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## Media systems and misinformation

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There has been significant advancement of scholarship on media systems over the last two decades. This provides resources to map and integrate media misinformation with studies of the evolution and configuration of media within countries and regions. However, bringing together misinformation and media systems also poses a series of challenges. Misinformation is enabled by digital media, engages transnational and transcultural flows, and involves a diverse range of actors and processes in its creation, circulation, and use, all of which are areas in which media systems scholarship has been found wanting. Misinformation thus provides a form of stress testing of media systems analysis, one which can help to identify more integrative and forward-facing approaches.

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### Media systems

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The analysis of media systems began as a mid-twentieth-century approach whose deficiencies were recognised and at least partly tackled in the early twenty-first century. The key change was to privilege empirical comparative analysis, as advanced by [Hallin and Mancini \(2004\)](#), over the previously heavily normative framework of [Siebert et al.'s \(1956\)](#) *Four Theories of the Press* (FTP). Hallin and Mancini proposed an analysis of the evolution and development of media in countries and regions, drawing upon existing historical studies. In a pivotal argument, they stated that the available data was insufficient for causal analysis, instead proposing to map the 'co-

presence' of variables to identify the 'characteristic patterns of relationship between system characteristics', (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 11). They examined four main media system variables:

- 1 The development of the media market (especially newspapers).
- 2 Political parallelism (alignment of media to political divisions).
- 3 Journalistic professionalism.
- 4 The degree and nature of state intervention in the media system.

They argued that the pattern of correspondences supported the identification of three different 'models' of Western media systems: a Mediterranean or polarised pluralist model, a North/Central European or democratic corporatist model, and a North Atlantic or liberal model. These were most distinctive in their historical formation, up to a high point of differentiation in the 1970s, and were now undergoing a gradual convergence, towards the liberal model of a predominantly commercial market media, with 'low' state involvement.

Both the book and its adoption have been subject to extensive review and critique (Humphreys 2012; Hardy 2012; Flew and Waisbord 2015). Here, the focus is on three areas of critique most relevant for misinformation analysis: nation-centrism and transnational/transcultural features, digital communications, and normativity. These are all elements in a broader questioning of the features of system-ness, claims for what constitutes media systems, and the choices of what to measure and how to assess their constituent parts. One powerful critique challenges the 'methodological nationalism' and 'container thinking' (Beck 2000) that posits the territorially bound nation-state as explanatory unit at the expense of processes of globalisation, transnational interaction, and transcultural flows (Couldry and Hepp 2012). Taking 'media system' as the primary unit of comparative research is challenged as methodologically flawed, inappropriate in aligning media cultures to nation-states and advancing

an inexact analytical unit (see [Flew and Waisbord 2015](#), 622). This overlaps with the second main problem area: digitalisation.

Although it was published a decade after internetisation, the digital barely features in [Hallin and Mancini \(2004\)](#). More significantly, the analysis is anchored around the formation and organisation of newspapers. [Hardy \(2008, 2012\)](#) argues the models must be revised if broadcasting is made the anchor since the public service media (PSM) systems of the UK, Canada, and Ireland are too divergent from those of the US, with its much lower investment and reach (Benson and Powers 2011). Yet satisfactorily addressing digital communications poses even greater challenges. Newspapers, radio, and television maintain strong ‘vertical’ linkages within nation-states, from jurisdiction to media production and primary audiences. These media have also always been transnational and transcultural, from the carriage and consumption of physical objects to the transfer of technologies, forms, and practices. Yet the ways mass media were organised and shaped at national and sub-national levels provided coherence for claims underpinning ‘media systems’ analysis. Both the increasing globalisation of electronic media from the mid-twentieth century and internetisation, challenge that framework by moving the ‘horizontal’ dimension of transcultural media flows from periphery to centre. Instead of remaining within either a nation-centric or ‘strong globalisation’ framing, a third approach emphasises both the continuing relevance and transformation of the national level within processes of global-local interaction ([Flew and Waisbord 2015](#)).

The third critical issue is normativity. This is the critique that Hallin and Mancini’s work partly disguises its structuring normativity. Their account of the US as a market liberal, pluralist media system is challenged for its disavowal of state-directed information management by an informal empire ([Curran 2011](#)). While dethroning US-centricity, their account privileges features of media professionalism and ‘independence’ associated with commercial media. Legacies of Western imperialism and cultural exchange are neglected. Instead, [Zhao \(2012\)](#), 145) calls for analysis of the ‘world’s media systems in their structural relationships – not simply in

comparative terms, which tend to flatten asymmetric power relations between the systems under comparison’.

To address these challenges, comparative media systems research should aim to integrate vertical dimensions (focused on political and media institutions within nations) with horizontal dimensions (incorporating cultural flows and exchanges of media forms, ideas, and practices). [Hardy \(2012\)](#) advocates expanding the scope of the media system variables outlined by Hallin and Mancini and adding two new ones. Their first variable, ‘the development of media markets’, is most amenable for extension to include the range of historical and contemporary communications. Both political parallelism and journalist professionalism need to be examined beyond their ‘mass/professional’ media presumptions to engage with contemporary and historical forms of citizens’/community media, citizen journalism, and professional/amateur hybridisations. A new, fifth variable is geocultural, to address the patterns of transcultural exchanges and factors shaping media markets and cultures, including geolinguistic and cultural affinities, diasporas, regionalism, and religion. A sixth category is media and civil society, inviting consideration of a broader range of social actors beyond organised politics. While certainly not exhaustive, these additions seek to balance the intended parsimony of the original variables with two interlinked ‘dimensions’ that incorporate the horizontal and transnational aspects of communications, cultural production, and exchange.

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## Misinformation

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Misinformation has several connected aspects that are especially pertinent to the discussion of media systems analysis. There are a variety and complex co-mingling of actors, multiplicity of communication channels, and multiplication of misinformation opportunities in the digital age. Even the most state-directed disinformation today usually involves a complex mix of state actors, para-state actors, and supporting actors whose directedness may be attenuated to untraceability

or be ‘self-generated’ in motivation. According to the EU Stratcomm Taskforce’s (Medium 2017) analysis of Russian propaganda:

Not only (are) big media outlets like Russia Today or Sputnik . . . deployed, but also seemingly marginal sources, like fringe websites, blog sites and Facebook pages. Trolls are deployed not only to amplify disinformation messages but to bully those . . . brave enough to oppose them. And the network goes wider: NGOs and “GONGOs” (government organised NGOs); Russian government representatives; and other pro-Kremlin mouthpieces in Europe, often on the far-right and far left. In all, literally thousands of channels are used to spread pro-Kremlin dis-information, all creating an impression of seemingly independent sources confirming each other’s message.

Silverman (2015, 15) describes a misinformation ecosystem with three key actors: official sources of propaganda, fake news websites, and individual hoaxers. To these can be added the full range of human and non-human intermediaries acting between communication sources and those accessing communications. This includes public relations and marketing agencies, lobbyists, and overt or covert campaigners, all illustrated by the disgraced, and subsequently disbanded, Bell Pottinger’s disinformation campaign to foment racial polarisation in South Africa on behalf of the Gupta business family. It also includes the non-human actants arising from human-computer interaction, from automated buying and selling of programmatic advertising to social bots creating the illusion of popularity for social media content to the algorithms shaping the selection, presentation, and ordering of circulating stories (Bayer 2019, 33–34). The range of actors and their interconnections makes for a more complex mapping of political actors and communications than is common in media systems analyses. Yet government agencies and political parties remain key actors, with one study of computational propaganda finding these actors were using social media to manipulate public opinion domestically in 48 countries studied, across democracies and dictatorships alike (Bradshaw and Howard 2018).

Misinformation fits well with some core elements of media systems analysis. There are significant ‘vertical’ dimensions linking the national political sphere, regulation, media, and publics. Much political ‘information disorder’ is designed to influence electorates, those with voting rights in respect of a territorially defined authority. There are strong links between voters and national media. A range of individual and institutional actors seek to influence national policies or are stakeholders whose actions or attitudes may influence policies. Finally, non-national actors with agendas to influence domestic politics provide much of the recent policy and research focus, including Russian and Chinese state and para-state misinformation and cyber-attacks (Bayer 2019).

Misinformation involves both ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ processes and flows; it occurs in the gaps identified by critiques of media systems analyses. However, while those critiques provide useful resources, they have rarely offered explicit strategies to reincorporate misinformation. In fact, misinformation has not been a strong theme across media systems analysis. While that may be explained, in part, by the rapid growth in attention to ‘fake news’ phenomena from 2016, the neglect of the longer histories of information disorder in the service of power is a more significant and revealing omission. While communication and power are major themes for Hallin and Mancini (2004), there is no index entry on misinformation or related terms. It is therefore necessary to draw on resources beyond those that more commonly populate media systems analysis.

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## **Misinformation and media systems: approaches and resources**

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### **Non-governmental organisations**

The first key resource emanates from beyond academia, in the work of non-governmental organisations measuring freedom of expression, the treatment of journalists, media plurality, and

other metrics. These offer a global ranking of countries and commonly identify laws and policies affecting reporting, media ownership and plurality indicators, and forms of ‘interference’ in media autonomy by state, political actors, media owners, and commercial interests. Various NGOs offer indexes of media freedom, inflected by normative values, such as the US-headquartered Freedom House, which traditionally privileged commercial non-state media. Others include Reporters sans Frontières (France), Article 19, and Index on Censorship (UK), as well as trade union groupings such as the International Federation of Journalists. Reporters sans Frontières’ (2020) World Press Freedom index ranks lowest states such as North Korea, China, the Philippines, Egypt, and Iraq, which denied the extent of the COVID-19 outbreak amongst their populations, harassed journalists, and suppressed scientific information.

References to these well-established NGO resources is surprisingly rare across media systems literature. However, there are limitations to these resources too. Their focus is on contemporary actions and not historical dimensions, they concentrate on state agency, and their contestable criteria produce reductive labels such as Freedom House’s tripartite classification of free, partly free, and not free. Such rankings tend to exonerate those marked ‘free’, to a degree that critical media scholars challenge (Curran 2011; Hardy 2014), and condemn those found wanting, yet in doing so, risk smoothing over the complexity and contradictions in performance. While many would agree on the qualities assessed, based on core human rights principles and values and the importance for policy action of doing so, there are many contexts in which policy action is aided by narrower comparability. Finally, the normativity that shapes all such measurements, while valuable and defensible, also needs to be subjected to much greater reflexivity and review. Media systems analysis can seek to examine broader interconnections than media freedom indexes and do so across synchronic and diachronic axes.

## **Supranational and intergovernmental organisations**

Supranational governmental organisations provide another rich source of data and analysis. These include the UN and its agencies such as UNESCO, supranational regulatory bodies like the ITU, intergovernmental authorities such as the European Union and SADEC, and political and human rights bodies like the Council of Europe. These organisations have varying forms of regulatory power but have in common a policy orientation so their relevant work on misinformation tends to combine data collection, research, legal-regulatory analysis, and policy proposals (Bayer 2019). For example, the EU's high-level expert group on fake news and online misinformation (European Commission 2018) made proposals concerning transparency, media literacy, empowering users and journalists, safeguarding European news, and promoting research.

## Academic research

Livingstone (2012, 421) draws on Kohn's (1989) framework identifying four types of cross-national comparative research: ideographic, hypothesis-testing, system-sensitive, and transnational. The first three focus on the nation-state as unit; the fourth, transnational, treats countries as the locus for global trends. To date, comparative studies of misinformation fall mainly into ideographic and transnational categories. An example of the latter is Vosoughi et al.'s (2018, 1146) study finding false news stories on Twitter 'diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly' than true stories. There has been some development of hypothesis-testing but negligible system-sensitive, 'media systems' research to observe and explain 'how and why nations vary systematically' (Livingstone 2012, 419).

The vast majority of studies have been ideographic, single country studies, mostly of the US, providing resources for comparability and system analysis but not explicitly combining both. A recent study noted that outside the US, 'we lack even the most basic information about the scale of the problem in almost every country' (Fletcher et al. 2018, 1). This is being remedied by an increasing number of cross-national studies, but most focus on discrete phenomena for the



purposes of comparison. For instance, [Fletcher et al. \(2018\)](#), 7) examine false news websites in France and Italy, finding that ‘false news has more limited reach than is sometimes assumed, in line with US research’. Yet this short study does not compare the findings cross-country, much less relate these to system-level features.

A comparative study of fact-checking does incorporate hypothesis testing: namely, that high-source transparency will correspond to high journalistic professionalism and that countries with low trust in media will have fact-checkers who provide comparatively ‘higher levels of source transparency’. The study concludes ([Humprecht 2019](#), 14):

Although online disinformation is a global phenomenon, practices of correction still seem to be shaped by national news cultures – in newsrooms as well as in independent organizations. Consequently, from a user’s perspective, the possibility of coming across transparent, professional fact-checking depends on the country in which one lives.

More commonly, misinformation is addressed in relation to discrete aspects of media performance, politics, or policies and usually with a focus on two of those three domains, although with recognition of their interconnectedness. Here, misinformation fits within research specialisms, such as news coverage, journalistic practices and cultures, and the relationship between media structures and content and the public affairs knowledge of citizens ([Aalberg and Curran, 2012](#); Esser et al. 2012). More recent studies examine how the production and circulation of misinformation is shaped by the economic drivers of platformisation and the challenge and opportunities of monetisation across online publishing and social media. This includes studies of the commercial dynamics driving politically oriented misinformation, whereby ‘political disinformation succeeds because it follows the structural logic, benefits from the products, and perfects the strategies of the broader digital advertising market’ ([Ghosh and Scott 2018](#)). The digital advertising model has rewarded maximising clicks and undermined the value and resources for quality reporting while social media gateways have disaggregated news

content from suppliers and retained advertising revenues. Misinformation has been aided by the growth of programmatic advertising, automating ad buying, and placement processes (Bakir and McStay 2018). In addition, political marketers have used behavioural advertising and micro-targeting, with studies (Bayer 2019, 33) showing

many UK political parties use third-party digital campaigning platforms (such as NationBuilder), which enables parties to match voters' contact information with the data on Facebook and Twitter . . . [while] political micro-targeting was also reported in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, although to a lesser degree.

While media systems research has closest affinities with studies of media institutions and production, misinformation analysis includes rich resources comparing users' communication activities. WhatsApp is used more widely across Southern than Northern countries: with nearly 60 percent in Brazil in discussion groups with strangers and nearly a fifth discussing politics, compared to 2 percent in the UK (Newman et al. 2019, 2020). More broadly, studies of misinformation examine digital materialities, socio-cultural and psycho-cognitive aspects that are expanding areas of comparative communication research but barely incorporated into 'media systems' literature. Disinformation is often intentionally affective and thrives on the generation of feelings of superiority, fear, and anger (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017; Bakir and McStay 2018). Those are mobilised by a mix of loosely affiliated or tightly structured networks, such as across the alt-right (Lewis 2018) to sustain racism and racial violence, misogyny, and other forms of hate speech. This makes studies of gender, sexuality, race, and the communicative resources used by or against all minorities of vital importance. Again, that is reflected across comparative communication research (Esser and Hanitzsch 2012) but not yet integrated into 'system sensitive' media systems analysis.

Greater advance has been made examining the relationship between misinformation flows and key variables concerning the political system; patterns of media and information availability; levels of trust across politics, media and sources of authority; and user profiles,

including demographics, access, education levels, literacy, and usage patterns across legacy media, social media, and search. For instance, studies suggest that ideologically motivated disinformation is more prevalent in polarised societies with low trust in media (Humprecht 2019). Audience research conducted across the US, the UK, Spain, and Finland found low trust in media was common but varied (Nielsen and Graves 2017, 6):

[L]ess than half of online news users in the US and the UK think you can trust most of the news most of the time. While the figures are higher in Spain and in Finland, very large parts of the population still have limited trust in news in general, and – strikingly – only somewhat higher trust in the news that they themselves use.

Trust illustrates the significance of another key resource. Commercial-sector data analysis or large-scale surveys usually exceed the capacity available through university-funded research. The Edelman (2020) Trust Barometer has charted falling trust in media worldwide, although with differences between countries and among media vehicles and platforms and class position, finding a widening gap in trust levels between the more affluent and general populations. This is also an example of integration, with Edelman's research widely cited by academics. In the US, overall positive trust in media was only around half (53 percent) in 1997, yet had fallen to less than a third (16 percent) in 2016 (Newman and Fletcher 2017, 7). In research conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, a corporate-sponsored academic research centre, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and Spain were at the higher end of trust in media, and the US, France, and Greece had comparatively low trust scores, with Australia and the UK in between. Newman and Fletcher (2017, 26) conclude, '[t]he reasons for lack of trust in the media are remarkably consistent across countries. Bias and agendas are rife and are perceived to have worsened with the advent of the internet'.

Trust and confidence in journalistic processes are associated with journalism that supports claims with evidence, conducts and highlights fact-checking, and is transparent about

sources. There is evidence of growing distrust in the commercial bias in news. Newman and Fletcher (2017, 24) report that '[a]nother reason for mistrust identified by our respondents is the belief that media companies are distorting or exaggerating the news to make money'.

The reshaping of news for commercial agendas, including brand-sponsored content, native advertising, content recommendation, and clickbait, is being examined, yet there is a need for integrative studies encompassing sources of misinformation across political and commercial speech, one of many key tasks for future research.

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## **Future directions: integrating misinformation and media systems**

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There has been much debate on the merits of pursuing media system typologies or instead focusing on comparing the characteristics of similar institutions and inter-institutional relations (Humphreys 2012; Flew and Waisbord 2015). For misinformation, the latter course appears to have been favoured, although with a focus on transcultural processes and transnational institutions. The case for a media systems approach is well-made by Flew and Waisbord (2015, 632):

Media systems are points of convergence of political, economic, social, and cultural forces grounded in the local, the national, and the global.

They should be seen neither as self-contained entities nor as extensions or epiphenomena of global developments. Instead, we should think of 'media systems' as analytical units to understand how and where multiple dynamics intersect as well as the comparative weight of actors and institutions in shaping the media.

The ambition for a more effective analysis of misinformation and media systems will be to enhance dialogue across work centred on both, within a broader, revising approach. Here, three key areas are discussed: actors and processes, governance, and comparative normativity.

## **Actors and processes**

Media systems research draws heavily on political science and the study of governing institutions, political actors, and parties. This is indispensable for analysis of states' activities, from engineering and directing to combatting misinformation. The mapping of COVID responses, discussed earlier, illustrates the range well. Authoritarian-populist governments (Brazil, Turkey, Russia, Hungary) have weakened non-compliant media institutions, alongside the undermining of civil society, but have been countered more effectively in pluralist democracies (US, UK, India). More authoritarian systems have exercised command and control (Saudi Arabia, Iran, China), while corporatist democratic systems in Western Europe have exercised information management. However, for misinformation, it is vital to accommodate a much wider field of action. Around each of the main actor categories that have shaped conventional political sociology there are a plurality of actor-types and increasing blurring and hybridisation, which a synthesising media system analysis must address, including AI-generated content from private and state-sponsored bot accounts. Agencies of control over communications that need to be encompassed are state; para state actors; state media; public service media; private media publishers; platform owners and operators; civil society media/radical-alternative media; pro-am publishers; open, 'public' social communications; and intergroup 'private' communications.

## **Governance**

In expanded form, media systems analysis is best placed to pursue connections between regulation, the role of the state, the organisation of markets, and the ever-changing institutional

arrangements of media and their performance. Those are all matters that are addressed by contemporary governance analysis, conceived as encompassing ‘all the collective and organizational rules that govern the organization of media systems’ (de’Haenans et al. 2010, 132). Media governance is ‘a framework of practices, rules and institutions that set limits and give incentives for the performance of the media’ (Puppis 2010). While governance has been adopted to broaden media policy analysis, it offers a means to integrate analysis of media practices, performance, and policy. In its contemporary form, governance analysis highlights the importance of more informal processes of rule-making such as amongst professionals in networks and the ‘house rules’ of firms or teams, as well as those shaped by interacting agencies from service users to protestors and by non-human actants.

Ginosar (2013) advances the case to use governance as ‘an analytical framework for the classification and typology of communication systems’ and proposes ‘a continuum on which different such systems are placed according to their governance types’. He identifies forms of ‘social control’ from liberal to authoritarian in political systems and corresponding levels of protection afforded to the ‘independence’ of journalism, acknowledging that ‘[b]etween these two distinct types, there is a variety of social control forms (governance types) that enable the existence of many types of communication systems’. However, this system-level typology risks reproducing problems of reification that were the legacy of FTP. Rather than identify media systems with macrolevel features of governance alone, it is preferable to analyse the multidimensional forms of governance of communications and how these relate to forms of governance within the political economic system overall. Reducing governance to a singularity risks smoothing out the internal complexity and contradictions that often are the focus of critical scholarship, such as the co-existence in ‘liberal’ systems of both high ‘rational legal authority’ in regulatory proceduralism and high policy influence from commercial interests and lobbyists. Governance analysis can help bridge the national/transnational division by inviting consideration of the multiple agencies, processes, and modes of rule-making across contemporary communications.

Governmental action on misinformation is intelligible across the political system spectrum of authoritarian to democratic, subdivided into neoliberal and regulated economic systems (Curran and Park 2000). Authoritarian governments have legislated against ‘fake news’ to shore up information control, especially where media are instruments of state. Germany’s Network Enforcement Act 2017, requiring social media platforms to block ‘fake news’, hate-inciting, or illegal content, illustrates action by democratic governments within a human rights legal framework. Several authoritarian populist governments have used various tools to attempt to discipline media that operate within more pluralist and formally democratic legal-regulatory systems, such as Bolsonaro in Brazil and Orban in Hungary.

The arguments made so far identify the need for an expansive political economic analysis conducted to incorporate socio-cultural, historical, and psycho-social dimensions. More comparative data gathering is needed before synthesising ‘system sensitive’ perspectives can be advanced, but that must be a guiding aspiration. Misinformation is most common in polarised political systems; is most prevalent among domestic political actors and supporters during electoral campaigning; and correlates with high public concern about misinformation, low trust in media, significant bypassing of professional news, and unreliable news circulation via social media (Bradshaw and Howard 2018; Fletcher et al. 2018). The key reason to integrate misinformation into media systems analysis is that identifying interconnections across ‘system’ variables is vital for analysis, evaluation, and policy proposals. That interconnectedness is demonstrated by questions concerning the degree to which resources to counter misinformation are present and effective alongside those that generate it. How is the discursive space for misinformation ordered across different systems in relation to different media channels and spaces? How is the performance of those channels shaped by governance arrangements, practices, and cultures?

In countries with strong PSM, researchers have found positive ‘spill over’ effects on private sector news journalism (Aalberg and Curran 2012). For misinformation, such interconnections need to be explored throughout communications resources and activities, within

and across media systems. In a six-country study of online news diversity, [Humprecht and Esser \(2018\)](#) find that the UK, Germany, and France showed the greatest diversity, while the US achieved the lowest rates. They conclude that ‘media systems that financially support strong public service-oriented news outlets are most likely to create media discourses that meet the normative goal of diversity in voices, backgrounds, and perspectives’ [Humprecht and Esser \(2018\)](#), 1841). Yet PSM generally face falling audiences and revenue and calls from right-wing populist movements to scrap license fees.

Following [Sen’s \(1999\)](#) powerful linking of media, democratic rule, and the cultivation of capabilities, a compound hypothesis is that the more democratic is a media system, the more resources are available for challenging information disorder. However, to proceed, both clarity in measurement and a comparative normative approach are needed. The media systems conceptual apparatus is strongly rooted in Western liberal discourses of state ‘intervention’, media ‘independence’, and so on. The challenges include building an architecture in which normativities can be espoused yet scrutinised for their particularities and application to create a critical, reflexive discursive space that is more capable of engaging subaltern understandings ([Zhao 2012](#)). That is especially important as so much misinformation cultivates stories of imperialism and nationhood, identity, and religion and mobilises cleavages of class, race, gender, sexuality, age, political affiliation, and cultural values. Media systems analysis needs to connect with feminist, critical race, postcolonialist, and other perspectives whose insights have rarely been foregrounded, again part of the ‘stress test’ that misinformation provides.

Integrating misinformation and media systems can be organised into the six media system variables discussed earlier.

## 1 Media markets

Analysis of all communication channels; plurality of supply, exposure diversity, usage.



Media publishers, marketing communications, platforms, communication intermediaries, fact-checking services, automation across communications.

## 2 Political parallelism

Political system variables; political-media relations; political communication and information management.

## 3 Professionalisation (Media governance 1)

Industry regulation (self/co); professional and trade body standards; informal rule-making and behaviours across communication services and users.

## 4 Role of the state [Media governance 2]

Laws and policies affecting information and communications.

## 5 Geocultural

Platforms; circuits of communication across affiliated communities; diasporic communications; transnational and transcultural flows; regional dynamics (supranational and subnational).

## 6 Media and civil society

Civic communications; protest action; education and media literacy; fact-checking.

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# Conclusions

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This chapter argues that misinformation and media systems should be integrated but that the latter must adapt to do so. The value of a 'media system' is not to advance a reified and reductive account of selected features for the purpose of creating taxonomies but to create a framework for examining the connections between aspects of communications within and across territories. 'A system is not an entity with a fixed set of characteristics, but a pattern of variation' (Hallin and Mancini 2017, 167). The value of system-ness is in pursuing analysis of how elements interact. Generalisation at the level of system is a heuristic, part of a necessary tension between the ideographic (historical, institutional, cultural) and classificatory (system) that continually interact and correct each other. Media systems analysis pursues, and privileges, sets of connections between politics, public media, and governance, within the wider arena of comparative analysis. This chapter argues that misinformation poses, in acute form, various underlying challenges to media systems analysis: the handling of the transnational and transcultural, the range and complexity of digital communications, the multiplicity of actors and processes. Misinformation stress tests media systems analysis. This chapter also suggests how these may be incorporated both within and beyond the schema of variables advanced by Hallin and Mancini and by expanding governance analysis and comparative normative evaluation. The reconfigurations arising from bringing together misinformation and media systems research can hopefully strengthen how this vital, synthesising work is pursued.

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