SPECIAL ISSUE OF *COMMUNICARE: JOURNAL FOR COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN AFRICA*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Strategic Communication in the African Context

The proposed special issue seeks to explore the developments, implications, opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of strategic communication. Artificial intelligence (AI) is defined broadly as "computational systems that involve algorithms, machine learning methods, natural language processing, and other techniques that operate on behalf of an individual" (Hancock et al., 2020, p. 89). It denotes "the ability of the machines to demonstrate cognitive skills in taking decisions, learn and perceive the environment, predict certain behaviour, and process written or spoken languages, among other skills" (Aceves-Fernandez, 2018).) AI and related technologies are increasingly permeating and changing every aspect of life including organizational communication processes. AI-enabled bots leverage natural language processing to mimic human behaviours, imitate or replace human users to perform certain communication functions in the digital sphere. Frequently operationalized as 'chatbots', 'conversational agents', 'communicative agents', 'embodied social bots', or simple bots, this software constitute a larger part of technologies that are increasingly automating the process and labour of communication (Reeves, 2016). This software is making inroads in organizational communication practice, influencing how organizations communicate and interact with their stakeholders. As Jakesch et al (2019) aptly observe, "we are now entering an era of AI-mediated communication where interpersonal communication is not only mediated by technology, but it is optimized, augmented, or generated by artificial intelligence." Following the increasing AI capabilities and their availability for business, new opportunities and challenges emerge. We invite contributions that shed light into this phenomenon. What does artificial intelligence mean for strategic communication in Africa? This special issue seeks both theoretical and empirical articles that address AI in the African context. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- AI in stakeholder communications
- Bots and autonomous agents
- Automated communication
- Big data and AI in corporate communications
- Automated stakeholder interaction/ engagement
- AI- enabled chatbots
- Conversational Agents in stakeholder communication,
- IA-based customer relationships
- Para-social interactions
- Public perception
- Digital divide
- Augmented stakeholder voice
- AI ethics

The papers can be theoretical or empirical. We can also include some narratives from the industry.

Guidelines for submission

Please send a 300-word abstract, contact details, affiliation and a short bio by 28 February 2023 to the special issue editor martin.ndlela@inn.no. Article processing fees for authors from African countries (excluding South Africa) will be waived. *Communicare's* APC policy can be accessed here https://journals.uj.ac.za/index.php/jcsa/apcs *Excess articles will be considered for publication in peer-reviewed edited volumes.

Guest Editor: Professor Martin N. Ndlela, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway/ Research associate, Department of Strategic Communication, University of Johannesburg, South Africa