

LEBANON | 11-12-13 MAY 2017

24TH COPEAM ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MEDITERRANEAN STORYTELLING: COMPLEXITIES, MEDIA RESPONSE AND PUBLIC OPINION

Media can deeply shape behaviours and public opinions. This responsibility is today particularly delicate, considering the complexity of the social, political and economic framework in the Mediterranean region, where epochal challenges like mass migrations, conflicts, extremisms and terrorism, financial crisis are intensely affecting citizens' lives as well as both national and regional dynamics.

This is why COPEAM devoted its 24th annual Conference - which took place in Beirut from 11 to 13 May 2017, upon kind invitation of Télé Liban - to the topic « Mediterranean storytelling: complexities, media response and public opinion ».

Around the topic **“Mediterranean storytelling: complexities, media response and public opinion”**, the 24th annual Conference of COPEAM took place in Beirut on 13 May 2017.

The main theme was introduced by **Helen Boaden**, BBC Radio former director, who offered a wide overview on how to counter not responsible journalism, to fight the manipulation of information and to chase after positive narrative choices.

She pointed out the concept of *“othering”*, meaning the human capacity to kill empathy instantaneously and turn human beings into incomprehensible and hateful creatures, not at all like “Us”, précising that it has not been invented by the Media, even though they have the power to foster or contain it.

In fact, propaganda has never disappeared and today it is on the rise, often fed on TV news channels and hyper-partisan news sites. Most of the negative coverage of the events comes from the web, since the stories spread online can be easily shared, specially when they raise identification, when they confirm our ideas and certainties, thus provoking the so called “confirmation bias” we all suffer from.

Helen Boaden, former BBC Executive. Fellow at the Shorenstein Centre on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University.

Helen spent 34 years at the BBC where she won several awards for her journalism before moving into senior creative and executive positions. She was Controller of Radio 4 (2000-2004); Director of BBC News (2004-2013) and Director of BBC Radio (2013-2017) when she sat on the BBC's Executive Board.

At BBC News, she was in charge of 8,000 staff at home and abroad and led the creation of the BBC's multimedia newsroom. She was also responsible for “myBBC”, a digital project that delivered personalized BBC content to audiences. Her research at Harvard focuses on the pressures facing traditional, impartial journalism.

In addition, people naturally remember shocking or negative stories much better than positive ones, even if they are flagged as factually dubious. Familiarity is what matters, given that, over time, the false information is remembered and reinforced. So, the important trick is to reduce the familiarity of the false claim and find out creative new ways to undermine fake facts. Among these, despite the speed of the news cycle - constantly pulling against the journalism disciplines and values - she mentioned data journalism and introduced the paradoxical idea of “Slow News”, resulting from journalists' capacity for “slow thinking” to get to the knowable truth, for more depth and analysis, for a greater testing of evidence, for facts to be given more context and significance. A trustable way to deliver information which has innovatively evolved in what BBC is proposing as “Stories”: highly personal digital films that offer slivers of insight into lives which never make the bulletins.

NEW MEDIA, NARRATION AND PUBLIC DEBATE: COMMUNICATION IN THE “POST-TRUTH ERA”

This was the focus made by the video journalist from AFP **Will Vassilopoulos**, who was assigned to the Greek island of Lesbos to cover the migration and refugee crisis in 2016. During the first panel on **New media, narration and public debate: communication in the “post-truth era”**, moderated by the President of Rai **Monica Maggioni**, he explained to the audience how overwhelming was to be there and the huge effort he had to make to maintain his journalistic integrity and to put aside his feeling of guilt before those people. So, he opted for covering those events at the core and in the purest form, through building a rapport and giving voice to the direct witnesses of not “fake”, but real, powerful stories.

The matter related to unreliable narration of the Euro-Mediterranean region was the core of **Ambassador Hatem Atallah’s** contribution to the debate. He gave an outline of the very recent survey on Intercultural Trends in the area launched by the Anna Lindh Foundation and revealing that our region is not a victim of a clash of civilisations, as it is often reported, but rather a ‘clash of ignorances’ based on historical stereotypes and the ‘culturalisation’ of conflicts promoted by some media and political narratives.

The survey – conducted across 13 countries and addressed to 13,000 interviewees with different age profiles – highlights people’s perception of the most critical aspects of life, among which migration, instability and conflict occupy a much lesser degree compared to others, while shared history, shared heritage and shared lifestyle result as the key qualities associated to the Region, along with education and youth programmes as efficient mechanisms to prevent conflicts and radicalization.



Magda Abu-Fadil from Media Unlimited tackled the issues of fake news, with examples of how photo-shopped pictures and distorted videos go viral on social media and may cause irreparable damage. For these reasons, professionalism and media ethics are essential to avoid disinformation, while journalists’ training is the most urgent answer to the need of a skilled professional media community that has a key role to play in the construction of the public debate.



CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM VS HATE SPEECH

Under the moderation of **Michel Touma**, editor-in-chief at L'Orient Le Jour, the second panel focused on **Constructive journalism vs hate speech**, as a necessity to overcome the frequent aggressive and intimidating behaviours in the Media, often encouraging social, political, cultural and religious divisions.

Therefore, speeches inciting or promoting hate and intolerance have to be considered as dangerous for democracy and countered within and outside the Media.

A fitting example in this sense was presented by **Anne Brasseur**, Ambassador of the *No Hate Speech Movement* promoted by the Council of Europe: an international online campaign open to all people aged at least 13 years and based on online communities of young people committed to debate and act against hate speech on the web.

Gilles Vanderpooten, Director of Reporters d'Espoirs, gave proof of an innovative journalism approach known as constructive journalism, which relies on the conviction that media can promote - through adopting positive solutions that involve the common people on a large scale - positive changes and encourage citizens to get informed and take action in the public life and debate.



A direct and personal witness on how the media professionals can rise awareness about main issues such as religious credo, women condition, youth and fight against common stereotypes was given by **Leila Ghandi**, French-Moroccan journalist and producer who, through her reportages and interviews, tries day by day to promote a different and positive image of the Mediterranean peoples in the media. She particularly highlighted the importance of positive journalism and quality information - via any traditional and new media - as antidotes to clichés and sensationalisms, and called for a proper use of language which so often contributes to confirm preconceptions of the *Other*.

PRESENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES

The panel was followed by a presentation of best practices, such as www.infomigrants.net, a news and information website for migrants resulting from a collaboration between three major European media: **France Médias Monde**, **Deutsche Welle** and the Italian press agency **ANSA**, with the financial support of the European Union. The portal is available in three languages - French, Arabic and English - and aims to counter misinformation among migrants and provide them with verified and balanced information during their journey towards a new life.

The plenary session closed with a reflection carried by the French **CSA (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiotvisuel)** on the treatment of information in crisis time, with a particular focus on the upstream treatment of terrorist risk and other essential aspects such as the respect of the human dignity, of the public order and of the public's protection, namely in a so competitive environment in which the all-news channels and the social media are proliferating unremittingly.

Finally, the role of the media and of the regulators in countering hate speech and discriminations and the actions favouring the social cohesion could represent some of the cooperation lines to be set up together in the forthcoming months by COPEAM and the MNRA (Mediterranean Regulatory Authorities Network), which the CSA belongs to.

NEW MEDIA, NARRATION AND PUBLIC DEBATE: COMMUNICATION IN THE “POST-TRUTH ERA”

MODERATOR



Monica Maggioni is an Italian journalist. Currently President of RAI and Vice president of the European Broadcasting Union, she has been a war correspondent, editor and editor in chief and director of Rainews24. After qualifying for the first Master school of Radio and TV Journalism (SGRTV) in Perugia, and a brief experience at Euronews, in Lyon, she starts her career as a crisis employee in 1996, for Tv7, the weekly magazine of Tg1 RAI. Between 2000 and 2002 she covers the most violent phases of the Intifada and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2003 she is the only Italian journalist embedded with the USA ground forces in Iraq during the second Gulf War. Since then she covers all major developments, reporting from Baghdad. In 2008 she moves to the USA to cover the presidential campaign that leads to the election of Barack Obama. She anchors Tg1 and several other programmes. In 2010 she is Editor of the foreign news team, and later of the Special Features section at Tg1. In 2010 and 2011 she produces two documentaries, both premiered at the Venice Film Festival: “Ward 54” – later awarded the Prix Mitrani in Biarritz – and “Out of Teheran”. In 2013 she is Editor in Chief of Rainews24, the all news channel of Rai. In August 2015 she is President of RAI. She has written three books: *Dentro la guerra* (Longanesi, 2005), *La fine della verità* (Longanesi, 2006), *Terrore Mediatico* (Laterza, 2015) and the essay *Twitter and jihad* (ISPI, 2015). She is an active member of the Administrative Board of ISPI (institute for the Study of International Politics), Milan, of the Italian Encyclopedia Institute Treccani, and of European Council on Foreign Relations.

SPEAKERS



Ambassador Hatem Atallah is the current Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation. Coming from a rich diplomatic background he was the Tunisian ambassador in several countries including US, UK, South Africa and Ethiopia. He was also the Permanent Representative to the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme), in addition he was appointed as Diplomatic Advisor to the Head of the Tunisian Government until February 2015. Ambassador Atallah participated in numerous summits of the African Union, United Nations and the Arab Maghreb Union and ministerial meetings adding up to his organization of many cultural activities: exhibitions of paintings, Cinema Days, musical performances, lectures on history and heritage, and debates on inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.



Will Vassilopoulos is a freelance Video Journalist primarily working for Agence France Presse (AFP). He holds a bachelor's degree in biology & sports sciences and a master's degree in exercise physiology from Manchester Metropolitan University. He started his journalism career in text for Japanese news agency Kyodo News before becoming a news anchor for an English bulletin at Greece's state broadcaster ERT. In 2011 he went behind the cameras and has covered topics such as Greece's economic crisis, political unrest in Egypt, Turkey and Romania, the conflict in Ukraine and most recently the migration crisis in Europe. He is the recipient of the 2016 Rory Peck Award for News for his film “Fear and Desperation: Refugees and Migrants Pour into Greece”.



Magda Abu-Fadil brings over 40 years of experience as a foreign correspondent and editor with international news organizations such as Agence France Presse and United Press International. Abu-Fadil was a Washington correspondent for Arab dailies Asharq Al-Awsat/Arab News, Al Riyadh/Al Riyadh Daily, Washington-based Defense News, was Washington bureau chief of Events magazine, and was Washington correspondent for London-based 8 Days magazine and The Middle East magazine. She taught journalism at her alma mater in Washington, trained at the International Center for Journalists there and years later founded the Journalism Training Program at the American University of Beirut. Abu-Fadil conducts seminars and workshops in English, Arabic and French for professional journalists across the Arab world, collaborates with international organizations on media projects, consults on media education and curricula, media literacy programs, speaks regularly at international conferences, publishes extensively on media issues, journalism education, and training, and blogs for the Huffington Post.

CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM VS HATE SPEECH

MODERATOR



Michel Touma begins his journalistic career in 1976, as an assistant to the correspondent for the Middle-East of RAI-Radiotelevisione Italiana.

In 1978, he joins the Lebanese French-speaking daily newspaper L'Orient Le Jour as a journalist. From 1998 to 2003, he is responsible for the Lebanese news. Then, he becomes Secretary General of the newsroom and Director of the daily newspaper. Since March 2015, he holds the post of Editor in chief for the Lebanese politics. Since 2000, he is also responsible for a course at the Sociology department of the University Saint-Joseph of Beirut.

He is also the author of different books and studies, among which one on the Hezbollah, one on the political confessionalism in Lebanon and one on the Arab spring, as well as of "Grégoire Haddad, évêque laïc, évêque rebelle" (L'Orient Le Jour publisher, 2012).

SPEAKERS



Leila Ghandi is a French-Moroccan award winning TV host journalist, producer, commentator, book author, speaker, and photographer. She has become a key figure of the media landscape. She has been ranked by Jeune Afrique Magazine among the 50 people with most influence in Morocco.

She produces and hosts a prime time television show that is viewed by over 2 million people each month and interviews people including Heads of State.

Through her expansive media presence she promotes the representation of free Arab Muslim women, women's empowerment, and aims to build and promote dialogue between cultures. Leila is also committed with NGOs, state agencies and international Foundations.

She is an inspirational speaker in locations such as the European Parliament and the UNESCO. She has been named opinion leader by the UN organization Search for Common Grounds, she has won media awards including the Anna Lindh Journalist Award, and awards for leadership and career achievement, including the Euro-Mediterranean Woman Success Trophy and the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from France. She has been chosen to represent North Africa at the exhibition Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa.

Leila holds a Masters degree from Sciences Po Paris, an Executive Program from Harvard, a B.A (Hons) in European Management from the University of Portsmouth and speaks five languages.



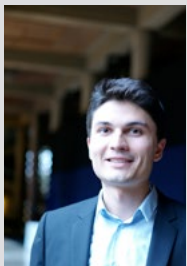
Anne Brasseur is a Luxembourgish politician who studied psychology in Tübingen and Mannheim before embarking on a political career in 1976.

Ms. Brasseur was involved in the local Council until she became Deputy Mayor of the City of Luxembourg.

Following on from this she became a Member of Parliament in Luxembourg and then held the post of Minister of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.

On 28 January 2014 Ms. Brasseur was elected as President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for a one-year renewable term, the second woman to hold this post.

Since January 2016 Ms. Brasseur is Ambassador to the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Campaign. She remains a Member of the Luxembourg Parliament and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



Born 1985, **Gilles Vanderpooten** created the collections of works "Conversations pour l'avenir" in which he wrote together with eclectic personalities such as Stéphane Hessel (Engagez-vous !), Jean-Claude Carrière (Utopie quand reviendras-tu ?), and also Philippe Starck (Impression d'ailleurs).

Involved in the associative milieu and in the entrepreneurship, he is driven by the research, the promotion of answers to the economical, social and environmental stakes, that engage our collective responsibility.

He created the Eidos Environmental Film Festival (during his studies at Audencia Nantes, in 2006), the Tour de France of the sustainable development (2008) and contributed to the foundation of the REFEDD-French Network of Students for the Sustainable Development (2007), of the NGO Indibio (2010) together with the explorer Jérôme Pasteur, and also the Appel de la jeunesse (2010).

Since 2012, he manages the NGO Reporters d'Espoirs, in which he launched in particular the programme "La France des Solutions", the exhibition "Solutions en lumière" at the Palais d'Iéna together with Philippe Starck and 60 artists (JonOne, Jef Aerosol, Raymond Depardon...).

He essentially works on the media (web, TV, press, radio, books...) as multipliers of constructive and inspiring initiatives. In France with Reporters d'Espoirs, at an international level with a network of media professionals (USA, UK, Denmark, Spain, Canada) that gather every year during the Transformational Media Summit (TMS).

His last book: "La France des solutions, these citizens that build the future", together with the explorer Jean-Louis Etienne, published by Arthaud in March 2017.

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24TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND
23RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF COPEAM
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Saturday 13 May 2017

09h30 **MEDITERRANEAN STORYTELLING: COMPLEXITIES,
MEDIA RESPONSE AND PUBLIC OPINION** Mistral 2

Introduction by key-note speaker: Helen BOADEN,
former director of BBC Radio

09h45 **NEW MEDIA, NARRATION AND PUBLIC DEBATE:
COMMUNICATION IN THE "POST-TRUTH ERA"**

Moderator: Monica MAGGIONI, President, RAI-Radiotelevisione Italiana
Hatem ATALLAH, Executive Director, Anna Lindh Foundation
Will VASSILOPOULOS, Video journalist, Agence France Presse
Magda ABU-FADIL, Director, Media Unlimited

11h00 **Coffee break**

11h15 **CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM VS HATE SPEECH**

Moderator: Michel TOUMA, Editor-in-Chief, L'Orient Le Jour
Leila GHANDI, Journalist, anchorwoman and producer
Anne BRASSEUR, Ambassador of the No Hate Speech Movement,
Council of Europe
Gilles VANDERPOOTEN, Director, Reporters d'Espoirs

12h30 **Presentation of best practices**

13h00 **Plural+ 2016 awarding ceremony**

