Editorial

The Global Media and Information Literacy Week: Moving Towards MIL Cities

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The Global Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Week commemorates the progress in achieving "MIL for all" by aggregating various MIL-related local and international events and actions across different disciplines around the world.

The MIL Global Week 2018, 24 to 31 October, was marked by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in collaboration with various organizations including the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the Global Alliance for Partnership on MIL (GAPMIL), the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the International Association of School Libraries (IASL), and the UNESCO-UNAOC University Cooperation Programme on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID).

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The Feature Conference of the MIL Week 2018 was held as the 8th MILID Conference under the theme of "Media and Information Literate Cities: Voices, Power, and Change Makers" from 24 to 25 October 2018, at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania. Thanks to the Department of Public Communications of Vytautas Magnus University, this three-day conference featured keynotes, panels, roundtables, workshops, movie screenings, and exhibition.

The MIL Week Youth Agenda Forum was also held at the University of Latvia in Riga, Latvia on 26 October. These events have fostered further collaboration between the Nordic countries, the Baltics, and other regions of the world.

The youth as digital natives not only use the internet more but at an earlier age, and over multiple platforms. Hence, the "young generation" received particular attention this year both within the framework of the Youth Agenda Forum and the Feature Conference, and not merely as the chief target audience of MIL training but as key actors and change-makers in favor of achieving media and information literate societies. Indeed, the young generation has been recognized as a particular target group in UNESCO's agenda for the coming years for their roles "as agents of change, social transformations, peace and sustainable development", which was the subject of a UNESCO Operational Strategy (2014-2021).

The MIL Week 2018 prompted that smart sustainable cities should also be media and information literate, and echoed with World Cities Day.

The UN resolution 68/239 adopted by the General Assembly on 27 December 2013 designated 31 October as World Cities Day in an attempt to endorse the international community's interest in global urbanization, provide a channel for international collaboration, and contribute to sustainable urban development.

The general theme of World Cities Day is "Better City, Better Life", and the theme for 2018 was "Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities".

Since urbanization provides the potential for new forms of social inclusion, Urban October was launched by the UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) in 2014 to underline the world's urban challenges.

In correlation with the UN-Habitat's mission, Sustainable Development Goal 11, within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is dedicated to sustainable cities and communities, and formulates the ambition to make human settlements and the concept of cities (whether as megalopolises, metropolises, or towns) "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

Building upon the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/70/1, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on 25 September 2015 with the

motto of "transforming our world". Represent a paradigm shift in the international policies on development cooperation, at its heart of this Agenda are 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets, which address the global challenges we encounter as an urgent call for action and provides a shared blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for people and the planet.

Moreover, the HABITAT III, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016 adopted the New Urban Agenda, which aims to set the pace of dealing with the challenges of urbanization and the course towards sustainable urban development by reconsidering the way in which cities are planned, managed and inhabited.

The digital revolution had a considerable impact on and has increased efficiency and quality of cities around the world in terms of transportation, security, healthcare, civil society, entertainment, and dispensed new social, cultural and economic opportunities.

MIL cities, through which the evolving concept of smart cities is fortified, enable citizens through creative means by developing and drawing on their capabilities to engage more creatively and make the most of media, information, technology, and the practical opportunities a connected city can provide.

A priority is to find groundbreaking approaches to MIL education in cities by building bridges between the existing community and the growing number of other stakeholders.

In addition to the SDG 11, which prompts to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, the development of smart media and information literate cities is also within the framework of the SDG 4 that endorses inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities and equipping locals with the tools to devise innovative solutions to global problems, the SDG 5, that builds upon enhancing the use of enabling technology, particularly information and communications technology, to promote women's empowerment under the MDGs and urges gender equality is not merely a fundamental human right, but in fact an essential foundation for peace, prosperity and sustainability, and the SDG 16, that promotes the significance of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and pave the way for providing access to justice for all and building effective and accountable institutions at all levels.

Hence, the MIL Week 2018 commemorated MIL and intercultural dialogue with the objective of urging the MIL in cities and underlining the necessity for reinvigorating global, regional and local partnerships

for promoting universal user-centered MIL and the sustainable MIL development and informed citizenry in comprehensive and sustainable information/knowledge societies.

The "UNESCO Chair on Cyberspace and Culture: Dual-Spacization of the World" (UCCC) in an attempt to commemorate the MIL Week as one of many events around the world organized the "Media and Information Literacy Seminar: Media and Information Literate Cities" on 29 Oct 2018 at the Faculty of World Studies of University of Tehran, Iran in collaboration with University of Tehran, the Iranian National UNESCO Commission, the Center for Cyberspace Research Policy Center (CRPC), the Iranian World Studies Association (IWSA), and the Institute for North American and European Studies (INAES).

The keynote speakers of this seminar were included Saied Reza Ameli– Professor of Communications, and the director of the UNESCO Chair on Cyberspace & Culture, and Cyberspace Policy Research Center – who delivered his speech on "Internet Literacy and Smart Citizen" and elaborated on the significance of internet and information literacy, Hojatollah Ayoubi, Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, who discussed "Political Necessities for Smart Life", Mohammad Reza Saeid Abadi, Former Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, scrutinized "Media and Information Literacy in the Mirror of Critical Mind and Ethical Journalism", and Shaho Sabbar, an expert in Mass Communication and Digital Media, whose speech was entitled "Logic is Learned and Our Children are Not Learning it".

Given that the people's access to information, particularly social networks, can provide them with the opportunity to be better connected, build better networks, find opportunities, create and expand their own businesses, and make informed decisions, information access increase levels of intellectual and social capitals.

Indeed, it is of paramount significance to facilitate the development of people's essential competence to navigate the complex and dynamic social and technological networks, which assist societies to contemplate and take measures more insightful and critically.

Since the MIL can facilitate grasping and translating digital opportunities into the achievement of various policy goals such as education, healthcare, and social development, to be truly sustainable and move towards positive and sustainable changes, smart cities must also be MIL cities.

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