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DEVELOPING A PLATFORM FOR CROSS-BORDER INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

The article focuses on the collection of information from open sources. It analyses those situations where the data does not simply provide a neutral and direct view of the world, but rather has to do with politics and culture, finance and authority. It examines the institutions and infrastructures that underpin data collection, from surveys to statistics, from climate science to social media platforms.

The aim of the study is to look at data journalism not only in terms of how things are represented, but also in terms of how it organizes relationships, so that it is not just about creating data stories (through data collection, analysis, visualization and presentation), but also about who and what these stories bring together (including audiences, sources, methods, institutions and social media platforms).

Scientific novelty and significance of the work lies in its exploration of handling big data within the field of media communication and journalism in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. It delves into topical areas such as the "platformization" of cross-border investigative journalism, the customization of data alerts and the database of offshore leaks, which are examined in detail. The application of open data in Kyrgyzstan is also discussed in detail. The research strategy and approaches employed in the field of media and communication are also addressed, adding to the overall significance of the study.

The article employed applied methods of social research, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. It involved expert analysis of the works of domestic, Western and Russian researchers, along with the establishment of classifications based on the study's methodology. The results of the study hold significant practical importance for the implementation of information and communication processes within the political system of the state. Scope: media and communications, sociology, etc.

The value of the study is that the tools of big data have been considered, focusing on the investigation by journalists of social problems in the region in achieving a sustainable future.

The practical significance lies in the development of new approaches for training competent communication professionals and journalists in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries.

Keywords: big data, data journalism, alert systems, investigative journalism, databases, digitalization, platform.

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Орталық Азиядағы трансшекаралық журналистік зерттеулердің платформалануы

Зерттеу жұмысы ашық дерек көздерінен ақпарат жинауға бағытталған. Бұл зерттеу деректер әлем туралы бейтарап және тікелей түсінік беріп қана қоймай, саясат пен мәдениетке, қаржы мен билікке байланысты мәселелерді талдайды. Сауалнамалардан статистикаға, климат туралы ғылымға, әлеуметтік медиа платформаларына дейін деректерді жинаудың негізінде жатқан институттар мен инфрақұрылымдар қарастырылады.

Зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты – деректер журналистикасын заттардың қалай ұсынылатындығы тұрғысынан ғана емес, сонымен бірге оның қарым-қатынасты қалай ұйымдастыратындығы тұрғысынан да қарастыру. Яғни, аталмыш мақала тек деректер тарихын құру туралы ғана емес (деректерді жинау, талдау, визуализация және ұсыну арқылы), сонымен қатар, аудиторияны, дереккөздерді, әдістерді, мекемелерді және әлеуметтік медиа платформаларын біріктіреді.

Зерттеу жұмысының ғылыми жаңалығы мен маңыздылығы Қазақстан мен Орталық Азия елдерінің медиакоммуникация және журналистика саласындағы үлкен деректермен жұмыс істеудің өзекті аспектілерінде жатыр. Трансшекаралық тергеу журналистикасын платформа-лау, деректер туралы ескертулерді орнату, оффшорлық ағып кетулерге байланысты мәліметтер

базасы сияқты бағыттардағы зерттеулер егжей-тегжейлі қарастырылады. Қырғызстанда ашық деректерді қолдану аясы кең болып табылады. Медиа және коммуникация саласында маңызды болып саналатын зерттеу стратегиясы мен тәсілдері қозғалады.

Зерттеу барысында әлеуметтік зерттеулердің қолданбалы әдістері қолданылды. Сандық және сапалық зерттеулер, атап айтқанда, отандық, батыстық және ресейлік зерттеушілердің жұмыстарына сараптамалық талдау, жіктеулер зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізінде жасалды. Зерттеу нәтижелері мемлекеттің саяси жүйесіндегі ақпараттық-коммуникациялық процестерді жүзеге асыруда үлкен практикалық маңызға ие.

Қолдану саласы: медиа және коммуникация, Әлеуметтану және т. б.

Зерттеу жұмысының құндылығы – журналистердің тұрақты болашаққа қол жеткізудегі осы аймақтың әлеуметтік мәселелерін тергеуге бағытталған үлкен деректер құралдары қарастырылды.

Зерттеу жұмысының практикалық маңыздылығы – Қазақстанда және Орталық Азияның басқа да елдерінде коммуникациялар бойынша құзыретті мамандар мен журналистерді даярлаудың жаңа тәсілдерін әзірлеумен айқындалады.

Түйін сөздер: үлкен деректер, деректер журналистикасы, ескерту жүйелері, тергеу журналистикасы, мәліметтер базасы, цифрландыру, платформа.

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Платформизация трансграничной журналистики расследований в Центральной Азии

Статья посвящена сбору информации из открытых источников. В данном исследовании анализируются ситуации, при которых данные не просто дают нейтральное и прямое представление о мире, но скорее связаны с политикой и культурой, деньгами и властью. Рассматриваются институты и инфраструктуры, лежащие в основе сбора данных — от обследований до статистики, науки о климате до платформ социальных сетей.

Цель исследования – рассматривать журналистику данных не только с точки зрения того, как представлены вещи, но и с точки зрения того, как она организует отношения — так, чтобы речь шла не только о создании историй данных (посредством сбора, анализа, визуализации и изложения данных), но и о том, кого и что эти истории объединяют (включая аудиторию, источники, методы, учреждения и платформы социальных сетей).

Научная новизна и значимость работы заключаются в актуальных аспектах работы с большими данными в сфере медиакоммуникаций и журналистики Казахстана и стран Центральной Азии. Подробно рассматриваются исследования на таких направлениях как платформизация трансграничной журналистики расследований, настройка оповещений о данных, база данных оффшорных утечек. Детально разбирается применение открытых данных в Кыргызстане. Затрагиваются исследовательская стратегия и подходы, которые являются значимыми в сфере медиа и коммуникации.

При работе над статьей применялись прикладные методы социальных исследований. Количественные и качественные исследования, в частности, экспертный анализ работ отечественных, западных и российских исследователей, классификации были сделаны на методологической основе исследования. Результаты исследования имеют большое практическое значение при реализации информационно-коммуникационных процессов в политической системе государства.

Область применения: медиа и коммуникации, социология и т.д.

Ценность проведенного исследования состоит в том, что были рассмотрены инструменты больших данных, сфокусированных на расследованиях журналистами социальных проблем данного региона в достижении устойчивого будущего.

Практическое значение определяется разработкой новых подходов к подготовке компетентных специалистов по коммуникациям и журналистов в Казахстане и других странах Центральной Азии.

Ключевые слова: большие данные, журналистика данных, системы оповещения, журналистика расследования, базы данных, цифровизация, платформа.

Introduction

This paper aims to examine data journalism not only as the collection and analysis of open data,

but also with a focus on organising relationships. In other words, to consider not only the tasks of collecting, analyzing, visualising data, but also the impact of these stories on mass audiences, news

sources, media practices, institutions and social media.

Snowden's revelations, which occurred a decade ago, proved that total surveillance of both major technology companies and entire countries was real and not a figment of someone's imagination.

Snowden's analysis of the leaks proved that no one is incognito anyone through big data practices (Gray, J., & Bounegru, L., 2019).

In the US, Nate Silver's 2014 edition of *FiveThirtyEight*, a manual on data journalism, provoked a negative reaction as it suggested the use of quantitative methods and negatively assessed 'opinion journalism' (Byers, D. (2014, March 19).

The situation became more complicated when Silver achieved success in accurately predicting the outcome of the 2012 US election. However, triggered a wave of criticism following 2016 presidential election, in which Donald Trump was elected.

At the same time, the UK witnessed the occurrence of Brexit, the role of populist right-wing leaders in the world increased and the so-called "post-truth" emerged (Davies, W., 2016), characterized by a widespread loss of faith in state institutions, the authority of experts and the growing role of online platforms in all spheres of life. Consequently, consumers of information became increasingly vulnerable to various manipulations and misinformations (Jasanoff, S., & Simmet, H. R., 2017).

Whether the so-called 'post-truth' moment is seen as evidence of failure or as a call to action, one thing is clear: data can no longer be taken for granted, and neither can data journalism. It highlights that data does not offer a purely objective and unfiltered perspective on the world; rather, it is intertwined with politics, culture, finance and power. The institutions and infrastructures that underpin data collection, ranging from surveys and statistics to climate science and social media platforms, currently facing challenges and scrutiny. Amidst the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, figures, graphs and rankings related to the virus have been widely shared, discussed, and both politicized and depoliticized. Daily epidemiological charts, including the concept of "flattening the curve", have become integral to public health strategies. The pandemic has not only increased awareness of data usage, but also has also brought about changes in attitudes towards digital reporting and data utilization (Bounegru, L. and J. Gray (eds.), 2021). The study's scientific novelty and significance lie in its focus on working with big data in the field of media communication and journalism in Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries.

The study makes an effort to comprehend the application of open data in Kyrgyzstan and to explore research strategies and approaches that hold significance in the field of media and communication.

The article employed applied methods of social research, including quantitative and qualitative approaches. It involved expert analysis of the works of domestic, Western and Russian researchers, along with the establishment of classifications based on the study's methodology. The study's findings hold significant practical importance for the implementation of information and communication processes within the political system of the state.

Data journalism can be seen not only in terms of how things are represented, but also in terms of how it organises relationships. It involves not only creating data stories through data collection, analysis, visualisation and presentation, but also considering the individuals and entities involved, such as audiences, sources, methods, institutions and social media platforms). Thus, we can ask, as Nortier Marres recently put it, "What are the methods, materials, techniques and mechanisms we curate to create spaces where problems can be solved differently?".

Materials and methods

The platformization of cross-border investigative journalism is a growing phenomenon, supported by the same technopositivism as the current trend towards the platformization of society (Dijck, J. van, Poell, T., & Waal, M. de., 2018). Data hosting platforms for cross-border investigations began to gain prominence around 2010 in the context of data leakage investigations. One of the most prominent and impactful example of large-scale journalistic collaboration on a platform is the investigation known as the Panama Papers, which received the Pulitzer Prize. To organise data collection and reporting for the 500 journalists involved in the Panama Papers investigation, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) developed a platform called Global I-Hub Wilson (Chapman, A., 2017). Ryle (2017) characterizes the platform as a specially designed technology that used to interrogate and disseminate information, bring journalists together in an online newsroom and ensure that journalists work as one global team. It is often referred to as the "ICWC Virtual Office" or "Facebook for Journalists" by both editorial and research staff at ICWC (Hare, K., 2016; Raab, B., 2016).

Data and cross-border investigations are supposed to be a perfect combination, empowering

independent journalistic cooperation (Coronel, S., 2016). There are implications that very few actors operate such platforms, and that a large number of journalists depend on them for cross-border journalism. One of them can be understood as what in the “big technology” landscape has been called a “hyper-modern form of feudalism” based on data ownership. (Morozov, E. , 2016).

Access to such platforms is protected by many layers of security for many good reasons, and not every journalist can gain access. A key question is who decides who is in and who is out, and what are the rules are for making these decisions, and what friction and conflicts that may arise as a result. Participation in such platforms is usually governed by a basic non-disclosure agreement or partnership agreement that details the responsibilities of the journalist or media outlet receiving access, usually with little reference to their rights. Such systems and their management schemes are not designed with co-ownership principles in mind, but rather as centrally owned structures, with monitoring of users’ actions and control of breaches of agreements as built-in functions (Câdea, Ş, 2021).

The adoption of this model in investigative journalism, similar to other aspects of the sharing economy carries the risk of creating a precariat for investigative journalism. This risk is evidenced in the self-descriptions of some organizations operating within these platforms. For instance, the OCCRP (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project) describes itself as “AirBnb or Uber journalists” aiming to undertake “big cross-border investigations” (OCCRP, 2017).

The business model of large network intermediaries in investigations can indeed resemble a digital platform with the gig economy. Access to the platform can be revoked at any time, the management may not be open to discussions, surveillance of user activity is built in, and “money is better off not counting” (Lillian Pierson, 2020).

In order to create hot stories, media professionals working with data need to have access to the most current and relevant data from the most trusted organisations, which requires journalists to have access to alert systems that send alerts through various channels (Lillian Pierson, 2020).

The first step in any data story is to find a dataset to analyse. For academic authors, a natural source is to share the results of any article that you think tells a compelling story. Many scientists publish their non-analytical data on open access platforms such as Dryad and GitHub, a practice that allows others, whether other scientists or journalists, to explore and

use the published results. And even data that is not shared through open access channels is often available on demand (Betsy Ladyzhets, 2020). In any case, the decision to use the results of a particular study in a data story requires careful consideration.

Priyanka Ranwal, science writer and data reporter at Climate Central, notes that the process of finding a dataset can depend on the task. In some cases, you may have a question (for example, “How many Americans have been tested for COVID-19?”) and you can find a specific dataset that answers that question. In other cases, you may come across an interesting dataset (say, the Global Health Security Index) and try to formulate a question based on it.

When exploring a potential dataset for use in a project, consider whether the data tells a compelling story. Are there any obvious trends or interesting outliers? Will readers want to explore the figure, or will they prefer to jump straight to the conclusion? For example, a story that gives an overview of biodiversity hotspots might be useful with a map or diagram showing where these habitats are located around the world and how they are threatened by humans. In contrast, focusing on the numerical results of various trials in a story about testing a new medical treatment can distract readers’ attention from comprehending the qualitative conclusions about what the treatment seems to have achieved so far and what steps to be taken.

In addition to these questions of value to the reader, consider the logistical issues. Can the data be downloaded? Is it released under Creative Commons licences? What do all the data labels represent? Do you understand the research methods, caveats and implications, or will you need to seek clarification from a scientist or press officer?

There are several publicly available and journalist-friendly sources of data that can complement scientific papers. Here are a few of them:

- The World Health Organization’s Global Health Observatory, a repository of international data on a wide range of health indicators.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a central source of health information in the US, including data and fact sheets on issues ranging from flu cases to wildfire prevention.

- The national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: National Centers for Environmental Information (NOAA: NCEI), a central source of weather and disaster data in the US.

- Climate Central, a non-profit climate research organisation that serves local journalists and meteorologists through its climate programme.

- Cochrane Reviews, a repository of medical evidence. (Members of the National Science Writers Association get free access to this resource.)

- Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), an open access biodiversity platform with over 1 million species occurrence records from both institutions and citizen science platforms.

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, Endangered Species Data; the Red List has an Application Programming Interface (or API), which is essentially a programming platform that researchers can use to mass upload vast amounts of data. Journalists can apply for an API key to use the interface.

- Data plural, a collection of “useful/interesting datasets” compiled by BuzzFeed news data editor Jeremy Singer-Wine. Singer-Wine sends out supplements to the collection in a free weekly newsletter.

- The information is excellent, a publication dedicated to data visualisation has made all the datasets underlying its visualisations freely available. These datasets are cleaned and updated as needed, making them easy to explore for novice data journalists.

- Google Dataset Search allows users to search for data on any topic with easily customisable filters for dataset formats and usage rights.

- Tabula, a tool for converting PDFs into data files. DocumentCloud, a similar tool, also has a repository of publicly available open-source documents that have been through the process.

- The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests investigative material that requires journalists to request information from government agencies. A handbook on data journalism includes a FOIA primer by investigative journalist George Padaysky.

The British Bureau of Investigative Journalism collects data from various sources gathered during its investigations in a database called Drone Warfare.

Databases can also be created for the purpose of further journalism, as a tool to facilitate research. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists has established and maintains an Offshore Leakage Database that collects data from the Panama Papers, the Paradise Papers and other investigations.

Similarly, the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) maintains and updates the OCCRP data, which provides access to over 19 million publicly available records. In both cases, the primary user of the tools was not expected to be the average reader, but rather journalists and researchers who would use the tools to further investigate any information found.

Bellingcat is a Dutch investigative journalism website that focuses on open-source intelligence (OSINT) and fact-checking. It was founded in July 2014 by British journalist and former blogger Eliot Higgins. Bellingcat publishes the results of both professional and civilian investigative journalism in war zones, human rights abuses and the under-world. Members of the site also publish guides to their methods and case studies.

To facilitate collaboration, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has developed a communication platform called Global Hub, based on open-source software components.

Described by its users as a “private Facebook”, it allows for the same direct exchange of information that takes place in the physical newsroom.

Reporters join groups that follow specific topics—countries, sports, art, court cases or any other topic of interest. Within these groups they can publish reports on even more specific topics, such as a politician they have found in the data or a specific transaction they are researching. This is where much of the discussion takes place as journalists cross-check information and share notes and documents of interest (Díaz-Struck, 2021).

It took several projects for the ICWC to get journalists used to the iHub. ICWC regional coordinators provide support to help them access the platform and resolve technical issues. This is key to ensuring that journalists meet the required safety standards.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJR) investigates who is behind more than 785,000 offshore companies, foundations and trusts from the Panama Papers, Offshore Leaks, Bahamas Leaks and Paradise Papers investigations. The ICWC published its first edition of the Offshore Leaks Database in 2013, using graphical databases to allow readers to examine the links between officials and more than 100,000 offshore entities. At the time of writing, that number has grown to more than 785,000 offshore entities, including from subsequent leaks such as the Panama and Paradise Papers. The ICWC first attempted to use graphical databases with the Swiss leaks, but it was with the Panama Papers that graphical databases began to play a key role in the research and reporting phase. Investigating 11.5 million complex financial and legal records containing 2.6 terabytes of data was a challenge. Using network graphing tools such as Neo4J and Linkurious, ICWC was able to enable partners to quickly explore the links between individuals and offshore entities (Díaz-Struck, 2021). For the Panama Papers project, graphical databases and other specialised technolo-

gies such as the Knowledge Centre and the Global I-Hub were connected by journalists from nearly 80 countries working in 25 languages through a global virtual newsroom. As of April 2019, governments around the world have paid more than \$1.2 billion in fines and unpaid taxes as a result of the Panama Papers investigation.

Some 35 current and former world leaders and more than 300 government officials appear in the offshore company files dubbed Pandora's Papers. The documents reveal the owners of some of the 95,000 offshore companies behind these purchases.

Most of the files are in Pdf format, images, emails, invoices and the like, which are not easy to find. Using technologies such as Apache Tika (to extract metadata and text), Apache Solr (to create search engines) or Tesseract (to convert images to text), ICWC engineers created open-source software called Extract with the sole purpose of turning these documents into searchable, machine-readable content.

Results and discussion

In November 2017, Kyrgyzstan became the 75th country to join the Open government partnership (OGP).

According to the Law on Access to Information Under the Jurisdiction of the State Bodies and Local Self-Governments of the Kyrgyz Republic, the main principles of freedom of access to information are its public availability, objectivity, timeliness, openness and reliability.

The main areas are open data, transparent public procurement, accessible public services and transparency of the mining industry. As part of the country's implementation in the initiative, a roadmap, the National Action Plan (NAP), which includes 19 initiatives, was approved by government decision on 16 November 2018.

In January 2018, Kyrgyzstan launched the "Open Data" project of the State Committee for Information Technologies and Communications. It involves publishing information from state bodies on a special portal, which is currently only available on request. "Open Data" is an 18-month project of the State Committee for Information Technologies and Communications. It was launched back in November 2017, but became fully operational in January 2018. It ended in June-July 2019.

The main objective of the project was to create a government portal for open data and provide mechanisms for public access to it. This is a unique

resource for a wide range of users: business, media, academia, students, NGOs, civil society and research companies. Every citizen will have free access to the data from all public authorities on a single website. The data in question is impersonal information that is non-personal (Vesti.kg, 2018).

Twelve government agencies of the Kyrgyz Republic were involved in the pilot phase. These are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the National Statistical Committee, the State Registration Service, the Tax Service, the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund, the Investment Promotion and the Protection Agency, the Ministry of Health, the State Committee for Industry, the Energy and Subsoil Use, the Ministry of Justice and the Customs Service. The portal united 215 datasets from 12 pilot government agencies in Kyrgyzstan and this information is now freely available to everyone.

According to the SCITC study, data on trade, the labour market and education are now most in the highest demand in Kyrgyzstan. The demand for such information is particularly characteristic of business structures. Now the data from government agencies are open, their datasets are being updated, and the information is also available in machine-readable format.

The State Registration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic has digitised public sector data, and these public bodies have ready databases in machine-readable format and can share them. By mid-2019, the data from these public bodies have been made available on the website.

This project was implemented as part of the larger five-year Digital CASA Kyrgyzstan project, of which Open Data is a part. It envisages a complete digital transformation of Kyrgyzstan by 2023, providing the internet to all remote regions of the country to access open data at the level of local governments and regional offices.

The willingness to share their data is also important. Open data and working with it is a new format for Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan is used to working with government agencies as owners of data in question-and-answer format, the Open Data project aims to reformat the consciousness of officials, accustoming them to openness and accountability to the people.

A large stratum of the work is devoted to educating users represented by the media, business, NGOs, state bodies and researchers in order to ensure the relevance of open data. It is a fact that the business representative is often confronted with the problem of finding free information. The National Statisti-

cal Committee provides a wide range of data on its website. However, some people argue that the data is not sufficient for in-depth analysis as it is overly generalized. To access more detailed information, it is necessary to pay for additional data.

The “Digital Kyrgyzstan” concept, adopted five years ago, is a national strategy focused on digital transformation. Its primary goals include empowering the population by improving digital skills, delivering high-quality digital services, and improving overall efficiency.

The concept includes 60 projects aimed at improving the digitisation of documents, introducing the Sanarip aimag system into the work of state institutions, digitising of the system of the State Agency for Architecture and Construction, developing the electronic circulation of documents, developing and expanding the E-Kyzmat and Tunduk systems, and many others.

In autumn 2021, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov signed a decree on the creation of the State Agency for Personal Data Protection in the country. The document is designed to optimise the management system and implement the Law on Personal Information. The Agency will ensure the protection of personal data, the rights of personal data subjects, the registration of holders of personal data, the maintenance of the register of holders of personal data arrays, and the newly established body will perform other tasks and functions in accordance with this law.

“As practice shows, the digitalisation process in the country is currently experiencing great difficulties. This is evidenced by complaints and dissatisfaction on the part of citizens due to bureaucracy in receiving public services. In order to improve the situation that work has begun on the new concept “Digital Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic – 2021-2023”, which aims to create a customer-oriented environment. Basic and infrastructure projects should not be forgotten,” said Ulukbek Maripov, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, emphasised at a meeting on digitalisation on 11 May 2021.

On September 14, 2021, Ulukbek Maripov, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan, familiarized himself with the system of mobile identification and the work of the mobile application “Teksher”. He noted that everything is being done in Kyrgyzstan to make the process of obtaining state and municipal services more convenient and easier. In the same year, the issue of work on mobile identification through mobile devices was raised, which

will undoubtedly increase the population’s access to the process of obtaining public services in an online format. With the Teksher mobile app, everyone will be able to quickly check the legality and quality of goods by scanning the code on the packaging. If the goods turn out to be counterfeit, the inspection authorities will be notified at once.

In 2021, an open database of environmental research was launched in Kyrgyzstan with the assistance of the MuvGreen Public Association. The purpose of this database is to provide materials that can be utilized for analysis, scientific research, as well as the preparation and writing of journalistic materials pertaining to environmental issues in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The environmental database includes research on air quality, biodiversity, energy, climate change, land and water resources, transport, water resources, agriculture and waste management.

The database provides current information and includes mandatory source links to the for the data. It offers access to materials regarding the state of the environment in Kyrgyzstan, environmental assessments of the country, and other valuable publications. “The data is publicly accessible, regularly updated, and can be utilized in environmental protection studies. Additionally, journalists and researchers can create professional materials using this data, with the requirement of proper attribution to the data source and acknowledgment of the ‘MuvGreen’ Public Association, – noted in the organization (24.kg, 2021).

An article published on the Journalism Centre’s website, “How the ‘platform’ approach helps Azattyk to develop”, describes how Radio Azattyk switched to the platform model in early 2020. According to this model, all materials are immediately published on all available platforms and then collected into sections and projects on the website. In addition, Azattyk also uses social networks and messengers to distribute its materials and communicate with its audience. The platform approach in Central Asian media involves the use of multiple platforms to distribute content. Instead of relying on a single distribution channel (e.g. traditional television or print press), media outlets use multiple platforms, such as websites, social networks, messengers and other digital communication channels, to reach a wider audience.

The advantage of the platform approach is that it allows the media to be more flexible and efficient in distributing content. Instead of relying only on traditional communication channels, the media can

use new technologies to reach a wider audience, including young people and those who prefer more digital platforms. In addition, the platform approach also allows the media to better adapt to changes in the media landscape. For example, as social media become more popular, the media can increase their activity on these platforms. Some media outlets in Central Asia, such as Radio Azattyk, use the platform approach to reach a wider audience in the region. They use multiple communication channels, such as websites, social networks and messengers, to distribute their content and interact with the au-

diences. This allows them to be more flexible and adapt to changes in the media landscape.

It is problematic to make an exact comparison between classical and digital tools of investigative journalism in Central Asian countries, as each country has its own specifics, cultural, political and legal nuances that can influence the choice of tools for investigative journalism. However, it is possible to provide general information on how classic and digital tools are used in investigative journalism in Central Asia. Some of these are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Classic and digital tools used in investigative journalism

Type of activity	Classic tools	Digital tools
Document research	Manual search of archives	Searching online archives, using OCR
Covert video recording	Use of hidden cameras	Use of smartphones with cameras
Financial research	Analysis of financial reports	Use of open databases, online payment systems
Social media research	Manual retrieval of information on social media	Use of specialised tools, e.g. Netvizz
Witness and expert surveys	Personal interviews, telephone interviews	Online surveys, videoconferences
Information collection on site	Eyewitnesses, photos and video on scene	Use of smart phones for photos and video, data transfer via internet
Data research	Manual data analysis	Using visualization and data analysis software
Using cryptography	Manual encryption of messages and documents	Using encryption to secure correspondence and confidential documents
Using VPNs	No	Using VPNs to protect confidential information, bypass blocking and filter content on the Internet

Table 2 – Investigative journalism tools in Asian media

Classic tools	Digital tools
Interviews with sources	Email, messengers, social media
Observation of events Online streaming, social media monitoring, surveillance cameras	Онлайн-трансляции, мониторинг социальных сетей, камеры видеонаблюдения
Research of archival documents	Electronic databases, scanners
Paper research Electronic versions of newspapers and magazines	Электронные версии газет и журналов
Field investigations	Mobile apps for audio and video recording, GPS navigation
Investigating secret sources	Secure communications, encrypted messaging
Searching for information in open sources	Search engines, databases, social networks
Analytical methods	Machine learning algorithms, databases

It should be noted that this is only a general list of tools that can be used in investigative journalism, while specific tools and methods depend on the specific tasks and resources available to journalists.

An example of the classic and digital tools of investigative journalism on Kazakhstan's websites is the investigation conducted by journalists from Ra-

dio Azattyk (the Kazakh service of Radio Liberty) into how state officials and business representatives use offshore companies to hide their income and assets. In their investigation, the journalists used various classical methods, such as interviews with participants and open source analysis, as well as digital tools, including databases of offshore companies

and analytical tools to analyse connections between companies and individuals. (rus.azattyq, 2022)

One of the results of the investigation was the publication of a database containing information on companies registered offshore and associated with Kazakh government officials and businessmen. The journalists also used social media to disseminate information about their investigation and draw attention to the issue. Thus, an example of a combination of classic and digital tools in investigative journalism on Kazakhstan's websites could be the use of different sources of information and analytical tools to achieve maximum objectivity and evidence of the results of the investigation.

Conclusion

Through data journalism, audiences gain an objective picture of reality by actively interacting with content. It is necessary to be able to use the basic tools of data analytics, navigate the platforms of cross-border investigative journalism and be able to apply modern mechanisms and approaches to as-

sessing the credibility of facts. The experience of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in the investigation "Panama Papers", offshore leaks, leaks from the Bahamas and the investigation of the "Paradise Papers" is important for the media and journalists of the Central Asian region to understand the need to actively develop data journalism both at the local, national and regional levels. To this end, it is essential to enhance the use of data analytics and investigative techniques, as well as to promote wider dissemination of publications prepared on the basis of joint projects.

It is recommended that university teachers be trained in data journalism, that they be supported in developing curricula, curricula and teaching aids on data-journalism, and that data-labs be opened at the faculties of journalism.

The government, for its part, should ensure access to data, train government employees to work with data and update databases in a timely manner. Joint data-journalism investigations with colleagues from other countries and with international data-journalism organisations is also needed.

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