

## **Media Literacy: a key ingredient to a healthy democracy**

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at the ninth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Scotland, Sir John Daniel stated:

“Adam Smith, a key figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, who lived here from 1723 to 1790; was the first thinker to articulate the vital differences of working principles between cottage workshops and industrial factories. His famous example was making pins. In a cottage workshop one person performed all the operations required to make a pin, whereas in the factory three principles came into play: specialisation; division of labour; and the use of machines.” In continuation Sir John Daniel emphasized: “These principles were the basis of the industrial revolution, whose economies of scale transformed manufacturing in Britain in the following century. Yet almost 200 years passed between the publication of Adam Smith’s classic work, *The Wealth of Nations*, and the application of his principles to the creation of a university.” [1]

The compelling principles of Adam Smith towards bolstering the idea of an ‘invisible hand’ as the tendency of free markets to regulate themselves by means of supply and demand, fair competition and the factor of self-interest [2]; are certainly applicable in the constantly changing and evolving landscape of media literacy, the latter is a key component to the promotion of essential democratic values and further encourages the growth of antitoxin components that provide societies with a healthy immune system shaped by transparent public institutions, flourishing freedom of the press and encourages responsible public servants. The concepts of government transparency, access to public information, accountability and patriotism – embraced or rejected by government leaders and statesmen – are equipped with the “Invisible Hand” of Adam Smith that encourages corrupt government leaders to exert certain degrees of influence upon the information media and telecommunications and therefore have indispensable impact on Information and Media Literacy (IML). Furthermore, it is crucial to delineate that high level of corruption in a country run by kleptocrats and incompetent leaders generate a disturbing interference and impose, dictate consistent disinformation campaigns among the major national information media channels. As of today South – East European countries of Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo\*, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, suffer from rampant levels of government corruption and organized crime with an ever growing influence in: shaping public opinion, distortion of true facts, while hindering these nations from embracing true economic principles of Adam Smith, therefore swerving their respective “Invisible Hands” – at a national level - by injecting false information to the public opinion at large instead of infusing more money into the pockets of their humble countrymen that are succumbed to poverty.

On the other hand, President Enrique José Bolaños Geyer in the Republic of Nicaragua (2002-2007), strengthened the national economy, established strategic relations with the United States of America, encouraged free and open press, increased transparency in key public offices and accountability became the highlight of his administration. Twelve years later, under Daniel Ortega Saavedra Nicaragua has immersed into a nation with a rampant degree of media censorship [3], dozens of assassinated and incarcerated national journalists paired with President Ortega's repeated violations of human rights. [4] Nicaragua's President Ortega has allowed a handful of his trusted cronies to accumulate massive riches (privatization of the nation's mining and natural resources for the benefit of a few) while engaged in corruption affairs that heavily harm national economy and affect the overall wellbeing of the Nicaraguan people. Ortega's attempts to manipulate the international public opinion and his eccentric influences upon the national media according to his political interests, did not hold the Organization of American States (OAS) at bay. The OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, with the Support of United States, Canada, Paraguay and other Latin American nations; has undertaken significant measures to deflect, reestablish the democratic order in the Central American nation of Nicaragua; by encouraging free, democratic and open elections and strongly advocating for government accountability and Freedom of the Press in the country. [5]

In his book "Media Literacy and Media Ethics, The Only Way Out", Prof. Sabahudin Hadžialić states: "The essence and significance of media literacy is, primarily, reflected in the influence of the media on the major democratic processes. The media today influences the shaping of opinions, beliefs and attitudes. Although there are differences in the level of media influence, all researchers involved in the analysis of the media of the *sui generis* agree that the media have a tremendous impact on the society as a whole, and thus *eo ipso* on each individual and persons' narrow circle. In the moment when we understand the influence of the media, with the help of media literacy, we are on the right path to prevent dependence on the media – *apropos*, to use them as a tool for making judgments and attitudes within the creation of a healthy society of direct democratic consciousness and not the main dish of manipulation on the table of bad individual, or narrow group ones, intentions and interests."

As a South – East European intellectual with a rising global impact, Prof. Hadžialić, unlike his fellow peers, is cognizant of the persistent intersection that exists between Information Media networks and political groups; the latter have a tendency to always dominate the former. In this scholarly work, Prof. Hadžialić is generating a European discussion that strives to improve Media Literacy and strengthen the independence, accuracy and efficiency of Information Media. In this context, it is evident that in spite of his home country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, governed by some of the most politically ruthless Nazi-nationalists, there is a light of hope -

represented by Sabahudin Hadžialić – inspired by a genuine desire to reach economic prosperity and a free market system through strong democratic institutions and ensure respect for human rights; the very same principles that Adam Smith elaborated across Europe, over two centuries ago.

Professor Sabahudin Hadžialić's book reinstates the importance of Innovation in tertiary education; the European Union Institutions focused on the promotion of Lifelong Learning must focus on embracing and adapting some of the interactive concepts and notions unveiled on the following pages.

**References:**

[1] The Ninth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning 2019, held in Edinburgh, Scotland (United Kingdom) on 9-12 September 2019.

Introductory remarks for the opening panel discussion by Sir John Daniel.

[https://sirjohn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/20190909\\_Panel\\_Intro.pdf](https://sirjohn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/20190909_Panel_Intro.pdf)

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[2] <https://www.investopedia.com/updates/adam-smith-economics/>

[3] [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-035/19](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-035/19)

[4] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/26/letter-human-rights-watch-oas-about-nicaragua>

[5] [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-007/19](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-007/19)

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