

Creation of multiple scenarios

Deliverable 4.1.

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MEDIA  **delcom**



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Deliverable 4.1.

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Introduction

This deliverable D. 4.1 aims to forecast media transformation scenarios in the participating countries and Europe.

The aim of the Mediadelcom project was to generate a novel method based on motivational modelling and agent-based simulation for outlining scenarios to predict media-related ROs.

As Mediadelcom applied a holistic approach of risks and possibilities concerning mediascapes we constructed multiple scenarios focusing on specific risk areas. Mediadelcom project has two different approaches that are reflected in case study 1 and case study 2. The case study one is a country report (14 all together) that provides critical analysis of the available information and existing knowledge on mediascapes in 4 domains.

In the course of testing various approaches for scenario building the consortium finally agreed that scenarios concerning the “wisdom based media governance” will be constructed as traditional narratives. Therefore, we will present verbal narratives on EU level and scenarios produced by each consortium team. These narratives take into account the national context in order to highlight the policy measures that need to be taken in the decision-making process. In the first phase of scenario building, the University of Tartu team also tested the applicability of the agent-based modelling approach to “wisdom-based media governance”. However, it was not feasible to create a full list of Corporate and Primary Agents that suit various countries. Also there was not enough data for calibration.

Monitoring mediascapes and wisdom-based media governance.

Traditional multi-modelling approach: EU and country narratives

Multiple scenarios are tools for policy analysis that describe a possible set of future conditions. The traditional scenarios are not simulations but a plausible description of evolution from present conditions to one of several futures (Moniz, 2005). Scenarios are used for strategic thinking.“ De Ruijter (2014, p.3) points out: A fundamental difference between problem-solving and thinking and acting strategically is that the first activity is powered by data and empirical facts: you are looking in the rear-view mirror, so to speak. The second activity, on the other hand, assumes a theoretical future for which no data (yet) exists. Whilst this future cannot be forecast, it can still be imagined.”

The future is unpredictable and uncertain, but if we wish to develop proactive media governance, we must look ahead and act before the problem is fully indicated (De Ruijter with Alkema, 2014, p.9). ”The time that scenarios cover is an important choice. The rule of thumb is that the time should cover the period in which policy actions can prove their value in society, including the time needed for decision-making, preparation and implementation. In the public sector, this could range from 4 years when considering a new law enforcement policy for up to 100 years to planning and building new dikes to protect a country from flooding. ... with a longer time horizon, pulling people out of their

regular thinking is easier. When the time horizon is too long, the scenarios lack relevance.”(De Ruijter with Alkema, 2014, p 61). Mediadelcom scenarios cover a 4 years period.

For the Mediadelcom multiple scenario building, we propose two approaches: one is based on **traditional, narrative based scenario building** (we label it as “*Wisdom based media governance*” scenarios) and **another is based on agent-based modelling** (for this approach we create two scenarios, the first one is under the headline “*Transparency*” and another one under the headline “*Capability of deliberation*”). These two approaches enable us to consider the possibilities and limits of different methodological approaches. Techniques such as agent-based modelling have not been used for scenario-building in social sciences.

For the Agent-based modelling we simulate the “if” conditions that help us think beyond the current situation. We will generate a novel method based on motivational modelling and agent-based simulation for outlining scenarios to predict media-related ROs.

Assembling and synthesizing existing dispersed research and modelling multiple scenarios will create an instrument for media risk management.

Scenario building points out steps that has to be taken for any scenario building (Shoemaker 1992, Ruijter,2014) We have modified these steps.

- a. identification of the focal issue or topic;
- b. identification of the key forces and trends in the environment or/and identify stakeholders, their motives and power position;
- c. ranking the driving force (actors)s and trends by importance and uncertainty; selecting the
- d. scenario logics;
- e. filling out the scenarios: best and worst scenarios
- f. assessing the implications;
- g. selecting the leading indicators and signposts for monitoring purposes.

a) In order to identify the focal issue, the Mediadelcom project focused on the main project results concerning the risks and opportunities of deliberative communication.

The main result of the first case study (CS1) was the invention and empirical analysis of the concept capability of monitoring mediascapes. Mediadelcom also introduced the concept of wisdom-based media governance that goes beyond the evidence-based media policy. The concept and the empirical findings are fully presented in the book “Monitoring Mediascapes. A Premise of Wisdom-Based EU Media Governance” (..) **The first focal issue - wisdom-based media governance** - comes from the main critical presumptions of good monitoring capability: 1. Quality of knowledge and access to information. 2: Co-operation between various agents who define the society’s need for knowledge, negotiate about continuous agenda setting and methodology; implement the available knowledge in the decision making process.

According to the case study 2 (CS2) as well as from the current analysis of EU policy documents (e.g. Media Freedom Act; AntiSlapp recommendations) the **second focal issue - transparency** - was formed according to the main risks concerning the preconditions of deliberative communication (Nord and Harro-Loit, forthcoming). These preconditions are:

- mutual respect in communicative interactions (participants in the discussion are ready to listen to other participants' arguments and will try to understand them without immediately dismissing them as irrelevant or false);

- the absence of coercive power in communicative relations (every participant in the discussion feels that they can express their views and opinions without any sanctions or threats of coercive power);
- equality of communicative freedom requires everyone to be equally accessible to give his or her opinion;
- reasoning-based arguments on communication are linked to the necessity of rational-critical debate and “the authority of the better argument”.

The main risks are, therefore, related to the freedom of expression and free access to multiple sources of information - preconditions that enable citizens to be informed and speak out. The common denominator of the two conditions is *transparency*. (For the actual deliberation more conditions should be fulfilled, but transparency is the main precondition). Transparency is and should be balanced with confidentiality and privacy. However, there is a slight balance towards transparency. In order to achieve such a situation the motivation of the majority of agents as well as their influence should be towards transparency. In simulation one can ask what happens IF some agents change their viewpoint or lose their influence suddenly? In this scenario most of the agents are “Corporate Agents” (Archer 1995). Public is usually a Primary Agents but in very special circumstances can turn into a Corporate Agent.

The **third focal issue is related to the “capability of deliberation”** and in the context of Mediadecom agent- oriented approach the actors are citizens with different repertoires of **media use**. For this scenario we use the quantitative data as an input.

For the Mediadecom it is also important to construct a profile of risks and opportunities concerning the present state of a system. Here the Mediadecom relies upon its findings - empirical data from the past, trends and countertrends.

b) Identification of the key forces and trends in the environment, the motives and power position of various agents is key aspect for the Mediadecom scenario-building. The novel aspect is that we consider actors with various motivations and viewpoints. This means that the relationships and interactions between the agents are essential. The Mediadecom distinguishes three groups of actors: content producers, influential regulators and content(prosumers). However, for scenario-building we propose to distinguish different groups of agents among these groups. For example, we distinguish groups of various users according to their media use repertoires. Mediadecom also takes into consideration political and economic conditions which are highly uncertain.

c) Ranking the driving force (actors)s and trends by importance and uncertainty; selecting the scenario logics; here the two different approaches for scenario- building diverge into two directions. For wisdom-based media governance the driving forces can be politicians, knowledge producers (academic and non-academic experts); NGOs; governmental or public bodies (e.g the organizations who decide upon finances, media organizations who provide/or do not provide access to editorial metrics etc.) For building up the scenario logics the key measures include variables like “co-operation” and “quality of knowledge and access to information”.

“Transparency” includes the viewpoint of various agents (transparency vs confidentiality/privacy) and “influence of this actor concerning the transparency”).

d) Filling out the scenarios: best and worst scenarios are described via a list of events that appear in scenarios. These events are different concerning 14 EU countries.

e) assessing the implications; and f) selecting the leading indicators and signposts for monitoring purposes - these topics will be solved via interviews with politicians and other important stakeholders in the very last phase of the Mediadelcom project.

Multiple scenario-building (traditional approaches)

A scenario is a policy analysis tool that describes a possible set of future conditions and enables pin-point most important risks as well as best opportunities. A scenario is not the prediction of a specific future but rather a plausible description of what might occur.

The methodology of traditional scenario-building focuses on three basic questions: What is uncertain? What is inevitable? For the Mediadelcom approach the third question is : who are the driving agents of changes? It is also important to decide conditions of important variables over time (Moniz, 2005)

PART ONE “Wisdom-based media governance” country-scenarios

Current situation

Halliki Harro-Loit

As noted in the Introduction, the scenario logics of the “Wisdom-based media governance” are constructed along two axes: knowledge quality and cooperation + interaction between different agents (see Figure 1).

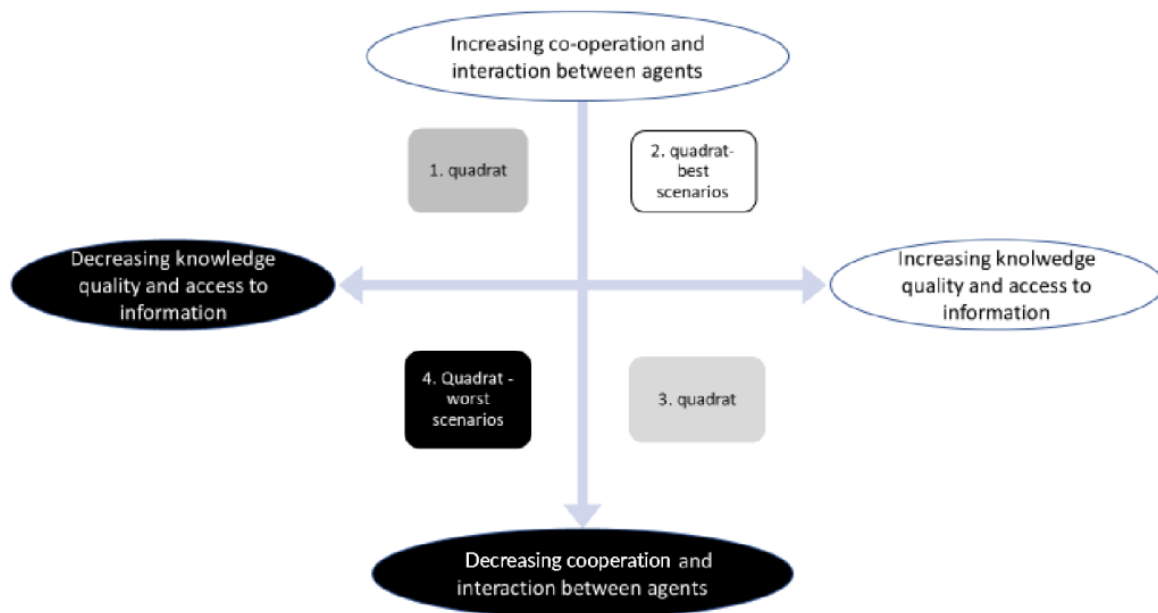


FIGURE 1. SCENARIO LOGICS PLACED ON X AND Y AXES.

In the context of applying these two criteria at the EU level, the following aspects of knowledge quality and access to information could be highlighted.

Democracy Index, Eurobarometer, Digital Economy and Society Index contain an impressive amount of data and allow for assessment of social development in the EU (for an overview of these indices see the book “Monitoring Mediascapes, 2024). Mediascape monitoring is less well represented, although the Media Pluralism Monitor and the European Ownership Monitor (EurOMo) do cover some of the most important risk areas. The European Ownership Monitor is methodologically best suited to wisdom-based media governance, as the research does not aim to draw conclusions on media ownership but focuses on transparency. This means that the monitoring project highlights the lack of information on ownership at the national level. The Media Pluralism Monitor relies on the available sources of information. According to the results of the Mediadelcom study, the gaps in knowledge are uneven and large in some EU countries. Therefore, it would be difficult to monitor additional risk areas (e.g. working conditions, competence and autonomy of journalists) at the EU level, if this information is not available or is missing at the national level.

- a. The recent EU policy documents (Media Freedom Act; Recommendations to protect journalists and rights defenders from abusive litigation (SLAPP) 2022; the Whistleblower Directive) are reactions to increasing risks concerning the freedom of speech, press and information (transparency). However, while there are several Indices that monitor press freedom generally, there are not any monitoring projects and methods that enable monitoring the causes that reduce transparency. Therefore, regulative tools are needed but their implementation is “blind” as only a few countries have a good overview of the nature and causes of the risk. For example, the anti-SLAPP recommendations provide several suggestions to educate judges and refine court procedures but the overview on the actual number and nature of lawsuits that could be defined as SLAPP is missing in almost all 14 Mediadelcom countries.
- b. The Digital News Report produced annually by Reuters Institute is widely used for monitoring media use in the EU. Unfortunately, several countries (e.g. the Baltic states) are not covered. On the national level there is an increasing trend that data and information on media use is collected for commercial interests and is sold for those who have money to buy information. Public universities usually do not have that level of money. Also, media companies collect editorial metrics, but this is not open to academic researchers. Mediadelcom also points out that to monitor possible risks for democracy, the data on the usage of channels and programs (which are usually the primary objectives of monitoring) are not as important as the monitoring of media use repertoires (see more about it in Part 2). Hence, both public knowledge on media use and citizens’ trust concerning assorted sources of information are decreasing.

In the context of **co-operation and networking**, bodies or organizations aim to collect information and research on mediascapes, and arrange networks to negotiate about pertinent aspects. Such as the most efficient research agenda, and which is the best methodology concerning longitudinal research that enables scholars to follow the most important changes in society that concern possible risks for deliberative communication (and democracy). The aims of these bodies should also concern oversight of validity, currency and quality assurance of the data. While the Western democracies have best practices, the post-socialist countries have very few examples of either bodies or organizations collecting data in the interests of society.

This kind of research governance also needs databases that would give an overview about human resources (experts and their qualifications), financing of various topics (to discover the

Matthew effect and biases). According to the Mediadelcom results, the smaller the country is, the easier it is to get an adequate overview of these resources. However, it is not possible to draw any conclusion about human and financial resources devoted to journalism, media and communication studies on national levels. Especially as there is not any way to find out the number of non-academic experts (and NGOs). The career models and qualification assessment system indicate big differences across the EU. Therefore, analysis of the reasons for low levels of qualification as well as best practice examples of motivation systems in academia could be useful for further development.

Best-case scenarios

The precondition of the best scenario is that politicians start to understand the importance of evidence-based political decisions. This might happen if the politicians and the public fully understand the increasing security risks in Europe. Once evidence-based policy becomes habitual, an opportunity becomes available for wisdom-based governance. The latter means dialogic communication between the agents, and if this becomes habitual there will be more strategically, future-oriented decisions. To reach these decisions might take more time, but the quality would be better for democracy.

If EU countries would raise the level of interest in wisdom-based media governance, best practice examples across Europe would be analysed and there would be a learning and adoption process that enables policymakers to direct the development towards wisdom-based media governance. The most prominent best practice example are special organizations and bodies that have both the capability and the legal right to collect, and analyse data (with the help of academic and non-academic experts), and subsequently to disseminate and help to implement the knowledge.

The best scenario would happen if the motivation system of researchers is revisited, so that this system encourages researchers to put more energy into longitudinal and wide-scope studies.

If the financing system was transparent and more stable, the resilience of the experts would also increase. Less money, but for longer periods, could provide more time for discussions and the application of research results. Should there be more time to discuss what society actually knows about the current situation concerning mediascapes, there would be also more possibilities to sort out whatever knowledge is still missing but is important in order to assess the "health of mediascape" in a given certain country.

If the monitoring of mediascapes is recognized by the nation states, the financing as well as efficient use of research money would be openly discussed. In the best scenarios, there will be no "more money" but the focus is on good planning and motivation to use the research money with maximum efficiency. In summary, adequate funding combined with good planning and service-oriented career models could improve the quality of supervision, cooperation and efficiency.

If media literacy is recognised as being as important as grammar and mathematics, there will be better opportunities for lifelong learning initiatives focused on current risks (e.g., resistance to information warfare). Better diagnostic tests and didactics also enable society to monitor the most critical lack of skills among citizens.

Worst-case scenarios

There is increasing security threat. Europe is at war economically but according to the worst scenario the wars in the Arab states and Ukraine as well as the Russian information warfare will expand. Each European member state has its own capability to manage crisis communication. Knowledge about the most vulnerable groups and the resilience of journalists is missing, especially in those nation states with the widest knowledge gaps.

According to the worst scenario, the risks concerning sustainability of (autonomous) news journalism and journalistic community, media literacy and the critical reception of media content among various social groups develop through small changes and consequently symptoms of risks go unnoticed. If these symptoms start to show democracy has a serious crisis, it will be too late to begin monitoring.

According to the worst scenario, the financing and career models encourage competition but not any co-operation among the researchers. The increasing pressure toward publishing as much as possible and the dissemination of the results without any control over the motivation or implementation of these results will alienate researchers and experts from the view that they should serve the public. They would rather serve their personal interests and careers. In turn, this alienation from serving the public reduces the opportunities for all parties to work together.

The European Union's policymaking based on democratic values is reminiscent of the blind alley of insufficient knowledge about which agents and circumstances accelerate risks. Even if some new monitoring projects are set up at EU level, it will take time to train local experts, and in some cases the necessary information will not be available to researchers.

If media and communication skills are not systematically included in formal education and curricula, there will be no adequate didactics and tests to raise the media-specific skills that concern most of the population. These skills would include awareness of communication ethics, critical evaluation of courses, critical reading and listening skills, and the ability to select necessary information from news feeds. If there is an expectation that changes in education will happen quickly, there may be political disappointment and no long-term efforts and initiatives that systematically contribute to raising general media literacy. In the worst case scenario, digital literacy initiatives (on both the national and EU levels) will expand, but they will be fragmented and there will be no way of knowing whether they are targeting those who need them most.



AUSTRIA

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Current situation

From a comparative perspective, the capability of monitoring mediascapes seems well developed in Austria – at least in some of the relevant research domains. Particularly in the domains of journalism and media usage, a large variety of empirical sources is available and research initiatives have reached a high degree of specialisation. In recent years, the complexity of different data collection procedures seems to be growing and there is a discernible trend towards internationally comparative research settings, first and foremost in the field of journalism research. Unfortunately, data quality in the area of media usage is still marred by the interests of commercial research institutions and their continuing struggle to synchronise the established “currencies” for measuring audience reach in different media sectors. In the domain of legal regulation, the basis of available data also appears to be well advanced, although empirical research is underrepresented. By contrast, research on media ethics and media literacy is less differentiated – presumably a result of either weak institutionalisation or the typically interdisciplinary character of these (sub-)domains which makes it difficult to identify a clearly defined canon of literature.

The Austrian country studies highlight a couple of good practices that can be described as examples of wisdom-based media governance. These include the continuous monitoring initiatives coordinated by the Public Value Competence Centre of the Austrian public service broadcaster ORF, the practice-oriented research and consulting activities by Medienhaus Wien, the public debates and research activities accompanying the re-establishment of the Austrian Press Council, and others. All of these examples include a variety of different agents (media practitioners, policy-makers, self-regulators, researchers, in some cases also members of the broad public) that intentionally cooperate to reach a joint aim.

However, our research also specifies several factors that regularly inhibit wisdom-based media governance. A general problem can be found in the increasing information fragmentation as a result of progressing specialisation in media research – for some research fields we can even detect an over-production of research results. More specifically, our studies highlight the challenge that not all relevant research is available to the public (e.g., when it is owned by private companies or hidden behind the paywalls of commercial publishers). Despite the successful monitoring activities of specialised institutions and individual researchers, there is a lack of continuously collected and reliable official media statistics. Although internationalisation of research entails many opportunities, it can also create a problematic trend when it leads to the marginalisation of expert knowledge about the Austrian media system. A lack of comparable long-term studies in most of the relevant research fields makes it difficult to identify problematic change processes and turning points relevant for deliberative communication.

Best-case scenario

Despite the shortcomings of the Austrian capability of monitoring mediascapes, several good practices can be highlighted (see above). If the context factors fostering such initiatives can

be stabilised or improved, while typical deficiencies of the national research agenda are corrected, further examples of wisdom-based media governance will become realistic. The following conditions would support this scenario:

- a provision of reliable official media statistics, particularly in the field of media ownership data;
- continued public funding for national research initiatives in the field of media and communication, alongside international cooperative projects;
- increased support for long-term monitoring projects;
- a broader debate about scientific publication strategies and open access/open data concepts.

Such conditions could possibly be provided by a realignment of public funding for media and journalism research, as well as funding for media and journalism in general. Public media funding could promote media pluralism and quality journalism, independent of political influences, if it demanded recipients to support practices of accountability (e.g., by making acceptance of the Austrian Press Council a requirement to receive any public funding). A part of the budget, however, could also be allocated to monitoring initiatives, with specific consideration of critical issues such as media ownership, political influences on journalism, media accountability, and digital literacy. Ideally, all monitoring initiatives are realised in close cooperation between policy-makers, media industry representatives, academic actors, educators, and – possibly – NGOs.

Worst-case scenario

On the other hand, the shortcomings of the Austrian capability of monitoring mediascapes could increase if one or more of the following conditions prevailed:

- a cut or an uneven distribution of public funding for media and media research;
- an increasing exertion of political influence on the distribution of funding for media and media research;
- lack of attention of media researchers (and funding agencies) on issues relevant for deliberative communication and democracy;
- a proliferation and overproduction of research on issues irrelevant for deliberative communication and democracy;
- an increasing share of media-related research that is not publicly available;
- a degree of internationalisation of media-related research that eventually leads to a marginalisation of expert knowledge about the Austrian media system.



BULGARIA

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Current situation

In Bulgaria current situation concerning wisdom-based media governance is controversial. The country possesses sufficient and well-educated journalism, media and communication research potential (since 1952). Although most of the publications, monitoring the national mediascape are extensive, use reliable sources and are comparatively easily accessible, their content display insufficient continuity, complexity and systematic approach in terms of longitudinal outlining of trends. Studies and good practices, that can be linked to wisdom-based governance of monitoring of the mediascape are scarce.

There are a number of factors that could influence the development of the mediascape with regard to sustainable deliberative communication in the upcoming years, such as: intense war conflicts around the world; deterioration of human rights, and particularly of freedom of expression and access to information globally; rapid technological development and AI expansion; adoption of a new European regulatory framework, as well as the political instability in the country.

Nowadays Bulgarian media legal and regulatory framework is harmonized with the binding to all EU member states *Acquis communautaire* and of the Council of Europe media policies, which is a prerequisite for producing a clear, consistent, and predictable wisdom-based governance of the mediascape in the country. However, some major risks have to be taken in consideration, related to: decline in freedom of speech due to lack of effective guarantees and limited access of information; shortcomings in regulation of media concentrations and press and online platforms; insufficient transparency of media ownership and funding; political and corporate dependence of media; deterioration of the working conditions and prestige of the journalistic profession; neglecting professional journalistic standards and growing of self-censorship; disunity of the journalistic guild; distrust in legacy media due to decline in content quality; difficulties in recognition and control of fake news; non-consistent comprehensive programs in media literacy at different societal groups.

Following the scenario-building approach of *Mediadelcom*, two axes as seeming to be most universal concerning the best and worst scenarios (the one of increasing-decreasing of cooperation and networking between the agents and the other of increasing-decreasing of knowledge production quality and access to information) are taken in consideration.

Best-case scenarios

The best scenario for the wisdom based media governance might be implemented with several conditions fulfilled through cooperative quality efforts of all media-related agents, such as:

- - modernization of media regulation through full-fledged and efficient incorporation of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), Digital Service Act (DSA), Digital Mar-

kets Act (DMA), and others common for EU member-states (policy makers, regulatory bodies);

- - coordination and cooperation among stakeholders for effective implementation of the complex media and communication policies, regulation, and digital, information and media (incl. AI) competences and skills through special synergies and mechanisms (regulatory bodies, academics, media industry);
- - stronger guarantees for the independence of the media regulatory authorities, such as fostering professionalism by introducing open and transparent procedures of recruitment of members and staff relying on civil involvement and avoiding political interference (policy makers, regulatory bodies, professional organizations);
- - enhancing public accountability of media sector by stronger self- and co-regulation and setting up an ombudsperson for all media, not only for the PSB, as it is now (policy makers, regulatory bodies, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs);
- - introduction of national multistakeholders' council at the Ministry of culture specifically set up for coordination of quality longitudinal media research (policy makers, academics, professional organizations, media industry);
- - ensuring transparent procedures for allocating public (national and EU) funds to strengthen media, PSB, freedom of speech and local journalism by amending respective legislation (policy makers, regulatory bodies, journalists, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs);
- - building a strong professional community and associations to promote the support of journalistic work against the tendencies of limiting pluralism, access to various sources of information, freedom of expression, incl. overcoming of self-censorship (journalists, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs);
- - providing specific action plans for media usage by vulnerable audiences: children, elderly, disabled (regulatory bodies, academics, journalists, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs).

The worst-case scenarios

For the wisdom based media governance the worst-case scenario might occur if there is no active quality coordination between all agents for improving the current status-quo:

- - formal incorporation or insufficient implementation of EMFA and national media regulatory framework (policy makers, regulatory bodies);
- - failure to improve registries in force and to adopt complex measures in order to entrench transparency of media ownership, people metric measurements, and allocation of state advertising (policy makers, regulatory bodies);
- - insufficiently effective incentives and mechanisms to boost and modernize media accountability (policy makers, regulatory bodies, professional organizations, media industry);
 - expansion of the tendency of self-censorship and conflict of interest due to insufficient funding and disregard for the journalistic profession and growing politicization of the media (journalists, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs);
- - lack of meaningful legislative initiatives to regulate PSM and allocating insufficient means for PSB to carry out its public function;

- - failure to support adequately quality journalism through an independent mechanism (policy makers, regulatory bodies, journalists, professional organizations, media industry);
- - insufficient efforts aiming at raising the quality of higher education and professional skills for journalists through special programs and training (academics, journalists, professional organisations);
- - reluctance to draw strategies and action plans to improve media literacy, especially on the part of the two legally authorised bodies: Ministry of Culture and Council for Electronic Media (regulatory bodies, academics, journalists);
- - non-efficient coordination between regulation, self-regulation and co-regulation (regulatory bodies, professional organisations, NGOs);
- - failure to develop reliable media usage patterns (professional organisations, media industry);
- - lack of synergies between all agents for a national platform set up for longitudinal and sustainable media monitoring research to serve as a reliable basis for media policies.

Interaction and proactive cooperation of media-related agents (policy makers, regulatory bodies, academics, journalists, professional organizations, media industry, NGOs, independent researchers) for evidence-based systematic collection, evaluation analysis and application of quality knowledge for wisdom-based media governance may withstand the risks for the development of deliberative communication and efficiently turn them in opportunities.



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Current situation

In Czechia, the current situation regarding wisdom-based media governance can be described as problematic but with a potential for positive development. Basic conditions are crippled by weak monitoring capacity and low relevance of journalistic organizations, and almost non existing co-operation of relevant agents involved in media analysis, data sharing and media policymaking. In the last decade we could observe tangible shift towards progress but the shadow of the past in the context of post-social transition is still lurking around. We still see inactive and inadequate professional journalistic organisations, there is the impenetrable boundary between the academia, media industry and NGO's. On top of that, the policy makers have not presented any clear strategy of media support and development. Not to mention, the decreasing trust and understanding of the role of public service media in the country, supported by uneducated attacks of populist politicians. The journalistic professionals also lack any visible and shared accountability measures. The last major problem can be identified in the alarming ownership development (e.g., concentration of ownership, oligarchization of ownership, unresolved situation with politicians and their ownership of certain types of media).

Notwithstanding, we can identify an opportunity in recent growing discussion of the amendment of the law regarding media ownership by politicians or laws regulating public service media. Another progressive point in this context is the realization that media ethics must be a discussed and fostered topic.

To summarize, Czechia has a potential to develop regarding some principles of deliberative communication, but we have to be realistic in reflecting the current state which still cannot be taken as an adequate representation of such.

Best-case scenarios

Before we list the potential best scenarios, it is crucial to fulfil the following pre-condition. Because a positive future development of media can be achieved only under specific conditions which means all actors (meaning academia, politicians, representatives of media industry and NGO`s) must cooperate on the changes and the changes must happen in an equal measure (and simultaneously) from top-down and bottom-up.

- a. To be able to achieve an ability to do informed decisions, based on accessible, shared and quality data, cooperation of all involved stakeholders is a common practice.
- b. Policy makers (government, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education etc.) postulate support and strategic materials for media literacy and media industry development. This is based in the functioning cooperation among all mentioned actors.
- c. A sustainable, and once again knowledge based, material support of the previously mentioned developments is available.

Worst-case scenarios

If we do not realise that we are currently at the verge of democratic backsliding, and do not take relevant actions, we could backtrack to loosing freedom of media as we know it. The situation is extremely fragile. In case the current discussions are obliterated or do not come to any constructive decisions, the following scenarios could become reality.

- a. The freedom of media ceases to exist due to uncontrollable oligarchization and political influences entering the independent function of public service media.
- b. The media literacy is not kept in adequate and on-time manner; therefore, people lose their ability of critical thinking and being able of actively participate in public affairs.
- c. A continuation of fragmentation of the relevant actors and irreversible emergence of data and knowledge deserts.



CROATIA

Zrinjka Peruško

Current situation

Media, communication and journalism research started to develop in Croatia in the 1960s, increasing in breadth of topics and volume of published research. The increase is especially evident after 2010 when media audience research and the study of media competencies of the audiences, including media literacy started to develop. Journalism and the legal framework for the media are on a whole well covered in research, but in all investigated research areas there are significant gaps in knowledge. Even though journalism and communication are studied at a number of public and private universities, a coherent program of research and marked funding for academic research in the communication discipline are lacking.

Wisdom based media governance requires not only adequate monitoring of the media system (we highlighted the domains of journalism, the legal framework for freedom of expression and information, media accountability, audiences media usage and media competencies of users and producers), but the use of the results of research and other data by policy-makers. In Croatia there is some cooperation on a formal level – e.g. the Ministry of Culture and Media invites experts from academia, industry, and the NGO's to their committees for legislative proposals, and the membership of experts in the relevant Parliamentary committee. Additionally, the Council for Electronic Media funds media research based on their own evaluation of their needs. Substantial cooperation where the findings of academic research are actually heeded and included in the policy guidelines or strategies is rare.

Best case scenario

The creation and functioning of the Media Policy Forum as an informal network of stakeholders from academia, media industry, professional journalistic association, NGO's and policy-makers from all levels of media policy and academic research policy would enable the sharing of current research results in a systematic fashion with all the necessary actors. If in the second step this academia-led network produced a jointly supported comprehensive research program for monitoring developments in the media landscape, and especially in a longitudinal fashion, and the funding for this was secured by the government, the positive impact would be felt not only in the improved wisdom based media governance but also in the advancement of the discipline of the communication science/media studies.

Additionally, research and analysis would be facilitated if the media industry data that is already required to be made public is made easily available online in one place. The effort to create such a network might push the media industry and public institutions to publish data in an easily accessible format, which is not currently the case.

- On the formal and institutional level – more adequate implementation of Media Literacy and Civic Education programs in secondary education
- Better communication and coordination between academia and the journalism and other media industry professions

- Modernization of media regulation through efficient implementation of the European Media Freedom Act
- Providing the specific tools for media usage by vulnerable audiences, e.g. children, elderly, and the disabled
- Ensuring the independence of media and regulatory authorities, as well as their professional performance
- Ensuring the independent and sufficient funding for the PSM
- Ensuring the transparent procedures for allocating national and EU funds to strengthen freedom of speech, as well as national and local journalism
- Ensuring higher levels of digital inclusion and connectivity

Worst case scenario

The best case scenario is based on the presumption that the policy-makers are open to explore best information and knowledge provided by academia in order to create media policies in the best interest of the citizens/the public. The key danger in Croatia is that this assumption is often negated, and the policies are framed or implemented to fulfill party-political interests. The risk is that changes to media policy legislature and related legislature (i.e. the penal code) will again increase the limits to freedom of information by increasing the secrecy of legal procedures with serious penalization (i.e. prison).

- Lack of political or professional will to implement the European Media Freedom Act in the national media regulatory framework
- Failure to adopt effective legal and regulatory measures for transparency of media ownership and allocation of state advertising
- Ongoing tendency of self-censorship and conflict of interest in the funding of journalism (especially local media journalism)
- Insufficient attention to quality of higher education and professional skills of journalists
- Reluctance to introduce actions to improve media literacy, especially for vulnerable audiences



ESTONIA

Halliki Harro-Loit, Epp Lauk

Current situation

Wisdom-based media governance can only be based on evidence-based monitoring. The results of Mediadelcom's research show that even if Estonian policymakers wanted to implement an evidence-based media policy, there would be insufficient data and information to cover the main risk issues (according to the 4-domain model). Therefore, the first step towards wisdom-based media governance is to negotiate and agree on the knowledge that is essential to foresee the possible risks and opportunities in the mediascape. It is also important to discuss and negotiate the methodology that is most efficient and would enable data quality assurance to be developed. The current situation concerning wisdom-based media governance in Estonia is controversial.

The presumption of the quality of knowledge production is a competent and internationally competitive community of experts. This assumption applies to Estonia. Another axis (Figure 1) - cooperation between assorted actors and networking - is much more problematic.

Political interest in media and communication is extremely low in Estonia. One issue that has been discussed in recent years is the problem of global corporations removing advertising money from the national media market. As a result, media organisations, as actors, have managed to talk about the great risk for the news media. However, Estonia cannot solve this problem alone, without the full support of all EU member states.

Evidence-based media policy, which would cover other risk areas such as working conditions, competences and autonomy of journalists, autonomy of public broadcasting media, citizens' repertoires of media use and citizens' actual media-related competences, is not on the agenda.

There is also not a public body or format that enables issues related to these matters to gain political and public attention. Scholars are overworked and do not have sufficient knowledge of lobbying, so the obligation to disseminate research results does not guarantee that scientific evidence will influence decision-making.

Digital security is high on the political agenda, but it is more a reaction to the crisis than a result of any strategy.

As mentioned above, Estonia has well-qualified experts and the scientific community is internationally competitive, which enables the country to participate in various international projects, and consequently the quality of knowledge production is high. At the same time, the funding of higher education and research has been under pressure for the last 10 years, and the attractiveness of an academic career (in journalism, media and communication studies) is declining. Researchers are not motivated to cooperate but to compete with each other, and the catalysts for this competition are the problem of funding and the current career model.

The main current risks and opportunities for Estonia in terms of wisdom-based media governance are as follows:

- a. In Estonian media research, there are not any discussions or agreements about either the data that should be collected regularly, and by which methods, or who will analyse the data and how it will be used for policy making.
- b. A special public body with legitimate power and obligation to produce and disseminate annual reports does not exist. The reports would concern: risks for sustainability of journalism and journalistic community; independence of public service media; media ownership influences; repertoires of media use and media competencies.
- c. Two reports, one on the current situation of Estonia's mediascape and the other about freedom of information, have been commissioned by Estonian government agencies in the 21st century. However, there is not any indication that politicians have either discussed the reports or considered them in policymaking.
- d. The Estonian research funding is up to 80% project based in JMC, competing with all other social sciences, so that the success rate of grants is about 0.2%. Project-based funding poses a number of risks: job security of scholars is low and therefore the attractiveness of academic jobs is decreasing; there is no strategic plan to explore the most important topics concerning changes in Estonia's mediascape and the knowledge becomes increasingly fragmented. Longitudinal studies have ceased. These risks are all present in the context of JCM studies in Estonia.
- e. Estonia has a highly qualified and competitive JMC research community, which is optimal for Estonia (about 50% of the scholars have an h-index higher than 3). This gives Estonia good prospects for the future
- f. Estonian researchers have successfully competed for international and EU research projects. As a result the EU's role in setting the research agenda as well as maintaining methodological quality is important and provides further opportunities for developing the quality of knowledge production.

Best-case scenarios

In the area of JMC, several actors are motivated to work together. These are: academics and researchers, the Data Protection Inspectorate, media organisations and audience research companies. There will be an opportunity to mobilise knowledge and build up an efficient system for monitoring. The motivation to cooperate can be increased by changing the way in which the outputs of scientific and non-scientific experts are measured. However, for the best-case scenario to be realised, there should be a specific body or organisation that has the legitimate power to organise networking and knowledge storage, and that can take care of the discussions as well as the implementation of evidence-based information. In addition to motivation, there is also a need to create a format for communication and legitimisation of suggestions and recommendations (e.g. a forum that meets once a year).

In summary, wisdom can be created if the government establishes an institution whose main task is to develop cooperation between the parties and who would constantly monitor the sufficiency of knowledge for assessing the situation.

At best, the risk discourse around the mediascape is reinforced by the news media themselves. People will get used to thinking critically about the impact of various media content. Media literacy didactics will receive more attention and recognition in formal education.

Worst-case scenarios

Given the historical context, Estonia's main risk factor - the lack of political interest in

news media and communication - remains unchanged. However, as the security threat increases political interest decreases because the government and parliament have to deal with short-term and urgent issues.

Estonia's democracy and freedom of expression may not be able to cope with increasing security risks. At present, neither the research centre nor the methods exist to assess people's media repertoires and the risks associated with the independence of the press.

In the worst-case scenario, changes occur unnoticed. For example, in the field of JMC, academic careers become less attractive or academic positions disappear altogether. The younger generation of experts works for foreign projects, and the knowledge of the Estonian JMC field is reduced to such an extent that it is no longer possible to find out what we do not know, for example about the state of media autonomy and people's media repertoires.

In the worst-case scenario, the media begins to amplify polarization, undetected. Disclosing various manipulation techniques also becomes an impossible task for specialists, because the public is not accustomed to think about the risks associated with the media and communication. A relevant discourse does not exist because society lacks media education.

If the security problem due to Russia's aggressive anti-NATO stance increase quickly there will be insufficient time to develop knowledge mobilisation and wisdom-based media governance strategies.

IF the European Commission would expand some of the most needed monitoring activities and take the initiative to monitor the autonomy and working conditions of journalists as well as the people's media use (repertoires), Estonia would have at least some knowledge of possible risks.

IF journalists would keep the knowledge-based understanding of changes on the agenda, people would be more aware of possible risks and agents who are interested in manipulating society via news media.



Evangelia Psychogiopoulou

Current situation

In Greece, the current situation regarding wisdom-based media governance can be described as being both opportunities- and risks-driven. Regarding opportunities, academic research is well advanced both on the legal facets of media policy and its implementation, and in the field of journalism. This allows systematic, long-term analysis to be conducted on the applicable legal rules and the scope of protection granted to freedom of expression and information. The research has also thoughtfully addressed issues related to the economic sustainability of journalism over the past 20 years and its ability to respond to contemporary challenges and keep pace with technological innovations. Most of this research is institutional: it is carried out

by domestic universities which help educate well-qualified experts. The presence of experts is actually quite strong and it has been increasing in recent years. The impact of new technologies and digitalization, which has diversified scholarship, has clearly played a role here, as has the proliferation of internationally and EU-funded research projects in media studies, which have nurtured and boosted domestic expertise. Research into the characteristics and evolution of Greek media literacy policy in particular has benefited considerably from EU funding, as have other areas of interest.

However, deficiencies can also be noted. First, mention should be made of the lack of publicly-available long-term survey data covering aspects such as journalism demographics and journalists' working conditions, media-related competences and skills, and media usage. The freely available data concerning the media market, for instance, are mostly collected by the media regulator and some public authorities, while data on access to the media and media consumption are gathered by market research and advertising companies; data on issues such as the number of journalists, their profile and employment types are missing. Scholarly research in some of these areas is also insufficiently institution-based. The lack of research is particularly pronounced in the area of media accountability. Overall, individual university departments and research centres in the country may conduct research, but the areas studied generally reflect the research interests of the individual scholars involved. Crucially, there is no (nationally-funded) research agenda focused on monitoring and assessing strengths and weaknesses in the domestic media system. In fact, domestic funding opportunities are generally quite limited. Consequently, poor funding and a lack of monitoring structures are perhaps the main challenges facing wisdom-based media governance in Greece today.

Best-case scenario

The best scenario for wisdom-based media governance in Greece will materialize if the following conditions are met:

- a. Media policy-making and the values that underpin it are informed and build upon the rich body of research carried out in the fields of law and journalism; the focus is on respect for freedom of expression and information and fostering sustainable, quality journalism.
- b. Research agendas are revisited, recalibrated and optimized in order to address gaps in research and data collection; space is made for developing a monitoring component that can ensure developments in the media system are tracked and assessed systematically.
- c. Continuity in research is ensured through institutionalised and adequately-funded research structures.
- d. The experience gained through international research networks, active participation in the European research area and the forging of transnational synergies is capitalised on.
- e. Coordination between the different actors involved in research and data collection is ensured, open data policies are developed, and structures for knowledge-exchange and advocating policy to national and European policy-makers are put in place.

Worst-case scenario

The worst scenario for wisdom-based media governance in Greece will materialize if the following conditions are met:

- a. Research and policy-making are kept separate, and the importance and relevance of research for the design and implementation of media laws and policies is downplayed.
- b. Research and data collection is minimised, and monitoring efforts are discredited.
- c. Domestic funding for research is ended.
- d. The experience gained through international and European research networks is ignored.
- e. Dialogue between different actors is undermined, and a conflictual and antagonistic culture develops between the various stakeholders.



Marcus Kreutler, Susanne Fengler

Current situation

From a comparative perspective, the current situation of wisdom-based media governance in Germany is favourable. Research in the relevant areas is well-established, research agendas are negotiated and influenced by different agents that represent various interests, and there are several relevant funding sources.

Education, including universities, and culture, including the media, are two of the main competencies of the 16 federal states. As a result, there is some degree of diversity and also competition for best solutions between the different federal states, as well as cooperation between them for joint efforts. Coordinated efforts or nationwide monitoring does require additional coordinative efforts and decisions take more time than in a centralized system.

Examples for different configurations of inter-state cooperation include public broadcasting and the media authorities. Typically, one state runs one media authority (Brandenburg and Berlin have agreed on a joint authority, as have Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg), but agreements on federal level are found for joint efforts such as monitoring of concentration.

These arrangements have created unusual agents relevant to knowledge about the media market, concentration and influence, and media usage. For example, the 14 media authorities are tasked with monitoring and regulating private broadcasting, including the prevention of excessive market concentration and monitoring of certain provisions for youth protection or accessibility in produced content. To fulfil this task, they run and finance efforts to monitor media and ownership plurality, as well as content. This way, a (relatively) small share of broadcasting fees is used for monitoring tasks, and results are actively used as a basis for regulation decisions.

A recent example for cooperation of different agent groups is the attempt of a wisdom-based reaction to controversies on the future of public broadcasting after scandals and criticism of inefficient use of the sizeable funds available to public broadcasters. The political commission on broadcasting issues tasked a council to develop suggestions for reforms that increase trust in the broadcasters' output as well increase efficiency to save money. The commission consists of eight members from different areas of academia and media training (law, journalism, film pro-

duction) as well media managers and journalism practitioners. It published its report in January 2024, key suggestions being a more efficient and hierarchic organization as well as an actual evaluation of programming and content offers as the basis for future financing – in other words, a stricter reporting system with the aim of evaluation-based decision-making.

Risks associated to the monitoring capacities can be associated with the future availability of longitudinal data on specific areas. Several large studies or study series into news media content and print market concentration have come to an end in recent years. While some of these efforts have made funds available for innovative projects (such as the media plurality monitor by the media authorities) the monitoring situation in these particular areas could deteriorate if no ways are found to continue the data gathering in these areas.

One area that is significantly problematic is the “meta-monitoring” of academic monitoring of the media sector. Federal statistics have only recently added communication and journalism studies to their catalog of subjects, but assignment of spending to different subjects still seems to be unclear and numbers appear incomplete. Also, there is no comprehensive and mandatory database of researchers, funding and academic output, as can be found in some other countries.

Best- case scenarios

On the one hand, the complex system of cooperation between different stakeholders on national and federal state level ensures diversity and representation of different regions and interests. It can be considered a strength of the German system. On the other hand, a balance needs to be found and constantly evaluated between these values and factors such as efficiency of monitoring activities and flexibility to react to new developments.

A best scenario would include two main improvements:

- An increase of “meta-monitoring”, especially with regards to the official statistics on academic spending in communication studies and related fields. This includes at least reliable figures on the field, but ideally an option to “fine-tune” search options in order to find relevant activities in other fields (e.g., media law at legal faculties).
- Continuation of long-term data-gathering on relevant aspects of the media, including media usage, the media market, content and competencies of media users. Where the field faces the risk of losing relevant activities, a responsibility of different stakeholders is needed to find ways to allow for continuation or otherwise a useable replacement – data gathering and knowledge creation in specific areas should not rely solely on personal or institutional engagement of single actors. This might include political decisions on state-funded monitoring in areas that have previously been covered by academic, public, or private actors, for example a discussion on some form of reestablishment of official press (or, including digital publications, private news publisher) statistics.

Worst-case scenarios

Two negative scenarios for CMM in Germany can be differentiated: A more conventional one of slow degradation, and a more dramatic one that includes large-scale political disruption at least on the level of individual federal states.

The mildly negative scenario is based on the assumption of continuity of relevant political and social interests and relevant actors in the German monitoring system. In such a scenario, financial restrictions or spending priority decisions by specific actors could lead to a slow deg-

radation of the hitherto rather favorable monitoring environment. Termination of long-term research efforts could particularly hinder the monitoring of new developments and, consequently, wisdom-based reactions to such developments. A general consensus on cooperation by different actor groups, while closely associated with the democratic-corporatist model, is not naturally guaranteed and could be gradually revoked by certain actor groups, e.g. due to shifts in economic interests.

The worst-case scenario centers around political disruption after possible election victories of extremist political actors. While such a scenario is considered highly unlikely on the federal level, it is discussed in view of growing support for the right-wing AfD party particularly in several Eastern-German federal states. The “Thuringia project” (<https://verfassungsblog.de/thuringen-projekt/>) by the legal website *Verfassungsblog* has incited a debate on a lack of safeguards against anti-system politicians on the level of the federal states. Given the federal states’ competencies in culture and education, public broadcasting, media authorities and universities could be targeted – with consequences for these actors’ monitoring contributions.



Petra Szavai

Current situation

The media situation in Hungary has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Nevertheless, the analysis of deliberative communication is far from complete, there is little systematic, strategy-based media monitoring. In terms of centrally organized research, the role of the Institute for Media Studies at National Media and Infocommunications Authority should be outlined; this institution is well funded and regularly publishes research. In the academic field, only sporadic research conducted by individual researchers in pursuit of their own research interests can be found.

Non-governmental organisations are very important agents in monitoring the media in Hungary, for example the Hungarian partner of Mediadecom, Mertek Media Monitor, which has been collecting data systematically in legal, journalism and media usage domains. International research also pays great attention to Hungary, with European Union bodies, transnational NGOs and academic research projects regularly looking at the situation of the Hungarian media. However, this does not mean that Hungary's media monitoring potential can be considered ideal.

Government education and R&D policy have a clear focus on technical sciences and natural sciences, with less and less support for education and research activities in the humanities and social sciences, including communication and media studies. For media research, the main risks lie mainly in the structural changes affecting the academic sector: institutions are currently vulnerable, especially in the area of financial autonomy, but it is still uncertain what impact the changes will have on their professional autonomy.

Concerning the co-operation and networking of agents, key problems include a polarised

professional public and a lack of cooperation. There are no major professional conferences, no meaningful dialogue between different research groups. Decision-makers do not involve part of the research community in collaborative work. Independent research institutions are in a difficult position in many respects: they have limited access to data, and in the case of media literacy programmes, they are not necessarily allowed to visit schools as part of the education programme.

So far, international research projects and surveys have been seen as an opportunity. In recent years, many Hungarian researchers have moved abroad, which is a great loss, but on the other hand, the Hungarian perspective is still present in research even if there is no Hungarian institutional participant in the project. The work of domestic organisations, mainly NGOs, which have been involved in monitoring the media landscape in Hungary is also important. These NGOs can carry out project-based research on media issues with the help of foreign funding. There is currently a major risk posed by the new sovereignty protection law passed in 2023. How these foreign-funded media research projects will be affected by the new law and the soon-to-be-established new authority is still in doubt.

The current situation also means a possibility. Hungarian researchers are able to produce in-depth analyses of the illiberal media systems, the destructive power of propaganda and the impact of disinformation. Unfortunately, the illiberal media model is toxic, so this knowledge could be useful in other countries. Therefore, Hungarian researchers have much to contribute to aspects of deliberative communication and this knowledge is valuable in international networks.

Best-case scenarios

In the current political climate, there is little reality of best-case scenarios in the near future. However, circumstances may evolve in such a way that consensus-building policy-making is initiated and professional considerations are brought into play. If conditions are favourable, change will be possible in some areas:

Increasing cooperation and networking between monitoring agents would be possible, *if* the government was open to professional opinions and different actors channelled their knowledge into policy making. The role of the media authority is also important in this sense: cooperation with independent actors, would make the authority an engine of knowledge sharing, and this would increase its legitimacy.

If the academic freedom was strengthened, either through internal processes or EU pressure, the independency of research – including media studies – would be improved. It would also create new funding sources for media research, especially because of the re-opening of the EU programs for Hungarian universities.

Development of a comprehensive, systematic monitoring system capable of researching ROs of deliberative communication would be possible only *if* the political system was changing. The research infrastructure could be appropriately financed in this case. There would be a need to develop research methodologies and conduct systematic research in all areas of media, building largely on best practices in other European countries.

Worst-case scenarios

The current situation in Hungary is so bad that it can hardly be much worse. *If* the situation remains stable, it is a worst-case scenario in itself. At the same time, there are some factors that pose further risks.

If universities taken over by public foundations do not have access to European research funds, the professional network of researchers will be eroded. The NGOs will be afraid to apply for foreign funds, *if* the new sovereignty protection act reinforces the chilling effect.

The declining international attention is also a risk. *If* Hungary becomes an outlier, a special country case, the research community will not be longer interested in the Hungarian situation, since it will have no relevance for other countries.

Hungary will be completely cut off from the European community *if* the government decides to trigger the HUXIT and a referendum approves it.



Javier J. Amores

Current situation

In Italy, the situation regarding Wisdom-based Media Governance (WMG) is marked by a number of intricate challenges and evolving dynamics, which makes it not successful, but with challenges ahead and great potential for improvement. Firstly, the Italian media sector is significantly influenced by political and economic powers, which often leads to issues with media independence and the upholding of journalistic ethics. There is a struggle to ensure that media entities operate without undue influence, maintaining a balance between freedom of expression and responsible journalism.

On the other hand, the academic landscape in media, communication, and journalism is marked by a considerable number of scholars known for their expertise, contributing to a robust academic community. These academics contribute to the international competitiveness of Italian research in these fields, though the degree of this competitiveness can vary across different institutions and areas of study. The scholars in Italy participates in significant international research projects, and the knowledge production is substantial in both quantity and quality. Nevertheless, the information produced by academics, as is the case with data from the media and government institutions, is rarely accessible. In addition, research funding, primarily from government and EU sources, faces challenges due to limited availability and high competition. Educational and training programs in these fields are generally well-supported, but financial support can fluctuate with changing governmental and institutional priorities. Politically, media, journalism, and communication issues are of interest to Italian politicians, often figuring in the political agenda, particularly regarding digital security and media regulation. However, the depth of this interest can be influenced by current political climates and agendas, and very often the main interest is to influence the media and their agendas. This situation, far from improving, has worsened under the current government. In addition, cooperation between researchers and politicians exists but it is very poor and problematic and also full of influences and interests. Frequently is influenced by the political climate and specific research areas. Researchers often collaborate among themselves and with other entities, yet the degree of collaboration with political figures is more complicated and influenced by the specific research focus and the prevailing

political environment.

On the other hand, the rapid digital transformation and the advancement of digital technology, together with the proliferation of social media platforms have further complicated the media landscape in this country, introducing new ethical dilemmas and governance challenges, particularly in the realm of digital content and social media. This situation necessitates a continual evolution of media policies and practices to keep pace with technological advancements. In a more specific way, these changes demand an adaptive approach to media governance, one that considers new ethical challenges brought about by digital content dissemination and the role of artificial intelligence in news production and consumption. Efforts to enhance WMG in Italy involve reinforcing cooperation between agents, increasing media pluralism, regulating to avoid monopoly and political influences in the media field and media research, fostering ethical journalism practices, ensuring the adherence of media outlets to these ethical practices, and ensuring that media regulation keeps pace with technological advancements. This requires a collaborative effort from media houses, government bodies, regulatory agencies, and journalistic associations.

Best-case scenarios

The best possible scenario for Italy concerning Wisdom-based Media Governance would involve a synergistic blend of robust academic contributions, supportive political engagement, and sustainable funding. This would require, of course, encouraged a greater cooperation between all agents (including scholars, politicians, representatives of media industry and NGO's). In this context, the academic community in media and communication would be at the forefront of global research, engaging in groundbreaking international projects and producing high-quality, impactful studies. This would be supported by robust, consistent and stable funding from diverse sources, including both government and private entities, ensuring stability and growth in research and education in communication. So, this ideal state would feature a highly competitive and collaborative academic community extensively involved in innovative international projects, and capable of advising and transferring knowledge to decision makers. In this context, there would be regulation and people in charge of ensuring that all data on media and academic production in the areas of communication and journalism were standardized and publicly available and accessible, and were translated and used to generate knowledge, from which be able to make decisions. Also, stronger laws and regulations should be established to guarantee the freedom and independence of journalists, as well as media researchers, avoiding all types of influence from public or private powers or entities. In this sense, politically, there should be a deep, genuine commitment to media-related issues, ensuring they remain a priority on the national agenda. Politicians and researchers would collaborate effectively, fostering an environment where media governance is not only about regulation but also about nurturing an informed, ethical, and dynamic media landscape. This scenario would lead to a more informed public discourse, a resilient journalistic sector capable of adapting to technological advances, and a media governance model that exemplifies balance, integrity, innovation and public interest.

Worst- case scenarios

In the worst-case scenario for Wisdom-based Media Governance in Italy, the academic community might face extreme resource scarcity, severely limiting research and innovation. Scholar in media studies could face severe stagnation due to inadequate funding and a disconnect from global research trends. This would hinder innovation and international competitiveness. Politically, there would be a complete lack of interest (even less than now) on the part of politicians in media issues and in improving deliberative communication and independence of the media and in ensuring an informed public opinion. Political disregard for media issues could lead to weakened regulatory frameworks, allowing unchecked political and commercial encroachments into media operation. In this context, transparency would be reduced even more and influences and pressures on journalists and media professionals would increase, as would monopolization, manipulation and unethical or negligent journalistic practices. The marginalization of media issues would lead to a lack of effective governance, allowing political and commercial interests to dominate the media landscape unchecked. Such neglect could result in a decline in media diversity and ethical standards, fostering an environment rife with misinformation and eroding public trust in media. All this could result in a homogenized media environment, severely lacking in diversity and pluralism, with rampant misinformation and weakened public trust in journalism. Journalistic integrity could suffer significantly, with limited opportunities for professional development and growth in the face of technological advancements. And media and journalism research would have no funding opportunities, and would be completely disconnected or isolated from political interests and processes and decision-making. Such a scenario would severely impair the media's role in democratic society, potentially leading to a significant decline in public discourse quality and a democratic deficit.



Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte

Current situation

In Latvia, the current situation regarding wisdom-based media governance can be described as promising. Basic conditions are created for both co-operation of agents involved and the increasing of the quality and availability of information and knowledge. Last decade was marked by several major achievements in media policy following the creation of the Media Policy Unit at the Ministry of Culture and development of the first media policy guidelines (National Media Policy Guidelines 2016-2020 (2016), establishment of Media Support Fund (2017) and Latvian Media Ethics Council (LMEC, 2018) new regulations of PSM including creation of Public Electronic Mass Media Council (PEMMC) and position of PSMs ombudsperson (2020-2022)) that provide systemic and legal conditions for the deliberative communication.

However, there are also strong risks connected to 1) the existing, rather underdeveloped, fragmented and disbalanced knowledge base on media, journalism and communication, 2) trust to and prestige of journalism, 3) limited development of media competencies in all groups of society, 4) lack of resources for research and monitoring activities and; 5) limited number and

opportunities of development of diverse and professional group of monitoring experts/researchers; 6) lack of vision for long term systemic development (including the effective collaboration with fields related to media and communication like science, education, economy, technological development etc.). As further possible risks also the political and geopolitical tendencies must be taken in account such as growing populism, ideological and ethnic bias, and the general instability in the region. These tendencies have an important impact on the field of public communication, create tensions between agents including those involved in monitoring and introduce a kind of protectionism and securability (vs. deliberation) as a governance approach of solution.

In short, current situation in Latvia can be characterised as formally well established (even if there is a need for the regulation as well as network of agents to be constantly developed), but practically unstable where lack of consistency, depth and versatility in existing knowledge, as well as lack of tradition and experience of different involved agents (regulatory bodies, judges, educators etc.), trust, prestige of journalism, monitoring capacity, resources, media related competences and the lack of long term planning in both media research and media policy open up many particular gaps and points of weaknesses for damaging influences and destructive processes. Lacking in both public space and academia is also a consistent media criticism, theory, and wider intellectual reflection on mediascapes that would allow us to envision, imagine, compare, focus on mistakes and provide new models for solutions and point on inconsistencies of existing models.

Best-case scenarios

The best scenarios for the wisdom-based governance of media and communication field in Latvia will be implemented with several conditions fulfilled:

- a. If a careful and balanced development of media policy goals and guidelines for the next period will be provided by the **government** (Ministry of Culture) to ensure continuation, coherence of policy measures for development of a pluralistic and diverse media environment.
- b. If this policy will be based on a careful evaluation of the achievements of the previous period employing sustained research by **experienced research bodies** and created using **consultations** with academic, professional associations and other NGOs, regulatory bodies (both National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEMMC) and PEMMC) and other agents involved in the monitoring of the field. Research and monitoring results **must have an ensured impact** on further policy development.
- c. If the **knowledge and skills** related to the understanding of role of media and journalism in contemporary society are **promoted**, especially, in the context of journalistic work, role and products, first of all, in all groups of primarily and corporate agents related to the field of deliberative communication, including judges and politicians, but also educators and in all different groups of society as well as strengthening monitoring capacity - research, discussion and reflective evaluation.
- d. If the agents involved in the network of knowledge production and consultation – universities, research institutions, monitoring bodies, civil society NGOs – are supported within a **long-term strategy of coordination** of both resources and outputs of information and knowledge. There is no special public body that is coordinating monitoring of mediascapes in the country. Insufficient research development currently limits scientific and policy discussion on the fact that wisdom-based management shall trans-

- form understanding of media competencies from a protectionist approach to a generative approach prioritising flexibility and creativity in media consumption.
- e. It is important in this regard **to ensure the political independence and professional expertise** of the body if such is created in Latvia. The expansion of EU (EC) monitoring activities and building of data archives for comparison especially for the areas such as journalists' working conditions, independence, and education; improvement of media literacy.
 - f. If there is the **stable financial base and strategy** needed for knowledge production which is provided transparently to the research agents (universities, research institutions, NGOs) in all areas related to deliberative communication. This financial support must be provided with an overarching goal to develop continuity of the research, coherence of data, building most urgent focuses related to the main values of democracy and deliberative communication, but also encouraging innovation and elaboration of the national specifics in the research field.
 - g. If the **academic media and communication field is substantially supported** in the country both in terms of general (media and science/education) policy and particular financing programs and instruments, effectively combining existing and creating new funding options on both national and EU level. There is no impact of local academic research conclusions on policy, industry, and users, that must be established.
 - h. If the support to internationalisation of all directions of deliberative communication research is provided.

Worst-case scenarios

As the recent achievements of Latvian media system can be characterised as fragile, the worst scenarios will be implemented if there is no support to coordination of agents and sustainability of the quality of research:

- a. If there is no informed political will to develop Latvian media system according to values of deliberative democracy.
- b. If there are no agents (courts, judges, law researchers and scholars, SLAPP, hate speech and whistle blowing monitoring bodies, think tanks) that are involved in processes of wider reflection and research on actual legal and ethical issues.
- c. If there are no timely responses to EU - level initiatives on deliberative communication development (monitoring of attacks to journalists, access to information, media ownership transparency issues, SLAPP cases, hate speech in digital environment, disinformation, whistleblowing).
- d. If there is no clear and stable media policy with a clear vision of the role of all agents involved. This vision must be oriented on the data provided and prospects analysed by universities, NGOs, commercial research companies and think tanks.
- e. If trust in the media continues to decline and the public's media use is dominated by non-professional sources of everyday information, then opportunity of deliberative communication will be determined by algorithm driven global platforms as the commercial agents. If the practice of underdeveloped research of media competencies continues, it will further deepen the limitations of the level of media literacy required by society in today's media environment.
- f. If there is no or limited financial support provided to the universities and research institutions to sustain their research and monitoring programs in longitudinal terms in addition to the project-based financing oriented on particular "blind spots" in research.

- g. If the research agenda supported by national and international funding is not secured against political influence. If current research and monitoring institutions are restructured and consolidated to improve their financial stability and the decision-making process is not transparent, there is a risk of lack of sustainability of deliberative democracy monitoring. The directions of the mentioned processes indicate that the dependence of research agents (universities, research companies, think tanks) on political priorities may increase in the monitoring process, and academic freedom in decision making decreases.



POLAND

Michał Glowacki

Current situation

Scenarios for deliberative communication in Poland reflect the systemic and cultural challenges for monitoring capabilities improvement via their scope, implementation and overall care (and willingness) to speak and respect each other. While there is a multiplication of media indexes, data and other media monitoring capabilities, their social impact must be read via highly polarised cultural contexts alongside systemic (research and policy-making) gaps for deliberative practices and literacies.

Overall, there is a mismatch between declarations and the actual practices of deliberations on the quality of media and democracy. Poland's findings on media's monitoring capabilities reflect broader cultural practices of law-making with questions about the real impact (and forms) of public consultations (and citizen panels) on future policy directions. The data shows there is a call for monitoring media law implementation, which is highly relevant for societies where regulations on defamation, access to public information and the practices of SLAPP can be used as a part of the political party agendas. One of the most significant challenges has been to find common ground for highly divided journalism tribes with their own media accountability authorities and the only-truth discourses (we vs the others). Filling the existing knowledge gaps would require more transparency in media ownership, citizen discussions on hate speech, social cohesion, and modern independent public service media.

Poland's media and democracy studies (dataset: 1000 publications and other academic records from 2000–2020) evidence the critical orientations towards normative theories, with approx. 60% of media and democracy studies focus on media theory. A call for more evidence-based and applied research has been the case in all four Mediadelcom research and data accessibility criteria, with the most significant gaps in the organisational D&I (Diversity and Inclusion) daily approaches alongside filling gaps beyond the journalistic norms and highly polarised production and distribution practices (the understanding of future media skills, HR policies, research). There is an overall goal to strengthen the monitoring capabilities of the academia, which reflects internal scholarly and external collaborative practices, such as researchers' involvement in policy-making, knowledge sharing and advising. The challenge of more evidenced-based research blends with the call for more in-depth recognition of media and communications as independent disciplines, alongside potentially relevant scholarly-indexed journals (adjusting the list

of journals towards the bibliographical and citation indexes) and funding schemes for longitudinal and cross-cultural monitoring and deliberative activities.

On the surface, one of the critical challenges for Poland's scenario drawings has been media literacy and deliberative media, which would go beyond the highly polarised societal, political and ideological media cultures (see, for instance, the conservative vs the liberal media thinking and related policies). Future best and worst scenarios presented here aim to juxtapose the Mediadelcom findings with the forward-look vision of people's care and interest in media deliberative practices and literacies.

Best-case scenarios

- There are no data and knowledge gaps; quantitative findings are blended with the qualitative longitudinal media and democracy monitoring cultures and systems;
- Media regulation and media accountability focus on the public's multigenerational and multi-ideological experiences and the citizen-driven voices of the deliberative communications reinventions (beyond politics and societal polarisation), explorations of new agile forms of deliberations, workshops and other forms of gathering in line with learning by contributing and making;
- Ombudsman-like roles (across departments) in media organisations (governance), citizen-engaged dialogue on media accountability and platform-oriented media regulations;
- Collaborative work between policy-makers and academia, commissioning systems for media-related works and data/knowledge sharing, impacting deliberations via media and democracy-related platforms and events;
- Systemic support towards media and democracy studies as a highly relevant lens of social science contributions; transparent authorities and criteria for the research and excellence framework science evaluation;
- A wide range of agents and monitoring indexes collaboration, policy-makers, ngos, citizen- and the local authorities-driven and activists involved in monitoring and media and democracy;
- Experimentation with media deliberative and monitoring capabilities; transforming knowledge and data towards after the legacy medias and social cohesion priorities;
- Highly relevant deliberative literacies (media and democratic communications) are part of the media literacies curriculum (schools and universities) and applied research performance.

Worst-case scenarios

In the worst-case scenarios, the wisdom-based approach remains as the normative concept to follow rather than the actual deliberative practices. The critical understanding of deliberations, reflected in Mediadelcom domains, with a strong emphasis on the cultural lenses of legal media regulation and the quality of media accountability practices and systems. One of the worst scenarios would also mean the ongoing multiplication of media audience data and funding media and democracy and a low level of media policy-publics and researchers policymaking and other forms of collaborations. The potentially relevant future scenarios include the politics over the citizens' voice, alongside political attitudes towards protecting the media and democracy status quo.

The turn into a wisdom-based approach might require a more in-depth examination of the

foundations of deliberative cultures and broader conditions of media organisations and civil societies.



ROMANIA

Ioana Avadani

Current situation

Mediadelcom project analyzed the Romania's capacity: of monitoring mediascapes, as an indicator of the capacity to make wisdom-based decision – meaning based on solid information, properly processed and interpreted and negotiated with all the involved agents. In doing this analysis, we engaged in an agent-based approach and looked at:

- - their monitoring capabilities: What agents are there and how extensive their research infrastructure is?)
- - their competence: Are the agents able to exert agency? What is their motivation?
- - their propensity to engage in a dialogic relationship: Who is talking? Who is listening? Who is the most influential? Who and how makes the decision?

We found that the way information, data and knowledge about media in Romania is gathered and publicised poses a risk to the deliberative communication and deliberative democracy. The data and information seem to follow the early atomic model of “plum pudding”, where valuable information has to be scooped out of volumes of irrelevant data.

A series of actors are active in documenting and researching the media field, and they take turns in dominating one domain or another. The state is the main agent in the legal domain, regulating the media and securing the harmonisation with the EU directives. Via the harmonisation mechanism, EU itself becomes an actor in the media field, for better or worse. The state is also the major actor in funding research. It created the structures and the mechanisms and holds the ultimate decisions in what it funds. Last but not least, the state serves as a “rapporteur”, as the public bodies provide periodical reports on access to information, whistleblowing, data protection, internet infrastructure and broadcast licensing. Journalists are, in theory, dominating the accountability and self-regulatory domain, but their activity is weak and their practices even weaker. The NGO sector is also active in this domain. The journalism domain is dominated by academic actors and their national and international research. There is a notable increase in academic literature on how technologies – especially digital – affect journalism practices, the self-recognised roles of journalist, the media usage patterns and the media market. Commercial actors are the leading force in monitoring the media usage patterns and data thus collected is used for marketing purposes. Data on media competences is almost completely missing, and the initiative in this domain belongs to NGOs. We identified a lack of diachronic and regular analysis of the mediascapes, which makes policy formulation difficult.

We also found a disconnection between the actors, and a lack of joint action, support or coordination.

The state disregards other actors and the media field, in general. Instead, it adopts legisla-

tion impacting the media without proper consultation and underfunds media research. The academic and non-academic resources and experts, including the business, are not cooperating and seem to operate on parallel tracks. As rich as it is, the academic literature on the media ecosystem is virtually unknown outside academic circles. Even the well-established academic journals dedicated to media and communication and who publish regularly articles treating current topics of interest are ignored outside their primary audience – other academics.

The status quo places Romania in the right bottom quarter of the diagram (see Figure 1), with available information, but of inconsistent quality and rather difficult to access to and a marked lack of interaction and cooperation between the agents. This poses the risk that research works and other valuable monitoring data and findings go unnoticed and unapplied by the practitioners and policymakers, and new knowledge is wasted.

This risk may be turned it into an opportunity if the agents decide to cooperate and create a common vision of how the mediascapes monitoring should be done.

Best-case scenarios

The access to quality information will increase:

- - if the Government reconsiders the importance of social sciences, media studies included, and increases the funds available for this domain; EU may lead the way in this respect and even set desirable indicators;
- - if the Government genuinely applies the access to information principles in all its activities and uses the new technologies to ease access and multiply distribution of information;
- - if researchers expand their areas of interest and embark in longitudinal studies of mediascapes, stimulated by the increased resources invested in research

The cooperation will increase:

- - If the non-governmental actors voluntarily decide to cooperate in systematically exchanging information, reciprocally acknowledging the quality of their work and its importance for monitoring the mediascape; the commercial agents open up their data to researchers; journalists develop an interest in documenting their work conditions and their status in the newsrooms; EU offers opportunities for joint work and exchanges;
- - if the Government embarks in developing wisdom-based policies, including in the media field, and genuinely opens consultations with all the relevant agents based on the principles of the deliberative communication.

Worst-case scenarios

The access to quality information will decrease:

- - if the Government maintains the current low funding available for research, especially for those in the social sciences, mediascapes included;
- - if the Government maintains or tightens access to information, under the pretext of data protection or national security. EU should refrain from allowing the national security criterion to be instrumentalized to the detriment of freedom of information in its own documents.

The cooperation will decrease:

- - if the non-governmental actors remain incapsulated in their respective professional bubbles, pushed into “survival mode” by limited resources or restrictive regulations.
- - if the Government adopts an authoritarian stance, making decisions on strictly political grounds.

Conclusion

It is visible that the Government is still the leading agent in the changes, be them positive or negative. Noteworthy, a move of the Government into the direction of cooperation and collaboration opens up several avenues for positive evolution, as it may also lead to increasing understanding of the role, the needs and the specificity of the media research, the need for transparency in all domains, the respect for all the agents’ contributions and needs, all leading to deliberative communication across the board.



Slavomir Galik, Norbert Vrabec

Current situation

In the Slovak media ecosystem, the wisdom-based media governance based on CMM (capability of monitoring mediascapes) indicates several risks and opportunities identified in different areas. Monitoring the media space in Slovakia is weakened by insufficient research on press freedom regulation and a lack of best practices for collecting and analysing SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation). Guarantees of access to public information need to be improved. Media governance faces challenges, including the absence of a significant journalists' organisation, a media market dominated by domestic and foreign financial groups, increasing pressure from politicians on the independence of public service media, and a lack of cooperation between the state, the media, and other actors. Opportunities in this area include adopting the Media Services Act, which aligns with the revised version of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMDS). The Media Service Council is the main agent concerning knowledge acquisition and cooperation regarding media policy and regulation of the Slovak media ecosystem. In line with the AVMDS, the Media Services Council operates, whose remit includes initiating and carrying out research and analytical activities in the media field for monitoring and assessing the state of the media environment, in particular concerning the level of media freedom / internal and external media pluralism / the spread of hate speech, disinformation, content that can seriously impair the development of minors/media literacy / commercial media communication / political promotion.

The current landscape in Slovakia offers the basic structural and legal framework necessary for fostering deliberative communication. However, this potential is undermined by several challenges. Firstly, the depth, consistency, and universality of existing knowledge in this area are lacking. This shortfall is exacerbated by inadequate collaboration among various stakeholders, including public authorities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and media

entities. The lack of cooperation between key agents relates to the area of setting strategic research priorities and then using the data to develop effective policy frameworks and regulatory frameworks in the context of wisdom-based media governance.

Research continuity is further limited, with many research projects and studies needing more regular, continuous execution. This sporadic approach to research hampers effective data comparison and the ability to predict future trends accurately. Despite the systemic and legal conditions conducive to deliberative communication, there is a notable absence of targeted research that specifically addresses the risks and opportunities within this field. The reasons could be related to a shortage of initiative or interest in this specific area of study, possibly due to limited awareness of its importance, insufficient funding, or a focus on other priorities within the academic and research communities. Nonetheless, some studies do touch upon pertinent aspects of deliberative communication, albeit indirectly. These studies often explore the dynamics of media and political relationships or delve into the financial dimensions of journalism. This indicates a gap in research that, if filled, could significantly enhance understanding and implementation of effective deliberative communication strategies in Slovakia.

Legislation in Slovakia shows that media ownership and editorial processes are not sufficiently transparent, leading to potential manipulation of content and fears of a reduction in the level of freedom of expression and media pluralism. The driving force behind these risks is the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few domestic and foreign financial groups, alongside political interests that may exert undue influence over journalistic content. This situation can create an environment where media outlets are pressured or incentivized to align their reporting with the interests of their owners or political affiliates, rather than maintaining objectivity and serving the public interest. Conflicts of interest in the media and politics, compounded by high concentration in the media market, are also a concern. Opportunities lie in the promotion of ethical journalism and in educational campaigns to address these issues.

In terms of journalistic practice, Slovakia lacks a strong professional organisation of journalists. The attitude of political elites towards journalists is generally negative and not very supportive. Incentives to ensure the dominance of highly qualified and ethical journalists in the media sector are insufficient. Opportunities include improving communication between political elites and journalists and encouraging the development of a respected journalists' professional organisation.

Efforts by the government and politicians to influence the independence of the public broadcaster (RTVS) are also a problem in the Slovak media landscape. The government manages to divide the public media institution into two separate entities, radio, and television. At the same time, the Parliament agreed to reduce the state contribution from 0.17% to 0.12% of the gross domestic product, which will result in a shortfall of 55 million. Euro. The management of RTVS announced a significant reduction in the distribution and production of its own production, a reduction in the number of employees and the cancellation of two television channels.

Patterns of media use show that data are controlled by private companies, limiting their public availability. Audiences prefer free content to paying for digital news, leading to dependence on dubious sources and contributing to the polarisation of society. This fosters a growing distrust of reputable media. Options to address these problems include encouraging the private sector to share media usage data publicly and strengthening media-audience relationships to build trust and combat misinformation.

Finally, the level of media literacy in Slovakia is low. Although media literacy programmes

are implemented in formal education, they are not yet widely implemented and there is no accredited teacher training programme focusing on media education. Most media literacy programmes are delivered by NGOs, journalists, and academic institutions. Opportunities in this area include emphasising media literacy across all age groups, including seniors, training teachers in the didactics of critical media use, and strengthening cooperation between stakeholders to achieve measurable results.

Using the following scenarios, we present trends that could occur in Slovakia regarding the implementation or absence of wisdom-based media governance.

Best-case scenarios

According to this optimistic scenario, the Slovak media ecosystem will improve significantly in the medium term thanks to the successful implementation of the Media Services Act and other supporting legislation. This leads to increased transparency of media ownership and editorial processes, reducing the risk of content manipulation and conflicts of interest between media and politics.

The best scenarios for the wisdom- based governance of media and communication field in Slovakia will be implemented with several conditions fulfilled:

- 1. Enhanced media governance and legislation: If the Media Services Council becomes highly effective in initiating research and monitoring the state of the media environment, it will lead to improved media freedom, internal and external media pluralism and a reduction in hate speech and misinformation. The Council can facilitate collaboration between various stakeholders, including media organizations, journalists, government bodies, and civil society, to ensure a cohesive approach to improving the media landscape. Engaging with a broad range of perspectives can help in crafting more effective and widely supported media policies. The careful and balanced development of media policy objectives and guidelines can lead to the development of ethical journalism, the expansion of media literacy education campaigns and a more informed and critical audience. The motivation of the Media Services Council to improve all these fields stems from its mandate to uphold the standards of media quality, diversity, and freedom in the public interest. This could be driven by a combination of legal responsibilities, societal expectations, and a foundational commitment to supporting a healthy democratic process through a free and fair media landscape.
- 2. Revitalized Journalistic Practice: If a strong, respected journalists' professional organization were to emerge, it would significantly improve the relationship between journalists and political elites. Coupled with professionally oriented curricula, this development could ensure a media landscape dominated by highly qualified and ethical journalists. Such an environment would encourage investigative journalism and hold power structures accountable. There are several possible motivations and contextual changes that could serve as driving forces or agents for the revitalization of journalistic practice as described. These include public demand for credible information, legislative and policy initiatives aimed at enhancing media freedom and integrity, media industry recognition of ethical journalism's value, and international standards and recommendations that can serve as benchmarks for local media, encouraging improvements in journalistic practice.
- 3. Enhanced Media Literacy: Should comprehensive media literacy programs be widely implemented in formal education, including accredited teacher training programs focusing on media education, it could successfully raise the overall level of media literacy

across all age groups, including seniors. This advancement would reduce the public's susceptibility to misinformation. By acting as the main agent of change, the educational system, supported by a network of stakeholders (policymaker, educational authorities, NGOs, and media organizations) can catalyse a comprehensive and effective process to enhance media literacy across all age groups. This multifaceted approach addresses the need for both foundational education and ongoing professional development, ultimately reducing the public's susceptibility to misinformation and fostering a more informed and critical society.

- 4. Improved Media Usage Patterns: If private companies were to start sharing media usage data publicly, it would lead to a more transparent and accountable media industry. Audiences, becoming more media literate, would likely show a greater willingness to pay for quality digital news, reducing their dependence on dubious free sources. This shift could result in a decrease in societal polarization and an increase in trust towards reputable media outlets.
- 5. Strengthening of Public Broadcasting Independence: If there were a positive turn of events where the independence and objectivity of public broadcasting, particularly RTVS, were bolstered, this improvement would likely result from successful resistance to government and political interference. Guidance and support from international bodies dedicated to press freedom and media independence, such as UNESCO or the European Broadcasting Union, can help reinforce the standards and expectations for public broadcasting. Their backing can provide a framework for independence and serve as a benchmark for national policies.

Worst-case scenario

In this pessimistic scenario, the media ecosystem in Slovakia deteriorates due to the failure to address existing challenges and the emergence of new issues. There is no clear and stable media policy with a clear vision of all agents' roles.

- 1. Weakening Media Governance and Legislation: Should the Media Services Act and the activities of the Media Services Council fail to make a significant impact, a lack of transparency in media ownership and editorial processes would likely continue. This scenario could lead to increased content manipulation and conflicts of interest, while efforts to promote ethical journalism and media literacy might see little progress, leaving the audience vulnerable to misinformation and hate speech. The impact of the Act significantly depends on the existence of strong enforcement mechanisms. This includes the capacity to investigate violations, impose sanctions, and ensure compliance among media entities. Without the ability to enforce its provisions, the Act's effectiveness would be limited. The Council's ability to make a significant impact is contingent upon its independence from political and commercial pressures.
- 2. Deteriorating Journalistic Practice: If the absence of a strong journalists' professional organization persists and the relationship between journalists and political elites worsens, then journalism education might remain inadequate. This could result in a media landscape lacking qualified and ethical journalists, where investigative journalism suffers, and media becomes more susceptible to political and financial influences. The deterioration in journalistic practice and the worsening relationship between journalists and political elites can significantly undermine wisdom-based media governance. It affects the media's ability to serve its critical role in a democracy, impacting

everything from public trust and media integrity to the very foundation of informed public discourse and democratic engagement.

- 3. Declining Media Literacy: Should media literacy programs remain limited and ineffective, with no significant advancements in formal education or teacher training, the general population could continue exhibiting low levels of media literacy. This situation might make them more susceptible to misinformation and unable to critically evaluate media content. Formal education systems often operate within a set curriculum that is slow to adapt to emerging needs and technologies. If media literacy is not recognized as a priority within the curriculum, there will be little to no space allocated for it, preventing the integration of comprehensive media literacy education. Improving media literacy requires a concerted effort to overcome these barriers, including curriculum updates, educator training, resource allocation, and a shift in educational priorities to recognize the importance of equipping students with the skills to critically engage with media.
- 4. Problematic Media Usage Patterns: If private companies maintain control over media usage data, preventing transparency, and the audience continues to prefer free, often unreliable content, this could exacerbate societal polarization and mistrust in reputable media. The lack of trust and reliance on dubious sources could deepen, undermining the democratic process and informed public discourse.
- 5. Efforts to Politicize Public Broadcasting (RTVS): Should efforts to politicize public broadcasting (RTVS) continue, its independence and objectivity could be weakened due to influence from the government and other political stakeholders. This influence might manifest directly, such as through censorship or interference with editorial independence, or indirectly, particularly by reducing the funding of the public broadcaster by the state.
- 6. Trend of Reducing Internal Employment Contracts: If the trend of reducing the number of internal employment contracts in editorial offices continues, journalists could be forced to work on a contract basis and to pay financial contributions to the state from their income. This method, while solving the media's economic situation by avoiding taxes for employees, could have negative consequences for the quality of journalistic work. Journalists might be forced to work for several media outlets simultaneously, preferring quantity over quality.

Conclusions

Both scenarios highlight the potential directions the Slovak media ecosystem could take, depending on the effectiveness of wisdom-based media governance policies, the response of media organizations, and the engagement of the public in media literacy and ethical journalism. A significant lack of transparency in who owns and controls the media, coupled with opaque editorial decision-making processes, creates a fertile ground for content manipulation. This opacity hinders the public's ability to discern biases and understand the underlying influences on the media they consume. The limited ability of the general population to critically assess media content due to a lack of media literacy education makes them particularly susceptible to misinformation. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the absence of comprehensive media literacy programmes in formal education, which fail to equip citizens with the necessary skills to navigate the complex media environment.



SWEDEN

Lars Nord

Current situation

Media monitoring in Sweden is characterized by a rich availability of data, often with acceptable quality, which enables a deepened and full-fledged understanding of Swedish media development. This data enables different actors in the Swedish society to foresee the media development and to conduct deeper inquiries into certain aspects. In all analysed domains (legal and ethical regulation, journalism, media usage and media competencies) there is a variety of reliable data sources from different sectors of society (government, academia, research institutes, monitoring agencies). The wide array of data producing and data collecting institutions is in many respects a source of advantage for the democratic resilience of the Swedish media system. This contextual backdrop largely reflects the scenarios presented here.

Simultaneously, minor problems and future challenges can be identified within the relatively well functioning system: richness of data is potentially good, but overproduction and uncoordinated data collection may be a problem. While monitoring and governance of media is conducted by a range of government and non-government institutions, none of these institutions have the task to monitor the overall capacity development and performance of the media system as an enabler of deliberative democracy. Because of the current compartmentalization of media analysis, there is a risk of over-using and over-emphasizing variables that are easy to measure and commercially motivated, whereas more complex analyses of the media situation in relation to democratic values remain under-investigated. Among media scholars, there is a widespread opinion that the discipline is somewhat disfavored by scientific councils for research funding. However, we see signs of improvement in terms of the current government's implementation of a new media authority, *Mediemyndigheten* (Swedish Agency for The Media) although it is too soon to say whether it will remedy the above-mentioned challenges with uncoordinated data.

For the scenario-building, *Mediadelcom* focuses on two axes that seem to be most universal concerning the best and worst scenarios: the axis of increasing-decreasing of co-operation and networking between the agents and the axis of increasing-decreasing of knowledge production quality and access to information.

Best-case scenarios

The presence of institutions with holistic media monitoring remits like *NORDICOM* (Centre for Nordic Media Research) and *Mediemyndigheten* forms a solid ground for the capability of monitoring the Swedish mediascape and adds broad and cross-sectoral capabilities and sharing of insights about media industry developments (e.g. financial performance and audience figures). However, as both institutions are public their monitoring role could be further developed *if* the government, or more specifically The Ministry for Cultural Affairs, decided to broaden their role and revise their tasks to also include a more coherent and sustainable monitoring of

the democratic performance of the media and thus increasing knowledge and access to information about media and democracy dynamics in the Swedish society.

The Government and the Ministry for Cultural Affairs can also pave the way for increasing cooperation and networking between agents *if* they took the initiative to coordinate efforts to systematically collect relevant data from diverse data production sources such as academia, NGOs, public authorities, etc. and then find ways to present them and make them more easily accessible for the public and increase knowledge.

The lack of sustainable funding of media and democracy related research projects in existing national and international funding programs would be a minor problem *if* scientific councils decided to introduce more specific programs focusing on media development implications for democracy and thus enabling a sustainable accumulation of further knowledge in this field.

Worst-case scenarios

Increased economic challenges and dramatic transformations of media markets may encourage the private sector data producers to focus more on collecting information related to commercial aspects. *If* such development occurs, private sector data producers will probably be less interested in participating in new governmental coordinated efforts to facilitate the overall provision of democracy-oriented data. As a result of decreased networking and cooperation, media monitoring in this case risk to be conducted in media industry silos.

A re-direction and consolidation of data production towards democratic performances of the media also depend on the political willingness to support such a change. Traditionally, the political system has respected the arm's lengths principle and acknowledged the democratic functions of the media. However, increasing political polarization in the Swedish society and intensified media criticism from certain political parties may change the current situation. *If* a more media hostile government comes into power, it may focus on changing fundamental media policy conditions and be less interested in securing data production that is democratically relevant. As a result of political changes, information, and knowledge about media role in democracy would decrease.

To conclude, the extensive and accessible data production on media developments in Sweden in general provide good opportunities for media monitoring. Information is largely available and contributes to public knowledge. Cooperation and networking between agents exist to some extent.

Governmental initiatives could improve knowledge production in hitherto relatively neglected democracy-related areas and synthesize existing data collection. Risks are related both to an increased commercialization of the media sector and its possible focus on more market-oriented data collection, and on possible political transformations that could change political actors' priorities regarding media policy initiatives.

PART II - Agent-based Modelling

John Alphonsus Matthews

The Agent-based modelling (ABM) methodology is being used as part of the Mediadelcom project to understand and estimate how changes in media structures and related stakeholders (agents) might influence risks and opportunities (ROs). The methodology provides a holistic approach to understanding the dynamics within news media structures while including related agents and changes caused by news media. Sterling and Taveter discuss ABM methodology as an approach for modelling complex which can include people and allow modelling of changing environments (Sterling & Taveter, 2009). They also discuss a conceptual framework known as the viewpoint framework, which studies the models at three levels of abstraction. It consists of three layers: conceptual domain modelling, platform-independent computational design, and platform-specific design and implementation.

A typical agent-based model consists of four core elements. These are agents, their relationships and interactions, the knowledge agents have, and the environment they are part of. Agents often differ from one another, with varying behaviours and attributes. Sterling and Taveter (Sterling & Taveter, 2009, p. 7) gave one specific definition of an agent as “an entity that performs a specific activity in an environment of which it is aware and that can respond to changes.” This concept can be applied to the methodology for Mediadelcom.

Motivational modelling - Three Types of Goals

Any agent-based simulation is designed and developed with some purpose in mind. The purpose is usually concerned with making decisions of some kind. Such decisions can, for example, be made on where should electric vehicle charging stations be located, how should land be used in one or another location to minimize environmental impact, what types of services should be offered to tourists in a particular destination, what would be the best way to evacuate the injured from the disaster zone, what are the most efficient isolation and vaccination strategies to slow down the spreading of COVID-19, and how to prevent the emergence of echo chambers of misinformation and fake news.

Let us consider judges, who should make a decision on how to develop a better support system for transparency to exist in a society. They might need a “sociotechnical” system to support their decision. The decision-support system is called sociotechnical because it supports decisions made by humans by agent-based simulations. A sociotechnical system of this kind can “try out” by means of its technical subsystem - agent-based simulation - the effects of decisions made by humans on how to organize the process that supports transparency. The first step in designing and developing this decision-support system is to understand the problem domain and identify its stakeholders. Motivational modelling distinguishes between three types of goals: functional goals, quality goals, and emotional goals - and roles. Functional goals indicate what the system should do or achieve. Quality goals present non-functional requirements of the system describing the quality aspects of the system - how the system should be. A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is used for evaluating or measuring the attainment of a quality goal. Emotional goals describe how the stakeholders should feel when making decisions or as a result of making the decisions. In addition, roles performed by the stakeholders are identified which represent who is responsible for the attainment of which goals.

In more detail, the starting point for outlining potential scenarios is modelling three kinds

of goals. They are functional, quality, and emotional. These goals can be defined as follows (Lopez-Lorca et al., 2014). Functional goals capture one or more desired scenarios. We can take a “judge” as an example for our models. They have a functional goal of leading towards justice. More specifically, they might tend to encourage other agents to increase their levels of transparency and their capacity to support it. A quality aspect of this could be the level a judge is willing and enabled to lead towards this goal. The emotional could also be considered satisfaction at meeting certain “values” (e.g., in the case of freedom of speech vs privacy, the society expects that these confronting values are well balanced and well argued in the court decision and the needs of democratic society are protected). Achieving these goals could be seen as the successful influence of other agents to become more transparent. Not achieving the goal could be seen as not being effective in achieving the goals.

What are Agents

We must explain what we mean by “agents” and why they are useful. The agents are often thought of as being “purposeful”. They have motivations in the form of roles and goals. The roles are routines that the agents perform, and the goal is some sort of result, one that is measurable. For example, a role could be the journalists. The role of journalists is to serve the public need for reliable information or act as a watchdog effort to improve transparency or, a goal could be the improvement of transparency. The goals are based on motivations, for example, a desire to increase transparency.

Roles also relate to and influence the relationships and interactions that occur between agents. For example, if we consider a network of agents, i.e., a set of agents that, in some cases, have relationships with one another, this will allow agents to influence one another. In such a network, the agents could also have different levels of influence, for example, their capacity to influence transparency in other agents. The agents will have knowledge, which is often referred to as its *knowledge base*. This knowledge, for example, could include what groups media consumers or producers are part of and perhaps their personal views on the need for transparency. The environment that this is set in is where the agents exist. This could be in the real world or a simulated environment created by software.

A key purpose and benefit of the ABM approach for Mediadelcom is that it is not limited by constraints of more classical approaches such as linear regression models, and instead allows a direct focus on agents, their behaviours, and their interactions.

For the Mediadelcom approach and from a social science perspective, it is important to consider that there are a variety of agents. Even if we can define various corporate agents, their homogeneity as a group is unclear. However, to simplify the definition of agents, we define them via their motivation to support, balance or be against several values that are important preconditions for deliberative communication. How can one measure if certain corporate agents are supporting one or another value? This is a methodologically difficult issue and has put limits on the applicability of scenario-building in various countries. In the case of Estonia, we could rely on qualitative and quantitative data. However, the list of needed input data for the scenario building is one of the outcomes of the Mediadelcom project. Another aspect is what the agents are motivated to do and their influence.

For example, corporate agents have a stronger influence on implementing regulations and policies. However, the most important aspect for Mediadelcom is the interaction between the agents, e.g., influence dynamics. What happens if the influence of one or another agent will in-

crease? To what amount does this affect the whole picture? It is the question of imagination what conditions could change the dynamics between the agents.

What concerns deliberative communication and news media - some changes may occur suddenly, and others will occur slowly and gradually. New technology brings new opportunities that are easily recognisable; however, how this influences different users, content producers, owners etc. Agents take time and are difficult to follow. Thus, a positive side of this modelling is that we can simulate small and gradual changes that are more difficult to notice. The small and gradual changes can sum up to significant risks (or opportunities if we speak about best scenarios).

The agents come with a slightly different terminology and interpretation within computer science. Thus we need to translate our understanding between social science and computer science. Translating media structures to what can ultimately be tested in ABM-based computer simulations is necessary. From the computer science perspective, we consider a *conceptual framework* is needed. Such a framework for our purposes refers to a methodology and collection of theoretical concepts. The conceptual framework we use is the *viewpoint framework*. For this, and much of what follows, Sterling and Taveter provide much detail (Sterling and Taveter, 2009). There are three layers or *abstraction layers*. These are the conceptual domain analysis, simulation design, and, finally, the simulation implementation. In other terms, the first layer is an initial analysis of the problem, i.e., the problem domain analysis. We then design the simulations using the ABM concepts by fitting our proposed theoretical scenario to the agents, knowledge, etc. Finally, we implement this in the NetLogo software package (Tisue & Wilensky, U., 2004.), thus allowing the implementation of computer simulations.

Often, a major difference between the understanding of agents in the two disciplines is that the agents will be implemented as very specific routines in terms of computer languages. They will often have very rigid conditions about how they run. This can be offset by including elements of randomness in their behaviour.

The terminology we apply, particularly when thinking on the computer science side, can have specific meanings. For example, we will later discuss agents having *views*. And these views will be on *topics*. The topics will be the likes of support for transparency. The view will be where an agent stands on this for this particular example, the agent's view is a numerical value ranging between 0 for no support and 1 for total support. (In some instances, it would also be possible to set the range from -1 for working against the likes of transparency and up to 1 for supporting it.) The topics and views can be used by ordinary policymakers to observe what might cause agents to increase or decrease their support for transparency, for example.

The probabilities and consequences of achieving or not achieving one goal will be evaluated by a qualitative approach. This was a process of trial and error. Testing the numbers of various agents and the proportions of different groups. led to simulations that gave reasonable results.

NetLogo and Simulation Design

We designed a NetLogo simulation that forms the basis for the two main scenarios. Below is a snapshot of the interface (Figure 1). It includes inputs that we can adjust (in green), such as the numbers of various agents that are to be included (in the "Transparency" scenario) or the proportions of the population that fall into different groups (in the "Capability of deliberation" scenario).

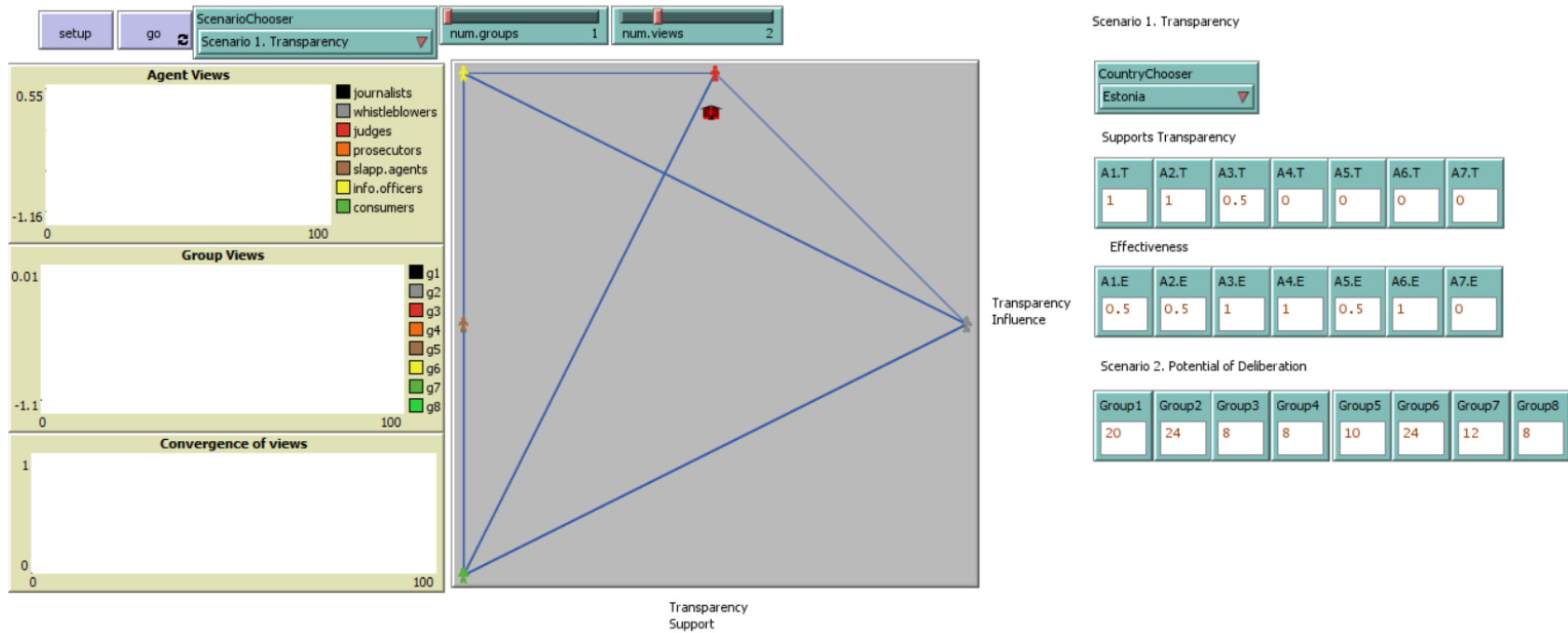


Figure 1a. The NetLogo interface for the primary simulation. The initial state before the simulation starts. Beige parts are charts that display how the simulation is performing, while it is active. Green represents adjustable inputs. Blue buttons perform specified functions. In the middle, the large square is the display port, which visualises the state of the simulation.

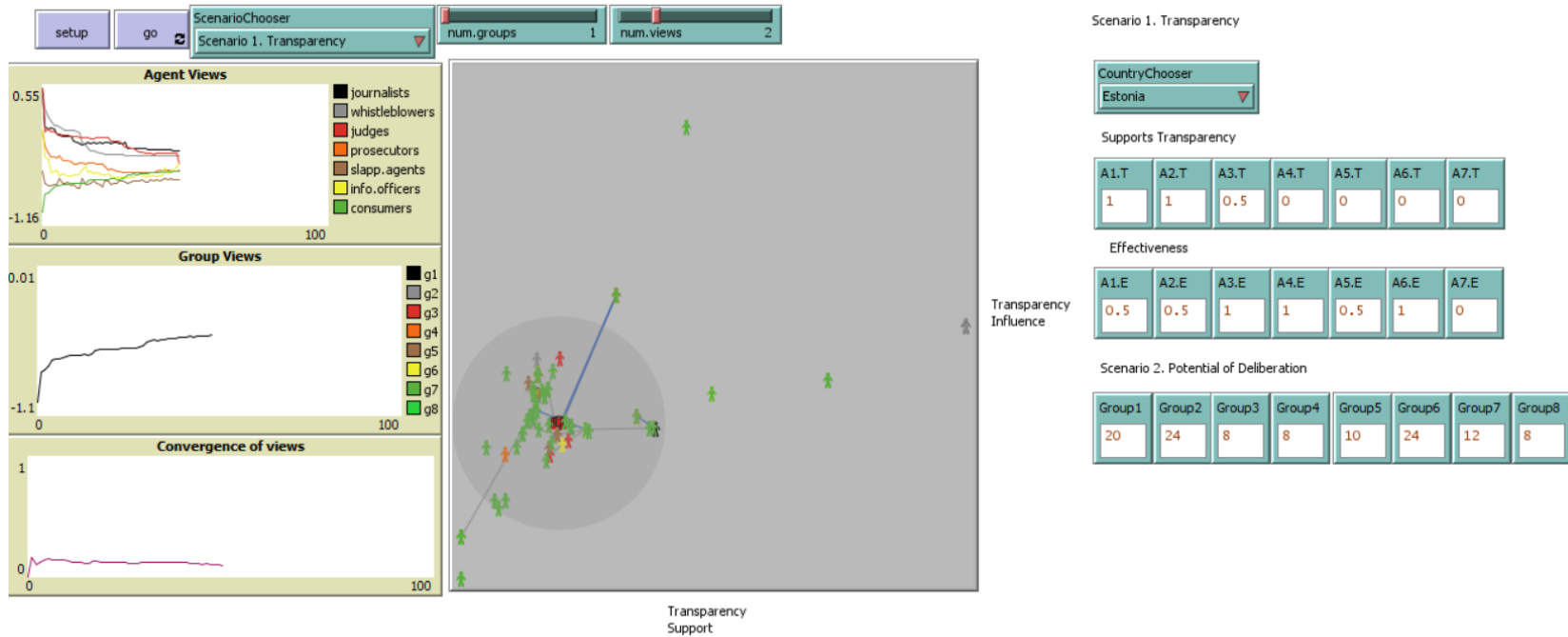


Figure 1b. The NetLogo interface while active for the Estonia scenario. Agents are changing their views and moving. In this scenario, most agents converge toward slightly less than 0.5 positions. This simulation is set up for the transparency scenario for Estonia and will be discussed in further detail later. The horizontal and vertical positions represent support for transparency and their Influence on Transparency, respectively. The A1.T to A7.T are values between 0 and 1 that represent the support different agents support. for transparency. A1.E to A7.T represent the level of influence each agent type has. The order of the agents is as follows (corresponding to the values of 1 to 7: journalists, whistleblowers, judges, prosecutors, SLAPP agents, information officers, and consumers). The values of Group1 to Group8 representation proportions (or relative size) of the eight groups included in the potential for deliberation scenario.

The interface comprises various components. They include adjustable inputs, such as the green values and graphs that output how the simulations perform. Adjustable inputs are in green. They include options to set up the simulation for the transparency scenario of the potential for deliberation scenario. (see the caption of Figure 1b for more information.)

The setup button sets the initial state of the simulation. The Go button then starts the simulation. These are used after inputs have been chosen. Below these buttons is the input option for the stop tick. This will tell the simulation when to stop, assuming it is set to stop. The next input decides if the simulation will stop or continue indefinitely. The number of groups option selects how many distinct groups the simulation begins with. This will be set to a single group for the transparency simulation and eight for the potential for deliberation scenario. This will be explained later under the respective scenarios.

The most prominent feature of the simulation interface is the viewport, which displays agents and the distance between them. In simple terms, closer agents have more similar views. As distance increases, their views are more different. For our scenarios, the increasing distance generally would indicate a risk, sure to fragmentation. It would show a lack of consensus. The viewport can be thought of as having an x-axis representing the horizontal position and a y-axis representing the vertical position. Each axis can be thought of as representing a topic. The middle of the display is an origin and represents a neutral view on topics. The top represents a value of +1 on one topic, while the bottom represents -1 and total disagreement. The right represents +1 on the other topic, with the left being -1 and disagreeing.

We based this distance on how closely their points of view align, with smaller distances indicating similar views and more considerable distances indicating higher levels of disagreement. In the case of simulations our simulations, there are two views, and the simulation can show one view on each axis. We describe the specific views later, under each of the two scenarios.

Moving on from the display port, the scenario chooser option allows us to choose between the transparency scenario and the potential for deliberation scenario. Below the scenario chooser option are variables that can be tailored to each scenario. These will be discussed in further detail when we discuss the two scenarios later. For the first scenario, we are focused on adjusting the number of agents in the simulation. In the second scenario, we are interested in eight different groups and the effects of changing their relative proportions in the simulation.

There are three charts on the right of the display. All of these relate to the views in the simulation. The Agent Views graph is most useful for the first scenario and shows how the average views of each type of agent change as the simulation progresses. The Group Views chart is more useful for the second scenario, and it tracks the average view of each group. The third chart tracks how close all (consumer) agents' views are becoming to one another. Low values indicate agents are reaching a consensus, which is occurring over all groups.

Applicability of ABM to the needs of Mediadelcom

The ABM approach requires translating research questions into language that relates more directly to this method. The method focuses on agents and relationships that might occur in or interact with media structures. To design the ABM models, we must be clear about the agents' interactions, knowledge, and motives. We will often perform the simulations without data. We then calibrate the models with available data. This bridges the gap between the simulations and the countries we want to study. This involves testing to show that model de-

sign/definitions are reasonable reflections of what has been observed in data available to the project. This is achieved by analysing information that is already available for different countries. The chosen countries are Estonia, Latvia, and Romania. According to the qualitative analysis (based on the country reports) and further comparative analysis carried out by Mediadelcom, these countries have contrasting values for many variables, which is useful for calibrating the models.

Transparency Scenario

We will study three countries as examples: Estonia, Latvia and Romania. These countries were selected as we have previously conducted analysis concerning transparency, comparing Estonia and Latvia and Estonian and Romania (forthcoming articles on freedom of expression and access to information. In addition, there is available a recent report on access to information in Baltic states: "Disputes over Access. A study of Journalists' Practices and Freedom of Information Policies in the Baltics, edited by Dinoizas Litvaitis). Because of these studies, it was possible to calibrate different actors' views and levels of influence.

We want to understand how scenarios change when we adjust input values. More specifically, we want to observe how levels of transparency adjust. We are concerned with transparency (freedom of speech and access to information) and confidentiality (privacy and protection of personal data). Both are desirable for deliberative communication. However, we need to understand to what extent they can conflict with one another. For example, if confidentiality prevails, data protection might dominate, and journalists might not stand for freedom but instead follow the commercial values of media organisations.

We can also ask, what are the ideal and worst-case scenarios related to transparency? An ideal scenario will show agents moving towards the truth and transparency rather than towards an alternative source or too much toward the view of the authority unless these also happen to be truthful, this is when confidentiality might be dominating.

Beyond the simulations and in the more complex real world, the best scenario might be journalists actively starting a discussion if there seems to be pressure to restrict access to the information or freedom to speech: other actors discuss the transparency topics; whistleblowers get actual /full protection; the courts can deal with SLAPP cases; journalists' autonomy to discuss editorial line and decisions is protected. We also want to know what a worst-case scenario looks like. The worst-case scenario is the opposite of the ideal, with views moving away from the truth and towards either that of the authority or the alternative point of view.

To study transparency, we will look at Freedom of Information (FOI) and Freedom of Speech (FOS). FOI and FOS relate to the level of transparency and represent transparency in our simulations. For example, FOI would include officials providing access to information. However, judges and prosecutors, who could be in some cases supporters of confidentiality, could impede or prevent FOI in some cases. In our simulations, we use a simplified interpretation of FOI and FOS. We have implemented FOI as the capacity of agents to move towards the truth or influence others to move towards the truth. Similarly, we have implemented FOS, but as the capacity of agents to deviate or encourage deviation from the views of the authority.

Higher levels of FOS allow agents to maintain independent views rather than being limited to the view of the authority. On the other hand, a value of zero does not allow agents to have their views, forcing the agents towards the view of the authority. Higher levels of FOI allow the producers to adjust their views towards a more truthful view, lower values leave the producers

without guidance towards the truth. We have implemented the level of influence of an agent by scaling (i.e., multiplying) the transparency and confidentiality factors by the corresponding agent level of influence factor. Freedom of Speech (FOS) and Freedom of Information (FOI) are necessary for high levels of transparency.

Agents

We will include the following agents in the simulation, and values relating to them are shown below in Tables 1a, 1b and 1c. We have allowed each agent to communicate with some consumers. They are given numerical values that indicate their support of transparency and confidentiality, and finally, a value to indicate how influential they are on these values. Variables can range from 0 to 1.

Estonia

Table 1a. Agents and their level of support for transparency in Estonia. Values can range from 0 to 1. The confidentiality value is (often) the opposite of the transparency value, i.e., support for transparency = 1 - support for confidentiality. The level of influence also varies from 0 to 1 and measures how effective the agent is.

Agents	Supporting Transparency	Supporting Confidentiality	Influence on Transparency & Confidentiality.
Journalists	1	0	0,5
Judges/court	0,5	0.5	1
Data Protection Inspectorate	0.5	0.5	1
Prosecutors/ other officials holding power	0	0,5	1
Whistleblowers	1	0	0,5
Organisations that produce information and decide if the public will get access (public or private).	0	1	1
Audience (primary agents)	0	0	0
Politicians and SLAPP agents	0	1	0.5

The scaling is based on country reports and the following forthcoming publications.

Journalists: Estonian journalists have been very active in starting public debates on freedom of expression as well raising the issues concerning access to public information. Journalists have successfully kept the freedom of speech and access to the public information topic in agenda.

Judges: Supreme court has been rather protecting transparency. The transparency protection has less effect as there are not many case taken to the court. However, the regional court has not been protecting transparency to the same extent as the Supreme court.

Data Protection Inspectorate has important role, as this organization provides many deci-

sions concerning access to information. As the access to the Inspectorate is free, journalists use this possibility to protest if some organizations do deny access to public documents.

Prosecutors have been protecting confidentiality (one very strong case form recent years)

Whistleblowers have protected transparency but there has been no nice end and therefore the influence of whistleblowers is not as strong as it could be.

Audience members are defined as Primary Agents but they can turn into Corporate Agents in case of some dramatic change (or case).

Romania

Table 1b. Similar to table a, but for Romania.

Agents	Supporting Transparency	Supporting Confidentiality	Influence on Transparency & Confidentiality.
Journalists	1	0	0,5
Judges/court	0,5	0,5	1
Data Protection Authority	0	1	0,5
Whistleblowers	1	0	0
Government	0,5	1	1
Public organizations monitoring mediascapes	0,5	1	0,5
Private/commercial organizations monitoring mediascapes	0,5	0,5	1
Audience (primary agents)	0,5	0	0
Politicians and SLAPP agents	0	1	1
Social media platforms	0,5	0,5	1
Academia	0,5	0	0

Journalists: are by default in favour of transparency, as part of their mission. They have little concern for confidentiality, within the limits of their professional rules. Their influence is moderate: they increase the transparency at the societal level and contribute information to the public space, but have no significant impact at the level of policy.

Judges/courts: The rulings go both ways, in favour and or against transparency, sometimes inconsistently (some judges rule for, some against in similar cases). I would put their influence at 1, as they can influence transparency in general in a rule of law state.

The National Supervisory Authority for the Processing of Personal Data: consistently against transparency, there were cases it acted against journalists and in favour of politicians.

Whistleblowers: always in favour of transparency, their influence is very limited, there were cases when they have been strongly persecuted (sacked, demoted, character assassination,

etc)

Government (as in the central structures, cabinet ministries, Prime Minister's office, President): minimally abiding by FOI legislation, in practice acting against it, claiming privacy/confidentiality obligations even in the case of use of public money. The main influence agent in transparency/confidentiality policy making.

Public organizations monitoring mediascapes (local authorities, central agencies, autonomous bodies such as the Audiovisual Council): moderately abide by their legal obligations for transparency, are not proactive and do not have the proper skills to be completely open. They tend to favour privacy/confidentiality.

Private/commercial organizations monitoring mediascapes (including NGOs and business): mixed attitudes - NGOs are pro-transparency, and some of the businesses (media and not media) are in favour of confidentiality, especially regarding their own functioning. They are influential, as they can break taboos or impact policy-making (ex., business association managing audience measurement).

Audience (primary agents): in favour of transparency but more out of curiosity than democratic interest, as consumers, not an influence at all.

Politicians and SLAPP agents: actively militating for confidentiality, are influential as policy makers or agents that can impede or intimidate journalists, NGOs and whistleblowers.

Social media platforms: important agents in transparency, as many Romanians get their information on social media, also important in protecting confidentiality, especially over their own functioning. Sometimes it is impossible for a regular person to get in touch with their representatives or contest/reverse one of their (automatic) decisions. Influential as the use of social media is widespread in Romania.

Academia: interested in transparency through research, but not otherwise, influence is almost non-existent, as the research is not known outside the academia.

Latvia

In the case of Latvia, many of the values are the same.

Table 1c. Agents and their level of support for transparency. Values can range from 0 to 1. The confidentiality value is (often) the opposite of the transparency value, i.e., support for transparency = 1 - support for confidentiality. The level of influence also varies from 0 to 1 and measures how effective the agent is.

Agents	Supporting Transparency	Supporting Confidentiality	Influence on Transparency & Confidentiality.
Journalists	1	0	0,5
Judges/court	0,5	0,5	0.5
Data State Inspectorate	0,5	0.5	0.5
Prosecutors/ other officials holding power	0,5	0,5	1
Whistleblowers	1	0	0,5
Organisations that produce information and decide if the public will get access (public or private)	0,5	0,5	0,5
Audience (primary agents)	0	0	0
Politicians and SLAPP agents	0	1	0.5

Journalists. The Association of Latvian Journalists is the only organization that regularly promotes the discussion on freedom of expression, access to information, the right of journalists to receive information, and the duty of politicians and officials to respect the work of journalists. Although the number of journalists among the members of the organization is small, the association is influential and fulfils its role as an agent well. For example, in 2023, it managed to prevent attempts by politicians to change the regulation, which increases the number of documents with limited access and allows officials to freely classify the availability of documents.

Judges. The issue is controversial because the decisions of different levels of courts and the motivations of the decisions differ. In general, the courts have largely supported transparency. In recent years, when there are many new cases related to issues of freedom of expression and their limits (also online), there is a tendency in the lower level courts, where a single judge makes a decision, if he has no experience with freedom of expression cases, then the court relies on institution's arguments and not prioritizing transparency. But later the next-level courts

mostly review previous decisions and support freedom/transparency. The process requires a lot of resources.

Whistleblowers. On the one hand, Latvia has a good situation, because Latvia was one of the first to adopt the EU directive and since 2022 there is a new Whistleblowing Law: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/329680-whistleblowing-law>, which guarantees whistleblowing raised the defence. A website has been created where it is possible to submit a whistleblower's application. However, the number of submissions, in general, is not large, as the representative of the think tank Delna explains, the awareness of whistleblowing is low, and reporting is not considered a reasonable practice in the "culture" of society.

More on the issue. At the beginning of 2022, a new whistleblowing law to transpose the EU Directive on Whistleblowing was adopted in Latvia. In 2023 Whistleblower Activity Report states that The State Chancellery has identified 44 competent institutions (state institutions and municipalities) to which residents or employees turned in 2022 to raise the alarm. In 2022, competent institutions received a total of 396 submissions, which were presented as whistleblower reports, including 362 in central state institutions and 34 municipalities. In 2023, 294 or 74% of submissions were received for the first time from the applicants (60% and 73% in the two previous years), while 102 or 25% were received from another competent institution or whistleblower contact point. Thus, the citizens mainly correctly choose the competent institution and turn to it immediately, and only a quarter of applications need to be forwarded after approval. In 2022, 44 residents used the opportunity to submit a report by filling out an electronic form on the unified website of whistleblowers. The largest number of submissions were received by the State Revenue Service (hereinafter - SRS) and the Office for Prevention and Combating Corruption (hereinafter - KNAB). In 2022, SRS received 61 submissions (for comparison – 85 submissions in 2021 and 111 submissions received in 2020), and KNAB received 55 submissions (for comparison – 63 submissions in 2021 and 53 submissions in 2020). In 2022, of the 396 submissions received, 99 were recognized as whistleblower reports, while 285 submissions were not recognized as such because they did not meet one or more of the signs of whistleblowing (for example, the information was not obtained in connection with work, the information is about civil or individual dispute). 12 submissions received in the general procedure were re-registered as whistleblower reports.² Thus, a total of 111 reports were recognized as whistleblower reports in 2022 compared to 156 reports in the previous year. To assess the nature of the information provided in the whistleblower's report, in 2022 the competent institutions initiated 14 administrative violation proceedings and 2 disciplinary cases. No criminal proceedings have been initiated in any case. A total of 78 cases have been subjected to various types of inspections. As a result of the review of whistleblower reports in 2022, 7 administrative violation processes and 1 disciplinary case have been completed, but in 3 cases responsibility has been applied (penalty imposed). It must be concluded that the preventive role of whistleblowing is growing, and improving governance and the rule of law. The number of cases where recommendations are given to the company or institution (in 2022 - 17 cases), violations pointed out by the whistleblower (in 2022 - 13 cases) or improvements are made is increasing every year. (in 2022 - in 5 cases). The quality of whistleblower reports is increasing and the number of cases where the facts indicated in the whistleblower's report are not confirmed after examination (examination completed without finding a violation) is gradually decreasing. The impact of whistleblower reports and the resulting changes in society. The 2022 data show that whistleblower reports played a preventive role in many cases. Whistleblowers have helped prevent or stop harm, including to human life and the environment (for example, the discharge of untreated sewage). The reports point to various shortcomings and unfair practices in the work environ-

ment.

Organizations. All state organizations have created tools and explain the options to citizens on their websites, and how information is provided. There are data protection, privacy, and whistleblowing guidelines throughout. As already mentioned above, the regulatory framework is favourable to transparency, but the use of regulation in specific, contradictory situations differs. Therefore, the recommendations mentioned in study (https://disputesoveraccess.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Disputes_over_Access_2023.pdf) to clarify the definition of journalist and media in the regulation are supported.

Audience. The audience is generally indifferent, there are no topical discussions in Latvia that would be initiated by audience representatives. For example, there is no organization in Latvia that defends freedom of speech, independence of the media, and the interests of the media audience.

Politicians. Considering geopolitical events (Russia's invasion of Ukraine) and risks related to national security, transparency, inclusion, and freedom of speech are seen as serious risks in political discourse, politicians prioritize security much more than transparency/freedom of speech.

Results

We have used Estonia as a baseline or reference point. That is a point from which we can measure how changes in inputs lead to changes in outputs. Using the Estonia scenario as a reference point, we adjust the input parameters and subsequently study how the behaviour/results of the simulations change in response. The baseline scenario's input parameters are an "anchor point" from which we can compare the changes that occur when we adjust them. The baseline scenario can be adjusted to suit the transparency or potential for deliberation scenarios. In this scenario, we also use a fixed number of each type of agent. We have made assumptions for this, but we keep these values constant across each variant, which we will discuss later.

Further, as there is little difference between the parameters from the three countries, this further supports us focusing on one country for what remains. We primarily work with the baseline scenario we described earlier. We observe a movement between the truth, authority and the alternative view. Increasing the level of influence of the journalists in some way could lead them to be more influential in the simulations. (Figures 2a and 2b).

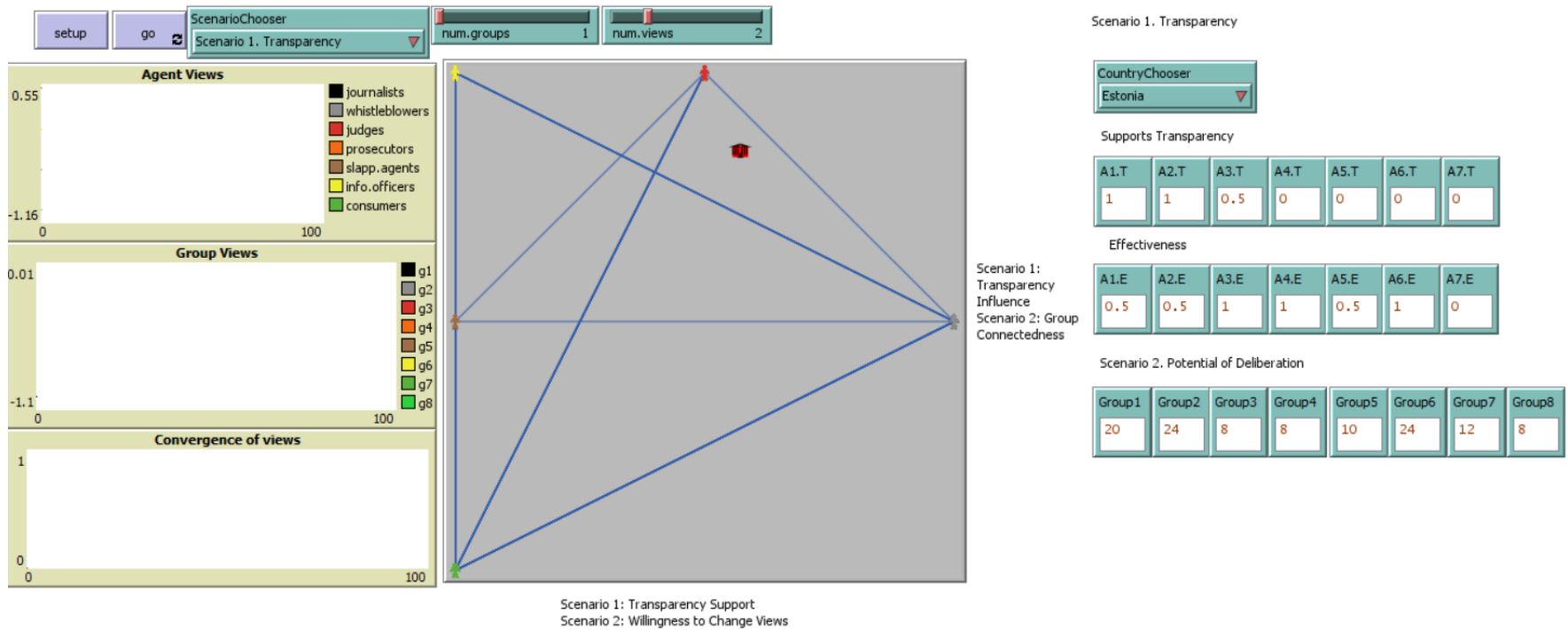


Figure 2a. Initial set-up for a scenario that includes a variety of agents. The authority is indicated in blue near the top in the middle. The Truth is on the bottom right with a flag and the alternative viewpoint is on the bottom left with the X. In this scenario, agents are moving between these three different locations. (We discuss further below what happens when some values change).

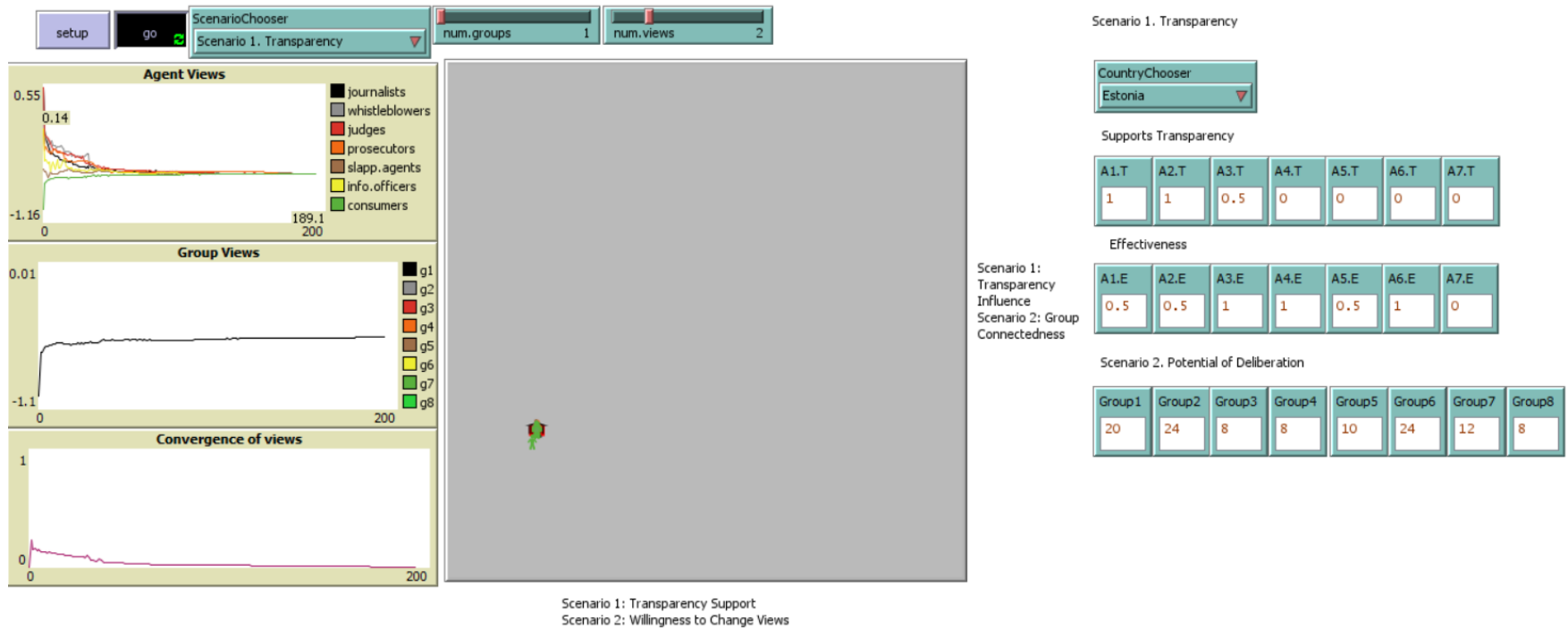


Figure 2b. Simulation while running. We see that there is a gradual movement of agents towards the bottom left. This indicates that the proportions in the simulations are leading towards lower levels of influence and support for transparency. There is also some element of convergence between the agents, with many of them coming to similar views. As is shown by the clustering of many agents closely together. This suggests that the setup of the simulation is allowing a form of convergence to occur.

In the absence of much difference between input values for the three countries, we have tested some more extreme scenarios. For example, testing the other agents also leads to changes in the results. This is because each of these has slightly different motivations for transparency and levels of influence. Thus, they exhibit slightly different behaviour. It is still the case that they do not lead to extreme scenarios, and there is also a need to calibrate them further. However, they are telling of the potential to refine these models to simulate what might occur with adding and removing particular agents. For example, if all agents are set to have views that are 0 for influence and support of transparency, the simulation just shows all agents staying at the bottom left, with no change in their views. By contrast, if all are set to 1, then they remain in the top right, with no change. If all values are set at 0.5, the simulation remains at 0.5. Perhaps further modification of the simulation could introduce more external factors, to create more external pressure on these values, and cause them to change to some extent.

We conclude that there is potential to model the proportions of different agents needed to allow us to understand how behaviour can change. However, we will need further information to establish more precisely what will lead us to the less desirable or improved scenarios. Such information might include a better understanding of the agents and the nuances of their interactions. And information regarding the relative proportions of the different agent types.

Thus, the ABM model here has provided us with the ability to model very specific behaviours for several different agents. It has allowed us to reduce a complex system and focus on specific features. The simplification may need further analysis to understand how features could change when other factors we have not studied change.

Potential for Deliberation / Openness - Audience Demographics

Audiences can be divided into categories with distinct behaviours. Some will prefer to view alternative news sources that diverge from the truth. Others might be more or less likely to communicate amongst themselves or with other groups. The capacity for deliberative communication can change depending on such behaviour and how large groups are relative to one another. We analyse audience demographics by dividing the population into eight groups. We chose eight as this number aligns with the groups identified in Table 2. We are interested in how they behave when we change the relative proportions of each group.

In this simulation, the two views represented are willingness to change views, and preference for how connected an individual's group should be.

Groups

We change to eight distinct groups for the baseline scenario in the case of the potential for deliberation. Somewhat similar behaviour is observed, We will discuss this and how some groups might behave differently later. We will focus on the case of Estonia. Below, in Table 2, details on the groups and information on the proportions (or percentage) of each in the simulation are summarised. For the simulations, we have given each group some distinct characteristics. These are summarised in the "Simulation Details" column.

Table 2. Explanations of the media repertoires of the Estonian population, including estimated population percentages. (Table from Ragne Kõuts-Klemm forthcoming publication).

No	Label	%*	Description of the repertoire	Simulation Details	Connect- ed- ness adj factor	Willing- ness to Change View
1	Russian Federation's focus	6	Followers of Russia's TV channels, low interest in news about Estonia; monolingual Russian speakers, mainly older people (65+).	A higher proportion of connections in the group with less outside.	Inner: 1.0 Outer: 0.1	0.5
2	Social and entertainment-media focus	24	Media is used mainly for communication and entertainment, less for news. Low interest in current affairs, focus on personal issues. Repertoire is found in every age group.	Fewer connections. Both inner and outer. Benign / Neutral.	Inner: 0.5 Outer: 0.5	0.5.
3	Hyperlocal focus, traditional media	8	Hyperlocal interest (local community level), news only from free (municipality) papers delivered to their homes, followers of national TV and radio (entertaining content, less for news); older Estonians and older Russian-speakers (70+), lower level of education	Inner connections: High Outer connections: Low	Inner: 1.1 Outer: 0.25	0.25 Very low
4	Local-national focus, traditional media	8	Mainstream web pages (Delfi or Postimees), national TV and radio, slight interest in current affairs. Monolingual in their everyday activities.	This might be a less extreme version of Group 3.	Inner: 1.5 Outer: 0.5	0.25 Low
5	Special interest focus, traditional and social media	10	Interest in news related to their profession or hobbies only, less in current affairs. Actively search for different sources relevant to their interests, high selectivity of news. Limits the media use with the particular channels knowledgeable. Rather, the higher education group, multilingual (Estonians and Russian speakers both).	Work and Hobby focused.	Inner: 1.0 Outer: 1.0	0.5 Moderate
6	Local-national focus, traditional and social media	24	Omnivorous interest in the news (current affairs and human-interest topics) mainly relies on traditional media news but is also targeted by social media news. The most "usual" users. They have the most significant share in the age group 40-60.		Inner: 1.1 Outer: 1.5	1 High
7	Local-national focus	12	High interest in news, focus on current affairs, news as a topic for conversations with others; actively searching news in different channels. Socially and politically active.	Similar to 6, but higher everything	Inner: 1.5 Outer: 2.0	1
8	Global focus	8	Interest in mainly foreign (western) news channels, lack of knowledge of Estonian issues. Younger Estonians and Russian speakers or Estonians aged 35-50 working abroad mainly.	Does not interact much with the local groups. Possibly add them as liberal and less nationally focused.	Inner: 1.0 Outer: 1.0	0.75

*Estimated population percentage.

Methodology of the construction of repertoires

The repertoires were distinguished using the Q methodology on a small sample of participants, among 36 Estonians. The Q methodology allows each respondent to rate the importance of certain news channels for them on a scale from -3 (not at all important) up to +3 (very important). The Q methodology assumes that in designing the study we as researchers are able to collect a representative sample of all types of topical opinions or instances (Stephen, 1985; Watts & Stenner, 2005; Davis and Michelle, 2011) – in our case a representative sample of news media channels available and used in a country.

We then use a small sample of respondents to see what combinations of these opinions/instances (i.e. news media channels) actually exist for users. In our case – how the news media channels can be combined by different users to meet their information and other news media related needs. Q-methodology makes it possible to synthesise qualitative and quantitative methods onto one epistemological platform and into one empirical design for fieldwork in media and communication studies (Schroder, 2004, p 193).

The repertoires of Estonians were distinguished in the research of Kõuts-Klemm 2017 and updated by the research of Pütsepp 2023. Both studies describe the composition of the repertoires in detail. Methodologically, the combinations of news media channels were distinguished by the principal component analysis. The result is the combinations of news channels that have a different load (significance) in different repertoires (for technical details see Schroder 2012).

Having obtained the list of different news media repertoires, we used the data of the representative audience surveys provided by the Estonian research agency Kantar Emor in 2022 (Interneti baasuuring, Teleauditooriumi uuring, Raadioauditooriumi uuring). In order to calculate the number of users in the Estonian population, we merged the data. Using the knowledge about the load of each channel in the media repertoire (represented as a principal component analysis), we created the rule for calculating the number of users in the population. For example, the fourth repertoire “Local-national focus, traditional media” was determined by the use of two largest online news sources in Estonia (delfi and postimees) and setting as a condition that the respondents must also follow national television and radio channels, which were considered to have a significantly lower load as determinants of the repertoire. Based on the list of all channels in a repertoire and the load of these channels, we calculated in a dataset the number of respondents whose media use fulfilled all these conditions. With new aggregated variables for each repertoire, we were able to contrast them and calculate the number of such users in the whole population.

By combining data from two datasets, we are able to estimate the presence of repertoires in a population, but it is an estimate and not the exact, measured number.

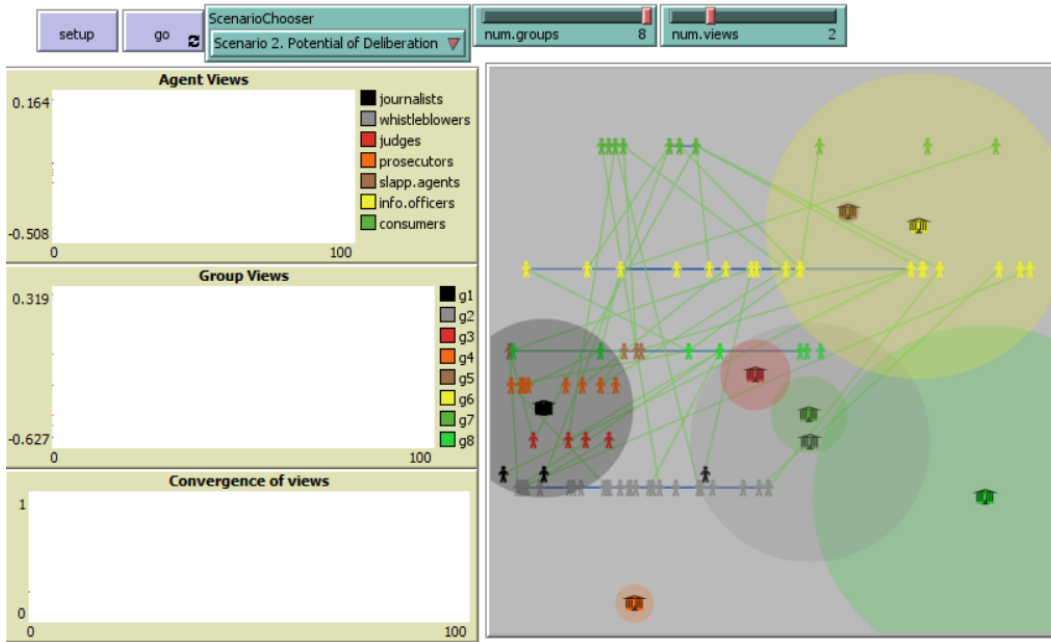
Results

In the case of Group 1, we are interested in understanding what could lead to it becoming isolated from the other groups and how much of a risk this is occurring. We also want to understand what can keep it associated with other groups. We can also expect a more hypothetical scenario where Group 1 manages to influence all the groups to converge to its view and that of the alternative sources.

During simulations, Group 1 (represented by black) often appears to distinguish itself from the other groups. Group 1 makes up 6% of the population. The adjustment factors of inner and outer levels of connectedness influence how the groups behave. For example, Group 1 has higher inner connectedness, lower outer connectedness and a preference for an alternative news source. So, we often observe Group 1 moving towards the alternative view (Figure 3 below). However, it does not isolate itself. It often aligns with the other groups, thus leading to some degree of convergence amongst all groups. Changing input values changes how each group moves towards the truth, the alternative view, and the authority.

Some unexpected behaviour occurs. For example, the alternative view does not only attract agents in other groups due to the influence of Group 1 upon others, leading to Group 1 having enough impact to draw the entire population towards the alternative viewpoint.

When we reduce the size of Group 1 to approximately 1% of the population, the Group tends to behave similarly to other groups, and there is less movement towards the bottom left. Let us discuss how to explain it. The average view tends to return to that of the other groups. If we increase the proportion for Group 1 to approximately 20%, (which reduces the proportion of the other groups too) behaviour changes slightly. Group 1 tends, to some extent, to be drawn more toward the bottom left. In this case, Group 1 possibly influences the other groups due to its magnitude. Causing them to move their views towards Group 1. We would need to rerun the simulation a large number of times, however, if we would like to better understand the possible significance of this divergence. If we adjust Group 5 to a high proportion, of around 50% of the population, results tend to change little. However future adjustments to how the agents behave in the simulation could lead to more distinct trends.



Scenario 1. Transparency

CountryChooser
Estonia

Supports Transparency

A1.T	A2.T	A3.T	A4.T	A5.T	A6.T	A7.T
1	1	0.5	0	0	0	0

Effectiveness

A1.E	A2.E	A3.E	A4.E	A5.E	A6.E	A7.E
0.5	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	0

Scenario 1:
Transparency
Influence
Scenario 2: Group
Connectedness

Scenario 2. Potential of Deliberation

Group1	Group2	Group3	Group4	Group5	Group6	Group7	Group8
6	24	8	8	10	24	12	8

Scenario 1: Transparency Support
Scenario 2: Willingness to Change Views

Figure 3a. Our usual 2D representation of agents and how they have converged over time during the simulation (specifically to an average of the two views for each tick). For example, Group 1 is black.