International Association for Media and Communication Research
Asociación internacional de estudios en comunicación social
Association internationale des études et recherches sur l'information et la communication

IAMCR/NAIROBI 2021
CALL FOR PAPERS

Rethinking borders and boundaries:
Beyond the global/local dichotomy in communication studies
11-15 July 2021 | Nairobi, Kenya and wherever you are

The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) invites the submission of proposals for papers and panels for IAMCR 2021, which will be held online from 11 to 15 July, 2021. The conference will also have a regional hub in Nairobi, Kenya. Both the online conference and the regional hub will be hosted by the Department of Journalism & Corporate Communication of United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa) in Nairobi. **The deadline for submission is 9 February 2021, at 23.59 UTC.**

Themes

IAMCR conferences address a wide diversity of themes defined by our 33 thematic sections and working groups. We also propose a single central theme to be explored throughout the conference with the aim of generating and exploring multiple perspectives. This theme is addressed in plenary and special sessions, and in *some* sessions of the sections and working groups. Not all submissions have to address this central theme. See the individual calls for proposals of the sections and working groups for other themes and for other perspectives in the central theme.

The central theme for IAMCR 2021, **Rethinking borders and boundaries: Beyond the global/local dichotomy in communication studies**, is concerned with how changes in communication theory and practice are challenging our understanding of global and local, creating new identities and discourses, and enabling a hybrid glocalisation, with both positive and negative consequences.

Five sub-themes of this central theme have been identified: *The rebirth of populist discourses*; *Activism and the new global social justice movements*; *Trends in global media ecosystems*; *Identity: Gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality*; and *Communication for development in health, climate change and education*. See the complete theme description and rationale here.

Section and working group themes

Proposals submitted to sections and working groups can be centred on an aspect of the main conference theme as it relates to the central concerns of the section or working group, or they may address additional themes identified by the section or working group.

Consult the calls for proposals of IAMCR's sections and working groups.

Conference model: Online with an African "hub" and global satellite activities

In alignment with the possibilities offered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the conference's main theme, *Rethinking Borders and Boundaries*, IAMCR 2021's conference will offer multiple modalities for participation. It will be an online conference with an African "hub" at USIU-Africa, and satellite activities at various points around the globe. The various components of the conference include:

1. **Online Conference Papers** – Abstracts submitted in response to the section and working groups CfPs will be reviewed by the sections and working groups and accepted authors will be invited to submit short conference papers (1,000 to 4,000 words). These papers will be grouped into sessions and published on the conference website prior to the conference on a platform that will enable discussion the conference.

2. **Section and Working Group Online Sessions** – IAMCR sections and working groups will curate a number of video sessions highlighting key issues within their thematic areas of specialisation.

3. **Flow34** – A stream featuring videos that integrate academic and aesthetic narratives. Proposals for this component will be reviewed by the Flow34 team. Topics can originate from the entire field of Communication and Media Studies. The selected videos will be scheduled and presented on the conference platform.

4. **Plenary Sessions** – Several plenary sessions streamed from the conference hub at USIU-Africa will feature contributions from around the globe.

5. **Special and Partner Sessions** – These video sessions will be produced by IAMCR and its partners.

6. **Nairobi Hub** – In addition to being at the centre of the global online activities, the conference hub, at USIU-Africa, will host a regional face-to-face event (in accordance with the possibilities afforded by the pandemic). The regional event will interact with the global at several moments of the conference.

7. **Other Regional/National Hubs** – We are currently considering the involvement of other regional and national hubs and will be accepting requests from IAMCR members interested in sponsoring them.

This call for proposals is for the **Online Conference Papers**.

IAMCR members will have full access to all online components.

Guidelines for abstracts

Abstracts are requested for the **Online Conference Papers** component. Abstracts must be submitted to one of IAMCR's 33 thematic sections and working groups. Before submitting, please consult the specific CfP of the section or working group at https://iamcr.org/nairobi2021/swg-cfp. See the IAMCR website for additional information about the various sections and working groups.

Abstracts should have between 300 and 500 words and must be submitted online at [LINK]. Abstracts submitted by email will not be accepted.

The deadline to submit abstracts is 9 February 2021 at 23h59 UTC.

It is expected that authors will submit only one (1) abstract. However, under no circumstances should there be more than two (2) abstracts bearing the name of the same author, either individually or as first author. No more than one (1) abstract can be submitted by an author to a single section or working group. Please note also that the same abstract or another version with minor variations in title or content must not be submitted to more than one section or working group. Any such submissions will be deemed to be in breach of the conference guidelines and will be rejected.

Proposals are accepted for both single **Papers** and for **Panels with several papers** (in which you propose multiple papers that address a single theme). Please note that there are special procedures for submitting panel proposals. For other important dates and deadlines, please see the key dates on the conference website.

Technical guidelines, if any, are defined by the individual sections and working groups. If you have questions, consult the section or working group's specific CfP. For further information about the conference, visit the website or contact nairobi2021@iamcr.org.

Languages

Each section and working group adopts its own policies regarding languages. Some accept abstracts and programme sessions in English, French and Spanish while others conduct their programmes in only one or two languages. Consult the CfP of your section or working group for details of its language policy.

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CENTRAL THEME OF IAMCR 2021

Rethinking borders and boundaries:
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The normalisation of global/local differences blocks many alternative ways of seeing the world, restricting us to the past –with its binaries of colonialism/anti-colonialism, white/black, developed/developing– and obscuring complexities that are both global and local, or even simply universal.

Nevertheless, the advances in technology that have altered the way information circulates around the world are challenging this global/local binary and enabling us to imagine new spaces and territories outside the global/local divide. Global processes can have local materialisations, and vice versa, an articulation captured in the concept of glocalisation.

We are in an era of new identities and discourses beyond the global/local and must keep glocalisation and translocality on our research agenda, and study, for instance, new ways nations and individuals appropriate the global to construct themselves locally, but also how what is created at the local level can move to the global.

These transformations can also have negative impacts. Global communication problems – from soft-censorship of mainstream media to deep fakes, bots and data privacy breaches – can impact on the local, generating local forms of de-democratisation. The worldwide rise of illiberalism and populist authoritarianism can be seen as a global dystopia arising from local realities, amplified by both social and legacy media. Similarly, in addition to enmity between nations, we are seeing, in different parts of the globe, nations ideologically at war with themselves.

The conference theme is a search for transformations that are global but with local bearings, and those where the local moves towards the global. Can boundaries be seen as portals, offering a post-global and post-local vision? How have transformations of the modes of communication enabled the local to disrupt the global?

The theme is open for a wide range of ideas dealing with, but not limited to, the following specific sub-themes:

1. The rebirth of populist discourses

The world has witnessed the transformation of politics with the rise of modern populism after decades of the post-ideological consensus. Populism is no longer a developmentalist bottom-up movement; rather, it has become a logic of governance, mainstreamed by, for example, the economic nationalism of Donald Trump, so that this discourse about 'the people' is now used by the people. There are similar nationalist populisms in Africa, where the right-left dichotomies are unclear. Against this backdrop, we are interested in papers and panels on the communication of populism, and how communicative transformations support populism, such as the technologies that stimulate misinformation and disinformation, reducing public confidence in traditional structures and increasing hyperpolarization, intolerance, illiberalism and various forms of ethnonationalism.

2. Activism and the new global social justice movements

Activism has opened up on various fronts. Brazil's Amazon fire protestors, student strikes for the climate, democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, Black Lives Matter, the Yellow Vests in France, and the global #MeToo movement all show that the battle for human rights is manifest and intense again. While failures in global and national governance on issues such as climate change and human rights have produced action by citizens clamouring for a better and fairer world. Illiberal groups use the same tactics to support their efforts. What sense can we as communication scholars make of these movements? How do they fit into the historical trajectory of social movements, and their relation to media? What is the role of digital media in modern day activism? Do local activists use media to globalise, and how? Does technology enable transnational activism and build global solidarity on common issues or does reproduce difference?

3. Trends in global media ecosystems

The world of international communication is changing rapidly. In the same way that Cold War tensions shaped global communication, recent changes have partly unblocked global/local differences by offering alternative ways of reaching international audiences. The difference between global and local is narrower than before. However, the technological transformation has not removed global disparities in content; the global(ising) North dominates, even as the South has become more innovative. We welcome papers on a variety of ideas such as international media (mis)representation of disease and disaster in North and South; the social construction of the immigrant, refugee and race 'threats'; the 'South' in the 'North', the turn towards corporate and digital colonialism; re-Orientalism of the Orient and the post-colonial desire of the exotic; global

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trends that support local inequality and de-democratisation; as well as resistance and success stories from the global South.

4. Identity: Gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality

Gender, class and ethnicity, as social constructions, continue to determine the quality of life across the globe. Although these constructions have been theorised from various perspectives – post-colonial, feminist, Marxist, phenomenological, among others – the events surrounding the coronavirus pandemic have (re)opened new lines of inquiry and representation of the social inequality both in the North and South. We are interested in papers that relate the pandemic with transnationalism and its contradictions: possible areas include media representation of local/global minorities in the time of COVID-19, disinformation and (anti)minority vigilantism, global conspiracy theories, the paradox between whiteness and racial privilege at the global level and minority entitlement at the local level, transnational movements that focus on disablism/ableism, postcolonial and self-othering texts, staging of cultural and religious erasure among others.

5. Communication for development in health, climate change and education

Global transformations have changed ways of establishing and sustaining international relations among nations, peoples and processes. Yet globalisation remains connected to various social, cultural and economic contexts, hence lending credence to the existence of global-local realities. This sub-theme attempts to establish the nexus between glocal communication trends and development practice in the realm of contemporary issues of the environment and climate change, health information systems and education and sustainable social transformation. We welcome papers that push for the understanding of the challenges and opportunities that global technological trends create for local communities and document some of the potential opportunities of glocalisation and their corresponding challenges in development practice.

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