiendo que en ella persisten profundos desequilibrios y desigualdades entre sus propios sectores sociales.

Así mismo, resultaría de gran interés, sin menospreciar las dinámicas de auténticas formas de comunicación horizontal y de carácter participativo, comprender cuál es el carácter y dimensión que alcanza el diálogo como elemento central de la horizontalidad, más al observarse que el diálogo podría encubrir formas de manipulación ya que éste podría estar siendo ejercido o direccionado por los adeptos del centralismo democrático o de

otras tendencias como también refiere Márques de Melo (Márques de Melo, 1990: 7).

La mirada crítica, y de la honesta revisión de las categorías de la horizontalidad, y de las dimensiones de la democratización de las comunicaciones, entre las que harían parte las políticas nacionales de comunicación, los proyectos de comunicación participativa, y la planificación de abajo para arriba (bottom up),así como la adopción desde las políticas públicas que se refieren y se han aproximado al derecho a la comunicación como al acceso más amplio al uso de los recursos tecnológicos para la construcción de los sentidos plurales, como es el caso de frecuencias radioeléctricas para medios comunitarios, podrían también ser materia de estudio y comprensión profunda.

El producto podrá dar como resultado el reavivamiento de aquellas líneas que en esencia hacen al espíritu del Informe MacBride que planteado hace ya cerca de cuarenta años mantienen latente como problemática central la tendencia al desequilibrio, la concentración y la desigualdad en el uso y aprovechamiento de los recursos de la comunicación y la información. Allí, se podrá junto a la presencia de los recursos tecnológicos del momento actual, las propuestas de globalización informativa, y del soñado uso universal de los medios y los mensajes como un derecho de todos y todas develar quién es el verdadero actor de la palabra.

Porque el futuro de la palabra estará garantizado siempre que la voz suene con fuerza desde la transparencia de las culturas locales, sus carencias y potencialidades, sus sueños y su experiencia en los fracasos. La palabra sonará en la misma sintonía de Seán MacBride (foto a la izquierda) cuando el espíritu sea de legítima búsqueda del beneficio de los otros, y del esfuerzo por construir puentes para el hacer común en lugar de mantener la condición de públicos y receptores, de beneficiarios y de sectores destinatarios de cualquier tipo de asistencia.

En síntesis
Lo que puede considerarse como central e irrenunciable del Informe MacBride puede sintetizarse en los siguientes puntos: El primero, y que se constituye en un campo de lucha creativo y paulatino,

el de reconocer la comunicación como un derecho humano. El Informe MacBride además de modo indiscutible es uno de los instrumentos mundiales pioneros, y el más importante, en señalar que la comunicación es un derecho humano.

Esta noción y en su mismo texto la atribuye en su antecedente de origen a la propuesta del francés Jean D'Arcy, quien ya en 1969, habría señalado que "La Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos que, hace veintiún años, (1948) establecía por vez primera en su artículo 19 el derecho humano a la información, habrá de reconocer un día un derecho más amplio: el derecho humano a la comunicación" (D'Arcy, Jean, 1978. CIC. No.36, p. 2).

Segundo, el Informe ayuda a comprender que el tema de la comunicación encierra en todo tiempo profundas complejidades para su comprensión y sus implicaciones van más allá de propuestas sólo de expansión tecnológica.

Un tercer elemento esencial y constante es el de la misma dinámica de la comunicación asumida como un proceso. El comunicador boliviano, Luis Ramiro Beltrán en un documento clásico titulado No renunciemos jamás a la utopía (1982), en relación al Informe MacBride y su vínculo con América Latina, destaca que uno de los sentidos, quizás el más importante, de una propuesta por un nuevo orden en la comunicación e información tiene como centro la dinámica participativa, horizontal y dialógica que trasluce este objetivo.

Así, señala: "El movimiento de "comunicación participatoria" es otra de las creaciones de la justiciera imaginación latinoamericana; busca renovar la teoría y la práctica de la comunicación de manera que el pueblo – y no las élites conservadoras – sea el protagonista de ella. Se dedica a propiciar formatos innovadores, de grupo y aún masivos, que permitan el diálogo equilibrado y democrático en vez del monólogo del dominador sobre los dominados. Las políticas de comunicación son un instrumento normativo amplio que podrá favorecer esa evolución democrática. Esta utopía naturalmente no se reduce a esta región sino en sí se constituye como un sentido universal en pos de una justicia comunicacional e informativa."

Un cuarto elemento es el concepto de Políticas Nacionales de Comunicación (PNC) otro de los aportes no superados del Informe MacBride. Este concepto ya aparece en los documentos de la UNESCO desde la XVI Conferencia General (París, 1970). Allí, se decide "ayudar a los Estados miembros para que formulen sus políticas relativas a los grandes medios de comunicación" (UNESCO, 1970; Quirós y Sierra, 2016: 20). Al respecto la definición más elaborada de PNC, y producida para la época de los debates del NOMIC es la de Luis Ramiro Beltrán ampliando y refinando los esquemas que adelantara en 1971 y 1972, la definió como: "Una Política Nacional de Comunicación es un conjunto integrado, explícito y duradero de políticas parciales de comunicación armonizadas en un cuerpo coherente de principios y normas dirigidos a guiar la conducta de las instituciones especializadas en el manejo del proceso general de comunicación de un país" (Beltrán, 1976: 1).

Para concluir, el Informe MacBride y su espíritu estarán latentes y presentes en cualquier región del mundo mientras no se pierda el sentido humano de la comunicación, y así no se diluya la potencialidad ética de ver la comunicación como un espacio democrático y de horizontalidad. Y será así mientras trascienda el convencimiento de que la comunicación se construye y se da en relación equitativa con un otro, con un prójimo, quien activa la misma posibilidad de diálogo y encuentro de sentidos.

El día que esta otra mayúscula utopía con que se reta al sistema neocolonial llegue a tornarse en realidad, Latinoamérica, por ejemplo, habrá tenido mucho que ver con esa conquista. Y ese día, no lo dudemos, ha de llegar, concluye Luis Ramiro Beltrán Salmón. ∎

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On the screen

Locarno (Switzerland) 2018

At the Locarno film festival (August 1-11, 2018) the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize, endowed with 20.000 CHF by the Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church of Switzerland, and bound to the theatrical distribution of the film, to *Sibel* directed by Guillaume Giovanetti and Çağla Zencirci (France, Germany, Luxembourg, Turkey, 2018).

Motivation: The film tells the story of a young woman who lives in a community in the Black Sea region of Turkey, which preserves an ancestral whistling language and rituals. Marginalized by society because of her muteness, Sibel spends most of the time in the forest, where she is seeking that freedom she is unable to find in the village. Her love encounter with a mysterious fugitive starts a process of emancipation through which she discovers herself as a woman. The film creates a powerful image of a character who, by challenging patriarchal structures and identity framings, becomes an example of dignity for the other women in the community.

In addition, the Jury awarded a Commendation to *Diane* directed by Kent Jones (USA, 2018). Motivation: Against the background of a wintery landscape, the film takes us through the last stages of Diane's spiritual journey. From her exemplary self-sacrifice in the service of the others our attention is turned towards her inner life. Highlighting the tension between guilt and forgiveness, the

film visualizes moments of transcendence shining through the routine of Diane's daily life.

A second Commendation went to the film *A Land Imagined* directed by Yeo Siew Hua (Singapore, France, Netherlands, 2018). Motivation: The movie critically explores slavery in contemporary society, showcasing the plight of foreign workers in Singapore. Deftly intertwining reality, virtuality and dreams, the film focuses on an investigation of workers' disappearance. This is the pretext for a reflection on the meaning of borders, national sovereignty and economic exploitation in a globalized world, as well as on the real possibility of solidarity between people from different places and cultures.

The members of the Jury in 2018 were: Dietmar Adler (Germany); Alina Birzache (President, Romania/United Kingdom); Anna Piazza (Italy/Spain); Baldassare Scolari (Switzerland).

Venice (Italy) 2018

The 8th INTERFILM Award for Promoting Interreligious Dialogue at the 75th Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica in Venice (29 August to 8 September 2018) went to the film *Tel Aviv on Fire* (still below) directed by Sameh Zoabi (Luxembourg, France, Israel, Belgium, 2017).

Motivation: This provocative, playful, and explosive comedy offers an unexpected view into one of the world's most painful conflicts. A Palestinian writer draws upon the skills and experiences of an Israeli checkpoint commander to enhance a TV-Series: "Tel Aviv on Fire". The film confronts the uneasy boundary between harsh reality and romantic illusions, transforming identities, opening imaginative space for dialogue.

The Members of the 2018 Jury were: Christian Engels (Germany); Jolyon Mitchell (United Kingdom); Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati (President of the Jury, Switzerland); Federica Tourn (Italy). ∎

WACC understands the crucial role cinema plays in representing social and political questions today and it partners with the Protestant film organisation INTERFILM and the Roman Catholic media organization SIGNIS to provide Ecumenical Film Juries at several international festivals. WACC and SIGNIS also make an annual Human Rights Award to a documentary film that promotes greater understanding of the complex world in which we all live.