

**TO THE ISSUE  
OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
OF MEDIA RESEARCH**

**К ВОПРОСУ О ПОНЯТИЙНОМ АППАРАТЕ  
МЕДИАИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ**

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*This paper deals with the substantiation of prospects of using the communication institutions' approach to analyze the present-day situation and processes in the media sphere. Under that approach, a primary, fundamental category is the information*

*and communication universum consisting of the two closely related complexes: human knowledge and professional matrices of interaction of subjects producing or sharing such knowledge. Furthermore, the information and communication universum can be divided into arbitrary segments (information and communication spaces): social (mass), public (specialized), and private (interpersonal) communications.*

*The authors lay out their vision of the category “media space”: this term is meant to be used to define the information and communication universum segment where high-end technologies are used for knowledge sharing. The basis of the media space is formed by the means of production and dissemination of socially significant information and information proper. Information producers and consumers regulating the processes in the media space interact with the media space but cannot be considered its elements.*

*Interpersonal relations arising from the process of production, sharing, and consumption of various information products are regulated by sets of principles, standards and rules, which can be called communication institutions. These include media, advertising, PR, literature, art, and others.*

**Key words:** *communication institutions approach; information and communication universum; communication institutions; media space; social (mass) communications; public (specialized) communications; private (interpersonal) communications.*

*Статья посвящена обоснованию перспективности использования институционально-коммуникационного подхода для анализа современной ситуации и процессов, происходящих в сфере медиа. С точки зрения этого подхода, фундаментальной категорией является понятие «информационно-*

*коммуникационный универсум», состоящий из знаний, выработанных человечеством, и профессиональных матриц взаимодействия субъектов, производящих эти знания или обменивающихся ими. Информационно-коммуникационный универсум может быть разделен на условные сегменты: общественные (массовые), публичные (специализированные) и частные (межличностные) коммуникации. Отношения между людьми, возникающие в процессе производства, обмена и потребления различных информационных продуктов, регулируются наборами принципов, норм и правил, которые можно назвать коммуникационными институтами. К ним относятся медиа, реклама, PR, литература, искусство и др.*

**Ключевые слова:** *институционально-коммуникационный подход; информационно-коммуникационный универсум; коммуникационные институты; медиaprостранство; общественные (массовые) коммуникации; публичные (специализированные) коммуникации; частные (межличностные) коммуникации.*

The conceptual framework used to describe and analyze the processes in the sphere called “journalism” was shaped in a particular era of development, and to a greater or lesser extent corresponded to it. The modern era represents a new information civilization with the following characteristics: information environment; information activity types; new products and services; new values and judgments of quality of life; new perceptions of space and time, etc.

Many researchers believe that mediatization of political, economic, social, and other processes should be regarded as one of the most important features of the modern age. Moreover, according to S. Žižek, a person captured by and absorbed in media culture

becomes a product of new media. Mediatization is the process of a real-world object turning into an artificial one: “a body which is almost totally ‘mediatized’, supported by prostheses, speaking with an artificial, computer-generated voice” (Žižek, 1998).

An analysis of works by modern investigators of mass communications, K. Brants and Ph. van Praag, H. Wijfjes, S. Cottle, S. Livingstone, D. McQuail, G. Mazzoleni and W. Schulz, J. Strömbäck and S. Hjarvard, and others, provides sufficient evidence to conclude that building on the traditional understanding of the word “mediation,” – as intermediation in disputes or conflicts, where a third party sorts things out and reconciles the disputants – scholars began to interpret the concept of mediation as a manifestation of the transformational function of mass media. In the process of collection, processing (“filtration”) and communication of data on real facts this function can alter (or distort) them, giving them their mediated meanings, which emerge in the course of the fabrication of illusory images (events) of reality (Brants, Praag, 2006; Cottle, 2006; Hjarvard, 2008; Livingstone; Mazzoleni, Schulz, 1999; McQuail, 2006; Wijfjes, 2009).

To indicate the processes of media that influence the public consciousness, social being, and modern culture, a well-known researcher, J. Thompson, introduced the term “mediatization”. According to Thompson, the term more clearly highlights the increasing power of the media over all aspects of modern life. When an event is designated as a media fact, it cardinally changes the nature of the event (Thompson, 1990).

We can add that similar terminological correlations can also be found in the field of English-language sociology of communications. The well-known theory of structuration proposed by Anthony Giddens contains the concept of “mediated experience”. In the modern era, the expansion of electronic media vehemently “carrying”

the results of social interaction through space-time intervals could not but result in the loss of sincerity of mass perception within social systems. Giddens believes that the intrusion of information about distant events into everyday life has “disrupted the traditional link between the “social situation” and its “physical basis””: mediated social situations give rise to hitherto unknown types of similarities and differences within the framework of the conventional forms of collective experience” (Giddens, 1991: 84). In other words, globalization makes society more complex, less predictable, and stochastic, simultaneously increasing the autonomy of system references. From now on, the mode of self-reproduction of social practices will become increasingly dependent on the rules of media functioning and information resources circulating therein.

In his remarkable book “On Television and Journalism” (Bourdieu, 2002), P. Bourdieu brilliantly shows how television endangers different cultural production spheres (art, literature, science, philosophy, law), as well as political life and democracy. According to him, **we are currently witnessing the actual monopolization** of journalists for means of production and wide dissemination of information, and access to “public space” for members of the ordinary public and scientists, actors, and authors. Journalists possess power over the means of public self-expression and public recognition technologies. There exists, to a large extent, unconscious censorship in the field, where a journalist “allows” only what correspond to his or her “system”, “field” categories of thinking (it is not a case of “personal” categories). On the other hand, today TV is a dominant model for the entire journalistic field, which is generally much more dependent on external forces than other fields of cultural production or the political field. And it is this field with the strong external dependence that exerts structural pressure on all other fields.

In our opinion, it makes sense to use the concept of “mediatization” to describe the social communication process with the following distinguishing features:

- Incorporation of patterns and rules typical for mass communication media into the system of rules regulating actions and relationships of people within a particular social institution, that is, the transformation of social institutions into active media space subjects;
- Dynamic interaction of authorities, business, non-commercial sector, and other social institutions with mass media in order to create, with their assistance, a favorable setting for their activities;
- Gradual transition from cooperation with the media to their management by winning over media workers and creating their own media resources.

It should be noted that there is sufficient evidence of the dependence of social institutions on media. (Dzialoshinskiy, 2013)

The activity called “journalism” has changed to such an extent that all former concepts, such as “function”, “subject”, “method”, “content”, “form”, “genre”, etc., are no longer relevant and comprehensive when they are used to reflect the situation in the digital media environment and in professional activity, which are rapidly converging. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a revision of the conceptual framework of media research at the macro and micro levels.

## **Basic approaches**

Presently, media research practices are based on several stable methodological paradigms. The basic ones include:

**Politico-ideological (resource) approach.** Advocates of this approach regard media as a specific resource, the ownership of which makes it possible to achieve various political and ideological goals. Correspondingly, media processes should be described as the processes of receiving, distributing, redistributing and consuming specific resources in the human relations space. In this context, accessibility of information is the most interesting issue. Obviously, the amount and quality of received information, i.e., access to information resources, is the most precise criterion for the differentiation of the subjects of information relations. Access to information is recognized as a clear indicator of information status and always means a certain advantage over somebody; possession of information, and even the simple possibility of receiving information, suggests that there are subjects denied such a possibility. In this case, stratification of information (hierarchized information inequality) appears to be a peak reached by few. Such logic of analysis naturally leads to the shaping of information strata (layers) determined by quantitative comparisons – upper, middle and lower.

**Media-linguistic approach.** Under this approach, media are regarded as a totality of media texts and discourse. Supporters of the media-linguistic approach are interested in the methods of analysis of mass information texts, specific features of media language, and investigating potentialities affecting individual and mass consciousness.

**System and structural approach.** From the standpoint of proponents of this approach, media is understood as an institutional sphere, a social field, and a system of mass-communication tools. Thus, media may be structured in different ways. For instance, if the owner is taken as a criterion, then state-run media, commercial media, and nonprofit sector media (civilian media) can be clearly identified. Based on the technological criterion currently employed,

traditional media, new media and integrated media can be singled out. Using a covered area criterion, we can differentiate between federal, regional, and local media.

**Territorial approach.** Supporters of this approach identify media with the media market or information space of a region (city, country, etc.).

**Technological approach.** A very popular standpoint under which media are described as a totality of databases and databanks, technologies of their maintenance and use, information and telecommunication systems and networks operating on the basis of common principles, and rules and ensuring information interaction of organizations and individuals, as well as satisfaction of their informational needs.

**Media-education approach.** Under this approach, media are seen as an instrument for shaping the social experience of pupils and students, who gain such experience in the process of studying the history, structure, and theory of mass media, by learning how to independently select and critically analyze the information provided through various channels, and independently generate messages using different semiotic systems and information technologies.

This paper presents another possible approach to the interpretation of the conceptual framework of the media sphere – **the communication institutions approach.**

Under this approach, a primary, fundamental category, based on which it is reasonable to restructure the conceptualization of modern media and media processes, is the concept of the “*information and communication universum*”. The concept has not become commonplace yet, but has already been used in various publications and even in titles of some dissertations and books (Eliseeva, 1998; Klyukanov, 2010). It was created based on the further development



of the brilliant ideas of V. I. Vernadsky and Teilhard de Chardin on the noosphere that encases the Earth, and is the center of all human knowledge. In terms of concepts rather than figures of speech, it can be noted that the original meaning of the category “universum” is connected with the idea that there exists some ultimate synthesis allowing the integration of all particularities and aspects into a single whole. The categorical concepts describing the universum are as follows: “being”, “world”, “matter”, “reality”, “one” and “absolute”. The concept of universum is related to the idea of the world of self-organizing systems, including self-organizing man, thus making it possible to catch the relationship between the sphere of nature, sphere of knowledge and sphere of human life. The concept of the information and communication universum makes it possible, first, to get over the idea that communication and the media space are strictly objective (or independent of man) or strictly subjective (or man-made and man-governable) systems. It is a system that is difficult to comprehend using common sense, and one in which at least two types of processes take place: natural and unregulated, and expedient and man-dependent.

Similar ideas were expressed by K. Popper, a renowned philosopher and science methodologist, in his theory of the three worlds: World 1: the world of physical objects and events; World 2: the world of mental objects and events; World 3: the world of logical contents fixed in the form of databases, books, libraries, and data processing methods. With the publication of works by M. McLuhan, J. P. Barlow, and T. Leary, one can remark on the specificity of the self-organization of the media world, a peculiar kind of World 4 that has “branched off” from Worlds 1-3 (Tarasenko, 1997). Ever more researchers are arriving at the idea that media systems are more than information media; they have their own meaning-forming,

world-forming trends, giving rise to specific cultural practices to comprehend, which philosophers and cultural studies scholars will have to look for new languages and methods.

Studying this World 4, V. V. Tarasenko and other scholars have identified anthropological, institutional, and epistemological problems of its self-organization. It has been demonstrated, that in this world, subjects and objects are non-local and their positions are easily changed. This world by no means seeks equilibrium; it is chaotic and continuously generates new communication systems where stability phases may alternate with structural catastrophes. The following key institutional characteristics of World 4 have been identified and formulated: intersubjectivity, normativity, and objectivity (Tarasenko, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2010).

## **Media space**

The information and communication universum consists of the two closely related complexes: human knowledge and methods, technologies, manner (or, better, matrices) of interaction of subjects producing or sharing such knowledge.

As a continuously changing concept, like S. Lem's thinking ocean on planet Solaris, the information and communication universum can nevertheless be divided into certain rather arbitrary segments, or, using other terms, "***information and communication spaces***".

As for the term "space", most often it means a place where something is located (for example, information), something happens (for example, communication), or a scene where some subjects act (cultural space – a scene of action of spiritual forces). Sometimes, the concept "space" is used to designate belonging to someone (for

example, “space of Russia”). There are also other concepts of space, whose authors and adepts include Aristotle, Descartes, Leibnitz, Hobbes, Locke, Durkheim, Simmel, and others.

P. Bourdieu made an attempt to integrate different traditions of space analysis, maintaining that the physical space is a more or less exact projection of the social space. Under such approach, the physical space is a form of representation of the social space. According to P. Bourdieu, the social space is “the ensemble of invisible relationships, the very relationships that form the space of positions that are external in respect of each other, determined one through others, by their nearness, proximity or distance between them, and also by relative position: above, below or between, in the middle”. According to P. Bourdieu, there exists the “space of relationships that is as real as the geographical space” (Bourdieu, 1993).

V. Ilyin presents a somewhat different classification, identifying the substantive and structural approaches to the understanding of the social space. In the first interpretation, it consists of substances, i.e. individuals, their groups and organizations connected by social relations. In the second interpretation, the social space is a supra-individual reality consisting of structuralized social relations. According to V. Ilyin, “the social space is a force field created by interacting individuals, their practices, but at the same time having its special (system) quality that individuals lack (for example, state, law, social customs, morals, etc.). Individuals only have its elements in the form of accepted social roles and values. Naturally, the social space does not exist without individuals. Social relations occur as a result of the interaction of individuals and their groups. However, relations and interacting individuals, in spite of their interrelationship, are not identical, as an electrical conductor is not identical to electric current” (Ilyin, 2000).

We propose that the concept of “information and communication space” be used to designate different noosphere segments with conventional boundaries created by communication actors. What is meant here is not a physical space (although today physical spaces of many premises are expressly adapted to communicative procedures: traditional reading rooms, audiovisual, computer rooms, display areas, elements of communication and recreation spaces, etc.), but a virtual space in which all relations have an ideal and symbolic nature.

From this point of view, in the structure of the information and communication universum, three interrelated information and communication systems can be identified.

The first system incorporates social (socially significant) information and mass communication channels, (media) through which such information is delivered to target groups. The intercommunication between communication subjects is provided by high-end technologies leaving open the possibility for the connection of an unlimited number of third parties. The system can be described as “**social (mass) communications**”. Social communications are organized by social institutions: the authorities, organizations, associations, unions, etc. Information transmitted via mass communication channels acquires a social status, i.e., generates (or should generate) general interest. Social communications are regulated by social regulators, including state legal institutions.

The second system, or **public (specialized) communications**, is first, meant to ensure an exchange of views between rather clearly defined groups of individuals on matters of interest expressly for such groups. Second, public communications take place in the public space, that is, in the space dedicated for the communication of such a group, or are transmitted via dedicated communication

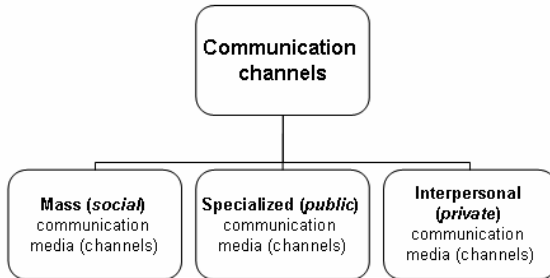
channels using primitive technical equipment that does not guarantee protection from the connection of a limited number of third parties.

A prototype of this concept of public communications is chamber music. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there existed a form of salon albums, now forgotten. High society and demi-monde were quite closed communities, and “publications” in albums satisfied the demand for social and creative communications. At that time and later on, special sites for face-to-face communication (salons, clubs, coffee houses) were regarded as the sites for public communication. Publications not intended for wide distribution, both underground and elite, also fit into this group. Today, public communications include various close and semi-closed groups in the Internet.

The third system can be defined by the term “**private (interpersonal) communications**”. These are systems of production and dissemination of personally significant information controlled by a particular individual. Private communications are communications free from outside influence, including legal regulation, although private communications require legal support, such as privacy protections, prohibition of phone-tapping, etc.

Prior to the development of up-to-date information and communication technologies, all types of information were transmitted via their respective channels as shown in *Figure 1*. Specifically, the target group of the mass media as the social (mass) communication channel is the mass (society, general population); transmitted messages (texts) are meant to be seen by the mass audience, and the communication itself takes place in the unrestricted space.

## Communication channels



However, presently we are witnessing an ever increasing blurring of borderlines between social, public, and private communications. In the past, too, some private letters written by classic authors were knowingly intended to be read by others – they were copied, and the authors did not object to their publication; before, too, political figures used private letters to communicate with each other, publishing them in the mass media for all to see. Journalists also used the open letter genre to draw public attention to this or that problem ... but now no one is surprised when private web blogs, private entries, or private photos are posted on the Internet. As a result, various types of information “cross” with communication channels non-specific to such types of information (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2

**Information and communication matrix**

Types of information	Information dissemination channels (media)		
	Interpersonal	Specialized	Mass
Private (individual)			
Public (group)			
Social (society)			

A major feature of social, public, and private communications in the current context is that they are mediated by technologies. Thanks to M. McLuhan, such technologies are now called media (McLuhan, 2007). According to him, media include different things, such as electric light, spoken words, written words, roads, numbers, clothing, housing, city, money, clocks, print media, comics, books, ads, wheels, bicycles, motorcars, airplanes, automation, photographs, games, the press, telegraphs, typewriters, telephones, phonographs, movies, radio, television, weapons, and many other things. What is common among these many different things is that they are all “technologies” or “mediators” which bring about great changes in man’s communication with the environment (both natural and social) and the way people perceive and understand the world around them, as well as their way of life.

Russian researchers originally used the term “media” as a synonym of the Russian term “sredstva massovoy informacii” (SMI) (mass media). However, it turned out that they were not identical.

The concept of “mass media” was introduced during the first half of the 1970s by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, to replace the concept of “sredstva massovoy kommunikacii” (mass communication media), which could imply a broad public dialogue, as here “communication” means “relations and contacts”. The concept of “mass media” suggests an authoritarian attitude towards the mass audience in accordance with the inherent idea of people as “products of circumstances and upbringing”. In accordance with the meaning of that idea that dates back to the Enlightenment, mass media should be “produced” or formed “from above” (Terin, 2009).

The term “media” is related to the idea of an everlasting connection of content and its formatting and transmission, which was proclaimed by M. McLuhan in his well-known phrase “The medium is the message”. This maxim was a revelation for most people who tended to ignore media technologies and focused only on the content. The meaning of McLuhan’s dictum is the requirement to see the connection between the content and its form. The content cannot exist all by itself, and the forms it takes affect our perception. “The code and the mode of information that is used will determine who has access to the data and who controls its dissemination, how much information will be distributed, how fast it will be transmitted, how far it will travel, how long the information will be available, and the form in which it will be displayed. As these variables change, so does the message that is being communicated” (Strate, 2009).

McLuhan showed that media *comes before* the message. Before creating an end product we should have raw material and technologies to process it. Before coding the message we should have the code as such to structure it.



As for the term “mass media”, it is used to distinguish those societal institutions that employ copying technologies to disseminate communication from the general media complex. This means principally books, magazines and newspapers manufactured by the printing press, and also all kinds of photographic or electronic copying procedures, provided that they generate large quantities of products whose target groups are as yet undetermined. Also included in this term is the dissemination of communication via broadcasting, provided that it is generally accessible and does not merely serve to maintain a telephone connection between individual participants. Public lectures, theatrical productions, and exhibitions do not qualify for inclusion, though the term does include the circulation of such performances via film or diskette. This delineation may appear somewhat arbitrary, but the basic idea is that it is the mechanical manufacture of a product as the bearer of communication, not the writing itself, that has led to the differentiation of a particular system of the mass media (Luhmann, 2005). In practice, as is stated in the fundamental Encyclopedia of Journalism, “the term *mass media* is used to describe a wide range of printed and electronic media, including television, movies, radio and sound records, books and magazines, as well as the so-called “new media”, such as the Internet and video games. However, three interrelated trends generated by the new media – fragmentation of the audience, specialization, and customization of media content – require another form of conceptualization of the terms *mass media* and *mass audience*” (Encyclopedia of journalism, 2009).

In English-language literature, the concept of “media space” began to be used in 1980 by R. Stults and S. Harrison to describe “an electronic setting in which groups of people can work together, even when they are not resident in the same place or present at the

same time. In a media space, people can create real-time visual and acoustic environments that span physically separate areas. They can also control the recording, accessing and replaying of images and sounds from those environments” (Stults, 1986).

In recent years, the category of “media space” has become the subject of many research works.

The US geographer P. Adams introduces four areas of the spatial study of communication:

1) “Media in spaces” – a study of the geographic location of communication networks, their technical infrastructure, and geometry of “space of flows”.

2) “Spaces in media” – an analysis of unique spaces of communication supported by media. Such spaces have no geographic coordinates; they reflect topologies of flows of information and ideas. They can be measured by personal contacts.

3) “Places in media” – an investigation of mechanisms by which particular locations receive their meaning through media.

4) “Media in places” – a study of what types of media communications and under what rules are possible or impossible in a particular location.

According to Adams, space arrangement (“media in spaces”, “media in places”) presupposes that “spaces” and “places” can be regarded as “containers” containing, bounding, and shaping media communications. Space representation (“spaces in media”, “places in media”) reflects the process of production of spaces and locations in communications through verbal, visual, and audio representations (Adams, 2009).

Based on Bourdieu’s concepts, N. Couldry and A. McCarthy underscore the deep media-space relationship. As electronic media are increasingly saturating everyday life with images of other places and spatial scales (imaginary or real), it is difficult to speak about

space without mentioning media, and vice versa. The authors state that, on the one hand, media space is material and consists of objects (receivers, displays, cables, servers, transmitters) “incorporated” into geographically-specific power structures and segments of the economy. On the other hand, it has become commonplace to stress the “virtuality”, “illusiveness”, and ephemerality of media space (particularly cyberspace) as opposed to “reality” and its remoteness from the material aspect of existence (*Mediaspace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age*, 2004).

In his article “Information Ecology: a systems approach to media environment” F. Stalder argues that “Media build an integrated environment based on flows of information. Increasingly, this environment provides the primary setting for human agency. Information ecology aims at understanding the properties of this environment in order to use its potential, avoid its dangers and influence its development positively...” (Stalder, 2011).

Jasper Falkheimer and André Jansson substantiate the timeliness of the development of the geography of media communication as an emerging academic field. They note that older theories of media and communication were outcomes of the so-called concept of “mass society” and presupposed clear boundaries between media producers and audiences, between texts and contexts, etc. However, the epoch of “liquid modernity” (the term introduced by Zygmunt Bauman) embodies a range of spatial “ambiguities” and “uncertainties”. Furthermore, thinking of communication as the diffusion of messages in space is surely not the same as thinking of communication as the production of space (*Geographies of Communication: The Spatial Turn in Media Studies*, 2006).

Concerning the “geography of communication”, Jansson distinguishes ideological and political aspects, technological aspects, and textural aspects (Jansson, 2006).

In the Russian discourse, the concepts “media space”, “media environment”, “media field”, and “media sphere” have emerged relatively recently, have not yet acquired a more or less clear meaning, and are most often used as synonyms. These concepts were preceded by categories such as “information space”, “information sphere”, and “information environment”, and therefore they repeat in their definitions the basic meanings of their “predecessors”. Thus, N.B. Kirillova in “Media Environment of the Russian Modernization”, based on the encyclopedia definition of the term “environment”, gives the following definition: “The media environment is what is around us day in and day out. It is a set of conditions in the context of which the media culture is functioning, that is, the sphere which through mass communications (the press, radio, TV, video, movies, computer channels, the Internet, etc.) connects man with the world around, informs, entertains, advocates particular moral and esthetic values, has an ideological, economic or organizational impact on assessments, opinions and behavior of individuals, in short, affects public consciousness” (Kirilova, 2005).

Obviously, the interpretation of mass media just as an environment rather than as the sphere of the implementation of human activity cannot satisfy researchers and practitioners, although the term “media environment” still appears in some publications. To date, there exists no generally accepted definition of the term “media space”, while the divergence of opinions in this regard is very great. We believe that it would make sense to use the term “*media space*” to designate the segment of the information and communication universum where high-end technologies are used to organize knowledge sharing. Thus, the means of production and dissemination of socially significant information and information proper, form the basis of the media space (Dzialoshinskiy, 2012, 2013).

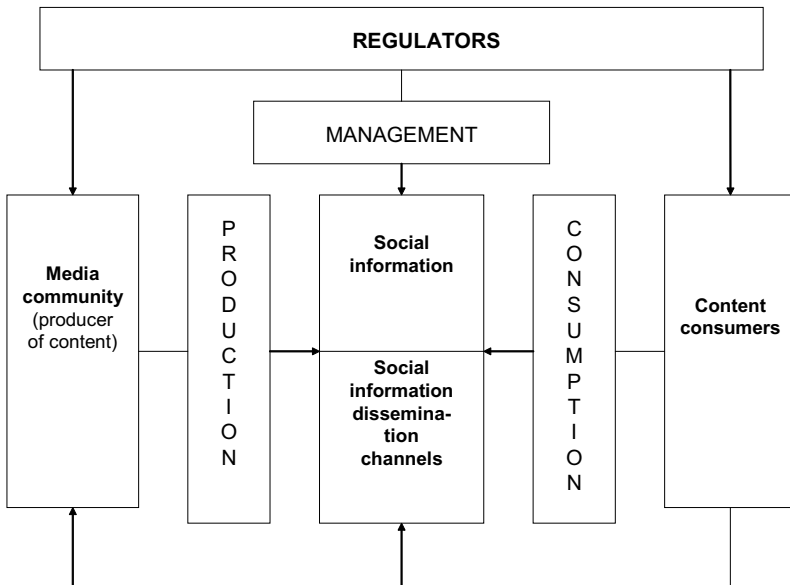
As for the subjects producing and consuming information, as well as regulating the processes in the media space, they interact

with the media space but cannot be regarded as elements of the media space proper. However, such interactions, or more exactly, actions—production of meanings, regulation, dissemination, and consumption – are important structure-forming elements of the media space (*Figure 3*).

As it is commonly understood, media space has conventional boundaries created by participants in the media processes whose relationships determine the metric of the media space. The principal regulator of such relationships is the relevant communication institution.

*Figure 3*

**Pattern of interaction of elements and subjects of the media space**



## **Media as an institution**

Further examination of the new conceptual framework requires a review of some works on the analysis of social institutions.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the study and comprehension of such institutions primarily took place in the legal field. Institutions were primarily understood as administrative agencies, or legal rules and restrictions established by legislation, expressly fixed and formalized. D. North defines institutions as formal rules, mechanisms that ensure their fulfillment, and codes of conduct that structure recurrent interactions between people (North, 1993). Such rules may be in the form of constitutional laws (e.g., presidential rule or parliamentary rule) or informal restraints, such as code of conduct. In one form or another, such an interpretation has become generally accepted. Thus, V.V. Radaev defines institutions as “codes of conduct and procedures for their enforcement” (Stalder, 2011). N.N. Lebedeva also believes that in modern science, the term “institution” usually means the system of stable relations in respect to the agreement (harmonization) of the forms of joint interactions of individuals based on using standards and rules shared by interaction participants (Lebedeva, 2008).

The most comprehensive and apt definition of institutions is given by J. March and J. Olsen: “An institution is a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances” (March, Olsen, 2006).

According to E. Ostrom, institutions as a system of rules may be presented as follows:

- **Position rules** that specify a set of positions and how many participants hold each position;

- **Boundary rules** that specify how participants are chosen to hold these positions and how participants leave these positions;
- **Scope rules** that specify the set of outcomes that may be affected and the external inducements and/or costs assigned to each of these outcomes;
- **Authority rules** that specify the set of actions assigned to a position;
- **Aggregation rules** that specify the decision function to be used in a particular position to map actions into intermediate or final outcomes;
- **Information rules** that authorize channels of communication among participants in positions and specify the language and form in which communication will take place (Ostrom, 1986).

Therefore, we can state that interpersonal relations arising in the process of production, sharing, and consumption of different information products are regulated by sets of **principles** (ideology, philosophy), and **standards and rules** (technologies) that can be called **communication institutions**.

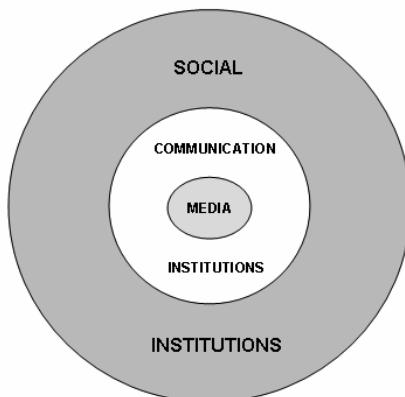
Any social institution emerges in response to public need. Needs, and conditions of their satisfaction form relevant interests and goals that form the basis of the establishment and development of social institutions. That is why the development of the communication sphere generally, and the media system in particular, required their institutionalization.

To make communication processes efficient, the sets of principles, standards, and rules, which are incorporated in the system of social institutions and are called communication principles, standards, and rules, have been developed. Via the communication institutions, society, through relevant social structures, produces

and disseminates information expressed in symbols. Communication institutions include: media, advertising, PR, literature, art, etc. (Figure 4).

*Figure 4*

**The social institution “media” within the system  
of communication institutions**



In the course of the socialization of individuals, “subjectivation” of institutions takes place, where relevant behavior patterns are integrated into the mental structure of an individual. In sociology, the process of accepting social values and codes of conduct, and acknowledging them as binding, is called “internalization” (in psychology, the term “interiorization” is used). The ideas of the world and of proper conduct are only stable when they become part of the mental structure, or interiorized.

The exercise of institutional functions in today’s complex society requires special – organizational – framework.



Organizations are rationally conceived entities that are meant to exercise particular functions. We can say that an organization is the specific form that each particular society finds for a relevant social institution.

In “Elementary Concepts of Sociology” J. Szczepański analyzed the different interpretations of the term “institutions” and came to the conclusion that social institutions are “the systems of agencies in which particular people elected by group members are authorized to perform specific public and impersonal functions to satisfy the existing individual and group needs of individuals and regulate behavior of other group members. All groups having at least rudiments of organization create specific *modes of action on behalf of the group* as a whole ... Such modes of action are defined as *impersonal*, i.e., they should be followed irrespective of individual traits and interests of a person, who always carries them out in the same way” (Szczepański, 1967).

Hence, all institutions can be divided into two subsections using their individual types of involvement in the process of social creative work as a criterion:

**Institutions-mechanisms** – stable complexes of values and standards regulating various spheres of life (such as marriage, family, ownership, capital, religion, etc.);

**Institutions-subjects** – organizations of different types and scale; in this case, the institutional subject is the collective of individuals united in an association based on the agreed acceptance and joint use of a number of requirements, which are the constraints of the scope, forms, means, and instruments of interactions (e.g., an enterprise) (Gavra, 2011).

From the provision that a public institution emerges and functions to meet a particular social need, follows the conclusion that an institution will continue to exist as long as such need exists

in a relatively invariable form. Therefore, we can state that in traditional societies, where changes do not take place (or take place slowly enough for people to be able to correct their interrelations), social institutions exist for a long time, for centuries and sometimes millenniums. This explains the myths about the “never-changing nature” of man and the “natural” or “normal” state of society.

However, with society becoming increasingly dynamic, an institutional structure with the rigid set of rules can become a destabilizing factor in the development of society. In a dynamic society, the norm of existence of social institutions is their responsiveness to dynamic socio-economic and other processes, rather than rigid stability (Yadov, 2006).

Institutional transformations follow different paths of development. To describe such paths and identify the extent of the institutional change, the term “mode of functioning of the institution” is used. The following modes are identified.

- **Inaction.** Individuals are aware of the rule, know how to act in a particular situation, but act differently; mostly-formal institutions with abeyant laws exist in this mode.
- **Sporadic action.** In a particular situation this rule may be applied or not applied and in the latter case individuals either adopt (an) other rule(s), or act as they see fit, not relying on any rules known to them.
- **Systematic action.** The rule is applicable always or nearly always (Radaev, 2003).

Experience has shown that inefficient institutions often continue to exist. This is due to several reasons.

First, the institution, even when it no longer plays its regulatory role and has lost its social meaning, will seek the conservation of social processes, opposing any transformations. That is why, in the

situation of a fundamental change of social relations, the destruction of old institutions and deinstitutionalization of the population is critical. However, as a rule, such attempts have failed (“restoration”) or only partially succeeded: new institutions emerged, their weight in the social life changed, and gradually everything returned to its previous state.

Second, there are powerful social agents uninterested in the revision of the existing “rules of the game” because of the losses they would incur. Thus, the preservation of inefficient institutions may be in the interests of the state, if this supports the maximum difference between state treasury income and expenditure, or powerful groups with special interests; or else if the evolution of society depends on once selected institutional path. New and more efficient “rules of the game” may remain inoperative because their implementation would require considerable initial investment not required by long-established institutions. All this stabilizes the existing institutional system irrespective of its efficiency. In a way, institutions lead society along a certain path that will be difficult to stray from in the future. A “mixture” of efficient and inefficient institutions appears, and the relationship between them ultimately will determine the path of the social development.

People design and form social institutions according to the interests of their own projects. Individual activity gradually turns into customary, repetitive activity that leads to its institutionalization. Practices of some individuals, having turned into mass practices, become a social institution.

Ultimately, institutions live a life of their own, according to their own logic, overcoming their creators’ intentions. According to V. Bychenkov, institutions are abstract entities that become subjects, “reducing man to the role of a mediator in the system of impersonal social relations... The mind forms an abstract concept

which then turns into an independent entity estranging itself from its creator and turning on him” (Bychenkov, 1996). No institute can exist without people who abide by its rules, but at the same time the institution rules over them. Therefore, a social institution is an impersonal and even super collective form brought into action by people who pursue their perceived interests, considering the force field of the institution.

Analysis shows that currently we have a complex, multilevel system of communication institutions. At the top of the pyramid, there are mega-institutions, such as the media, which serve all social processes. On a lower level there are institutions providing for communication between large spheres of social life: political, economic, social and cultural. Naturally, these spheres come into contact with each other and interact, which results in the appearance of hybrid communication institutions. Still lower, there are institutions, which regulate communication processes in specific areas of human activity (Dzialoshinskiy, 2012).

## **Communication matrices**

As part of the institutional system of society, communication institutions interact with other social institutions, creating an institutional matrix defining the tendencies of human interaction. Institutional matrices are always linked to a particular social or geographic area, i.e., they have a space within which particular imperatives operate. In other words, it is a certain real or virtual territory where the population acknowledges the authority of a particular matrix (Dzialoshinskiy, 2013).

Different communication matrices are developed and approved within this framework. They can designate various regulators of communication behavior, which are usually called principles, postulates, standards, rules, discourses, conventions, codes or formats. The collection of matrices, that is, standards and rules, stable forms of communication behavior can be defined by the term “communication culture”. Communication culture plays an active role in the regulation of communication processes, displaying constraining nature in respect of communication subjects. Ignorance of or failure to comply with the communication matrices will result in the alienation of the communication subject.

Thus, a cub reporter entering the professional environment enters the world of values protected and supported by the system of social standards, prescriptions, taboos, and sanctions that ensure the stability of the professional community. In the course of communication, cooperation, and joint work of the reporter and his or her environment, an ever-deeper comprehension of professional standards and values occurs. Under the influence of education (with various mechanisms of approval and disapproval) and other influences of the professional environment, formerly external standards of proper professional conduct permeate the individual’s mind, taking on the shape of a certain model of professional conduct based on professional values and standards, – a product of the personal experience of the individual and collective experience of the macro – and a microenvironment adapted through behavior samples and the system of meanings.

Deep assimilation and repeated use of prime professional postulates, simple and universal professional standards, results in shaping professional behavior stereotypes which are not perceived

as professionally regulated, so the question “Am I doing right?” usually does not arise. An accepted line of conduct, having become habitual, becomes a necessity.

Taking into consideration the facts mentioned above, it is possible to formulate an important conclusion that communication institutions form a quite rigid system of rules, standards, and public expectations governing the actions of professionals engaged in a particular type of activity: journalism, advertising, PR, literature, etc. The results of the performance of communication institutions – just as of other social institutions – include the development of formal (laws) and informal (codes of conduct) prescriptions regulating professional behavior. The draft Code of Ethics for Communications – an unprecedented convention for Russia, aimed at developing uniform ethical standards in communications, including communications with business partners, employees, and representatives of mass media and communications in social media, is an example of institutional activity (*Pervyy Eticheskyy kodeks v oblasti kommunikatsiy byl predstavlen na Baltic PR Weekend, 2014*).

Directives of communication institutions are cemented into a certain status by people ensuring the functioning of the communication system, and into roles imposed on (or sometimes forced upon) people associated with such institution. The term “role” (as a rule, “social”) traditionally refers to an individual and is used to define a collection of standards determining the behavior of persons acting within a social system according to their status and position, and the behavior proper through which such standards are implemented. Ample empirical strength of that term makes it possible to use it to define a particular aspect of the functioning of different subjects of social activities (organizations, agencies – various subsystems of society with a status, position in the system

of social interactions). One example is the list of professional roles, which Russian journalists play in various combinations and hierarchic sequences (*Table 1*).

*Table 1*

**Journalist’s professional roles**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Role content</b>
Analyst	Analyze current events, search for solutions
Teacher, mentor	Cultivate certain qualities, standards of conduct
Generator of ideas	Identify key problems of social development, offer new ideas and roadmaps
Herald	Establish public discussion priorities, affect public opinion
Defender	Protect citizens against encroachments by the authorities Act as an arbitrator addressed for the resolution of disputes between conflicting parties
Informer	Reflect a variety of opinions and attitudes Provide practical information, advice, etc.
Commentator	Comment on developments, explain and interpret facts, actions, texts
Monitor	Monitor the activities of economic and political structures
Critic, exposé	Criticize actions of the authorities, individuals and population groups Criticize the implementation and results of actions carried out by various population groups and their representatives, as well as problems and proposed solutions discussed in various publications Polemicalize with other publications
Lobbyist	Using the press resources ensure the realization of interests of a particular political, financial or other group

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Role content</b>
Organizer	Inspire active public action Organize joint actions, ensure coordination, ordered actions for the purposes of the achievement of common goals
Negotiator	Promote mutual understanding, settle disputes
Assistant/ consultant	Help people find each other and encourage integration Assist people in specific life situations
Ideologist (propagandist)	Form particular views
Educator	Disseminate and explain to the population ideas, doctrines, views Educate, provide reference, encyclopedic and historical information on a wide range of issues
Chronicler	Record current developments with the view of communicating them to present and future generations
Dialog moderator	Enable multilateral public information sharing
Public opinion “tribune”	Assist individuals or social groups in stating their views on various problems of concern to the public
Entertainer	Provide an opportunity to have a good time and fun, distract one’s mind from bad thoughts, stresses, provide psychological safety valve

While stressing the viability of using the communication institutions approach in the analysis of the present-day situation and current processes in the media sphere, we should remember that any institution emerges, develops, and sometimes dies out, not of its own volition, but only due to the actions – conscious or unconscious –



of many people. Social institutions in all spheres of life were not formed until the emergence of man and society, but with them, they function via man and for man. In terms of the problems addressed in this article, it means that various standards and rules governing the communication processes have a specific – probabilistic, variative – nature. The live world or professional culture are not just typical forms of activity, not just depositories of standards and stereotypes of professional conduct, not just the “memory” of the professional community, but also of individual uniqueness, creative embodiment and development of forms of professional activity.

When the standards and rules are not understood as flexible systems, and are rather associated with something rigid, the creative nature of communication-related types of activities will also be lost. Specifically, while regulating and maintaining, in given social conditions, the required activity level and ensuring a certain level of quality of journalists’ work, the standards and rules compiled by the professional community, if uncritically accepted, may lead to a lack of individuality, and banal and clichéd materials.

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