**Questions by Dr. hab. Dorota Siemieniecka, professor of UMK**

**Answers from Assoc. Prof. Dr. & Dr. Honoris Causa Sabahudin Hadžialić**

**Temptations of the manipulation**

* **What is the manipulation and how can we recognize it?**

To define „manipulation“depends on which field of human appearances we are focusing. Simply, general definition of „manipulation“ is *„the skillful handling, controlling or using of something or someone for the certain individual or group plans, goals and interests“ (Hadžialić, S., 2017).* Although, when we are talking about manipulation within and from media towards the public and establishing of so call „media democracy“ or shortly „mediocracy“ that is democracy which is handled/manipulated for the needs of intertwined interests of the certain politics/economics interest and/or media owners, we have definition such as: “*Media manipulation is presentation of certain plans, goals and interests within hidden media presentation agenda, regardless which media we are using, in an adequate sociological, psychological and philosophical skillful way which will help the aim of manipulator to provoke receivers of the information to accept the goals of manipulators in acceptable and highly appreciate way that will lead towards creation of “common” interests that is, by the end of the day, only interest of the certain political or economical group within or outside of the media.” (Hadžialić, S., 2019)*

In regards the second part of your question, it is very difficult to recognize manipulation presented by the media, especially, if we are not media literate person. Let me explain first what is “media literacy” (Hadžialić, S. ,2018): “*Media literacy in itself carries two meanings: as the term is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages through the media while the essential focus of media literacy is in acquiring complete knowledge of critical and creative skills, knowledge that helps to connect complex ideas, constantly questioning the appearances, trying to identify responses that will satisfy the congenital curiosity of each of us, but it also identifies the individual, and also wider, social misconceptions and delusions. By understanding the impact of media on society, media literacy prevents us in becoming dependent on the media. Or to at least it enables us to control the selection method, the method of reading and making appropriate decisions based on the “reading” of the media that are available to us. The using and abusing of the new media and the availability of different information to everyone at any time and in any way possible within the multimedia availability of new media certainly shows how much more needs to be done on improving the education of all individuals, regardless of their social, racial, ethnic, and / or political status, and above all because society aims towards further development of direct and immediate democratic consciousness.“* Furthermore, as an answer to the second part of your question, an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, political activist, and social critic, Prof. Dr. Noam Chomsky (2011) has compiled a list of the ten most common and effective strategies resorted to by “hidden” agendas  to establish a manipulation of the population through the media (Hadžialić. S, 2016):

1. *The strategy of distraction*
2. *Create problems, then offer solutions*
3. *The gradual strategy*
4. *The strategy of deferring*
5. *Go to the public as a little child*
6. *Use the emotional side more than the reflection*
7. *Keep the public in ignorance and mediocrity*
8. *To encourage the public to be complacent with mediocrity*
9. *Self-blame Strengthen*
10. *Getting to know the individuals better than they know themselves*

So, the answer on your question is an education within media literacy to be able to recognize manipulation of all kind, although we have to have in mind that nobody is perfect and sometimes, even if we are media literate, we can be, unconsciously manipulated being not focused or sometimes relaxed without paying attention to the issue. Simply, it is like “corruption”: In undeveloped society it goes up to 80 % within the system and within developed society it stays up to 7 % of acceptable level. Manipulation is within human being behavior and we will, if educated in a way to recognize it, be able to recognize Trojan horse (Ancient Greece, around 1,180 B.C.) of manipulation and behave in accordance to his/her understanding of it.

* **What are the manifestations and forms of manipulation in social media?**

An excellent question, dear colleagues, by all means, having in mind that social media, encircling of the all known media until today, increase the ways of manipulations up to the unlimited levels and continues with enlargements as it grows and develops.

Here we can see demagogy of the media within its full capacity (Hadžialić, S., 2017). The aim is to define the role of social media on the WWW within the assumption of whether there is any information or manipulation in the reflection of demagogy of the media in virtual perceptual reality:

a) In order to explain the "and / or" the possibility that the media itself is the source of manipulation to confirm the thesis that "Conspiracy theories do not exist, but it works." (Hadžialić, S. 2010).

b) In order to establish the fact that even the most sincere ideas for advancing the existence of mankind can become their own opposite (Opennheimer, R. 1947) with the aim of manipulating the sequence of events that ultimately leads to control of thoughts and actions.

c) In order to detect hidden agendas within the use of information collected from social networks, they are analyzed and manipulated by governing structures with a focus on controlling possible future actions of their own citizens (NSA, 2013).

d) In ​​order to deal with the problem of everyday "bombardment" with excessive and unnecessary flash information that condition certain reactions with the aim of manipulating our consciousness in the direction of assumed intentions in the model and the state of something called *social networks* as the assumption of total and / or mad/insane (Maciedo, M. 2013) awareness that, through the social networks, tell us about the end of history we know.

e) In order to find solutions that in the modern Agora (a central public space in ancient Greek city-states), that could appropriately become the use of social networks, to create preconditions that, avoiding manipulation, we create the possibility of mutual information with the aim of improving everyone's prosperity with the goal *everyone for one and one for everyone.* No matter how utopian it sounded "Avelange was the snowflake at the beginning" (Hadžialic, S., 2009) in the space and time where manipulation is the subject of all sorts of information we know, even when we talk about online journalism.

f) In order to present the potential *positive* role of social networks on the WWW with the aim of realizing *the promise of the Internet*, that his/her full incarnation as the individual will be experienced as immediate, at the same time as the creator, participant but also the perpetrator of this/her own guidelines presented on social networks. However, at the level of *communication theory*, "it complains that the political public on the Internet substantially promotes its privatization, because the individual can use the possibilities again only as an individual and thus avoids the effects of filtering that are coming from the representative public and communication among the present ones“. (Mayer, T., 2003).

In regards your question, Let's start from the fact that *information is power and who controls information controls all human immediate activities aimed towards sustainability and advancement.* That is why social networks are a unique example of unification of information, but also of power within a media that has a "social" prefix. Is that right? Perhaps it is a "social" but "controlled social" medium. Through the manipulation.

On the social networks are more than four billion users from the planet Earth who are sitting in their homes, talking online, reading news online, watching video and movie records, negotiating, falling in love, wrangle, arguing, inviting protests (Taylor, C., 2011), call for devastation of the governments (Radio Free Europe, 2013) or control by governments towards their own citizens (Otte, E. & Rousseau, R., 2002).

As mentioned above, within ten strategies of manipulation (Chomsky, N., 2011) – as a matter of fact, within all of them we can find sources for the manipulation within social media. The most suitable solution of the controllers of media (and mind) is to create “Spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann, N. 1974**)**  within social media and I talked about it to the students of UMK (organized by Faculty of Educational Sciences and invited by rector of UMK) that within my module ***Social Media*:** *”The spiral of silence theory is one of the most important theories of the traditional dissemination field. The theory stipulates that individuals have a fear of isolation, which results from the idea that a social group in general might isolate, neglect, or exclude members due to the members' opinions. Thanks to this fear of isolation, it leads to remaining silent instead of voicing opinions. As a result, with time elapsing, the disparity between majority and minority opinions becomes larger.”*

Although, mentioned as one of the forms of manipulation, on this “spiral of silence” are based other forms of manipulations, such as bullying, harassment, fake-news, miss-information and miss-leadings.

* **What is media freedom and how should it be shaped in a democratic society?**

Yes, now we come to the methodological-logical sequence of human survival, where in the center of human's experience of the world and of himself/herself as one of the most important questions the question is raised the question of freedom (From, Erich, 1994). Freedom is linked to the existential question about the overcoming of each immediate challenge and the opposition to every misunderstanding, degradation and / or destruction during the course of civilization development (is it? – in the last 100 years has been killed more people than in the past 2000 years). Of course, this is, even in details, concretized in the field of personal, social space of the individual, even in the social network. How, then, to include media freedom within it?

Media freedom is very wide issue and paper and even book should encircle an answer on your very precised question. Although, I will try to be methodologically focused as much as possible like I was back in October 2016 being invited by the side of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of UMK and held a lecture at Amphiteatre of FoES titled „Freedom and missuse of Freedom in Media“ (Hadžialić, 2016).

Freedom is holy principle on which human life is based, for which people are fighting for within the historical and personal development. Freedom shows a quality and beauty of life, but it is not easy achievable.

It is very difficult to gain it and even more difficult to maintain. Only developed person can express freedom up to the end. For the maintaining of the freedom knowledge and experience is needed, responsibility, and, of course, courage. Without mentioned there is no freedom. Knowledge and experience enrich human life and only that abundance makes possible independency. Without that kind of abundance there is no freedom, only combat.

Of course, it is needed to make difference the freedom of expression from the freedom of the media and/or media freedom. While the freedom of opinion and expression is unlimited, problem with the freedom of the media/media freedom is little bit different. Question arises: How to find balance between ensuring to the media to inform the public about the events and in the same time to stop appearances of the information that jeopardize integrity of the individual and social security? Difficulty lies down in it that both extremes will damage society interest. It is bad if too much wrong types of the information become public and if too many persons or social structure as the whole would be jeopardized by that. In the same time, it is equally bad for the social structure, as the whole and by that for the individuals, who are living in that society, if government conducts too much control over the media. Somewhere between those two extremes we can hope and expect to find real balance.

Media must be free, but responsible in front of the public, and not in front of the government.

Please, do read the following sentence…quote..: “*Every man may revise constitutional principles on which authority is based on, draw attention on its mistakes and disadvantages investigate and reveal its mistakes, and warn fellow citizens on its baleful consequences*”…end of quote. This was told by Thomas Erskine, Scottish jurist and historian at the end of eighteen century. So, today, almost 250 years later, we are still combating for the mentioned rights. At least on certain areas and within certain ideologies of the prevalence.

* **Is it possible to reconcile the interest of power with social influence?**

About government regulation and control of the media there is no complete harmony even in the most democratic society. Problem arise not within preventing the government to be involved in freedom of the media, but what to do and in which way prevent that journalists and media abuse and misuse that freedom. Who need to regulate, control and penalize them? Can public do that?

Of course, here we have a problem of public capacity to do that – its consciousness, knowledge and awareness. It can happen that public is manipulated by the reason of egoistic and special interests, but also because of the ignorance and immaturity. Public is not something that is unique and compact. Public is divided, complex and uneven within the competency. Another quote is the following, and it comes from “Cannons of journalism” of the American society of journalistic editors, back in 1992…quote: ”*Trust between journalists and the readers is the foundation of good journalism. All efforts have to be made to ensure that the content of the news is correct, immune on prejudices, and that all sides are equitable presented. Comments from Editorial board, analytical articles, should keep up to same standards in regards facts, as the news reports. Significant mistakes in regards facts, or omission, should be corrected immediately and flaringly.”* …end of quote.

Yes, it is possible to reconcile the interest of power with social influence. One word – ETHICS.

Ethical decisions are always made within a certain context which includes political, social and cultural climate. Although context does not determine automatically the outcome of the ethical judgment, it surely does have influence which cannot be ignored. De facto, the factors of the context, very often, are creating internal morality conflict of the stands of our conscience about what we should do and what is popular to be done.

Also, we have to question as well motives of the moral agent (moral agent are those who are making ethical decisions, regardless if they are acting independently or as representatives of some institutions, and all communicators are becoming to be moral agents when they put in conflict ethical dilemmas of their professions and when they have to take full responsibility for their acts) because good motives sometimes might be used to justify something that looks like non-ethical act.

So, finally we need and establishment of the Ethical codex / Code of Ethics as a proposal for the creation of sustainable peace and development worldwide.

Ethical codex, which might be communicated and transferred as the proposal for the world governments in each country will be based on those principles (Hadžialić, S., 2019):

1. Moral responsibility (depending on the understanding of morality within each country) for the responsibility of the public services in the sense that the Minister is a servant to the people and not vice versa; All of us knows that everywhere exists a saying: „Would you like to be introduced to real him/her. Give him/her a power “. Through the education and all kind of literacy today (from basic through technology up to the media) we create “morally responsible leaders” who are above all, responsible to the people who elects them and not to party group and/or party leader.
2. Moral leaders – everything comes from the top and people cannot be blamed anywhere for the mistakes of politicians on power; Very often politicians hides behind a people if we say that they are corrupted hypocrites who „blames everybody else but not the one to be blamed and praise everybody else but not the one to be praised“. Should exist the equality between power and responsibility – meaning – as bigger power, bigger is responsibility.
3. Ethical government – accept and takes responsibility for the actions. Again, as higher the power as higher the responsibility. Simply, to establish an independent body outside of the elected government which will, on the basis of 12 months analyze promised and done issues; tasked and executed issues of the executive power, and, within the given „table of quality“ gain or lose public trust.
4. Ethics within the depth of public service – a compliance function – established within the government by independent advisory board and control. Prime-minister is nothing else on a higher position than the Main officer for ethical and legislative compliance of act of the whole government and both are elected by the Assembly elected by the people.
5. Transparency in work of the government (not to wait for somebody to ask the Government to present something). The ethical government presents publicly its work and by that creates a reputation. The ethical government will pay and support the media to search for the gaps in their work and, through publishing it, help them to correct it in the nearest future. Namely, sometimes outsiders see better than insiders.
6. Competitiveness of the public service – quality, ethical people and not just party listeners should be participating in the public service.
7. Creation of coalition on power on the foundation of Ethics and not if this or that party is left and/or right and/or in the center. Good is good regardless is it left and/or right and/or in center.
8. Ethical government and economic development of any country should be highly connected – through zero tolerance to manipulation of the information; the economy where no ethics is on power suites only a few selected firms and persons close to the Government.
9. The ethical government has all preconditions to help people in one country to have the moral recovery of one society.
10. Two words: „creation and innovation“ within the ethical behavior of the government will lead every people and each country towards the win/win situation and mutual benefits of all within the society as the whole.

I do hope that above mentioned will find a way around the globe to establish sustainable peace and development worldwide.

* **How to educate against the manipulation?**

Public as the whole, researchers and creators of the politics treats the youth as special type of the media consumers. When the education is in question, children are much more exposed to the risk of negative consequences of the influence of media messages because kids are on much lower level of development – in cognitive, emotional and moral point of view – and does not have experience in real life for the adequate processing of media messages.

But, when we leave childhood and entered growing stage, that does not mean appropriate media literacy by three reasons: First, many young and adult people does not make progress in development much more than from the level achieved in childhood. Secondly, life experience of many adults is not so various and substantial to make possible rising of the level of media literacy. Third, gaining of media literacy, and through that proper ethical approach, requests also development of special abilities and active application of the skills – and that does not come automatically with the age.

Media professionals are recognized as having a vital role to play in social mobilization around the rights of children. They may be involved primarily as reporters of the misdeeds and omissions of others, but they are catalysts, nonetheless. As watchdogs in the public interest and promoters of democratic exchange they have a distinct role in the process of improving the image, rights and prospects of children.

One of the difficulties facing journalists is that they operate in an increasingly commercial environment. Children have a universal appeal, and, in theory at least, are cherished in every culture. They also constitute an important segment of growing advertising and consumer markets.

Threats to children generate emotive responses which can be harnessed to capture readers and audiences. It follows that there is always a risk that stories and images of about children will be valued as much for their marketing potential as for the social significance of the stories themselves.

Media professionals can stimulate public outrage by the use of children to illustrate the traumas of illness or abuse, and the horrors of war, starvation, poverty, etc. This ‘shock value’ is often seen as a valid technique to cut through the protections that otherwise cushion people from the harsher realities of life, and especially when seeking to expose the relative deprivation suffered by those who live in the southern hemisphere or in the less well-off communities of Central and Eastern Europe or the run-down suburbs of the developed world.

As a result, children are often represented in the media as victims, villains, or as ‘cute’ attachments to adults. Identifying specific children considered to be at risk of harm, exploitation or abuse, can bring danger to them and their families. At the same time, the denial of children’s identities by treating them as icons can be problematic. Such ‘iconic’ representation does little to improve recognition of their rights and dignity as human beings.

How well they do their job depends as much upon their personal skills and knowledge as it does upon the medium they work through. Journalists most often communicate by producing ‘stories’ that help people to understand the world around them. The ‘human interest story’ is a dramatic device to capture people’s interest/anger/sympathy and so explain a wider ‘truth’. So, if journalists are to play a part in improving public understanding of children, they need access to ‘good stories”. Often their sources will be NGOs working among children or on their behalf.

A particular area of concern that needs to be addressed is the access which children have to potentially harmful material, including the depiction of violence, sex, and ‘sexualized’ images of children – especially in advertising, and fashion and pop music marketing. While controversy may continue about the extent to which such material directly influences the behavior of children, it should remain a priority among media producers to ensure that children are not brutalized or otherwise put at risk by easy access to material, including imagery that appears to condone or encourage violence or inappropriate sexual activity.

Media have been accused for the promotion of every imaginable shape of anti-social behavior, from abetting of non-respect for the government and up to causing of the growing of the number of suicides within teenagers populations. But my opinion is that our behavior is mostly linked to the primary cell of the society, family. That must be taken into the account. Violence of any kind is sociological and psychological status and it is consequence of the complex connection between individual and cultural statuses and we cannot blame media for all pathologies of the society.

Media professionals (including journalist, professor of media studies and teachers in the schools) have a significant role to play in developing effective media literacy programs within schools, as well as a vested interest in ensuring that future generations recognize the value and come to trust the mass media as a source of reliable information. Media literacy will also enhance the vested commercial interests of the media, as well as encouraging the development of future generations of competent media readers and influencers (as well as users as well as professionals).

My proposal was, is and always will be: introduction of the Media literacy as the module/subject from the Primary school (8th grade) and continuing in the Secondary school, plus include it in each and every Faculty on every University, regardless of the science that particular University covers and being involved into. Why? We live in the *Hologram galaxy* already, but we do not know it yet. *Gutenberg galaxy* is far beyond us, and we do not know that either. To be able to encircle the knowledge, the best answer is *Media literacy*.

Particularly, within specialized Faculties, such as the ones that covers the Media within its widen coverage of study, another most important Module is *Media Ethics* as the science of morality which helps, directly and indirectly, the establishment of the ethical society in general, regardless to which race, religion, gender, society, morality and education we belong.

On the first place we are humans, then everything else. To be able to become ones, we need two words “literacy and ethics”, but this time Media ones. Because, we are media more than ever as the part of fourth industrial revolution we are currently living within.

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Short Biography of Prof. Sabahudin Hadžialić:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. & Dr. Honoris Causa Sabahudin Hadžialić was born in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Europe. He is a member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Association of Writers (Sarajevo, BiH), Croatian writers association Herzeg Bosnia (Mostar, BiH), Association of writers Serbia (Belgrad, Serbia), Association of writers of Montenegro (Podgorica, Montenegro) and Journalists Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Association of independent intellectuals "Circle 99", Sarajevo and Ambassador of POETAS del MUNDO in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is Freelance Editor in Chief of the electronic and print magazine DIOGEN pro culture (2009 -) and Editor in Chief of E–magazine MaxMinus (2010-2014) from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has the status of the Self-sustained artist in the Canton of Sarajevo since Jan. 1, 2009. As of Jan. 1, 2013 he has a status of Distinguish self-sustained artist in Canton of Sarajevo by the Decision of the Minister of Culture and Sport of the Canton. He writes scientific papers, poetry and prose with the editing and reviewing books of other authors. He has published 24 books of poetry and prose (stories, aphorisms, stage plays, novels), essays and textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, France, USA, Italy, and Switzerland. He has a doctoral (Assoc. Prof. Dr.) scientific title in Media and Communications and he has Dr. Honoris Causa title as well. He taught and teach, as the professor, in Poland, Lithuania, and Italy. He is the member of International boards of several scientific and cultural magazines in BiH and internationally. So far he published more than 70 scientific papers in national and international scientific journals. He is an author of scientific papers, articles, and bibliography and review articles published in domestic and foreign magazines. He has participated in numerous international and national scientific conferences. His poems, short stories, stage plays, novel and aphorisms have been published in journals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia, England, Ireland, Spain, Kosovo, Italy, China, Estonia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Turkey, Lebanon, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Iran, Austria, Malta Estonia, Germany, Greece, Albania, Romania, India and USA. His poetry and prose were translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, Arabian, Polish, Estonian, Albanian, Maltesian, Bulgarian, Persian, Chinese and Romanian. He was the co-owner of the first private newspaper in Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (as part of former Yugoslavia) titled "POTEZ", Bugojno, Bosnia and Herzegovina back in 1990. His official WWW page is: <http://sabihadzi.weebly.com>.

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