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Call for Papers for the special issue of the
Media Studies Journal (Medijske studije)

POLITICAL SCANDALS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Abstract submission deadline (up to 500 words): **1 March 2023**

Notification of abstract acceptance: **15 March 2023**

Full paper submission deadline: **1 June 2023**

Special issue publication date: **December 2023**

A multitude of political scandals came to public attention in recent years all around the world, involving all kinds of nepotism, sexual misdemeanor and harassment, coercion and abuses of power. To name just a few examples, the scandals leading to the downfall of former British prime minister Boris Johnson, the sheer disregard for political hallmarks, namely lack of peaceful transfer of power by populists, such as Donald Trump or Jair Bolsonaro, or a new bundle of offshore-leaks, including tax-evasion schemes of not only the rich and powerful but also numerous key political figures, show that political misconduct is one of the main issues in media coverage on a global scale. In this regard, scandals of less severity, similar to the concept of "talk scandals" (Ekström & Johansson, 2008), are becoming more prominent in public discourse about politics as well. In some instances, such provocative acts are strategic forms of "self-scandalization" (Haller, 2013) to increase attention for controversial political messages which gain prominence in discourse through media coverage and engagement in social media (Kleiman, 2019). Populist politicians, notably right-wing populists, have been especially skilled in using scandalous behavior and deliberate provocations to instrumentalize media coverage and trigger public attention (Maurer, 2022). On the other hand, there is evidence that the emergence of scandals, especially corruption scandals, may help the prospects of populist parties (Foresta, 2020).

In this light, politics appears to have entered a mode of perpetual crisis and growing dysfunctionality. The rapid succession of scandals may be a symptom of this crisis, while being its catalyst at the same time. With respect to this very broad diagnosis, we must first ask what defines a political scandal and, second, how such scandals are relevant for a polity and public discourse. According to Thompson (2000), political scandals in modern societies are mediated through journalism. Some scholars argue that scandal coverage is useful for democracies because it may repair dysfunctions (Hondrich, 2002), as outrage may be an instrument for societal change (Hessel, 2010). Other researchers claim that scandals and outrage are often constructed with strategic interests by public players and may have harmful effects on societies (Kepplinger, 2020).

A cause of a number of political scandals in the last decades can be attributed to overall transformations of media and journalism in the digital age. On the one hand, technological infrastructure and digital tools give reporters new means to investigate political scandals that deal with substantial misconduct, such as corruption and other phenomena of power abuse. On the other hand, we can observe how social media offer new means to vent emotional attacks, spark outrage, or voice public discontent. Politicians are regularly

subject to such firestorms. The rise of social media, particularly social network sites, led to a higher number of audience-induced scandals and to a faster distribution of accusations (Burkhardt, 2018). Participatory digital publics can create a 'spill-over'-effect so that the consequences of misconduct, such as sexual harassment, may incite a more substantiated discourse in the political system and in conventional journalistic mass media (Coombs & Holladay, 2021).

Proposals may focus on – but are not limited to – topics such as:

- >the role of political scandals in modern post-industrial societies as an instrument for societal change (e.g., Hondrich, 2002);
- >audience-induced scandals and emotional outrage in participatory digital publics (e.g., Burkhardt, 2018);
- >political scandalization and reputation management in hybrid media systems (e.g., Chadwick, 2017; Samoilenko et al., 2020);
- >populism and political scandals (e.g., Maurer, 2022; Herkman & Matikainen, 2019);
- >political scandalization and self-scandalization in the age of authenticity (e.g., Enli & Rosenberg, 2018);
- >political scandals and gender (e.g., Cucchi & Cavazza, 2020; Courtemanche & Connor Green, 2020);
- >scandals and celebritization of politics (e.g., Street, 2019; von Sikorski et al., 2018).

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Manuscripts should be submitted directly through the *Media Studies* OJS system, available here, where they will undergo double-blind peer review, following the standard procedures of the journal. **When submitting the manuscript, specify that the submission is for the special issue *Political scandals in a global context*.**

Papers should be up to 8000 words, including footnotes and references. Detailed instructions for authors can be found here.

For more information about the special issue please contact:

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