



Martín Oller Alonso

“Not See the Forest for the Trees.” The Significance of Context in Media Monitoring Capabilities from a Comparative Perspective

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/mlar-23-02-05>

ABSTRACT

This article presents the upgraded Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) initially proposed by Oller in 2016. OMM2 underlines organic analysis principles, focusing on dynamic, comparative and diverse perspectives. It offers a methodology tailored for studying communication and media in developing nations, especially those with evolving intermedia journalistic cultures, emerging or fragile democracies, and autocratic governance. Particularly applicable to nations recently joining the EU, like those in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe (SCEE), OMM2 aids in analyzing journalism, media monitoring, and political communication in these regions. These countries, often characterized by political upheaval and historical events like colonialism (e.g., Eastern Bloc), are the focus of the MEDIADELCOM project. Media assessment entities in these areas are part of a larger network encompassing diverse societal facets. In the SCEE context, deliberative communication signifies collective decision-making through public discourse, recognizing diverse opinions. Utilizing OMM2 for a comparative study of media monitoring is crucial to comprehend deliberative discussions in these EU-associated European democracies.

KEY WORDS

Comparative Analysis. Deliberative Communication. Eastern Europe. Journalism Cultures. MEDIADELCOM. Monitoring Capabilities. Organic Multilevel Model 2.0.

1 Introduction

The realm of European media and communication research has witnessed a significant influx of studies throughout the 21st century, exploring diverse concerns and developments associated with modern media transformation. However, this wealth of research has faced limitations in promptly pinpointing troubling tendencies and delivering practical research advancement scenarios for academics, policymakers and specialists. Current knowledge is vast yet uneven, lacking cohesion and dispersed across various sources.

The *MEDIADELCOM* project¹ seeks to tackle this challenge by consolidating existing knowledge and information into a cohesive and structured framework. How? Through an international comparative study that concentrates on the comparative meta-analysis of deliberative communication in fourteen countries, primarily with recent EU membership (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden) based on four domains: (1) Journalism; (2) Legal and regulation; (3) Media usage patterns; and (4) Media related competencies.

The 21st century has witnessed the solidification of comparative research in media, journalism and communication fields globally. This trend is driving scholars in political communication to explore new methodological tools or adapt existing ones to suit contemporary research approaches. The days of applying research methods in a decontextualized and asynchronous manner are gone. Contemporary international comparative research necessitates a “glocal” contextual and diachronic analysis capable of revealing the unique characteristics of the immediate, intermediate, peripheral and “remote” environments that shape communication professionals’ conditions. As a result, the multilevel model emerges as one of the best-suited strategies for systematizing the contextual influences affecting research at local, regional, national and international levels.

This article introduces the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2),² which builds on earlier models.³ Why? Because the *MEDIADELCOM* project benefits from an optimal diachronic international comparative approach, providing a contextual analysis over time of fourteen EU countries.

The OMM2 is rooted in the concept of organic analysis, emphasizing dynamism, a diachronic perspective and heterogeneity. It serves as an ideal model for characterizing journalism, media and related studies in regions like Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, known for political and economic instability, emerging democracies, recent EU membership, as well as periods of colonialism (Eastern Bloc). According to Oller and Barredo, it is an optimal approach for examining and understanding communication and media studies in developing countries characterized by intermediate journalistic cultures and/or autocratic political systems.⁴ The institutions, structures, organizations, agents and professionals responsible for assessing media platforms are not isolated components in any country or region. Instead, they are part of a broader cultural, social, educational, communicational, political, and economic network. In the European context, deliberative communication relates to the collective decision-making process enabled by public dialogue and the evaluation of multiple arguments. Consequently, examining media monitoring capabilities is essential for understanding the state of deliberative discussions across various European democracies within EU.

¹ Author’s note: For more information see: *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

² See: OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163.

³ Author’s note: In the subsequent part of this article, I will delve into some of the key points. For an in-depth understanding, readers are advised to refer to: OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.

⁴ OLLER, M., BARREDO, D.: Intermediate Journalistic Cultures. International Comparative Studies in Journalism. In *Journal Medijska istraživanja/Media Research*, 2013, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 39-60.

The OMM2 structure reformulates the notion of interconnected layers found in previous models centered around journalism and media research, incorporating a comparative outlook and the addition of supra level analysis. This analysis considers the role of transnational organizations, institutions, agents, and international structures that operate cross-sectionally among various nations from a comparative perspective. It is also applied for the first time to investigate the monitoring capacity within a specific field, such as deliberative communication, as part of the *MEDIADEL.COM*. Halliki Harro-Loit, professor at the University of Tartu and the head of this project, underscores “*the significance of the diachronic aspect in comparative research, as well as the necessity for skilled researchers and data analysts to contribute to such endeavors*”⁵. The project also addresses the distinct challenges of monitoring media accountability in Europe, incorporating insights from a recently concluded global study on the proliferation of diverse media self-regulation instruments and deliberative democracies. Hence, this pioneering, comparative, diachronic and integrative meta-analytical approach depicts communicative models as dynamic systems, highlighting their interconnectivity and distinctiveness. Consequently, the structure of the OMM2, akin to a tree, adapts to the project’s requirements. This structure comprises four tiers: (1) the branches and leaves (actor/micro level), which portray individual professionals; (2) the trunk (institutional/meso level), signifying internal institutions and organizations; (3) the roots (system level/macro level), which lay the groundwork for a country’s foundational structures; and (4) the forest (trans-systemic/supra level).

2 Analysis of Influence Models

In the field of journalism research, numerous influence models have been established to comprehend the dynamics at play during the creation and distribution of information within the media. These models can be categorized based on their analytical levels and the variables they deem pertinent to explain the phenomena under examination. Contextual influence models in journalism research have been developed through empirical approaches, sharing the common goal of bridging the gap between theory and empirical occurrences to better understand the mutual influence between media and society.

When classified by levels of analysis, multiple primary trends can be discerned from the contextual studies of varying influence levels. McQuail devised a model incorporating five analytical levels (international organizations, societal level, institutional level, organizational level and individual level) concerning the influence levels of society, media, and media audiences or users.⁶ Chaffee and Berger suggested three analytical levels: individual, organizational and legal, as well as economic circumstances and other institutions connected to the information system.⁷ Whitney, Sumpter, and McQuail, along with Ettema and Whitney, grounded their models on a three-tiered structure: individual, institutional and organizational.⁸

⁵ *Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.

⁶ See: MCQUAIL, D.: *Introduction to the Theory of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1983.

⁷ See: CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R.: *Analysis Levels: An Introduction*. In CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R. (eds.): *Handbook of Communication Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1987, p. 143-145.

⁸ See: WHITNEY, D. C., SUMPTER, R. S., MCQUAIL, D.: *Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, and Institutions*. In DOWNING, J. D. H., MCQUAIL, D., SCHLESINGER, P., WARTELLA, E. (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 2004, p. 393-410.; WHITNEY, D. C., ETTEMA, J. S.: *Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions*. In VALDIVIA, A. N. (ed.): *A Companion to Media Studies*. Hoboken, NJ : Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 157-187.

On the other hand, when classifying models by relevant variables, different influences on journalistic process can be identified. Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model, built upon five layers or levels spanning from micro to macro, has undergone several revisions by the authors.⁹ Weischenberg's journalistic paradigm is also noteworthy, portraying journalists as individual actors at the center of a circular arrangement within his onion skins model (*zwiebelschalen*).¹⁰ Voakes' model concentrates on social influences in journalists' ethical decision-making, suggesting a hierarchy of influences with relative value assigned to each level: individual, small group, organization, competence, occupation, extra-media and law.¹¹ Similarly, McQuail and Windahl's model categorizes factors influencing newsrooms and journalistic work into six groups: audience, owners, social and political institutions, advertisers, content providers and agencies.¹²

Over the past decade, multilevel models have emerged that aim to incorporate various levels and influence variables. Esser's model (*mehrebenenmodell*) is organized into four levels, extending from the social sphere and the historical and cultural conditions of society to the values, ideas and professional roles of journalists.¹³ Other notable multilevel models include those by Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney & Wise¹⁴ and Preston and Metykova¹⁵.

Oller and Meier proposed an integrated multilevel model structured around three levels (actor, institution and systems) that underscores the interaction between actors and different contextual levels.¹⁶ Furthermore, Reese and Shoemaker's revision of their hierarchy of influences model highlights the significance of ethnographic and quantitative analysis.¹⁷ These are the elements that were also incorporated in the initial version of the OMM published in 2016 and implemented in the Latin American context, specifically in Ecuador.¹⁸

AUTHORS	Individuals	Media routines	Organization of the media	Media structure	Society (Politics and Economics)	Culture and ideology	Trans-national level
McQUAIL, 1983	•	•	•	•	•		
ETTEMA & WHITNEY, 1982	•	•		•			
CHAFFEE & BERGER, 1987	•		•		•		

⁹ See: SHOEMAKER, P. J., REESE, S.: *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Media Content*. New York, NY : Longman, 1991.

¹⁰ See: WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 1: Media Systems, Media Ethics, Media Institutions*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992; WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 2: Media Technology, Media Functions, Media Actors*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

¹¹ See: VOAKES, P. S.: Social Influences on the Decision-Making of Journalists in Ethical Situations. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 18-35.

¹² See: MCQUAIL, D., WINDAHL, S.: *Communication Models. For the Study of Mass Communications*. 2nd edition. London : Pearson Education, 1993.

¹³ See: ESSER, F.: *The Forces Behind the Headlines. English and German Journalism in Comparison*. Freiburg, München : Verlag Karl Alber, 1998.

¹⁴ See: GROSSBERG, L., WARTELLA, E., WHITNEY, D. C., WISE, J. M.: *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2006.

¹⁵ See: PRESTON, P., METYKOVA, M.: From News Networks to House Rules: Organizational Contexts. In PRESTON, P. (ed.): *Making the News. Journalism and News Cultures in Europe*. New York, NY : Routledge, 2009, p. 72-91.

¹⁶ See: OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.

¹⁷ See: REESE, S., SHOEMAKER, P.: A Sociology of Media for the Networked Public Sphere: The Model of Hierarchy of Influences. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, p. 389-410.

¹⁸ See: OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de Ecuador. Perfil, situación y percepción profesional de los periodistas (Vol. I)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2017; OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de Ecuador (Vol. II)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2019.

SHOEMAKER & REESE, 1991	.	.	.	.	.	.
McQUAIL & WINDAHL, 1993			.				
WEISCHENBERG, 1992, 1995	.	.	.	.	.
VOAKES, 1997	.		.	.	.	.
REUS, 1998	.	.	.	.	.
ESSER, 1998	.	.		.	.
WHITNEY et al., 2004	.	.		.			
GROSSBERG et al., 2006	.		.	.		.
DONSBACH, 2000, 2008	.	.	.		.
PRESTON & METYKOVA, 2009	.	.	.	.	.	.
HANITZSCH et al., 2010	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER & MEIER, 2012	.	.	.	.	.	.
SHOEMAKER & REESE, 2014, 2016	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER, 2016	.	.	.	.	.	.
OLLER, 2023	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

TABLE 1: *Historical Overview of Multilevel Models*

Source: own processing according to HANITZSCH, T.: Zur Wahrnehmung von Einflüssen im Journalismus. Komparative Befunde aus 17 Ländern. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2009, Vol. 57, No. 2, p. 153-173.; OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163.

These models of influence in journalism (and, to some extent, in communication field) offer different perspectives and approaches to understanding how the media influences the society, and how society influences the media. However, none of them focus on a diachronic comparative meta-analysis of journalism or another field of communication. Thus, I adapt, enhance and advance the OMM for the meta-analysis of deliberative communication in fourteen European countries, as part of the *MEDIADELCOM* project.

3 Meta-Analysis of Deliberative Communication: MEDIADELCOM Project

MEDIADELCOM is financed by the EU's funding program for research and innovation Horizon 2020. This project is an initiative aimed at scrutinizing and monitoring deliberative communication in fourteen countries within the European Union (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden). Its goal is to bolster European integration, societal unity and, consequently, the Europeanization process, mainly in the emerging democracies within the sample. *MEDIADELCOM*'s consortium contends that European political and cultural landscapes can grow more effectively if certain policies augment the conditions for deliberative communication and their capacity to study it.

The consortium's goal is to devise a methodology capable of assessing and forecasting the potential risks and opportunities associated with (the study of) deliberative communication that could arise from media transformations in the period from 2000 to 2020.

MEDIADELCOM offers a comprehensive evaluation of deliberative communication and societal cohesion within Europe based on the study of four domains: (1) Legal and regulation domain: Ethics and accountability systems; (2) Journalism; (3) Media Usage Patterns; (4) Media Related Competencies. This project develops a diagnostic tool (the method of diachronic comparative meta-analysis of media monitoring) that will be beneficial for policy makers, educators, media critical bodies and institutions, as well as for media experts and journalists. However, dissecting the capacity and quality of research and monitoring in EU is quite a complex undertaking. According to the previous results published by *MEDIADELCOM*, data might be non-existent in some contexts (and nations), inaccessible in an open or digital format. Additionally, data that is accessible might not be structured properly. The non-availability of reliable and processable data poses a major obstacle. To enhance research and monitoring capabilities, it is crucial to guarantee that data is available in open, digital, structured and tabular formats. Additionally, efforts should be made to boost the reliability of the data and ensure it contributes to the promotion of democracy. Data availability is not the sole issue, but data provided by different actors often exhibit issues related to closure. Data from universities and public bodies is rarely made available, while data from transnational organizations is limited and, often, unprocessable and lacks a structured, tabular format.

Due to this reason, research, monitoring, and education in the realms of media, communication, and journalism in EU involves a diverse range of actors, each playing their part to define the risks and opportunities in (the monitoring and study of) deliberative communication in a micro, meso, macro and supra level. These include transnational organizations monitoring democracy and media systems globally, large comparative research projects, units in media industry structures or related to media industries, scholars and research groups in universities, independent organizations or professional associations and organizations that could be considered branches of the government or a public body.

Overall, the *MEDIADELCOM* project is an ambitious initiative, aiming to improve the (study of) deliberative communication in the European Union through research, analysis, and policy recommendations.¹⁹

4 Proposal of the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) for the Meta-Analysis of Deliberative Communication in Comparative Perspective in EU

This chapter introduces the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) for conducting a meta-analysis of deliberative communication in a comparative perspective. The OMM2 framework aims to effectively analyze and compare deliberative communication across diverse contexts by examining the micro, meso, macro and supra levels of interaction. The Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 consists of fourth interconnected layers:

- **Micro-Level (Individual Actors):** This level focuses on individual actors participating in deliberative communication, examining their cognitive abilities, communication skills, motivations, attitudes and behavioral patterns. Key factors to consider include individual backgrounds, values, experiences and the influence of social identities on deliberative processes.

¹⁹ MEDIADELCOM. [online]. [2022-03-17]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-1/>>.

- Meso-Level (Institutional Context): At this level, the model investigates the institutional context in which deliberative communication occurs. It considers the roles of formal and informal institutions, rules, norms, and practices that shape and facilitate deliberation. Aspects to examine include the influence of media, educational systems, civil society organizations and public policies on deliberative processes and their outcomes.
- Macro-Level (Systemic Context): The macro level encompasses the broader systemic context, such as cultural, historical, and political factors that affect deliberative communication. This level considers the overall environment that enables or hinders deliberative processes, including the influence of political systems, power dynamics, societal values and the macro-context.
- Supra-Level (Trans-systemic setting): In the revised version of the OMM, a novel element representing transnational and comparative contexts has been introduced: Supra level. This element incorporates a broad spectrum of global factors, including worldwide institutions, international laws and treaties, global cultures and multinational corporations. It is in these transnational and comparative contexts where the influences of globalization and global trends are most palpable (in a local, regional, and national level), and where cross-national comparisons are drawn. Specifically, it encompasses the Global Political System, characterized by political landscapes and transnational structures; the Global Economy with its trade, markets, fiscal policies and interconnected systems; Global Education through international educational policies; the Cultural/Historical/Social Global System, which encapsulates worldwide trends, values, phenomena and social systems; the Ideological Transnational Perspective that deals with ideas and belief systems that transcend boundaries on a global scale; the Military/Religious System, which includes global security dynamics, alliances and conflicts; the Media System featuring transnational platforms and international media policies; and finally, the Technological Global System marked by its interconnections, multinational corporations and its operation on a global scale.

This study, based on the *MEDIADELCOM* project, encompasses fourteen countries, displaying a range from affluent to impoverished nations, and those with low to very high *Human Development Index*. The countries' sizes also span from very small (Estonia with 1.3 million inhabitants) to very large (Germany with 84 million inhabitants). Despite these differences, there are similarities in their historical and contextual backgrounds.

Sweden, Germany and Austria serve as examples of stable democracies since World War II, representing media systems in Western and Northern Europe. Hallin and Mancini typically view these countries as representative of democratic-corporatist media systems.²⁰ According to the *2022 World Press Freedom Index*, Sweden ranks 3rd, Germany 16th, and Austria 31st.²¹ Historically, Sweden has been particularly conducive to independent journalism, being the first country to introduce the *Freedom of Information Act* in 1766. In contrast, Italy and Greece underwent traumatic dictatorships in the 20th century and belong to the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist group, as identified by Hallin and Mancini. This group is distinguished by high political parallelism, low levels of professionalization and media instrumentalization.

In the case of emerging democracies within the sample of *MEDIADELCOM* – the focus of this article – there are critical junctures and significant changes. All post-socialist nations share a common critical juncture around 1989/90, connected to the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – more from a cultural and historical standpoint than a geographical one. Within the post-socialist group countries with recent EU membership, some sub-groups can

²⁰ See: HALLIN, D. C., MANCINI, P.: *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²¹ *World Press Freedom Index 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index>>.

be identified. Estonia and Latvia are post-Soviet states that gained independence following the dissolution of the USSR. These Baltic nations share a common history and experiences as part of the USSR. Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia were independent nations before 1990 but were members of the Warsaw Pact, falling within the Soviet sphere of influence and control. Conversely, Croatia was part of the SFRY²², a socialist state that remained non-aligned and outside the Soviet sphere. The transition to free media and capitalist markets with private ownership significantly influenced media development in these countries. Key reforms included adopting media laws and transforming state broadcasting into public service broadcasting.

Given this backdrop and context, as we will discuss further, the media and communication research landscape in Europe during the 21st century has experienced a notable surge in studies, delving into diverse issues and phenomena tied to contemporary media shifts. Nevertheless, the abundance of research has encountered challenges in swiftly detecting problematic trends and proposing actionable research progression strategies for scholars, policymakers and experts. The existing knowledge, while extensive, is unbalanced, with a lack of cohesion and distribution across multiple sources.

4.1 Individual Actors – MICRO

In the OMM, the branches and leaves of the tree represent individual professionals due to their irregular position, diversity and number, since their perception and ideas within a country (or region) are not homogeneous. For these reasons, at this level, the interests and working methods in organizations at the individual level are carefully detailed, being determined by the training, work experience, age and gender of journalists,²³ among others.

At the micro level of contextual analysis, individual factors influencing the work of researchers and media professionals are examined, including sociodemographic and cultural, economic, political and professional factors. These factors are critical because all professionals are constantly forced to make decisions in their work. In addition, the analysis of this contextual level allows us to understand their attitudes and perceptions about their work and role in research and in society.

At this level, reference psychosocial influences are considered, such as the values, principles and beliefs of professionals/researchers, as well as the influence of organizations working for data protection and security concerns. In addition, their individual characteristics are examined, such as level of education, specialization, gender, age, political leanings, religious affiliation, salary, professional position, membership of a professional association, years of experience and perceptions about their professional ethics and autonomy.

Analysis of the individual level is important to understand the degree of influence of practitioners on final decisions in relation to the other contextual levels, such as the institutional level and the system level. The professional and social structure in which the EU works influences their individual norms, values, ideas, perceptions, behaviors, lines of research and actions.

The contextual analysis performed by the OMM involves a bidirectional analysis between professionals as individuals and the rest of the actors, organizations and institutions at the other contextual levels. Power relations are embedded in the social construction of space and time, while they are conditioned by the spatio-temporal characteristics of social formations and, of course, in professional relations. Analysis of this contextual level is important to understand the impact of individual factors on information production and distribution and decision-making. In social theory, space cannot be conceived independently of social/professional practices.

²² Author's note: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

²³ See: JOHNSTONE, J. W. C., SLAWSKI, E. J., BOWMAN, W. W.: *The Newspeople. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Champaign : University of Illinois Press, 1976.

Spatial and temporal concepts are the basis of our contextual analysis because in all historical transformations, the emergence of a new social structure is related to the redefinition of the material foundations of our existence, space and time.²⁴

Citizen deliberation in Europe at the micro-level is spontaneous and less organized. It occurs when more than one person meets and discusses a topic, keeping in mind the principles of deliberation. The quality of these debates is based on several indicators, such as citizens' knowledge and trust. If these media-induced conditions are met, public deliberation will be enhanced. For example, audiences who are exposed to a variety of topics in a topic and are willing to discuss and deliberate will have a better quality of deliberation.

Several data sources provide insights into various aspects of European citizens' deliberation at the micro level. *Eurobarometer and European Social Survey (ESS)* data supply information on the level of debate of European citizens on politics and current affairs and on their level of information on specific topics.²⁵ This data also delivers information on equal opportunities for citizens to have a voice in the political system. The *European Values Study (EVS)* provides information on levels of interpersonal trust, which is another important factor for the quality of deliberation. The *Leibniz Institute for the social Sciences (GESIS)* website provides data on citizens' trust in different institutions, which is key to the quality of deliberation.

From a micro-level comparative perspective, the role of different actors involved in media and communication research varies across countries. In Estonia and Latvia, individual researchers and NGOs are significant contributors to the field, while in Croatia and Poland, academic departments and research centers play a more prominent role. In countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Italy, a range of institutions, universities, and private companies participate in media and communication research, each with distinct histories and developmental paths.

Various agents/actors, including NGOs, journalists' unions, professional associations and diverse stakeholders play a role in shaping research governance. This encompasses aspects like funding distribution, research agendas and the impact of these stakeholders, while also addressing concerns about information overload, research imbalances and the need for publishing governance. Individual actors, such as university-based scientists, research groups and media industry professionals contribute to the understanding of media landscapes across different countries. International organizations like *Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders*, journalist unions, professional associations and NGOs also influence research agendas and governance in countries like Croatia and Greece. Challenges in accessing funding for media and communication research projects vary at the micro level, depending on individual actors, such as researchers and scholars. In countries like Germany, Sweden and Austria, funding sources are more diverse, with support from national and EU institutions, foundations and universities. In contrast, in countries like Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania, publicly funded research projects in this field are relatively scarce, and EU funding plays a crucial role in enabling access to European researchers and promoting comparative research.

"The vertical line of the center of Europe" includes Italy, Germany, Sweden and, in some study areas, Austria. These countries are characterized by robust data availability, well-established public authorities and institutions, a relatively strong investigative journalism sector and comprehensive research on employment conditions, journalist education and safety. Various actors contribute to increased knowledge about current developments in these countries.

Children, considered a particularly vulnerable group concerning media usage, are the focus of the longitudinal project *EU Kids Online*, which started in 2009 and covers all participating *MEDIADELCOM* countries. Qualitative academic studies aim to interpret quantitative data

²⁴ See: CASTELLS, M.: *The Emergence of the Network Society*. Oxford : Polity Press, 1997.

²⁵ *Standard Eurobarometer 94 – Winter 2020-2021: Media Use in the European Union*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/726029>>; *Flash Eurobarometer: News & Media Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.

trends and explore audience viewpoints, ideologies and various demographic groups. In some countries (e.g., Sweden), data informs policymakers and media authorities, while in others (e.g., Czech Republic, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary), it is insufficient or unavailable for policy-decision making. International studies, such as *Eurobarometer*, *Media Pluralism Monitor* and *Reuters Digital News* research offer comparative data with open access, covering most *MEDIADELCOM* countries on a longitudinal basis.

In media users' competencies across fourteen European countries, two dimensions are analyzed: (1) social practices rooted in one's social environment and broader contexts and (2) key personal characteristics essential for effective self-realization in today's mediated society. The absence of universally accepted Media and Information Literacy (MIL) definitions and inconsistent data leads to fragmented policy development. Opportunities arise from EU interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digitization and the emergence of social media, which have raised awareness and mobilized various stakeholders.

4.2 Institutional Level – MESO

The *MEDIADELCOM* study examines how discursive reactions to policies influence research policy development and adoption, and how educational, scientific, technical institutions/institutes play a key role in this process. In the investigative context, the meso-level of the analysis focuses on the organization and structure of the media, including its structure, routines, processes, editorial line, rules and profiles of journalists as a group. The editorial environment is a strong determinant of journalism, and the organizations and routines of the media are the direct result of how the work of the media is organized. Therein lies the importance of its study. Like this meso-institutional level, it determines the possibilities and capacities of all actors in terms of research and publications focused on deliberative communication and its influence on democratic processes in Europe. Organizational culture is embedded in the culture of institutions and affects how professionals work together and complete tasks. Technological innovation has also shaped organizational environments, being responsible for important changes in the production of scientific documents and in the institutional priorities of organizations. Similarly, the type of institution (educational organization, research institute, statistics department, transnational organization), ownership (public, private, community), range of influence (local, regional, national and international) where professionals work define the model of publications. The relationship of professionals is determined by these factors. The structural hierarchy also influences the decision-making capabilities of professionals and the structure and organization of work within departments, sections, areas, etc.

The meso-level of contextual analysis is essential to understand how institutions and organizations influence the process of scientific production in terms of communication and decision-making. Both in the context of deliberative communication and journalism, understanding the organizational, cultural and technological systems that influence these processes can be of great help to improve citizen participation and the quality of scientific and media production.

At the meso-level, deliberation in Europe can take specific forms, such as round tables, plenary meetings or deliberative surveys where a group of citizens come together to discuss and find solutions to a specific problem. A relevant study highlights the importance of institutions for citizen deliberation and the role they play in the political and scientific production process.²⁶ Examples of these institutions include deliberative surveys and policy initiatives in which citizens,

²⁶ *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions. Catching the Deliberative Wave.* [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>>.

“mini audiences”, as a small, diverse, and representative group, participate in the debate. The *MEDIADELCOM* study examines the impact of discursive reactions to policies and how they influence research policy development and adoption. Why? Because institutions occupy shared space – where politics, market, education and journalism are among the forces competing for public attention from fundamentally the same vantage point – they work hard to substantiate claims of independence and distinctiveness from each other.²⁷

This level also examines some of the issues related to deliberation in Europe, including bureaucratization, intermediate positions, communication and information channels, hierarchy. Understanding these issues and their impact on deliberation can help policymakers and democratic institutions create more effective processes for citizen participation and decision-making. Therefore, the meso-dimension of deliberation provides a deeper understanding of the specific institutional forms of deliberation and their impact on the production of research in this matter in Europe. Innovative citizen participation, public institutions, private organizations and new democratic institutions play a key role in promoting and improving the media and the political monitoring process.

From a meso-level comparative perspective, the development of primary academic institutions for media and communication research varies significantly among countries. For instance, Austria’s University of Vienna houses the largest and oldest Department of Communication, while its counterparts at the University of Salzburg and the University of Klagenfurt have shorter histories. Institutionalization and accreditation of journalism and communication programs have been crucial for countries like Romania and the Czech Republic, while NGOs, independent researchers, and foreign research centers have significantly contributed to the field in Bulgaria. The establishment of university departments, research centers and academic journals has fostered media and communication research development in countries such as Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Italy, each offering varying numbers of programs and academic journals dedicated to the field.

The analysis also highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective media research governance, particularly in Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe. These countries often prioritize monitoring and analyzing media development, with contributions from various actors in media professions, political and economic sectors and civil society. Institutional forces at the meso-level shape media research and governance through the involvement of public bodies, independent authorities, market research institutions and academic institutions. National research governance differs across countries, with Estonia and Latvia primarily driven by EU grant funding, and international and European comparative research projects and networks, such as COST, influencing research agendas. The availability of funding sources affects institutions like universities and research organizations at the meso-level. Countries such as Estonia and Latvia face inconsistent funding approaches, while the Czech Republic, Greece and Hungary experience unfavorable funding situations that put media research at risk. In contrast, Italy’s government plays a more significant role in funding media research through the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR).

In the legal domain, research and monitoring capabilities vary across countries, with Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden having significant data and analyses on media laws and freedom of expression. In contrast, countries like the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Estonia face gaps in research and data collection. In terms of media accountability, Austria, Estonia and Germany have well-established monitoring practices, while the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia face challenges in this area.

Countries with shorter EU membership, overlapping with the third cluster, display varying monitoring capacities and data quality concerning media sector digitalization processes, working conditions for journalists and journalistic education and training. Some of these countries,

²⁷ See: ZELIZER, B., BOCZKOWSKI, P., ANDERSON, C. W.: *The Journalism Manifesto*. Cambridge: Polity, 2022.

such as Hungary and Poland, face challenges with data reliability due to politicization. Estonia stands out with its regular state monitoring system for journalist education and training but faces limitations in terms of irregularity and discontinuity.

Non-profit actors generally provide the most accessible data, while the availability of commercial data is more restricted. The data collected by academic institutions is often available in public libraries or behind paywalls. In some countries, data accessibility is relatively high (e.g., Romania, Germany, Sweden), while in others it is limited (e.g., Italy, Croatia).

In media users' competencies across these fourteen European countries, the absence of universally accepted MIL definitions and inconsistent data lead to fragmented policy development. Opportunities arise from EU interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digitization and the emergence of social media, which have raised awareness and mobilized various stakeholders.

4.3 Systemic Context – MACRO

In the macro dimension, the *Deliberative Democracy Monitoring Index* is used to measure the level of deliberation in a democracy. This index considers several factors, such as the deliberation of political elites, the role of the media in promoting public deliberation and public policy decisions. The indicators used in the index include the common good, the level of participation in society, the breadth of consultation, the need for reasoned justification and respect for arguments to the contrary. These indicators are used to measure the level of deliberation of citizens and, in addition, the point at which the research and monitoring of the media of a country or group of countries is located. The deliberative principle of European democracy states that the common good must motivate political decisions and that respectful dialogue and informed and competent participants are necessary for the functioning of democracy. Persuasion is also a key component of the deliberative process, and its study, as arguments and counterarguments are weighed to arrive at a collective decision. The *Deliberative Democracy Monitoring Index* provides a useful tool for measuring the level of deliberation in European democracy and underlines the importance of citizen participation, media participation and respectful dialogue in decision-making: “As an extension of participatory democracy, this is an opportune time for Member States [EU] to promote and adopt good and effective practices of citizen participation and where it is decided to use deliberative democracy techniques”²⁸.

The OMM, through the configuration of contextual reality as a tree inside a forest, establishes the roots as the structuring systems and the basis of a country or region. The systems level comprises the political-executive, legislative and judicial systems; the economic system – market structure, economic policy, etc.; the education system – academia, professionalization, training, etc.; cultural/historical/social systems – social organizations, cultural institutions, laws of historical memory, etc.; media system; and technology – development, access, legislation, infrastructure, etc.

Political and economic factors undeniably play a significant role in shaping media and its study; however, it is essential to also consider other variables associated with a country or community's cultural environment. This is because cultural distinctions can account for variations in professional perspectives.²⁹ Additionally, ideological forces encompass ideas and meanings that serve the interests and power dynamics of society. Within social systems like communication³⁰ and education/research, media exist within institutional relationships, and the nature of these

²⁸ *Report on Deliberative Democracy*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publishing, 2023, p. 27. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/report-on-deliberative-democracy-eng/1680aaf76f>>.

²⁹ HANUSCH, F.: Cultural Forces in Journalism: The Impact of Cultural Values on Māori Journalists' Professional Views. In *Journalism Studies*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 191-206.

³⁰ See: LUHMANN, N.: *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt : Suhrkamp, 1984.

relationships influences the form that professionalism takes.³¹ Technological advancements in journalism and society at large are becoming increasingly important for the media industry and journalism as both a practice and a profession.³² The emergence of business clusters, convergence initiatives and new digital communication technologies have enabled a worldwide network of communication and research exchanges. The education system is an integral component of the process of researching, publishing and monitoring the media and journalism. The educational training of professionals and researchers will determine their practices, which is something that is directly related to legislation and changes in the (de)regulation of media systems.

From a macro-level comparative perspective, the role of various actors in media and communication research differs across countries, as exemplified by Estonia and Bulgaria. In Estonia, academic groups from the University of Tartu and Tallinn University conduct primary data collection on research organizations, with around 30 individuals involved in journalism and media research. In Bulgaria, foreign and domestic research centers, associations, institutes and NGOs undertake research, with independent researchers significantly contributing to recent years. Factors such as policies, funding and political ideologies have greatly impacted media and communication research in countries like Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Romania experienced disruptions in journalism studies during its communist era, while Bulgaria's research relied on NGOs due to declining enrollment in journalism and communication programs. The 1990s witnessed the establishment of media and communication departments in universities across Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Political and regulatory influences at the macro level have also affected media and communication research development. Hungary has seen increased government control over academia since 2012, with most universities now overseen by party-affiliated foundations. Italy established regulatory monitoring institutes like AGCOM³³ in 1994, while Greece institutionalized media and communication studies in the 1990s, and Italy's history in the field extends back to the 1960s. Sweden possesses comprehensive research data on media development from various sources, while Germany's central organization, DGPK³⁴, connects researchers in media and communication studies and offers numerous monitoring initiatives. Austria's communication and media research is organized under the *Austrian Society of Communication*, which represents both academia and media practice.

Macro-level systems and structures, including national research governance, politicization of research and involvement of international organizations like *Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders* differ among countries. Funding, particularly from the EU and pan-European or international comparative research projects and networks (e.g., COST), significantly influences research agendas. The media research landscape across Italy and Central, Southern, and Eastern European countries comprises a diverse mix of actors, institutions and systems. Governance, research agendas and the level of politicization of research vary substantially among countries such as Croatia, Greece, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Estonia and Latvia. Macro-level dependence on national and EU funding sources differs considerably between countries, with some systems supporting or hindering media research and monitoring. Southern, Central and Eastern European (SCEE) countries often lack systematic, nationally focused longitudinal studies, but researchers can access longitudinal data by participating in European or international comparative projects that collect data periodically.

The focus of media research in a macro-level in both legal and self-regulatory areas typically revolve around long-standing concerns, such as balancing freedom of expression with privacy and data protection rights, and media ownership transparency. Emerging issues like whistleblower protection and disinformation are not consistently addressed across countries.

³¹ See: REESE, S.: Journalism Research and the Hierarchy of Influence Model: A Global Perspective. In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 29-42.

³² See: LEWIS, S. C.: Journalism in an Era of Big Data. In *Digital Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 321-330.

³³ Author's note: Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni.

³⁴ Author's note: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft.

International comparative research projects have contributed to the development of media accountability in countries like Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia and Poland.

Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Croatia face challenges concerning continuity and diversity in data sources, reliance on private market research companies for media data collection and issues with media ownership transparency. Generally, these countries lack public data on production conditions, and there is an urgent need for further knowledge development in this area. In countries without academic or publicly funded longitudinal studies, commercial research offers a snapshot of media usage changes from an industry perspective. However, this data is often not publicly available, limiting its value for policy planning and in-depth analysis. Countries with longer traditions of academic audience research are better prepared for diachronic analysis of media usage patterns. Yet, some countries still lack adequate research for longitudinal analysis (e.g., Italy, Croatia, Greece), and small academic communities or limited resources for research can result in fragmented or insufficient media usage monitoring (e.g., Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia).

The meta-analysis reveals a varied Media and Information Literacy (MIL) landscape, marked by differences in definitions, policies, educational integration and research capabilities. Despite this diversity, we can group countries into three clusters based on the embeddedness of MIL and media-related competencies in social contexts, educational systems and social and political contexts. Central and Eastern European countries are particularly influenced by external contexts, such as their relationships with the Russian Federation, which shape the development and monitoring of media-related competencies. Opportunities arise from the emphasis on fact-checking and recognizing propaganda tools as crucial competencies for individual safety and national security, forming the foundation for necessary actions.

4.4 Trans-Systemic Setting – SUPRA

The trans-systemic, or supra, level transcends national boundaries, encapsulating systems and structures that operate on a European and global scale. In this forest, I delve deeper into the components of the trans-systemic level for a better understanding of *MEDIADELCOM* results. The political dynamics on a global scale have the potential to influence the media and communicative landscape significantly. With the advent of globalization, political decisions taken in one country can reverberate in other parts of the world, affecting global media narratives. This is particularly true in the context of international relations and geopolitical struggles, where the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy discourse. The global economy and its various facets such as trade, markets, fiscal systems and interconnected financial systems shape global journalism, communicative and media structures. As European organizations often rely on international markets for their revenue streams, changes in the global economic landscape can drastically influence media operations, including content production, distribution and consumption.

International educational policies and academic exchanges play a significant role in shaping the future of global communication and media studies and research. Collaborative educational initiatives across borders facilitate (or not) knowledge and wisdom exchange and help standardize research methodologies and practices. Additionally, these collaborations contribute to a shared understanding of media systems and journalistic norms, promoting a more globally conscious media landscape.

Cultural and social trends, values and phenomena that permeate social systems worldwide influence European systems. Media often mirrors societal values and concerns; as such, global cultural shifts can lead to changes in media content and representation. Similarly, global social movements and historical events can also profoundly impact the media landscape, leading to transformative changes in media practices and structures. This underscores the significance of

the longitudinal/diachronic examination provided by *MEDIADELCOM*. Also, as belief systems transcend boundaries, they can shape European systems. Media often act as a conduit for ideological dissemination, and with the rise of global media platforms, ideologies can spread rapidly across European nations. This dynamic interaction between transnational ideologies and media systems influences the narratives and discourses propagated by global media, encouraging the phenomenon of “Europeanisation”, especially among countries with shorter EU membership.

The war in Ukraine has been visualized in Europe, as it has not happened for a long time, the global security dynamics, alliances and conflicts, that have notable implications for European systems. Media plays a critical role in reporting and analyzing international security issues, and it’s influenced by global security policies and dynamics. Similarly, global religious dynamics can shape the media landscape, particularly in terms of representation and discourse around religious issues and the migratory phenomenon.

Transnational platforms and international media policies significantly influence global media systems. These platforms and policies often dictate the flow of information on a global scale, shaping narratives and discourses in the process. Additionally, they play a crucial role in media convergence, fostering collaboration among media organizations across nations. In this regard, the proliferation of technology, led by transnational companies, has significantly impacted European media systems. From altering journalistic practices to changing consumption habits, technology has reshaped the global media landscape. Furthermore, legislation and policies around technology at an international level can influence media practices and structures. As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, its impact on global media systems will continue to grow.

The trans-systemic, or supra, level involves a complex interplay of various global systems and structures inside of UE. These components, in conjunction with one another, shape the European media landscape, influencing everything from content production and distribution to consumption and interpretation. Understanding this dynamic interaction is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of deliberative communication and its level of investigation, surveillance and monitoring.

The influence of these global factors is evident in the differences in the roles of various actors in deliberative communication research across European countries. The media research landscape across EU comprises a diverse mix of global actors, institutions and systems. The governance, research agendas and the level of politicization of research vary substantially among countries. Furthermore, supra level dependence on international and EU funding sources differs considerably between countries, with some systems supporting or hindering media research and monitoring.

The trans-systemic, or supra, level of citizen deliberation within Europe embodies a complex and multi-faceted landscape of institutions, actors, policies and processes. This level integrates the micro-, meso-, and macro- perspectives, producing a comprehensive panorama of the deliberation space within the continent. Trans-systemic examination illuminates the multifarious interactions, dependencies, and influences within and across different strata, elucidating the interconnected dynamics of media, communication, and deliberation in EU.

From a trans-systemic standpoint, deliberation quality, as affected by various agents and structures, reflects a diverse and nuanced picture. As I have shown in previous sections, at the micro-level, citizen knowledge and trust, along with media-induced conditions, determine the efficacy of spontaneous deliberation instances. These individual and small-scale deliberative engagements contribute to the overall deliberative health in the broader national and regional contexts, underpinning the meso- and macro-level dynamics. At the meso-level, research institutions, academic departments, NGOs and a host of other actors play substantial roles in shaping the research governance, thereby influencing the deliberation quality. This influence extends from setting research agendas to funding distribution, and from handling information

overload to addressing imbalances in research. The meso-level perspective also highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective governance, with institutional forces shaping research direction and execution. And, at the macro-level, the deliberative landscape is heavily influenced by a variety of factors including policies, funding, political ideologies and historical contexts. Institutional forces, research governance and the involvement of international organizations shape the overarching structure and approach to media and communication research across different countries. Media research also encompasses a gamut of issues from freedom of expression and privacy rights to media ownership transparency and whistleblower protection.

The trans-systemic perspective illuminates the dynamic interplay of legal and self-regulatory mechanisms, policy interventions, educational initiatives and funding provisions in shaping media and communication research. It highlights the differential access to funding, varied research capacity and diverse institutionalization of research in the studied countries, indicating the presence of systemic asymmetries that warrant attention.

Trans-systemically, the European deliberative landscape presents a plethora of opportunities. The European Union's interest and legislation, complex international contexts, digital transformation and social media emergence have all contributed to greater awareness and mobilization of various stakeholders. Central and Eastern European countries' focus on media-related competencies for individual safety and national security offers a new paradigm for enhancing deliberation quality. However, challenges persist. Inconsistencies in Media and Information Literacy (MIL) definitions and data fragment policy development, with the lack of systematic, nationally focused longitudinal studies limit deeper understanding of media usage patterns. Furthermore, certain countries, especially the younger democracies in the EU, grapple with issues related to data quality, monitoring capacities and politicization.

Consequently, the trans-systemic perspective underscores the need for more integrated and coordinated efforts across all levels – from individual citizens to nation-states and supranational bodies like the EU – to enhance the quality and impact of deliberative communication in Europe. It calls for fostering a culture of deliberation that is informed, inclusive and reflective of diverse voices, and that respects the principles of freedom of expression, privacy and transparency. To realize this, there is a need for improved data collection and monitoring, robust media and communication research, inclusive policymaking, effective legal and self-regulatory mechanisms and continued education and awareness initiatives.

5 Conclusion

The *MEDIADELCOM* project conducts a comparative meta-analysis of deliberative communication across fourteen EU countries, mainly the ones with recent EU membership. In this endeavor, contextual analysis plays a crucial role in assessing media monitoring capabilities from a comparative standpoint. Consequently, the multilevel model of contextual analysis emerges as one of the most fitting approaches for systematizing environmental influences across local, regional, national and international levels. Understanding the extent of contextual influences on professionals' final decisions in relation to other structural levels is vital. The Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2) serves as a suitable method for organizing empirical and theoretical data across various geographical areas on a diachronic and comparative basis. This model represents a fresh direction in the cultural, contextual and ethnographic examination of deliberative communication in Europe from a comparative angle, even more in the “semi-peripheral” countries.

Each nation's scientific output features unique flows, products and practices. As such, the study focuses on micro, meso, macro and supra factors and the interplay between them. The importance of employing the OMM2 as a contextual meta-analysis method at a comparative level

stem from the intricacy of media monitoring analysis and deliberative communication in emerging democracies of EU. This complexity arises from a paradox: The history of a simultaneous vortex of external events and the complete lack of change of any kind. Everything seems different, and yet, everything remains the same.³⁵

Based on the micro-level analysis, the sociodemographic factor directly affects the profile of the agents involved in media and communication research, which varies across countries. Various actors, including individual professionals, NGOs, journalists' unions, professional associations and diverse stakeholders, play a role in shaping research governance. Challenges in accessing funding for media and communication research projects vary at the micro level, depending on individual actors, such as researchers and scholars (e.g., Romania). In some countries, funding sources are more diverse, with support from national and EU institutions, foundations and universities, while in others, EU funding plays a crucial role in enabling access to European researchers and promoting comparative research.

At the meso-level, the growth and development of premier educational/research establishments for media and communication studies differ across nations. Institutionalization, organization, structure, routines and professional standards and the accreditation of journalism and communication programs are crucial in some countries, while NGOs, independent researchers and foreign research centers contribute significantly to the field in others. The meso-level analysis highlights the importance of dialogue between policymakers and researchers for effective media research governance, particularly in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. National research governance and availability of funding sources affect institutions like universities and research organizations. For example, countries such as Estonia and Latvia face inconsistent funding approaches, while others experience unfavorable funding situations that put media research at risk.

The findings highlight the intrinsic importance of institutions and organizations, where their type/model, ownership, scope and professional makeup enable scientific and research-related advancements, acting as catalysts for change or maintaining the status quo based on internal dynamics. The significance of "middle-ground roles" is particularly pronounced in countries with lower levels of institutionalization or those undergoing enhancement, such as in the contexts of countries with recent EU membership.

From a macro-level comparative perspective, the deliberative democracy index measures the level of deliberation in democracies, and the role of the macro-systems in media and communication research differs across European countries. For example, Estonia's research is primarily conducted by academic groups, while Bulgaria relies on research centers, associations, institutes and NGOs. Macro-level factors, such as policies, funding and political ideologies have significantly impacted media and communication research in countries like Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Systems and structures, including national research governance, politicization of research, and involvement of international organizations, differ among countries. Funding from the EU and other international comparative research projects and networks significantly influences research agendas. These findings reveal a novel cross-border landscape (supra-level) that dictates the extent of research and surveillance in the examined nations. This is due to the existence of an overarching, transnational layer that impacts uniformly, depending on each country's research level. Additionally, this layer interacts with various supranational entities, including national-level satellites such as non-governmental organizations.

The trans-systemic level (SUPRA) within an international comparative context encapsulates the complex interrelationships and dependencies among the analyzed European countries and their communicative and journalism systems. Surpassing national and even continental confines, this level zeroes in on the interactions and interfaces of systems on a worldwide stage. Through

³⁵ See: ANDERSON, C. W.: *Reconstructing the News: Metropolitan Journalism in The Digital Age*. Philadelphia, PA : Temple University Press, 2013.

an international comparative lens, the trans-systemic level interrogates patterns, trends and phenomena that transpire across diverse systems or nations, encapsulating political, economic, cultural and educational/research systems, among others. This level of analysis empowers understanding of the ripple effects that certain factors or policies in one system can trigger across deliberative systems, as well as how disparate countries respond to analogous global challenges. The trans-systemic level offers the opportunity to juxtapose practices, policies and results among the EU countries, delivering a more comprehensive perspective that unveils hidden patterns and links not discernible when scrutinizing deliberative communication and its level of monitoring and research.

Monitoring capacities in legal and ethical media regulation exhibit varying levels of institutionalization and engagement from different actors and structures. Legal regulation often benefits from the input of legal scholars and lawyers, while media accountability primarily relies on communication or media scholars and practitioners. The diverse research, monitoring and institutional support across countries underscore the significance of transnational research and monitoring efforts for understanding and addressing media regulation and accountability challenges. Certain financial assistance is crucial for some researchers, as it enables them to access specific information sources, publications and professional mobility opportunities that would otherwise be unattainable.

Although research on the journalism domain is well-established in EU countries, improved coordination and integration with the non-academic sphere are needed. This could involve fostering closer collaboration with policymakers and media practitioners to better understand the challenges in developing monitoring capabilities across various contexts. This contextual meta-analysis emphasizes the importance of further research and enhancing monitoring capacities in the analyzed European countries, offering valuable insights into risks and opportunities in journalism that can inform policies and actions aimed at reinforcing journalism's role in delivering impartial and accurate information in the public interest.

Recommendations for further development and research in media users' competencies include harmonizing visions and coordinating actions among various agents, conducting more research on the normative framework and institutional contexts of media-related competencies, and transitioning from a defensive philosophy in MIL teaching programs to a greater focus on creativity and citizen participation.

Despite differences in data collection scope, data collection quality in media usage patterns remains relatively consistent across countries. Comprehensive studies in countries with sufficient academic and public resources cover all relevant variables for the *MEDIADELCOM* project, providing information about media access, trust and relevance on a longitudinal basis. These studies employ academically verified methodologies, enabling policy planning and societal self-reflection. Countries with extended EU membership generally have higher data saturation and continuity.

In sum, by adopting the Organic Multilevel Model 2.0, researchers gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their monitoring capabilities of deliberative communication in EU, allowing them to identify the factors that promote or hinder deliberation and research governance across diverse settings. This framework guides the creation of policies, interventions and practices that promote more inclusive, efficient and democratic deliberative processes, contributing to the progress and growth of emerging democracies in the European Union.

Acknowledgement: This article represents an amalgamation of my prior work and the outcomes derived from the MEDIADELCOM project. The MEDIADELCOM project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, under grant agreement No 101004811. I wish to express my appreciation to this project and to all the researchers involved, whose contributions have been instrumental in the realization of this article.

Literature and Sources:

- ANDERSON, C. W.: *Reconstructing the News: Metropolitan Journalism in The Digital Age*. Philadelphia, PA : Temple University Press, 2013.
- CASTELLS, M.: *The Emergence of the Network Society*. Oxford : Polity Press, 1997.
- CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R.: Analysis Levels: An Introduction. In CHAFFEE, S. H., BERGER, C. R. (eds.): *Handbook of Communication Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1987, p. 143-145.
- ESSER, F.: *The Forces Behind the Headlines. English and German Journalism in Comparison*. Freiburg, München : Verlag Karl Alber, 1998.
- Finding Risks and Opportunities for European Media Landscapes*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.mediadelcom.eu/>>.
- Flash Eurobarometer: News & Media Survey 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>>.
- GROSSBERG, L., WARTELLA, E., WHITNEY, D. C., WISE, J. M.: *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2006.
- HALLIN, D. C., MANCINI, P.: *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- HANITZSCH, T.: Zur Wahrnehmung von Einflüssen im Journalismus. Komparative Befunde aus 17 Ländern. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2009, Vol. 57, No. 2, p. 153-173. ISSN 1615-634X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5771/1615-634x-2009-2-153>>.
- HANUSCH, F.: Cultural Forces in Journalism: The Impact of Cultural Values on Māori Journalists' Professional Views. In *Journalism Studies*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 191-206. ISSN 1461-670X. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.859864>>.
- Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions. Catching the deliberative wave*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>>.
- JOHNSTONE, J. W. C., SLAWSKI, E. J., BOWMAN, W. W.: *The Newspeople. A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Champaign : University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- LEWIS, S. C.: Journalism in an Era of Big Data. In *Digital Journalism*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 321-330. ISSN 2167-0811. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.976399>>.
- LUHMANN, N.: *Soziale Systeme. Grundriss einer allgemeinen Theorie*. Frankfurt : Suhrkamp, 1984.
- MCQUAIL, D., WINDAHL, S.: *Communication Models. For the Study of Mass Communications*. 2nd edition. London : Pearson Education, 1993.
- MCQUAIL, D.: *Introduction to the Theory of Mass Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 1983.
- OLLER, M., BARREDO, D.: Intermediate Journalistic Cultures. International Comparative Studies in Journalism. In *Journal Medijska istraživanja/Media Research*, 2013, Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 39-60. ISSN 1330-6928.
- OLLER, M., MEIER, K.: *La cultura periodística de España y Suiza*. Madrid : Fragua, 2012.
- OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de ecuador. Perfil, situación y percepción profesional de los periodistas (Vol. I)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2017.
- OLLER, M.: *Análisis orgánico multinivel de la cultura periodística de ecuador (Vol. II)*. Saarbrücken : Editorial Académica Española (EAE), 2019.
- OLLER, M.: Contextual Analysis in Comparative Studies of Intermediate Journalistic Cultures around the World. The Organic Multilevel Model (OMM). In *Alcance*, 2016, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 121-163. ISSN 2411-9970.

- PRESTON, P., METYKOVA, M.: From News Networks to House Rules: Organizational Contexts. In PRESTON, P. (ed.): *Making the News. Journalism and News Cultures in Europe*. New York, NY : Routledge, 2009, p. 72-91.
- REESE, S., SHOEMAKER, P.: A Sociology of Media for the Networked Public Sphere: The Model of Hierarchy of Influences. In *Mass Communication and Society*, 2016, Vol. 19, p. 389-410. ISSN 1520-5436. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1174268>>.
- REESE, S.: Journalism Research and the Hierarchy of Influence Model: A Global Perspective. In *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 2007, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 29-42. ISSN 1981-9854. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.25200/BJR.v3n2.2007.116>>.
- Report on Deliberative Democracy*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publishing, 2023, p. 27. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/report-on-deliberative-democracy-eng/1680aaf76f>>.
- SHOEMAKER, P. J., REESE, S.: *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Media Content*. New York, NY : Longman, 1991.
- Standard Eurobarometer 94 – Winter 2020-2021: Media Use in the European Union*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/726029>>.
- VOAKES, P. S.: Social Influences on the Decision-Making of Journalists in Ethical Situations. In *Journal of Media Ethics*, 1997, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 18-35. ISSN 0890-0523. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327728jmme1201_2>.
- WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 1: Media Systems, Media Ethics, Media Institutions*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992.
- WEISCHENBERG, S.: *Journalism. Theory and Practice of Current Media Communication. Volume 2: Media Technology, Media Functions, Media Actors*. Opladen : Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.
- WHITNEY, D. C., ETTEMA, J. S.: Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions. In VALDIVIA, A. N. (ed.): *A Companion to Media Studies*. Hoboken, NJ : Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p. 157-187. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470999066.ch9>>.
- WHITNEY, D. C., SUMPTER, R. S., MCQUAIL, D.: Media Production: Individuals, Organizations, and Institutions. In DOWNING, J. D. H., MCQUAIL, D., SCHLESINGER, P., WARTELLA, E. (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications, 2004, p. 393-410.
- World Press Freedom Index 2022*. [online]. [2023-11-13]. Available at: <<https://rsf.org/en/index>>.
- ZELIZER, B., BOCZKOWSKI, P., ANDERSON, C. W.: *The Journalism Manifesto*. Cambridge : Polity, 2022.

Annexes

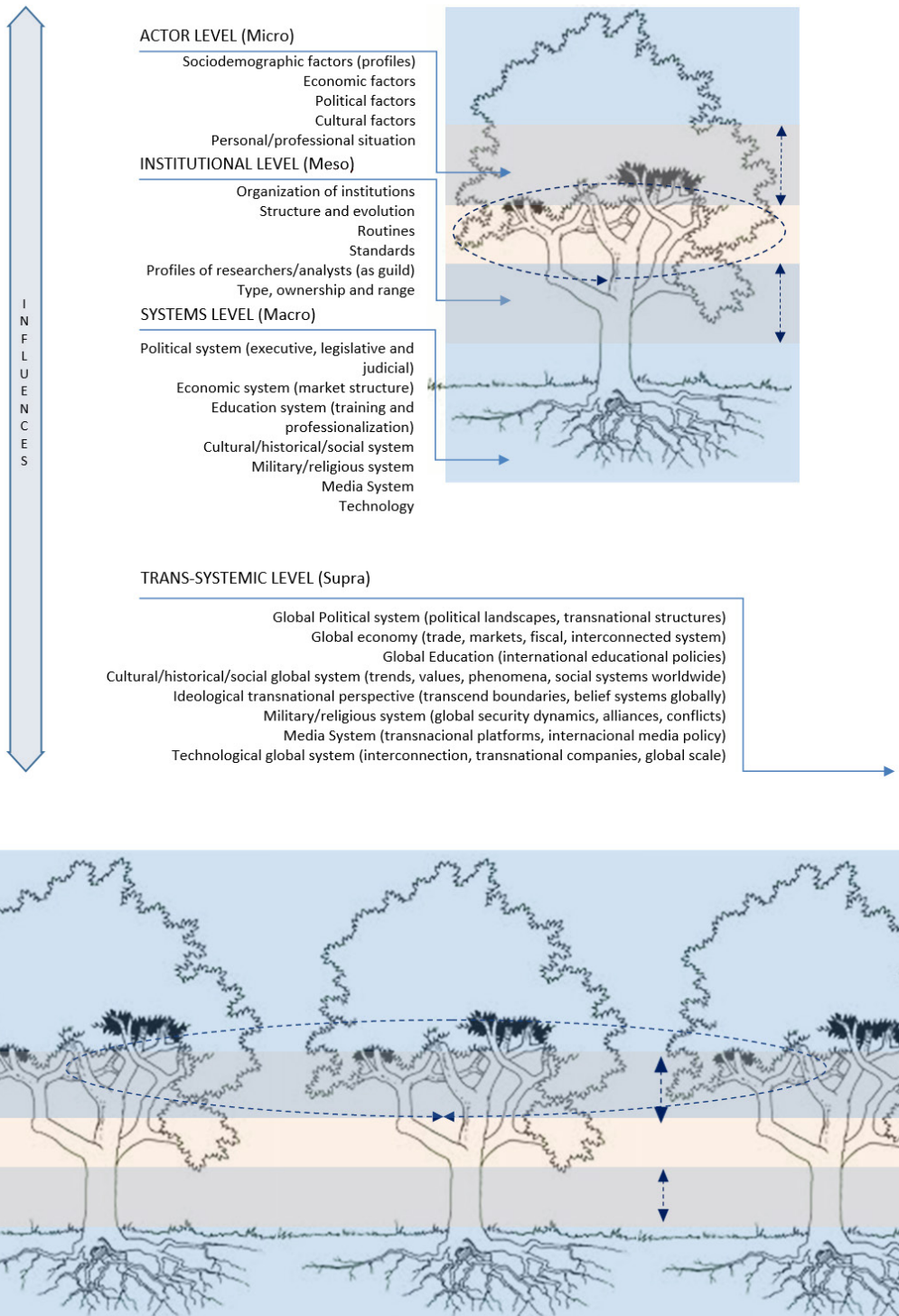


FIGURE 1: Organic Multilevel Model 2.0 (OMM2)

Source: own processing, 2023

Author



Martín Oller Alonso, PhD.

University of Salamanca
Department of Sociology and Communication.
Avenue Francisco Tomás y Valiente s/n
37071 - Salamanca
SPAIN
martin.olleralonso@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2256-5681>

Martín Oller Alonso holds a PhD. degree in Journalism (Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid, 2012); a master's degree in advanced studies in Communication (2009),; a degree in Advertising and Public Relations (2011),; Journalism (2008); Magisterium (University of Murcia); and Sciences of Physical Activity and Sport (Catholic University of Murcia, UCAM, 2002). He is involved in several international research projects, such as PHARM, World of Journalism Study (WJS), Journalistic Cultures and Pre-professional Journalistic Culture, based on the comparative analysis of communication, journalism, journalists, and journalism degree students in more than a hundred countries around the world. He has published more than 20 scientific books, collaborated on almost fifty books as a co-author, produced more than sixty scientific articles, and participated as a speaker in nearly 90 conferences in various countries around the world. Likewise, he has resided in Switzerland, England, France, Spain and Ecuador; conducting research stays in Italy, Cuba and the United States. Currently, although Oller Alonso continues his scientific activity in Latin America - mostly Ecuador and Cuba, he is carrying out a postgraduate stay at the University of Milano as part of the research group of the MEDIADELCOM (2022-2024).