

AI and the News: Challenges Arisen From the Adoption of AI in News Production

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Изкуственият интелект (ИИ) и новините. Предизвикателства от приложението на ИИ в производството на новини

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Аторите нямат известен конфликт на интерес, който да разкрият

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Abstract

It is premature to assess the impact of AI technologies on the media ecosystem. Nevertheless, a preliminary approach may be proposed, provided that it is founded upon verifiable facts, discernible behaviors, tangible constraints, and practical limitations. In considering the potential contribution of AI to the field of journalism, it is important to adopt a patient and critical approach. The deployment of AI should be assessed following its intended purpose, the nature of the data employed, and the degree of impartiality exhibited by the algorithms and intelligent computing systems. This paper presents a concise overview of the implications of integrating Artificial Intelligence-generated content in news production. The essence of this paper is to present a case for the necessity of human guidance, specifically that of professional journalists, in the deployment of AIGC in news production. In this vein, the article offers an outline of the most significant aspects of the utilization of AIGC in journalistic practice. It focuses on six pivotal concerns, which, thus far, seem to undermine the potential that AI has regarding information management. These issues, representing what in this paper is called as negative side of AI, have to do with: i) data incompleteness, ii) copyright and originality, iii) the opacity of sources, iv) the role of agenda-setting and framing in AIGC, v) the lack of a critical approach, and vi) its relation to fake news.

Keywords: journalism, Artificial Intelligence, AIGC, media sociology, disinformation

Резюме

Рано е да се оценява въздействието на технологии на Изкуствения интелект (ИИ) върху медийната екосистема. Въпреки това може да бъде предложен предварителен подход, при условие че се основава на проверими факти, забележимо поведение, осезаеми ограничения и практически ограничения. При разглеждането на потенциалния принос на ИИ в областта на журналистиката е важно да възприемем търпелив и критичен подход. Внедряването на ИИ следва да бъде оценено в съответствие с предназначението му, естеството на използваните данни и степента на безпристрастност, демонстрирана от алгоритмите и интелигентните изчислителни системи. Тази статия представя кратък преглед на последиците от интегрирането на съдържание, генерирано от изкуствен интелект, в производството на новини. Същността и е да представи аргумент за необходимостта от човешко ръководство, по-специално това от професионални журналисти, при внедряването на ИИ в производството на новини. В този смисъл статията очертава най-значимите аспекти от използването на ИИ в журналистическата

практика. Тя се фокусира върху шест основни проблеми, които досега изглежда подкопават потенциала, който ИИ има по отношение на управлението на информацията. Тези проблеми, представляващи това, което в този документ се нарича отрицателна страна на ИИ, са свързани с: 1. непълнотата на данните, 2. авторското право и оригиналността, 3. непрозрачността на източниците, 4. ролята на определянето на дневния ред и рамкирането в AIGC, 5. липсата на критичен подход и 6.) връзката му с фалшивите новини.

Ключови думи: журналистика, изкуствен интелект, AIGC, медийна социология, дезинформация

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Introduction

Human activity is becoming increasingly tied to the technologies of automation. In this context, Artificial Intelligence signals a crucial turn in the process, e.g., the automatic collection and elaboration of digitally given information based on an issue, topic, event, name, place, etc. This is why AI applications have been extremely multiplied during the last decade in various professional, academic, and other fields as well as discussions and debates on AI and its different aspects. As Chan-Olmsted (2019, p. 946) underlines “Artificial intelligence is a transformational technology of the digital age and an increasingly critical business mindset for companies, especially for those in the media sector with a growing array of digital content products and advertising opportunities”. According to the same author there is no choice for the media whether to adopt those cognitive technologies. The only question is about “when” and “how”.

The objective of this article is to present the argument that AIGC, in its present form, is unable to function as a tool for the production of news without human guidance from professional journalists. Following the argument mentioned above, the article is structured into four principal sections. The initial section addresses the three main applications of AIGC in the context of news production. The second part presents a list of six issues that have emerged from the recent and nascent adoption of AIGC in news production. These include concerns regarding i) data incompleteness, ii) copyright and originality, iii) the opacity of sources, iv) the role of agenda-setting and framing in AIGC, v) the lack of a critical approach, and vi) its relation to fake news. These issues have the potential to exacerbate existing social tendencies, leading to further behavioral problems. Thus, this article examines four possible reactions to this phenomenon. In its final section, it proposes solutions to enhance the integration of AIGC into journalistic routines.

One of the primary areas of professional activity and public deliberation is the field of media, with a specific emphasis on the discipline of journalism. This is even more relevant in contemporary societies, which have been characterized as *media societies* for several decades. Furthermore, there are also several aspects in the study of the relation between AIGC and journalism that need to be analyzed and discussed further. In this perspective, there are at least three main fields of study: **AIGC as a tool in the production of news content**. The complicated process of news production from the early years of media theory and media sociology remains one of the key issues for gaining a better understanding of the field. The same happens in the era of AI. Several issues in this area have been raised so far. First, what journalists know, how they understand, and how they use AI in news writing and news overall production. Research findings

in 32 different countries, showed that journalists “use AI for news gathering, two-thirds emphasized that they use it to produce media content, and slightly more than half of the respondents emphasized that they use AI for distribution” (Patil, Angadi & Kumar, 2024, p. 5). A particular area of concern within the field of journalism, as well as academia, is the ethical dilemma posed by plagiarism, which has the potential to significantly undermine the integrity of the profession (Aleessawi & Alzubi, 2024; Hunney, Jyoti & Akash, 2023). The same group of problems includes the commoditization of users’ data (Dunnell et al., 2024; Terzis, 2024) and the amplification of biases (Vyas, 2022), among others. Concerning the deployment of AI in the production of news, several issues have been identified for discussion, including the information (data) included in AI-generated content (AIGC), fairness and biases (Lee, 2024) authorship, personal data and private life issues (Wang, 2023), trustworthy of the AIGC (Labajová, 2023), etc. **Public views and reactions towards media and AI media-generated content** (Heim & Chan-Olmsted, 2023; Wu, 2023). This is one of the four main questions in media theory and media sociology as well. It deals with the perception of media content by the members of the public and the effects of AIGC on the way of thinking and acting of the audience. Kolo, Mütterlein, and Schmid (2022) found in their research that the consumers of AIGC consider AI-based texts as true journalistic content when it comes to credibility, but as fake news regarding readability. In addition, people with high and low trust in media perceive content labeled as AI-generated differently, independent of whether that content was written by AI software.

One more issue regarding AIGC and its impact on consumers is that it may cause guided reactions especially in social media (Marcellino et al., 2023). AIGC seems to be like human-generated content (HGC) and presents real facts, despite sometimes presenting imaginary facts or imaginary compilations of real facts or parts of facts (individuals, places and spaces, actions, or all of them). However, the problems begin when people do not recognize that they have consumed AIGC (Brewer et al., 2024). The reactions of the public vary in dependence on the properties and conditions of news production (Gunter, 2013; Kitzinger, 2009). Nowadays, the public is a comparatively media literate one (Coleman & Ross, 2015; Nerone, 2015). In parallel with the tones of media content they consume, individuals also engage with a plethora of criticism surrounding the portrayal of current affairs, politicians, scientists, and other figures in the media. So, the public’s reactions towards media content consumed by themselves depend also on what they know about the condition of its production, especially in cases where news stories are related to important interests for them. A further question regarding the impact of AIGC on public concerns is how they react when they acknowledge that they consume AIGC (Chan-Olmsted, 2019).

The public's perception of AI content in this case is also shaped by the media portrayals of AI and its negative sides in news, series, reality shows, films, etc. (Ouchchy, Coin & Dubljević, 2020). The Turkish scholar Aynur Sarisakaloglu (2021, p. 20) claimed that "the analysis of how this technology is communicated to the public is limited". Yet, a lot of scientific publications are dedicated to the coverage of AI in the old and new media. She has also shown that the mainframes used in the Turkish media discourse on AI, in general, were: "Artificial intelligence as assistant/supporter", "economic benefit", "elimination of human error", "human replacement", and "ethical concerns". Altay & Gilardi (2024) support that "people are skeptical of headlines labeled as AI-generated, even if true or human-made because they assume full AI automation."

Finally, if we abandon, for the moment, the question of how the AIGC can influence social systems like the political system, economic system, educational system, etc., perhaps the most important issue concerns **the use of AI in the production of media content**- text and images, uses and abuses. This is also another one of the four main questions in media theory and media sociology. It deals with the media content itself, the message the most important dimension in every communication process.

Description of AI technology and its implementation

Before we proceed with the analysis of the main issues regarding AIGC, it's useful to briefly describe the most essential aspects of AI and its use in the production of media content. AI is essentially an automation technology involved in the selection of internet content that meets specific criteria (words, names, terms of persons or places, events, etc.) set by the user (Patil, Angadi & Kumar, 2024). The outcome of the selection is a set of information corresponding to the criteria set by the user. AI often uses the outcome of the selection process, transformed or not, in words or/and images as description or analysis (article, news item, picture of a person or place, order, guide, books' content, etc.) indicating or not that it has been produced with the use of AI technology. If we accept that digital technology performs the first degree of automation, like a digital library instead of a physical one (e.g., Google Scholar), digital shopping instead of physical (e.g., Amazon), then AI represents a second degree of automation. It can be defined as the automation of information through the digitization of human activities that have already been subject to automation in one form or another. (Chan-Olmsted, 2019). AI- although it can be developed into a general-purpose technology, too (Kiggins, 2021)- largely goes where the internet has already gone. AI represents the automation of online content management, gathering, and combination. In this sense AIGC is rather a collection of ready-made information available on the internet. For this reason, of extreme importance is how far the first step or degree of automation

has gone, i.e. how much analogical content, created before the advent of digital technology, has been digitized so far. AI can facilitate and accelerate operations in various sectors of the economy and human activity. In this perspective, AI contributes to the improvement of those operations and the financial condition of the enterprises. But since a big part of humanity's creativity throughout history has not been digitized yet, the AI process of information selection is based, first, on the already available digital and digitized content, second, on the eventual linguistic, cultural, religious, and ideological biases it contains. AI mechanisms select the information they want regarding a topic, view, person, religion, country, etc., depending largely on the mainstream approaches that are noticed in the information warehouse of the internet (Pariser, 2011). Third, AI's process of information selection is also based on the programmers' own biases.

Thus, AI can reproduce on a higher level and larger scale the established mainstream topics, persons, and views related to any subject. In this sense, AI technology naturalizes what is rather subjective in some issues (war in Ukraine, president of the USA, Putin, climate change, religion, Christianity, Islam, trip to the moon, internet, cinema, Hollywood, etc.). In other words, AI is doing in terms of technology what the dominant ideology used to do. It presents as objective what is subjective. In the Greek language, the word data is translated into *δεδομένα*, a word that means *given* (the past participle of the verb *give*). Datafication carries the risk of taking the dominant ideology as a given.

AI in journalism: the prehistory

From an essential point of view, the utilization of strategies that are structurally comparable to those employed by artificial intelligence (AI) has a lengthy history within the field of journalism. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in the current digital age, where the prevalence of low-cost, fast journalism has been noticed. One of these strategies is the so-called *churnalism* i.e. the combination of ready-made or pre-packaged by various sources, actors, and institutions material such as press releases, documentation materials, and videos shot by other actors (leniently called *citizen journalists*), instead of writing original story based on the journalist's research, archives, etc. (Harcup, 2015). Such practices were and remain common in low-cost, popular outlets, as well as for reducing the cost of news production in general (Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis, 2017). They are also trite during crisis periods such as warfare situations, financial crises, pandemics (Heyl, Joubert & Guenther, 2020; Jaakkola & Skulte, 2022), where the direct access of journalists to the sources of information becomes even more difficult. Before the advent of AI-driven journalism, the collection and combination of information from digital and non-digital sources, which constitutes the process of churnalism, was a manual task. With the advent of AI, however, this

process has become increasingly automated. It is the AI technology that collects and puts all various and relevant pieces of information together in one text.

Apart from churnalism, digitalization of news production was a more essential step and a precondition for the development and implementation of AI in news production (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018; Praprotnik, 2016; Stephens, 2007). There have also been other technologies before AI that have been notably used more positively in journalism and the media compared to churnalism. Such technologies are for example big data journalism, whereas algorithms were also used in news production (Broussard 2014; Thurman et al. 2019; van Dalen, 2012). Some scholars (Dorr, 2016; Lambrou, 2024) note that big data was the main technology that the journalists used to reveal the Panama Papers and Luxleaks cases.

Uses of AI in journalism

To better understand how AI can be used in the production of media content, we must examine in detail how it works. According to Patil, Angadi & Kumar (2024, p.4), “AI can use algorithms to create media content through the process of converting data into text, images, and videos”. AI is doing this through the analysis and creation of numerous and diverse media content, starting from marking and selecting data, writing news, and moderating comments, all the way to checking facts and content verification (Diakopoulos, 2019; Patil, Angadi & Kumar, 2024; Trattner et al., 2022). Such a technique in the production of news is also called *automated journalism* or *robotic journalism*. Thus, AI changes the mode of collection, verification, and dissemination of news.

Although we are still in the initial phase of the use of AI in the production of news content, Kolo, Mütterlein, and Schmid (2024: p. 3202) point out that “an increasing amount of news is generated automatically by artificial intelligence (AI)”. AI seems ready to have a large impact on more and more social practices and functions (Verdegem, 2022). It can be applied to news content in multiple ways, too.

As we mentioned above, AI can facilitate and speed up operations in the production of news as a commodity, and hence contribute to the economic and social resilience of enterprises and the productivity and profits of media companies as well. AI facilitates the faster and cheaper production of media content and the news more precisely. Something which, at least in the short term, is beneficial for the media companies.

But beyond the institutional-economic side of news production, AI seems to be helpful to the media content itself. AI can contribute to more informed and comprehensive news stories about facts and events (de-Lima-Santos & Ceron, 2022). As recent findings have shown, journalists

support the idea that “AI can augment, but not automate, the media industry” by enabling them “to break news faster while freeing up time for deeper analysis” (Patil, Angadi & Kumar 2024, p. 5).

In addition, AI can contribute to faster and more effective fact-checking since generating and reproducing fake news is one of the most serious problems in the news sector (Kertysova, 2018; Newman et al., 2023). BBC’s experience in this direction is very important. The BBC has a substantial corpus of data comprising daily news, features and videos. The tool in question tracks sources, extracts, and articles from the BBC and other global media outlets. The tool then applies a simultaneous segmentation of locations, people, organizations, and things to the relevant stories, which are subsequently categorized. (Patil, Angadi & Kumar, 2024).

AI could also contribute to the personalization, or rather to the customization of news for multiple but at the same time different audiences, which have different thematic, hermeneutic, and ideological preferences. A good example in this direction is the news site *blick.ch*, the *20 Minuten app*, or some travel guides (Newman et al., 2023).

Despite the optimistic predictions of AI’s potential to transform numerous domains of socioeconomic activity (Trajtenberg, 2018), not all communication and media researchers align with the techno-optimistic perspective. Some moderate approaches suggest that AI could be useful, if it were under human control and concerning news production, under the control of journalists who can evaluate the trustworthiness of sources and the significance of various pieces of information to interconnect them in the context of a broader narrative. As other research findings show, that the use of AI technology can be not only productive but also efficient in terms of journalism only when it is used under the command and the responsibility of human journalists who can either discern the significance of current events and their aspects, or distinguish facts from comments (Lambrou, 2024).

Yet it would be erroneous to assume that the aforementioned issue is the sole problematic aspect of the AIGC. Researchers, scholars, journalists, and many others (Terzis, 2024; Trajtenberg, 2018; Verdegem, 2022) since the very beginning of the project have spotted several problems or eventual negative sides of the AIGC. In most cases, these dangers stem from the political economy of the media, which tends to have a huge impact on news production, since early modernity (Habermas, 1991; Mosco, 2009).

Problems and negative sides of AI-generated media content

Some of the most widely discussed issues surrounding the use of AI (Kertysova, 2018) in the production of media content are analogous to those encountered in other domains where AI is employed, such as education, science, and art. Other issues, such as the reporting of current affairs,

are inherently specific to the domain of media and journalism. AIGC is based on a set of automatically selected pieces of information originating from various digital sources (on the internet). Given this, we can raise the question if all the analogical information created in the course of human history has been digitalized.

The **first** and perhaps the very basic issue that appears in the AIGC is the **incompleteness (or the lack of completeness) of the information provided by the AI**, as this can have a significant impact on its accuracy and, subsequently, its usability and applicability in real-world scenarios. On the one hand, AI refers to cognitive techniques that enable a computer to calculate probabilities (Kiggins, 2021). On the other hand, AI constructs agents that can do the right thing (Jungherr, 2023). Nevertheless, in the absence of sufficient data, a computer may still arrive at an answer that could be regarded as a correct decision. But is this a correct decision? Second, if the digitization of human culture, science, art, and all the information of the past has not been ensured, this may lead to a new, digital Western-centrism, if not American-centrism or Anglo-Saxon-centrism or Eurocentrism with all possible consequences in the intercultural relationships that may arise from the publication or from the application in real life of the information that stakeholders will get from a Western-centered AI. To be more precise, has all the information contained in newspapers, magazines, TV and radio outlets, cinema, painting and sculpture, dance, and so forth, as well as the critique of scientific books and reviews across the globe, been digitized? If the answer to the latter question is affirmative, it would be beneficial to ascertain whether these data and information are accessible either by the various applications of AI or by all its users. If this is not the case, we are faced with the prospect of a significant undertaking: the rewriting of all historical archives, and potentially even the very fabric of human history. Regardless of one's willingness to engage with this process, it is nevertheless a formidable challenge. It is a complex endeavor that necessitates navigating numerous complexities, including:

- identifying the parties responsible for this phenomenon,
- understanding its consequences, and
- determining who or what stands to gain from this transformation.

Beyond these immediate concerns, the distortion of historical records raises broader questions about the nature of intellectual justice and its relationship to broader notions of justice in general.

The **second** issue that's been raised in the AIGC is related to the **originality of the information** in the news outlets when it is AI-generated. The question of whether AI-generated news stories meet the criteria for being both fresh and new is a significant one. This is a matter of

importance to the general public, as well as to media owners editors-in-chief, and so forth. In this regard, certain AI applications, such as ChatGPT, are unable to fulfill the requisite need for information on current affairs. The information provided by AI to journalists fails to meet the criteria for news because AIGC "remains limited in their ability to assess the accuracy of individual statements" (Kertysova, 2018, p. 60). This largely happens because AI is a pre-trained tool with limited knowledge of the world and events. This is also the case with other AI applications, such as Wordsmith and Heliograf, which nevertheless perform better (Zagorulko, 2023).

AI gathers and brings together information that is collected across the internet. In this case, a news story generated by AI appears to be, first, not an original news story. It's a story that has been copied from a different source of the same or another media company. The issue of authorship (who is responsible for the content of the article and holds the copyright) and related ethical concerns, as well as institutional and legal implications, are pertinent in this context (Ballardini, He & Roos, 2019; Lambrou, 2024; Lund & Naheem, 2024; Samuelson, 2020). Second, the characteristics of such a news story are similar to those of churnalism articles, thereby corroborating the existing evidence, which was mentioned earlier in this work, concerning the phenomenon of churnalism.

The opacity of the sources comes as the **third** issue. A major function of journalism concerns getting information from the appropriate sources. A large part of the journalistic activity is spent in seeking and finding these sources. This practice contributes to the reliability and accuracy of the information they publish and thus to the accurate informing of the public opinion. In instances of scandal, illegal conduct, or even mere operational failures of the institutions in question, journalistic practice plays a pivotal role in addressing and resolving these issues. At the same time, this also explains why journalists must protect these sources of information. This protection guarantees the accuracy and correctness of the information they publish.

From this point of view, getting algorithmic information across the internet from unknown sources threatens the credibility of the news stories. Even if such news stories are completely true, there will always be the suspicion that they may be false, incomplete, one-sided, distorted, etc. This will be strengthened in times of crisis and polarization in both the political system and the public. It remains unclear whether the advent of artificial intelligence has brought about the end of the post-truth era, or it is an intrinsic feature of this new after 2016- reality.

Furthermore, the opacity of the sources can blur the difference between hard news and soft news, factual and fictional content, trustworthy and not trustworthy information, and fake and real news. Missaoui et. al (2019, p. 2) have found that "journalists estimate that AI would tarnish the

integrity of news by making sources too opaque”. Additionally, the journalists assert that AI aggregates data from disparate sources yet cannot assess the relative significance of each source (Lambrou, 2024).

Regarding media ethics, the opacity of the sources and the fabrication of news stories are significant violations of professional journalism standards. Zagorulko (2023) adds that using an AI tool in news production demands verification and correction by humans.

Fourth, agenda-setting and framing still matter. AI is capable of collating information that is already available in digital form on the Internet. In this sense, journalists do not define an original agenda of their own. We don't know who the agenda setter in AIGC is. In this context, it could be argued that the situation is distinct. The decision of which issues will be covered is at the discretion of the journalist or the editor-in-chief. On the other hand, AIGC seems to be closer to the model of news which is observed in social media. In other words, to subordinate creativity in journalistic work (Plenković, 1980, pp. 38-39).

Thus, we think that AI-generated media content rather reproduces an agenda set by others instead of setting an original one. The picture becomes less clear when the initially available information comes not from other journalists, but from actors working for the sake of governments, ministries, organizations, the army, etc. Therefore, in times of crisis, there is a risk that such media may be utilized as conduits for the dissemination of propaganda or, even more concerning, disinformation.

The issue with AIGC is more evident when the analysis focuses on framing. Framing is not about the facts themselves, but rather about how the facts are presented, to produce a specific meaning or explanation that aligns with the preferences of the news producers (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Every single act of understanding depends on the discursive means that the news producers employ. Words, adjectives, metaphors, similes, other oral forms, or/footage, editing, music, etc. are used by journalists in their reports (Tankard, 2003). This means that every single piece of information regarding current facts and affairs on the internet (which AI collects) has already been framed. So, the text generated by AI technology comes to media professionals with a frame or frames already set by others. Eventually, different pieces of information for the same fact may contain a different frame. This does not change the fact that AIGC is already framed by others. Usually, these pieces are based upon the dominant frame i.e. the framing used by the mainstream media regarding events such as the war in Gaza or in Ukraine, inflation, unemployment, strikes, and demonstrations (e.g. yellow jackets in Paris, Pylos shipwreck, Portsmouth case, US election) etc. In some cases, they contain multiple frames that are

closer to conservative/populist views in journalism. The issue is further compounded in times of crisis, where the strategic frames constructed in the production of propaganda or commercial content can result in the manipulation of facts and events, potentially leading to the dissemination of misinformation.

Fifth, the lack of a critical approach is another major problem concerning the negative side of AIGC. This is not a new phenomenon, while it had been previously detected to a large extent in churnalism, which tends to be another disadvantage of AIGC. The lack of a critical approach in news production leads to at least three more negative outcomes in professional journalism. The first one is the difficulty or lack of presenting a balanced opinion, which is crucial in periods of crisis when the impartial informing of the public has a significant impact on decision-making. For example, a recent experiment showed that ChatGPT tends to “generate biased content that is rather in line with the context of the user’s query, than respecting the rule of balancing. Only 48% of the generated texts met the standard of balance of opinion” (Zagorulko, 2023). The second outcome refers to AI’s inability to distinguish between facts and opinions so far. The third one has to do with its weakness to “conclude contradictory data” (Zagorulko, 2023). *Grosso modo* means that it cannot avoid the trap of fake news. It can consider false statements as true, whereas data, is a process that is a precondition for news falsification.

Consequently, the **sixth** and final issue addressed in this work is **the growing prevalence of fake news**, which represents a significant challenge in the utilization of AI for the generation of news content in the media. Artificial intelligence has already been a part of the journalistic routine. But what makes such a threat possible? First, as we have already said, the opacity of the sources. The risk of a journalist including false information in a broader AIGC is greater when the sources are unclear. Those who study fake news and how to fight it as a phenomenon know very well that the transparency of sources is one of the criteria used for identifying a certain news story as non-fake. Second, is the inability of AI to distinguish between facts and opinions (Lambrou, 2024). AI technology collects data across the internet according to some pre-defined criteria. A piece of information can reflect a real fact or a view of real facts. It can describe a fact through specific frames, which highlight specific words, terms, images, or all of them to dictate specific social practices or to meet the preferences of the audience. The situation becomes worse when some facts or parts of facts mentioned in the AIGC are not real, they are invented or completely fictitious. Third, even in the era of the internet, AI programmers are individuals who have their own biases. All AI applications have been programmed to identify the available information on current affairs or other issues and topics that have been marked by specific words or terms. It originates from the

programmer's understanding of economic, political, social, and cultural context. In other words, it depends on the programmers' views, ideology, religious beliefs, etc.

To illustrate the proposed argument, it is helpful to consider one or two examples. Let us posit that the government announces a reduction in the workforce at state-run corporations. It may choose to terminate an employee's contract when it lacks the resources to retain it, whereas it may dismiss an employee whose performance fails to meet the requisite standards (Herrity, 2024). Should a journalist wish to compose an article about the aforementioned second form of dismissal using AIGC, a considerable number of facts about the initial case will likely be omitted. Or vice versa. Something similar can be observed if a journalist or anyone else is interested in producing an article about migrants and refugees, or about "terrorist attacks". Some actors consider police attacks on demonstrators as "terrorist attacks", or they consider unemployment or famine also as a kind of terrorism. So, it depends on programmers' views on how all facts and events have been coded. To put it another way, the final text will be completely different if the facts are defined differently. Furthermore, the article may be received in a negotiated manner by the audience, with unpredictable reactions both within and beyond the communication sphere. From another perspective, the issue under examination is of even greater significance. The production of AIGC confuses the distinction between reliable and unreliable information. Consequently, the entire field of news production may be affected, particularly if the related content is not identified as such.

The very essence of fake and false news lies in the distortion or invention of facts, which are taken for granted based on pre-existing prejudices that lead to the shaping of *filter bubbles* (Pariser, 2011; Pleios, 2021; Spohr, 2017). No other technology offers an equally efficient means of achieving similar tasks (Kertysova, 2018). While AI's contribution to news production has already been under dispute, it has facilitated and accelerated the production of "realistic videos, images, and audio of almost anything imaginable- including events that never took place" (Wittenberg et al., 2024).

In parallel, the members of the public do not consume all the content they have access to. They would rather adopt practices of selective exposure, i.e., consuming content that contains views and topics compatible with their views and preferences. Recent research findings (Gardikiotis & Pilioussis, 2024) indicate that a significant proportion of the audience is not primarily seeking further news but rather information that aligns with their existing views on reality. The advent of new technological disruption from artificial intelligence (AI) is imminent, with the potential to unleash a further wave of personalized content that may be unreliable (Broussard, 2014; Newman et al., 2023; Thurman et al., 2019; van Dalen, 2012). Considering that

fake news is based upon preexisting prejudices of the public, it is quite possible for AI not only to generate fake and false content but also to contribute to an even more extended reproduction of the phenomenon.

Epilogue I: The eventual impact of AIGC's negative sides

Optimistically speaking, AI has the potential to become a general-purpose technology, which ensures fast, enriched, and money-saving practices. It also serves the public to consume content that is by its preferences. Even to a larger extent compared to the social media algorithms. On the other hand, AIGC raises a lot of concerns because of its early effects on journalism. Informational processes on social issues are very different from the informational processes on non-human or natural processes. The information the citizens get from the media is connected to decision-making and acting in a complex social environment where unequal and very often contradictory interests take place. By ignoring such a reality or, even worse, facing social reality as a kind of natural reality, AIGC might result in the polarization of society, unrest, and the malfunctioning of social institutions. This could, in turn, give rise to several unforeseen consequences.

All the aforementioned negative sides of AIGC together could provoke at least four serious social reactions.

- Even higher distrust of citizens towards the media. Distrust towards the media has been high in Europe over the recent years (Eurobarometer, 2023; Pleios, 2024) and even higher in countries that belong to the so-called *Mediterranean model*, which represents the relations between the media system and the political system, like Greece (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Since citizens may suspect that the media content they consume is generated by artificial intelligence with all its immature qualities, distrust will be one of the most likely outcomes. Besides, according to some research findings (Patil, Angadi & Kumar 2024), harm to journalistic and sociopolitical trustworthiness and reputation is one of the main problems that the producers of AI-generated media content have to face. That's why some authors (Heim & Chan-Olmsted, 2023; Vyas, 2022). suggest that establishing trust in AI is one of the most crucial issues.

- A growing distrust of the media by citizens may, in turn, give rise to contradictory and fluctuating electoral and political behavior, or it may serve to exacerbate the existing political and social polarization that is already a feature of the current Western societies (Grossmann, 2018; Ladd, 2010; Ladd & Podkul, 2020). Nowadays, political polarization is both largely and tightly connected to the fabrication and spreading of fake news and vice versa, as it has been noticed in

the USA during the last three pre-election periods, or in the Greek 2019 national elections (Pleios, 2021).

- However, the real problem is not the negative sides of AIGC in terms of journalism, but rather from the point of view of social reality. From this perspective, a conflict between reality and AIGC, or indeed numerous conflicts between consumers of AIGC and social institutions/arrangements, may emerge. To illustrate this situation symbolically, we can take a look at the dystopian final scene of the film *Joker* (Todd Phillips, 2019), where the main character (Joaquin Phoenix) kills the journalist (Robert DeNiro) on the live broadcast.

- Finally, we should not overlook one further catalyst. The loss of jobs in journalism and the so-called cognitive deskilling (Kiggins, 2021) of professionals is a significant consequence of the advent of AI. On the one hand, those who are displaced from their roles as journalists may seek recourse from those who are opposed to AI, not only in their private lives but also in their public activities. On the other hand, the journalists who employ AIGC could lose a variety of skills that are highly recognized as preconditions for being a journalist.

Epilogue II: Is there any “cure”?

The immature adoption of AIGC in news production leads journalists and scholars to the conclusion that some measures are needed to avoid the consequences of these disadvantages. Here are some of the suggestions we could make.

- It is evident that a significant digital transition campaign or an innovative communication strategy on informational democracy is imperative. A vast array of informational products, including books, newspapers, literature, cinema, music, and more, existed prior to the advent of the internet and have yet to be digitized. This endeavor could be undertaken by UNESCO in collaboration with national governments.

- Humans, foremost journalists, should play the leading role in the production of news and exercise control over AI technology. This is a principle for protecting journalistic ethics and standards. Human management of AIGC flows is necessary.

- Labeling or separation of the AIGC from human-generated content (HGC): Audiences have the right to know which media content or part of it is human-made, and which is AI-generated. Given the already-noticed distrust towards media, some citizens may be further inclined to question whether any of this content is genuinely "handmade." This ultimately gives rise to a growing distrust, which in turn gives rise to a range of consequences. In this case, democracy and the public sphere will be among the biggest losers. Therefore, a new kind of fact-checking or verification is needed. Originality or AI free content verification must be deployed widely. In

addition, labeling may contribute to fighting fake news by reducing “people’s belief in and sharing of content debunked by professional fact-checkers” (Wittenberg et al., 2024, p. 1). However, we must admit that labeling is a necessary but insufficient condition.

Some analysts support that the technology that has been used for AI-generated content could help anyone interested in separating AI-generated content from human-generated content. However, AI detection tools (like OpenAI, Writer, Copyleaks, GPTZero, and CrossPlag) can identify some kinds of AIGC, but they cannot do the same with more sophisticated AI technologies, like those employed by the media industries (Elkhatat, Elsaid, & Almeer, 2023). That’s why we need more advanced technologies to do this. Yet, the issue arises from the fact that AI technologies, which are employed in the production of media content, are frequently more sophisticated than the analogous technologies used to verify this assertion.

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