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Infoxication: 21ST Century's *horror vacui*

Infoxicación: el *horror vacui* del siglo XXI

Horror vacui is a Latin phrase meaning «terror of the void». In psychology it can become a condition of the mind called cenophobia: pathological fear of emptiness.

Cenophobia derives from two Greek words: kenós, emptiness and phobos, fear.

In art history, the *horror vacui* is related to the need to completely cover the empty surface, the space, the blank paper of a work. This aesthetic trend expands in architecture, decoration, design… The Baroque, and its formal excesses are commonly identified with this idea, but not only.

The *horror vacui* has been experienced at different times and throughout the history of human communication and has been exacerbated at the end of the last century, extending into the first twenty years of the twenty-first century.

The baroque eclecticism and post-modernism of the 80s are another common example, but it is especially the hyper-connectivity of the internet era, fully established in the 90s with the amplification and expansion of social networks, which have definitively charged the physical space and the ether of images, words, sounds and have led us to what the philosopher Gillo Dorfles called in his penultimate book «the (in) civilization of noise» (Dorfles, 2008).

This phenomenon of *horror vacui* (not only present in art, but, as we said, present in all forms of communication, even informative) has given rise to hyper information, even a poisoning one, becoming toxic: the so-called infoxication, a kind of information overload.

In everyday life, too, an eagerness to constantly communicate everything is growing all the time: to photograph and to write everything all the time. The culture of Instagram, Snapchat, selfie, Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter; an irrepressible desire to produce and reproduce images, sounds, texts, in an unbridled way, to save and send each image, each word.

The phenomenon of *horror vacui* does not only affect individuals, but also companies, public bodies determined to generate, retrieve, classify and store data: the era of big data. The era of uninterrupted communication, of constant crowding. An excessive production.

In economics it could be called overproduction. The manufacturing surpluses and at the same time the excess garbage that is generated seem to be the results of an over-acting of man, an excess of activity, of a flight forward, of *horror vacui*. Just as the overload of information has led to phenomena such as the multiplication of fake news, in which the excess of information produces an inability to process it, to verify it and therefore to discern the true from the false, or less known phenomena such as data garbage, the nemesis of Big Data, data lakes, full of information, emails, audios, videos… the so-called Dark Data, dark data that according to a study by IBM (2015) would reach by 2020 the 93 % of the data that is generated and collected, and remain inactive.

In issue 17 of the journal *Comunicación y Hombre*, numerous studies are gathered on the well-known infoxication, but also on phenomena and human experiences related to excessive communication, which we could call «common-xication» and the development of *horror vacui* in any aspect of the sharing between people in which the number of followers, likes, retweets, traffic, sales, merits prevails, compared to the quality and depth of them.

In this sense, the work of the researcher José Manuel Domínguez de la Fuente approaches the study of the loss of self-knowledge and introspection due to the excess of communication.

For his part, the author James G. Breiner from United States provides his vision of how the press should fight for its credibility in the face of info-toxication.

Jacobo Herrero-Izquierdo, Pablo Berdón-Prieto, Itziar Reguero-Sanz y Virginia Martín-Jiménez, from the University of Valladolid, present a study on the position and opinion of journalism university students in Madrid facing the overabundance of information about the pandemic, the infodemic and the fake news.

The authors Inmaculada Martí-Herrera and Juan Pablo Micaletto-Belda also face the study of opinions of university communication students in the face of fake news in a context that provides a great capacity for access to numerous sources of information and yet dominated by misinformation, infoxication and the post-truth call.

Researcher Gonzalo Sarasqueta from Buenos Aires makes an approach on the change in political communication techniques in the era of infoxication and interruption, the passage from storytelling to storydoing.

The false synonyms of disinformation and infoxication in the face of the information strategy of the European Commission are the focus of the study of authors Eva Ramón Reyero and Ascensión Gil Martín.

The author Noemí Morejón Llamas provides a vision about the infodemic and the information dependence on the ethical function of Andalusian public television during the Covid 19 crisis.

Social networks as the perfect place for the breeding ground of uninterrupted and excessive communication among young people is evident in the analysis of researchers Diego Botas, Pablo Garrido and Juan Gabriel García on university students and social networks, a study on the perception of privacy and its management.

Dr. Ana Slimovich from Argentina analyzes the constant flow of information and the official discourse and internet users during the pandemic, especially on social networks, which has

also led to the presence of inaccurate or false news in the case of the global pandemic and mediated politics in the Argentine presidential communication and its repercussions on Twitter in the first half of 2020.

The complex difficulty of discerning fake news due to the constant flow of information and infoxication in the field of international relations is centered in the study of Dr. Javier Jaspe on Russian information operations in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Finally, it is the contemporary flight from emptiness, the *horror vacui*, which the study of the researcher José Antonio Jimenez focuses on and on emptiness and noise, exemplified in cinema in the use of framing, composition and space, as essential elements in the construction of the existential discourse of the filmmaker Hou Hsiao-hsien.

These studies on the excess of communication, on infoxication and *horror vacui* coexist with other investigations on topics of current interest such as the work of doctors Antonio Ramos and Jesús Diaz on the journalistic treatment of divorce in the Spanish press.

Dr. Alberto Navarro presents from Mexico his text on visual studies. Archeology and scopic regime.

The relationship between regional awareness and media relevance. An analysis of the representation of autonomous communities in Spanish cybermedia is a work by researchers Roberto Gelado Marcos and Belén Puebla Martínez.

The discussion on digital citizenship is addressed by researchers Salomé Sola and Francisco Sierra Caballero in their article on the place of culture in the era of cognitive capitalism.

Doctor Carmen Fragero contributes the communicative fact in literature in one of the most significant examples of Don Quixote, proposing that Alonso Quijano el Bueno is truly dying, and is truly sane.

Andrea Sotelo-Carreño from Colombia contributes with an investigation on the narratives of indigenous people and peasants in the context created in La Cocha and Tota lagoons.

The author Manuel García Borrego proposes a comparative investigation in his article on how models of professional practices are used for journalism students in Spain and Norway.

Doctors Rosalía Guerrero and Jesús Enciso Gonzáles from Mexico present their work that shows how subjectivities are structured through the internet and smartphones and urban imaginability is shared by virtual means, using Pachuca de Soto as an example of the aesthetics of simulation and excess.

A society on the edge of emptiness is shown in the work of Dr. Leopoldo Tillería who, from Chile, confronts the work of Ge-stell, *simulacrum* and matrix: devices of meaning in Heidegger, Baudrillard and Holzapfel.

Social networks as a place of barriers and opportunities for the communication of social responsibility and the management of sustainability is the center of the research presented by doctors Albert Monfort and José María Más that provides an updated review on these issues and opens future lines of investigation.

The reviews present an overview of recent publications on hot topics such as that of Dr. Eduardo Torres on *The long march towards quality regulation in official advertising in Mexico*; that of Dr. Yagarí Brian on *Imagined Technologies*; that of doctor José Ángel Agejas on *Surviving fear*; that of Dr. María Solano on *The Common Experience*; that of Dr. Patricia Vargas on *What to do when the Internet burns: crisis management of online communication* or finally that of researcher Ivana Ruiz on pandemic and disinformation.

In issue 17 of the journal *Comunicación y Hombre* the covid-19 pandemic could not be present since inevitably it has also influenced communication and precisely in the prosperity of a phenomenon linked to infoxication, which is that of infodemic.

In the next issue 18 of Comunicación y Hombre, in which the Global Village will be the protagonist, the pandemic will also inevitably appear, not only because unfortunately we will have to live with it throughout 2021, but because it is closely linked, with the transits, with the media in terms of transportation, and in terms of vehicles, unfortunately for globalized diseases.

Even so, despite the presence of the negative consequences of globalization, in number 18, above all, we will speak of a global village in the sense of sharing ideas and human exchanges of emotions, information, through images, sounds and words that will make you think again of the Global Village anticipated by Marshall McLuhan (1962) in the positive aspects.

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