In Focus

A Medium Is Born: Participatory Media and the Rise of Clubhouse in Russia and Ukraine During the Covid-19 Pandemic

sciendo

KATERYNA BOYKO, PhD Student; Uppsala University; kateryna.boyko@im.uu.se
ROMAN HORBYK, Postdoctoral Fellow, Södertörn University, roman.horbyk@sh.se

10.2478/bsmr-2022-0003

ABSTRACT

Clubhouse is a social network allowing only real-time oral communication. While its 2020 worldwide launch went largely unnoticed in Eastern Europe, it took countries such as Ukraine and Russia by storm in February 2021. Users were enticed by the platform's exclusivity (invitation only and limited to IOS users), unusual format, and compatibility with post-covid social life. For some time, Clubhouse was the dominant theme of discussions on other social media, mainstream news media organizations started launching daily talk shows in the app, and early adopters engaged in a plethora of participatory activities ranging from propagandist broadcasts to 24/7 rooms where bots would recite Russian classical poetry, from fervently seeking ways to monetise their participation to creating the somewhat unexpected genre of audial fakes.

In this article we intend to analyse the turbulent arrival of the new app in Russia and Ukraine from the perspectives of media ecology and media archaeology. Focusing on the app's mediality and remediation, the social media discourse about it and particular content in some of the notable rooms, we highlight the conjunction of social environment, the already existing and novel technological affordances, as well as users' perceptions and expectations in the emergence of a new niche in the ecology of participatory media. Based on this, we will also try to outline some possible scenarios for the new platform in Eastern Europe's dense mediascapes. We argue that the prompt rise of Clubhouse's popularity was not thanks to its special authenticity, as some suggest, but rather because of the normalization of group long-distance conversations (e.g., via Zoom), coupled with the intentional monomedia poverty of affordances and clearly delimited boundary between the roles of broadcasters and listeners, which was perceived as liberating in a produsage-saturated environment. This actually limits the participatory media potential of content creators and influencers, increasing their power and reviving monological models of communication that suggest a passive audience.

KEYWORDS: Clubhouse, Russia, Ukraine, covid-19, participatory culture

INTRODUCTION

Once a star is born, its development can follow different paths. It can burn fast and bright and quickly collapse, or it can be dim but stable, using up its fuel slowly over billions of years. New media, once born, can also grow quickly and remain at the top for a long time, or after an explosive launch quickly fade into oblivion and media archaeology's cabinet of curiosities. The new social media platform Clubhouse, specializing in oral-only communication, became a supernova in the media space of Eastern Europe in February 2021, outshining all other social media, which suddenly started looking dim, weary and passé. But will its glory last?

Just as the formation of celestial bodies is a process that is hard to observe, it is a rare occasion to observe the arrival and advancement of a new medium in real time and *in vivo*. Especially when it brings exotic cases such as audial fakes through impersonation of a legendary pop star, or bots reciting classical poetry. What did Clubhouse add to the media landscapes of Eastern Europe, specifically in Russia and Ukraine, how can we explain its explosion and what are we to make of it? Using the methods of participant observation in a digital-ethnographic fashion (Pink *et al.* 2016) and a platform walkthrough (Light *et al.* 2018), this article considers a range of questions surrounding Clubhouse's recent East European breakthrough and its implications for media theory, first and foremost is the attempt to analyse **how the platform's design and affordances interplayed with the local social and cultural context and how it affected produsage and participation observed among its users.** This is **the aim** of our study.

We are explicitly posing the following research questions:

1) what patterns formed the groundwork when Clubhouse was introduced and spread in Russia and Ukraine?
2) what political, economic and cultural uses of Clubhouse specific to the local context emerged among those early adopters?
3) how was the platform perceived in the social media discourse in relation to the local culture and mediascape?
4) how can the unusual rise of the platform in the local contexts during the covid-19 pandemic be explained from the perspective of media theory focusing on the platform's own properties?

These questions are answered through methods of digital ethnography and a platform walkthrough, as well as analysis of collected data from the perspectives of media theory, particularly through the lens of the concepts affordance, remediation, participation, and produsage.

We argue that the lightning-fast rise of Clubhouse's popularity is not thanks to its special authenticity, as some suggest, but rather because of the normalization of group long-distance conversations (e.g., via Zoom), coupled with the intentional monomedia poverty of affordances and clearly delimited boundary between the roles of broadcasters and listeners, which was perceived as refreshing in a produsage-saturated environment and, in fact, limits the participatory media potential of content creators and influencers.

METHODOLOGY

This study has **a qualitative ethnographic bottom-up inductive approach** that implies a researcher going into the field and observing the community in its natural settings (Hammersley, Atkinson 1983/2019). While carrying out online observations of the Clubhouse app and its perceptions, we

followed Sarah Pink's *et al.* vision of digital ethnography as an open, non-digital-centric, reflexive way to study the digital milieu that does not stick to only one platform but rather looks at the broader contexts of interaction with the digital (Pink *et al*. 2016; Cruz, Ardèvol 2013). Naturally, the Clubhouse app was our primary focus. In order to study it, we used **a walkthrough method** as "a way of engaging directly with an app's interface to examine its technological mechanisms and embedded cultural references to understand how it guides users and shapes their experiences" (Light *et al.* 2018: 882). Following such an approach, the researcher logs into the app and imitates its daily use while documenting the app's screens, its features and activities.

Our study had **two phases**. The main phase took place from mid-January until late February 2021. It was the very period when Russia and Ukraine experienced a rapid rise of Clubhouse use. During that period, we followed the path of the "ordinary" user of the app from that region. We managed to get an invite from a young Ukrainian Facebook influencer (the scheme was described in detail under the name "pyramid of invites" in the section *Fast radio burst*). Then we installed the app and started using it on a daily basis during the following month, visiting and listening to the most popular rooms and shows, following the chain of invites, taking notes. In parallel, we were observing open-access posts about perceptions and reactions to the app on social media, in particular, Facebook, taking notes. We were also collecting and saving instances of media coverage of the app's advent.

The second follow-up phase of the study took place in the beginning of June 2021 and lasted for a week. We looked into the accounts of the most popular Clubhouse influencers in the Russian and Ukrainian segments and tracked the rooms we listened to during the first phase.

All the Clubhouse rooms we listened to were public, with unlimited access, trying to attract vast audiences. No sensitive personal information was revealed during the talks. Information that users write in their accounts is also open for the other app's users and presents only the facts that users wanted to divulge about themselves. Moreover, the majority of the users we are writing about are public persons, who use the app to boost their publicity. That is why we feel free to refer to conversations and account information without asking the users for permission while concealing the identities of those who are not public persons, celebrities or anyone who never talked to the news media about their Clubhouse use. As for the Facebook posts, we are referring only to those made public. With regard to a number of ethical issues related to digital ethnography and covert/overt participant observation online, we chose to anonymise the users we cite without providing links to specific posts.

CLUBHOUSE: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WORKS

Clubhouse – a social network allowing only real-time oral communication – was launched in March 2020. Its creators Paul Davison and Rohan Seth made a bid for the platform's exclusivity. To access it, one needed an invitation from an already registered user and a device with IOS only (BBC 24 February 2021). While the launch of the network went largely unnoticed against the background of the rapidly progressing covid-19 pandemic, it experienced a surge in popularity in the beginning of 2021. From the 1st through 16th of February 2021, the downloads of the app almost tripled from 3.5 million to 8.1 million (BBC 19 February 2021). In May 2021, it had 10 million weekly active users (Dean 2021). However, following the significant decrease of downloads on Apple's App Store around that time, the social network departed from its exclusive image and launched a version for Android (Criddle 2021) as well as hinted to a possibility of abolishing the invites (Perez 2021). So far, the app is advertisement and subscription free. However, analysts predict that it will have to change its business model to start bringing revenue. There are also suspicions that, as user data is the most valuable asset for the social network,

the company will inevitably start trading it (News ABC, 20 January 2021). Clubhouse has already sparked several controversies, in particular regarding privacy issues (Collins 2021) and instances of racism, antisemitism, and bullying during discussions in the app (Huet, Tobin 2020).

How does it work? Communication on Clubhouse is exclusively oral and live. The only text a user will ever type is their registration info and usernames or discussion rooms' titles in the search field. There is no possibility to like/dislike or comment. The main format of communication in Clubhouse is a discussion room, which can be scheduled or started spontaneously by any user of the network. The room lasts for a certain period of time and usually can be joined by every other user (up to 5 thousand). One gets notifications about the talk when one follows a certain speaker or theme. Remarkably, the divide into speakers and listeners during the discussions is rather strict. Only the initiator of the room and their invited guests have access to the microphone while the audience is usually muted and is allowed to speak by the organiser of the room only after raising a hand. The talks were not saved for the audience and were actually prohibited from being recorded[1].

PARTICIPATION, REMEDIATION, AFFORDANCE: THEORETICAL TOOLS AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

We now turn to theoretical concepts to be used as an analytical and explanatory framework. Henry Jenkins (2006) introduced the idea of participatory culture wherein any private individual (not just professionals and elites) may both consume and produce: contribute to generation of new content, as well as new meanings and ideas. It is customary to consider social media in the context of participatory culture and produsage – when users act as content producers and collaborate for creating and improving the content (Bruns 2008; Bruns, Schmidt 2011). It is especially interesting to do so in the case of a recent and trendy new social network.

The study of participatory culture is a rather sprawling field with a number of currents that define participation in sociological and political terms. While Nico Carpentier (2016) defines participation in a more political way as "the equalisation of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in formal or informal decision-making processes" (2016: 72), Jenkins' approach is less politically laden and focuses on access, interaction and creation. We have neither the possibility nor aim to review the participation debate here since our focus is to contribute to an understanding of how participatory culture works, specifically in the unstable and fluid situation of an arrival of a new media platform. For the purposes of this essay, we follow Henry Jenkins in defining participatory culture as

> "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, members care about others' opinions of what they have created)." (Jenkins *et al.* 2016: X).

Carpentier himself agrees there are two main approaches in participatory theory, a sociological and a political one.

> "In [the sociological] approach, participation includes many (if not all) types of human interaction, in combination with interactions with texts and technologies. Power is not excluded from this approach, but remains one of the

1 In September 2021, Clubhouse started to launch features that allow users to record and share parts of conversations within certain limitations (Chan 2021).

> many secondary concepts to support it. I treat participation more as a technical term, a modus operandus, free of political connotation. Participation simply describes how users in one way or another contribute to or participate in using a service or a platform. [...] In contrast, the political approach produces a much more restrictive definition of participation, which refers to the equalisation of power inequalities in particular decision-making processes (see Carpentier 2011; Carpentier, Dahlgren, and Pasquali 2014)" (Carpentier 2016: 71–72).

We decided to focus on the broader, sociological treatment of participation, in which Clubhouse can be seen as a particular iteration or flavour of a range of social media that invite and stimulate participation by design. We are foremost interested in how the app's design, and the culture of communication it stimulates, affects user participation. At the same time, we have a special focus on the political and power dimension, in which we follow insights from works by Carpentier.

In general, the influence of the covid-19 pandemic on participatory culture is presented as ambiguous. On the state level, civic engagement suffered since governments had to impose rapid restrictions without involving the community in the decision-making process (Bernadette Hyland-Wood *et al.* 2021: 3). On the other hand, participatory media tools were vital in tackling the pandemic, for example, participatory disease surveillance – a system in which people could self-report their symptoms or events. Such aggregated information gave the experts and officials data to conduct necessary public health interventions (Garg *et al.* 2021).

Covid-19 related restrictions, lockdowns and imposed requirements to work from home boosted people's creativity, which was manifested in various participatory online practices. Such practices are in the focus of many studies dedicated to the theme. For example, internet memes about lockdown in Poland (Norstrom, Sarna 2021); semi-professional and amateur parodies of covid-19 realities (Stratton 2021); a fandom football Facebook group created by Australian fans and dedicated to a Belarusian football club, since in 2020 the Belarusian Premier League was the only top-flight championship in Europe to continue (Fiadotava 2021). Other cases present participatory practices with a civic touch, like creating amateur instructions on how to make protective masks (Oswal, Palmer 2021) or youth support for social distancing initiatives on social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok (Mazidah 2020).

On the other hand, the covid-19 pandemic highlighted certain tensions within participatory culture that became even more visible during that period. For example, the competition between expertise and likability on social media platforms (Marchal, Au 2020) or role of smaller, less regulated and moderated platforms in the spread of conspiracy theories (Zeng, Schäfer 2021). In general, it is possible to say that the influence of the pandemic on participatory culture still needs systematic research that goes beyond small case studies. Our analysis of Clubhouse's introduction to Russian and Ukrainian audiences attempts to provide a deeper insight into this problem.

Importantly, one needs to pay close attention to the aspects of media form and design when considering a new medium, or at least a new social network, with significant differences in format and technical possibilities. To this end, we mobilise some of the key notions of media theory: affordance and remediation. The concept of affordance was coined by James J. Gibson (1979) and signifies what the environment offers to the individual. In the context of design (and design of media), it implies how the environment is constructed, requiring different behaviours from different individuals, creating the uses of an object that are possible, preferred and encouraged and those that are discouraged or simply

impossible. Donald Norman (1999) distinguishes real and perceived affordances, which are important for screen design. The former are built-in and physical, for example, smartphone screen affords the user to look, touch, point, click, while perceived affordances are more about "what actions the user perceives to be possible than what is true" (ibid.: 39). This is the working definition for this article.

Remediation was theorised by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) to describe how older media are represented in new ones (for example, photography remediated painting, film remediated both stage production and photography, television remediated film, and streaming services can now be perceived as a remediation of television). The relationship between old or established and new media can be quite complex as, rather than discarding the earlier sets of forms and aesthetic principles and devising something radically new, they rely on, borrow and refashion the formats, principles and experiences of the earlier media.

We approach the arrival of a new media platform from the perspective of media archaeology as "...a way to investigate the new media cultures through insights from past new media, often with an emphasis on the forgotten, the quirky, the non-obvious apparatuses, practices and inventions" (Parikka 2012: 2). Unlike media history, media archaeology is not preoccupied with creating a linear narrative, aiming instead to dig into the new media and analyse them historically, approaching them in the same way it approaches obsolete and old media. In such a way, the advent of new media forms and formats may be better understood, with a potential for predicting how their future will unfold.

What is known:
Previous research on Clubhouse

It is peculiar that, in contrast to massive coverage in news media, the advent of Clubhouse is still analysed in few scholarly texts. It is usually presented as a new format of social media that "features a mixture of audio podcasting, talk radio, and conference call all wrapped in one package" (Strielkowski 2021: 1). While describing its technical characteristics and affordances, researchers point out different potential ways the medium can be used: psychotherapy of sorts, promotion and marketing, propaganda and a space for free expression.

Focusing on the Western context, Strielkowski reminds that, accidentally or not, the name of the new social media – Clubhouse – coincides with the psychological rehabilitation system popular in North America. According to him, to a certain extent, Clubhouse owes its success to the covid-19 pandemic. People locked in their homes and tired of endless videoconferences felt lonely and excluded, and Clubhouse managed to provide them with "a certain form of narrative therapy" (*ibid.*: 2) thanks to the specifics of its format. He suggests that if Clubhouse does not develop into a psychotherapy social network, it will have to shut down or evolve into regular social media since, in the post-lockdown reality, people will socialise offline and will not need the audio chat any more to talk out their problems.

Researchers who study the popularity of Clubhouse in the Russian context also present it as covid-19's offspring, "a way to compensate for the deficit of communication during the pandemic" (Kolomiytseva 2021: 123). They underline how Clubhouse in Russia was used primarily for professional and political aims. According to Kolomiytseva, from the very beginning Clubhouse was colonised by celebrities, influencers, and experts, especially from the IT and finance areas. The network was used less to find interlocutors and more to reach out to new audiences, promote personal and corporate brands, recruit new specialists, carry out PR campaigns etc. (*ibid.*).

The author also points out Clubhouse's potential to enhance both malicious propaganda and political debates. She draws the example of China, where this network was used for free discussions about issues typically censored by the authorities. In the

Russian context, Clubhouse seems to be a suitable tool to coordinate actions for the non-systemic opposition, since the chats are neither recorded nor moderated (Popova 2021).

To sum up, the few existing early studies on Clubhouse present it as a social network whose popularity was enhanced by the covid-19 pandemic. It has been used actively for both personal and professional reasons. In authoritarian contexts, it also has certain potential to facilitate free political debates and coordinate actions for political opposition.

FROM DEAD SOULS TO DEAD POETS: MAKING SENSE OF THE LAUNCH OF CLUBHOUSE EMPIRICALLY

Fast radio burst: The Clubhouse explosion in Russia and Ukraine

In Russia and Ukraine, the popularity surge of Clubhouse coincided with global trends, and started in February 2021. In Russia (like in the US), the interest in the app peaked thanks to the appearance of local celebrities like Yandex' deputy CEO Tigran Khudaverdyan, banker Oleg Tinkov, blogger Ilja Varlamov, actors and TV hosts/comedians Mikhail Galustian and Ivan Urgant (Kolomiytseva 2021: 122). Their invites can be traced to earlier users who enjoy fewer followers and who are linked to business and finance. This points to the original core of the Russian Clubhouse in the business community. On the contrary, in Ukraine the main engine for popularization of the social network were journalists, IT and marketing experts (Kostiuk 2021). Analysing the patterns in the chains of invites among early adopters reveals that Clubhouse came to Ukraine from the US rather than from the Russian segment as the first spreaders of the platform were themselves invited by US-based users.

One should also keep in mind that in the Russian and Ukrainian contexts, the penetration of Apple devices, which are still considered to be status symbols, determined possible directions of the network's development. Clubhouse initially open only to those who could afford a relatively expensive iPhone. Furthermore, these early Clubhouse users were invited to voice their opinions in the room broadcasts. The combined profile of a vocal and opinionated individual and an iPhone owner is likely to be found in, among others: creative industries, IT, media, and finance spheres.

Clubhouse emerged as a distinct platform with its own set of rules and its own logic that set it apart from other social media. One is almost tempted to talk about a different habitus and a different subfield, where one has to make use of different communication patterns, ways of behaviour and types of social capital to become successful. It is also strongly conditioned by the original community that came to colonise and dominate the platform early (something that still underscores the persistently elitist character of the platform and the limited nature of its breakthrough). For example, the Ukrainian opinion leaders who dominate Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or Twitter have very modest following on Clubhouse: publicist Vitaliy Portnykov (1.7K, joined 13th of February)[2], poet Serhiy Zhadan (2K, joined 19th of February), frontman of the leading band *Okean Elzy*, Sviatoslav Vakarchuk (8.7K, joined 11th of February), activist and blogger Serhiy Sternenko (only 372, joined 20th of February), star chef Ievhen Klopotenko (1.1K, joined on the 16th of February). One feature that seems to be predictive of the number of followers is the early adoption of the platform as well as ties to IT: early adopters and IT entrepreneurs, even though virtually unknown in broader circles, such as Nick Bilogorskiy (17.4K, joined 6th of January), Kateryna Mykhalko (14.6K, joined 18th of January), Vladyslav Greziev (15.6K, joined 18th of January), Yaroslav Azhnyuk (9K, joined 14th of January) rank much higher than the Ukrainian celebrities.

The beginnings of the first club in the Ukrainian segment, called Ukrainian House,

2 The number of the followers is presented as of June 24th, 2021.

are exemplary. One of its co-founders, Nick Bilogorskiy (joined the network significantly earlier, on 6th of January 2021) is a US-based Ukrainian currently working as director for Security Intelligence at Google. In one of the interviews, he intimated how he shared one invite with another notable figure in the Ukrainian IT community, the ex-director of Microsoft Ukraine Dmytro Shymkiv. Ukrainian House started as a private conversation between Bilogorskiy and the Ukrainian entrepreneur Kateryna Mykhalko (joined 18th of January 2021) that they made public by mistake – and it was spontaneously joined by dozens of their followers. This success encouraged them to continue discussions that eventually, after entrepreneur Vladyslav Greziev joined them (another early adopter – on the platform since the 18th of January), led to establishing Ukrainian House (Druziuk 2021). Its premier show was the Ukrainian Show "where investors, CEOs and leaders discuss[ed] technology, culture and the future of Ukraine" as it states on the club's Facebook page. Already in February, among the guests of the show were Ukrainian opinion leaders like previously mentioned Dmytro Shymkiv, IMF representative Vladyslav Ryshkovan, frontman of the leading Ukrainian band Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, and writer Serhiy Zhadan (Kostiuk 2021).

This is only partly true for Russian influencers: the leading rapper Alisher Morgenshtern (5.5K, joined 19th of February) and comedian Mikhail Galustian (29.4K, joined 8th of February) are definitely not among the top aristocracy of Clubhouse in Russia. However, there are also notable exceptions such as blogger Ilya Varlamov (306K, joined 8th of February) who managed to summon a large following on Clubhouse as well as on other platforms, or TV host Ivan Urgant (107K, joined 15th of February). At the same time, people from finance and marketing such as Yandex's Tigran Khudaverdyan (96.7K, joined 5th of February), banker Oleg Tinkov (197K, joined 11th of February), entrepreneurs Kseniya Dukalis (175K, joined 8th of February), Ilia Krasilshchik (116K, Joined 1st of February), Igor Rybakov (104K, joined 2nd of February), Sergei Guriev (72K, joined 10th of February) occupy the top sliver of the Clubhouse users, much like the early adopters from IT in Ukraine.

It was thus logical that one of the major issues discussed by the users in their public rooms, almost from the very beginning, was how to monetise the new platform. Some speakers were making claims that they already managed to make their profiles profitable but there was some confusion as to what a possible model would be. Two major ideas emerged in these discussions: talking about certain products for remuneration (directly copied and remediated from Instagram) and selling speaking slots in rooms/discussions by popular hosts. Both were available only to those with a Clubhouse following large enough for anyone to want to pay for access to it.

However, for ordinary users, the main question was how one could get an invite when nobody around had it. At first, the new user was granted an opportunity to invite only two other persons. After a while, the invitations were restocked. The first advice from the media on how to get on what the journalists described as the hip new fad was to look for friends and acquaintances in the US, where the app had already been around for some time. The second proposed fix was to register in the system formally and wait for an uncertain period of time until being let in (Levina 2021). However, local users devised various schemes to join "the club of the chosen". One could sell and buy invites on local classifieds/trading websites like *Olx.ua* in Ukraine. The prices quickly rose and could reach 2,500 UAH (approx. 100 USD) on the 17th of February, dropping drastically to as low as 200–300 UAH within several days when the market became saturated with such offers (**Figure 1**).

Another option was what we call a pyramid of invites. To boost their popularity on other social media, particularly on Facebook, some aspiring influencers gave away invites to their willing subscribers under the condition that they would "return"

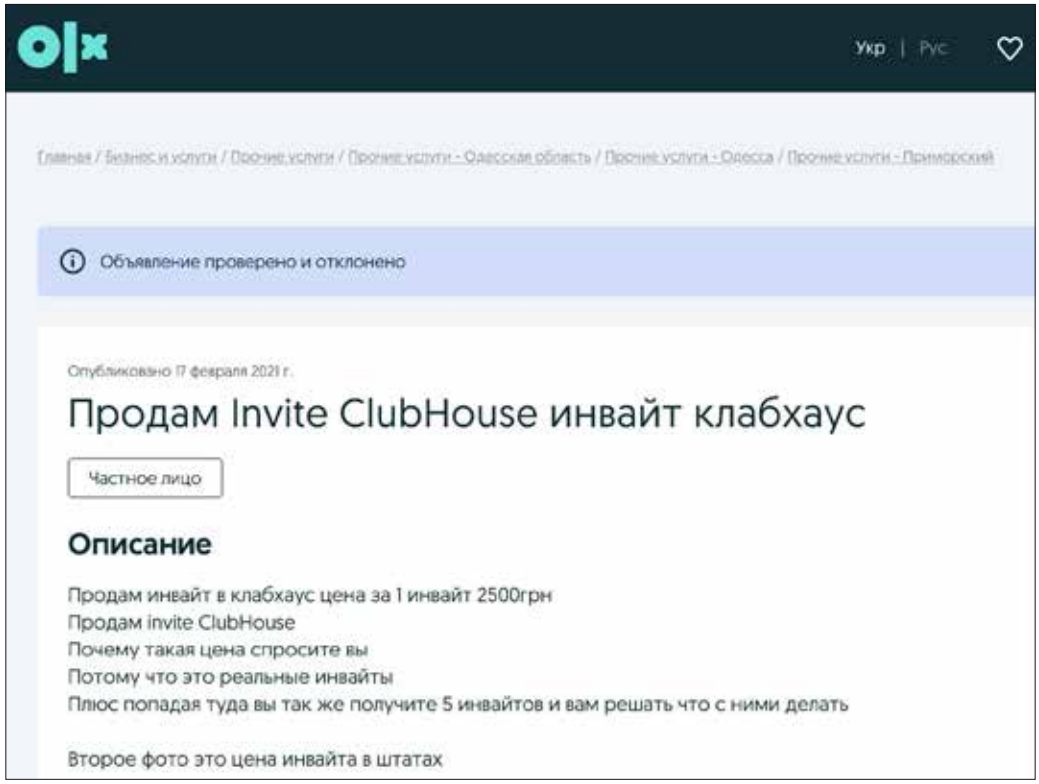


FIGURE 1. The Clubhouse invite on sale for 2500 UAH, 17th of February 2021.

the invites they would get. The initiator of the scheme would grant their two invites under the condition that the invited would yield their own invites (now four) to the next people who ask the initiator, and these four fresh invitees would likewise invite the next batch (now eight people), and so on, and so forth, potentially *ad infinitum*. Thus the initiator, even though directly owning only two invites like anyone else, would stand in the centre of this scheme (not unlike a financial pyramid) and enjoy much interaction and new followers on their pages elsewhere as well as, in general, raise their social capital and status while accruing only a modest following on Clubhouse itself.

Clubhouse as a platform for politics and activism

Social media are known as tools for political debate and organization. The advent of Clubhouse as a new social media also had political implications. Notably, Clubhouse's launch in Russia did not go without tensions with authorities. Unlike in China, where the app was banned after the start of discussions on taboo themes like the placement of Uighurs in concentration camps in Xinjiang, Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, and the 1989 Tiananmen protest (Etherington, Liao 2021), the Russian authorities took a more cautionary position. The federal agency responsible for monitoring and censoring Russian mass media, *Roskomnadzor*, was urged to monitor Clubhouse because, like Facebook and Twitter, it never registered in Russia and thus avoided storing Russian users' data on servers located in Russia as the law requires. After the hate speech ban of the Clubhouse account of the notorious Russian TV propagandist Vladimir Solovyev, *Roskomnadzor* demanded that the app restore his account (Current Time 2nd of March 2021). In its turn, *Roskachestvo* (the organization established to monitor quality of goods and services) reported potential hazards of the network, including privacy breaches, fraud, and unauthorised recording of conversations (TASS 25 February 2021).

As it was described by Olga Popova (2021), Clubhouse did appear to be a censor-free space for the Russian opposition. On the 21st of March, a forum of independent municipal candidates was held in the app, gathering a 2.5K-strong public. It is telling that an identical gathering with the same speakers and themes but physically taking place offline in a Moscow hotel had been dispersed by police one week earlier. That time, *United Democrats* managed to gather only 200 delegates offline (Deutsche Welle 21st of March 2021).

The pro-government actors or opportunists attempted to use Clubhouse as well. For example, on the morning of the 26th of February, a show went on the air entitled "Putin's Squad's". It was launched by an eponymous organization founded by a local politician in Krasnodar, by the name Marat Dinayev. He hires groups of retired elderly people, mostly women, to stage protests for payment (Meduza 2nd of March 2021). These "protester mercenaries" often do work even for rival factions on the local level but never go against the government; among their targets were activists supporting Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny (Ovinnikova 2018). The show started with a minimal introduction by the female host who said "Okay let's go". A group of two or three female pensioners started a seemingly improvised jingoist rant:

> Speaker 1: Enough! Putin is a champion for peace. He doesn't want to engage, to kill children, to spill blood. We need to live peacefully. We have one system; you have a different one. It was asserted by Stalin that two systems can co-exist, the capitalist and the socialist one. What else do you need?
> Speaker 2: When Russia was weak under Yeltsin, it was welcomed, Russia was nice. [...] When Russia was on its knees, it was liked by America, by the EU [...]. The President was good, their puppet. Oh my good Lord! They

don't need a strong President here who would uplift the country. Even the vaccine was invented in our USSR!
Host: So do you think Yeltsin's Russia wasn't as free as every body's saying?
Speaker 1: Of course, we were subordinate to the West. The foreign minister Kozyrev, do you all remember him? He took advice on what to do from America. And now our Minister...
Host: Please keep talking.
Speaker 1: ...our Minister of Foreign Affairs is strong. Who is strong? The president, the Defence Minister Shoigu, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Three irreplaceable men in the country. But the president is the principal.
Host: So can any country envy us?
Speakers 1 & 2: Of course!
Speaker 2: They do envy us!
Speaker 1: And this is why they hate us so much! They elect trash. Especially Ukraine. The so-called brothers. They used to be our besties.
Speaker 2: My husband was Ukrainian. Good that he didn't live to see this.
Speaker 1: And now they are enemies.

However, the honeymoon of these gonzo activists with the new platform did not last long: already on the 2nd of March, the group issued a video statement on YouTube calling for the blocking of Clubhouse as a hotbed of immorality, chaos, and suicide (Meduza 2nd of March 2021).

Unlike in Russia, Clubhouse discussions in Ukraine did not focus on monetization and protest coordination, and saw zero interest or intervention from the government. Back in February, the Ukrainian segment of Clubhouse was primarily represented by journalists, IT, PR and marketing specialists who discussed such themes as creativity, design, mental health, marketing techniques etc. Media companies and news organizations such as *Liga.net* started daily talk shows that featured discussions on current events and social-political themes with journalists and invited experts, much like a radio talk show. Journalists used Clubhouse as another tool to engage in activism and exert influence on politics, as is characteristic of the Ukrainian media system (Horbyk 2017). The new format coincided with important developments at the time, such as the imprisonment of the Odessa pro-Ukrainian activist and blogger Serhiy Sternenko, which was discussed actively on Clubhouse, with journalists on the *Liga.net* room on the 23rd of February openly debating options of how to get him released (which may or may not have contributed to the protest wave against the court decision). Having short of 300K followers on YouTube, Sternenko himself joined Clubhouse on the 20th of February, only 3 days before the arrest, but did not convert his popularity into a notable following on the new platform, where he still has only 372 followers (even though he was released during the spring and continued his media activism).

Fakehouse, or Playful Disinformation

Clubhouse had a notable place for pranks, mystifications, provocative titillating content, fakes and eccentricity of a different kind, too – not necessarily political. For example, in a discussion room on the 17th of February, someone who sounded like the legendary pop-diva Alla Pugachova talked to the audience and sang several hits. When asked how she managed to get an invite, she answered that her husband Maksim Galkin invited her, although the profile of "Pugachova" revealed that in fact she had been invited by a young actress. Later it was confirmed that the session was a prank with a fake Pugachova, although the personality of the prankster was never revealed (Meduza 17 February 2021).

The general omnipresence of fakes and their infiltration on Clubhouse would expectedly lead to a discourse on the issue on Clubhouse itself. And such a discussion

was initiated on the 19th of February; the Russian segment was attracted to a show aptly titled "Fakehouse: Who, How and Why Produces Fakes?" However, the line-up was more than unexpected in that its participants were themselves engaged in manufacturing fakes. It included Ashot Gabrelyanov, the founder and former editor in chief of the Russian portal and TV/channel *LifeNews*, known for its numerous fake news stories and manipulation (StopFake 2016), Roman Chukov, who works at the foundation *Roskongress*, founded by the Kremlin under the personal auspices of Vladimir Putin (Roskongress 2021). The show was moderated by Vladimir Tabak, who gained notoriety in 2011 when, still a student, he coordinated the publication of a calendar in support of Putin featuring scantily clad female students of Moscow State University; he later worked in the team of the chief Kremlin ideologist of post-truth, Vladislav Surkov, as a supervisor of web campaigns during elections (Ginzburg 2020). The show was initiated by ANO Dialog, a Kremlin-sponsored GoNGO created to monitor and react to negative social media content about public service, infrastructure and local authorities (*ibid.*). In a way, this was a relevant panel to discuss the manufacturing of fake news from a first-hand perspective of practitioners who actually create it. More seriously, it demonstrated the agility of the Russian authorities in colonizing the newest media and attempting to set the agenda there.

Other unusual broadcasts in the Russian segment were far more aesthetic and inspirational. "Dead Poets Society" – a room named after Peter Weir's 1989 movie – represents digital technologies in service of the classics. It hosted bots who recited poetry by famous (deceased) Russian poets. The bots used actual voice records of recitals that have been preserved. The bot of Joseph Brodsky was the first one to be created on the invite of the club's founder, IT entrepreneur Nikolai Lebedovsky. This bot profile later used his invites to create bot profiles of Anna Akhmatova, Sergei Yesenin, Vladimir Vysotskiy and others. The "poets" read their texts to each other while the rest of the audience was expected to listen in silence. If a living person started to talk, the bots went silent and resumed reciting poetry only after 10 seconds of silence in the room (Parfenenkov 2021). This case exemplifies the possible gap between the speakers and the audience, and the ability of the machine to impose a certain type of behaviour on the latter. It also questions and explores the limits of the fake and the authentic: the recitals were authentic poets' voices that were assembled and enacted by fake bots. Eventually, the club ended up entering the top 15 Clubhouse clubs in the Russian language with 4.5K followers; however, converting this success into other social media failed, for example, the club's Telegram channel lists only 156 followers.

Big Little Liars: Perception of Clubhouse

The tripling of Clubhouse users in just 16 days drew attention to the new, oral social network. Naturally, the first impressions and reactions spilled over into other, text-based social media. In the second part of February, Clubhouse became one of the major themes in news and social media, particularly on Facebook. The reactions ranged from delight to disappointment, sometimes about the same issue. On the one side of the spectrum, Facebook users praised Clubhouse for its "cosiness" and "incredibly interesting and deep discussions" led by very young people and without sexist jokes. On the other side, users were irritated by dilettantism of the speakers, "jibber-jabber, giggles, scream" as general impression from the talks, and prevalence of stereotypical themes: "The main life-hack of this season: the name of every created room in Clubhouse should end with 'and creativity'. For example, 'Design and creativity', 'Yoga and creativity', 'Accounting and creativity', 'Constitutional Court and creativity'". Some Clubhouse neophytes felt excluded and unwanted.

> "My feelings when entering the room <...> with that orgy, business

> meeting on a cosmic scale, or whatever in progress is that I am the odd one out there. After entering someone else's monologue, everything I want is to click and leave, drop the phone on the floor, turn it off, turn myself off", wrote a well-known Ukrainian actress and TV host in a Facebook post.

Many users did not conceal that it was more important for them to showcase how well they keep track of the latest trends, that they possess a new iPhone and have enough social capital to get a desired invite, or even to be invited to speak. The platform's exclusivity was another recurring theme discussed on Facebook and Twitter.

Lucky owners of the IOS devices ridiculed those who used Android and were "missing out on all the fun". The Russian humorous historical Facebook group *Stradayushcheye Srednevekovye* ("The Suffering Middle Ages") published a meme based on a painting *One morning at the gates of the Louvre* by Édouard Debat-Ponsan that depicted Catherine de' Medici observing the aftermath of St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. The painting was supplemented by the following caption: "Year 2024. The Androids, finally, enter Clubhouse" presciently hinting that when owners of Android devices are allowed to enter the app, it will have begun falling out of fashion (**Figure 2**).

On the other hand, some users tried to dissociate themselves from the Clubhouse hype, stating directly that they do not take part in "the vanity fair" bragging of getting an invite. "I was not invited into Clubhouse. Nobody fucking cares about me. I lost all my social capital among trendsetters some five years ago <...> I can talk in a nice and interesting way without Clubhouse. For money, of course. I don't want to do it for free", wrote a voice actor from Kyiv.

Surely, the new format encouraged reminiscences and comparisons with older media practices. Some users rhetorically – and nostalgically – asked who among their friends remembered getting invitations to Gmail, LiveJournal and Facebook. Some bloggers went even further, comparing Clubhouse to an old wire radio point (the so called "*brekhunets*", "the little liar" in Ukrainian) that during the Soviet times functioned as a sound background at homes. For example, a former Ukrainian MP and popular Facebook blogger ironically compared Clubhouse to the way his grandmother used to talk to the radio receiver:

> " – Soviet pensioners are living better and better, the radio said.
> – So much better that we can't even die, answered Granny.
> – General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Presidium Chairman of the Supreme Council of the USSR Leonid Illich Brezhniev announced that Soviet people are already living in times of developed socialism, the radio informed.
> – ...which means in the arse, specified Granny.
> – It is midnight in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the radio used to tell daily at 3 p.m.
> – Why the hell should I care about your Kamchatsk?, commented Granny.
> I don't know whether the radio heard Granny. I think it did a bit."

The arrival of a new platform focused on voice and oral verbal communication sparked a debate on language among social media users in Ukraine. The debate revolved around the status of the coalescing Ukrainian community on the platform. Whereas some of those who wrote on the topic admired the perceived high quality of the Ukrainian language content on Clubhouse and often constructed this in opposition to what they saw as more strategic, monetization-driven and cynically exploitative Russian content, others decried the small size and poor diversity of choices offered by the Ukrainian community, sometimes describing it as a ghetto:



FIGURE 2. "Year 2024. The Androids, finally, enter Clubhouse". A meme from Suffering Middle Ages dated 24 February 2021

> "The difference between discussions in Russian and Ukrainian is astonishing. They prefer to talk about TikTok, sex, marketing and creativity. No politics or social issues! <...> Unlike the Ukrainian segment. Which is hot and free. Where the thematic breadth can please anyone's taste – from sex to Zelenskyi".
>
> "In some languages, like English or Russian, there really are topics. <...> [Users] are looking for like-minded people by topics rather than language. In the Ukrainian segment, people unite around the language rather than topic or interests. The word 'ghetto' comes to my mind but I don't want to think in that direction".

Thus, the launch of a new media platform became an element in the discursive construction of difference and national identity (cf. Horbyk 2018).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: CLUBHOUSE AS A ZOMBIE RADIO, ANTI-PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, AND THE RETURN OF THE PASSIVE AUDIENCE

The new platform landed in Eastern Europe in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, and its explosive expansion was timed in between rather harsh lockdowns. This most certainly affected the appeal of the platform and the way its use spread. However, we disagree with the early analysts who posit that it was Clubhouse's authenticity and human contact that made it popular. While attractive on the surface (it was indeed about voice, listening to others and informal communication – a deficit commodity as of 2021), this perspective does not hold under closer scrutiny. Clubhouse is designed exclusively for oral communication over distance. In this respect, it has no advantages over conference calls (Zoom or Skype), Facebook lives, radio or even voice telephony. Its unique offer is not a greater reduction in distance, a closer contact or greater intimacy (after all, it is primarily for public conversations). On Clubhouse, we communicate but there is no greater contact compared to all other platforms, and this is a no better substitute to unmediated human communication. The user experience for the speaker is much like speaking on the phone; for the listener, like listening to a radio show. If there is some unique offer that facilitated Clubhouse's spread, apart from its novelty and exclusivity, it must be something else.

In order to locate it, one must consider the mediascape conditions during the pandemic. For most of the middle-class white-collar urban professionals, these were the conditions of distance labour relocated from office to the private spaces of home. This was not voluntary for many but rather imposed by employers or the state. The character of labour has also changed as tasks that required being present in the office now had to be outsourced to home with the help of communication technologies such as videoconferencing. An intensive, radical and involuntary mediatization of work practices ensued. It was also coupled with a likewise forced mediatization of other, more informal and private practices. Suddenly people were forced to mediate more and in situations where they had never actively used media before. In Russia and Ukraine, it was also complicated by the confusion about the rules and their changes. Extremely harsh lockdowns (especially in Ukraine, where even the metro was closed for several months) were followed by periods of rapid relaxation, when almost all establishments (restaurants, bars and clubs, theatres, cinemas, museums) were open again. White collars, previously confined in the office, gained more control over how they work, which also made new portions of previously working time during the day available for audiovisual media use (cf. Bick *et al*. 2020).

Heavy daily use of conference call platforms for work communication (Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Teams etc) normalised

live interaction over long distance in the form of a collective conversation where everyone connects from their own sofa and device. A common feature of this interaction, however, was video that could be and often has been disabled (by simply turning off the camera) but in the vast majority of contexts was required. This proved to be exhausting, especially in long sessions (Fauville *et al*. 2021; Shockley *et al*. 2021).

Clubhouse became like Zoom without video. Its rise was prepared by the normalization of Zoom-style video-conference communication but driven by its unique offer of long-distance collective communication without the visual component. On Clubhouse, there is no need for preparations, presentable clothes, lighting, and background. One can connect from bed or bathroom without need for any explanations, in pyjamas or even naked without any consequences. One does not have to endure eye contact and get stressed about how one looks on the screen. Rather than adding new functions, removing the video option altogether created the unique offer that made Clubhouse a welcomed addition to the lockdown mediaspace. Essentially, it filled the niche of an informal audio-only conference call.

Furthermore, Clubhouse established a clear boundary between the creators and the public. While the listeners may ask questions, this is moderated by the host, and only speakers are encouraged to talk as a rule. If a user has very few followers, it makes no sense to broadcast; one has to be an influencer or be invited by an influencer host. This makes Clubhouse a less optimal space for produsage. The platform was apparently designed with the idea of an influencer in mind, and designed for content creators. At the same time, Clubhouse's affordances do encourage a certain passivity. You do not need to like, share, or comment on anything as there is no such option at all. There is no need to write anything at all either, apart from name and bio during registration. You can likewise quietly enter and leave without hosts being notified. You can be audible and active but that is strongly conditional, and a choice to remain passive and inactive is at least as much encouraged as to be active. Curiously, this leads to what seems to be the return of passive audience and the monological model of communication, almost mass communication, whereby the select few communicate to the many. Politically, this also heralds a less participatory model as seen from Carpentier's perspective, as users are clearly separated into those having power and influence over decision-making in content creation, and those who mostly consume the content on offer.

While this minimalist asceticism that reduces options instead of extending them may appear restrictive, in the world where boundaries are ever more fluid and hybridised, new options are daily heaped on top of the extant ones, and everyone is encouraged to *produse* content and interact, Clubhouse offers relatively strong boundaries and clear, well-defined roles, and does not impose a requirement to participate but legitimises the right to be passive, which may have been perceived as refreshing and liberating especially against the background of the imposed requirements to actively communicate via Zoom or other video conference calls. At the end of the working day, it must have been a relief for many to tune in and just listen to others talking without having to do anything by themselves while still partaking in a common mediated experience. Thus, the new niches created by a post-pandemic media ecology were filled: the audio *cum* video conference call for work (Zoom and the like, requiring active participation); the evening video streaming for entertainment (Netflix and alternatives, passive consumption); and the audio-only conference call mostly for relaxation (Clubhouse, mostly passive consumption).

The minimalist asceticism seems an even more clearly pronounced feature of Clubhouse if one considers that it radically eschews multimedia and, in general, any form of intermediality. Like Malewicz's suprematist painting, the expressionist theatre that removes the scene to the bricks of

the back wall, or Grotowski's "poor theatre", Clubhouse discards the medial richness in favour of the purity of monomedium, limiting communication to the barest, minimal essence albeit capturing it with the cutting-edge, smart Apple hardware. From the perspective of media archaeology, Clubhouse can be construed as a remediation of radio. It is focused on live, real time vocal communication of hosts and invited speakers that is broadcast to a (largely) passive audience. Like radio, it is live and, as of early 2021, was unrecorded, capitalizing on the audience's fear of missing out. But unlike traditional radio, it has no central studio or broadcasting facility, which is reminiscent of guerrilla radio pirates active in the Eastern bloc during the Cold War, in that it is communication between several broadcasters located in different places with the possibility for many more to listen to it. The similarity also extends to the matter of choice of whether to be a listener or a broadcaster. This decentralization enables a comparison with the media form of a conference call, and essentially suggests a conclusion that Clubhouse is a remediation of radio modified with those features of conference call that are stipulated by contemporary technological conditions (decentralised internet connection and prevalence of portable and handheld communication devices). There are also certain features (digital format, orality, clearly defined roles) that make it a partial remediation of a podcast, with the exception of liveness and simultaneity. The liveness itself was a mixed blessing for Clubhouse during its launch since, while enticing the audience not to miss interesting talks, it discouraged investing in content one would have liked or needed to revisit because the content disappeared without a trace.

CONCLUSION

In late winter – early spring 2021, Clubhouse' popularity spiked in Ukraine and Russia. It started its spread from IT and media professionals (especially in Ukraine) as well as finance and influencers (especially in Russia) who tried to find ways of monetizing the new fad. The aura of exclusivity and novelty made a Clubhouse invite a desired good, which opened the way for an invite market and pyramid-like schemes of obtaining one. Clubhouse was also quickly politicised and made relevant in the political spheres of Ukraine (as a new platform for news organisations to broadcast, and for journalists to comment and influence politics) and Russia (as a tool to organise and connect in a more repressive environment, but also used for governmental propaganda and disinformation). The novelty of the medium also stimulated experimentation, and a number of initiatives explored the authenticity of voice and vocal communication, from staging broadcasts by celebrity impersonators to rebroadcasting records of long-deceased poets. The new medium also sparked a strong reaction, which ranged from admiration to denial, with many nuances of opinion in between.

The authors analysing the launch of Clubhouse often repeat that its lightning success was due to the high authenticity of vocal communication against the background of the pandemic. However, a deeper look and a media theory perspective suggest that Clubhouse is a remediation of radio modified with certain features of a conference call and podcast. Therefore, it is not persuasive from a theoretical standpoint to ascribe a special authenticity or intimacy found in neither radio nor conference call to a media form that is cognate of both. Rather, the fast burst of Clubhouse's popularity is owed, from the remediation perspective, to its domestication of the conference call (too ubiquitous during the pandemic) into the intimate sphere of leisurely conversation. This humanization of the conference call (ironically, a Zoom meeting with a human face when no face is shown) was supported by the rejection of intermediality, encouraging the liberating passivity of the audience, and drawing clear borders between the roles of speakers and listeners.

What is, then, the future of Clubhouse in Eastern Europe? Since Clubhouse is not moderated in a centralised way, it has the potential to become a platform for

oppositional and subversive discussions and even coordinating offline actions. This had been happening in China until the platform was blocked, and we have demonstrated that this was happening in Russia to a certain extent. At the same time, the government is curious about the newest kid on the block and tries to co-opt and domesticate the platform; moreover, Clubhouse is likely to be banned in Russia as well if it becomes a true threat to the current regime in the Kremlin. In Ukraine, the participatory significance of the platform is limited by its still limited reach. We have shown possible sources for Clubhouse's elitism (primarily the restrictive IOS-only invite system at the time of its launch). But it is also about the technical affordances of the medium. The participation is weak and unequal, as seen from the perspective of the political approach in participation theory (cf. Carpentier 2016). It is managed and controlled by those who have social capital. There is no equality in content decision-making on Clubhouse as only well-connected users have the power to choose which themes to discuss and speakers to invite. A speaker who himself has no significant following, can only reach a greater audience if invited by a popular host. Because of this, the agenda of Clubhouse tends to reflect the worldview and values of the powerful group that dominates it (IT, finance and marketing), quite remote from those of average Ukrainians. Still, an opening-up of the platform to a large number of Android users could unleash the civic potential the platform has. Here, this top-down structure of media participation may actually prove conducive to political organization of significant groups by a few leaders. The question then is, how would Clubhouse attract vast numbers of East European users to flock to it now that the first stage of expansion passed? Who would be the influencers the average Ukrainian or Russian would follow, and what would make these influencers want to use Clubhouse? It is curious, for example, that hyper-popular Russian rappers ignored the platform that would be nearly perfect for spontaneous rap improvisation or rap battle. In the context of the uncertainty of how the owners of Clubhouse plan to monetise their platform, the platform's future in Eastern Europe looks dimmer than one might expect. It may well prove a fleeting fad, the proverbial khalif for an hour, or a star that quickly fades after a moment of blinding radiance. The other scenario of an even more dramatic expansion now seems less likely. A more balanced, and perhaps the most realistic scenario, would see Clubhouse remaining a limited but stable niche medium catering to the needs of a few specific social groups. Yet its breakthrough in February 2021 is already ingrained in media history and the social anthropology of Eastern Europe as a unique case of a rapid and avalanche-like appearance of a new communication platform with many lessons for media scholars and practitioners all over the world.

REFERENCES

BBC 19 February 2021. 'Clubhouse Downloads Double in Two Weeks, Analytics Firm Says'. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-56127226 (25 June 2021).

BBC 24 February 2021. 'Clubhouse: What Is It and How Do You Get Invited?' https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-56180581 (25 June 2021).

Bick, Alexander; Blandin, Adam; Mertens, Karel 2020. 'Work from Home after the Covid-19 Outbreak'. – *CEPR Discussion Paper* No. DP15000.

Bolter, Jay David; Grusin, Richard 1999. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Bruns, Axel 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*. New York: Peter Lang.

Bruns, Axel; Schmidt, Jan-Hinrik 2011. 'Produsage: a closer look at continuing developments'. – *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*, 17, 1, 3–7.

Carpentier, Nico 2016. 'Beyond the Ladder of Participation: An Analytical Toolkit for the Critical Analysis of Participatory Media Processes'. – *Javnost – The Public*, 23, 1, 70–88.

Chan, Clara J. 2021. 'Clubhouse Launches Audio Recording Features'. – *The Hollywood Reporter*, 30 September 2021. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/digital/clubhouse-audio-recording-search-1235023246/ (25 October 2021)

Collins, Barry 2021. 'Clubhouse: The Hot New Social Network Has Big Privacy Problems'. – *Forbes*, 10 February 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/barrycollins/2021/02/10/clubhouse-the-hot-new-social-network-has-big-privacy-problems/?sh=4b091a6ce4c3 (25 June 2021).

Criddle, Cristina 2021. 'Clubhouse Launches on Android as App Downloads Collapse'. – *BBC*, 10 May 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-57058516 (25 June 2021).

Cruz, Edgar Gómez; Ardèvol, Elisenda 2013. 'Ethnography and the field in media(ted) studies: a practice theory approach'. – *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 12, 9, 3, 27–46.

Current Time 2 March 2021. 'Clubhouse Poised to Shake up Russia's Access to News and Newsmakers'. https://en.currenttime.tv/a/clubhouse-poised-to-shake-up-russia-s-access-to-news-and-newsmakers-/31128267.html (25 June 2021).

Dean, Brian 2021. 'How Many Users Does Clubhouse Have? 40+ Clubhouse Stats'. – *Backlinko*, 10 May 2021. https://backlinko.com/clubhouse-users (25 June 2021).

Deutsche Welle 21 March 2021. 'О чем говорили на форуме муниципальных депутатов в Clubhouse'. https://www.dw.com/ru/o-chem-govorili-na-forume-municipalnyh-deputatov-v-clubhouse/a-56946079 (25 June 2021).

Druziuk, Yaroslav = Друзюк, Ярослав 2021. 'Що таке Clubhouse й чому всі хочуть потрапити в голосову соціальну мережу'. – *The Village,* 4 February 2021. https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/business/business-guide/307281-clubhouse-2021-ukrainian-house-explainer (25 June 2021).

Etherington, Darrell; Liao, Rita 2021. 'Clubhouse is Now Blocked in China After a Brief Uncensored Period'. – *TechCrunch*, 8 February 2021. https://techcrunch.com/2021/02/08/clubhouse-is-now-blocked-in-china-after-a-brief-uncensored-period/?guccounter=1 (25 June 2021).

Fauville, G.; Luo, M.; Queiroz, A. C. M.; Bailenson, J. N.; Hancock, J. 2021. 'Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale'. – *Computers in Human Behavior Reports* 4, 1–10.

Fiadotava, Anastasiya 2021. '"We Came for the Sluts, but Stayed for the Slutsk": FK Slutsk Worldwide Facebook Page Between Ironic and Genuine Football Fandom'. – *Humor* 34, 2, 259–282.

Gibson, James J. 1979/2015. 'The Theory of Affordances'. – *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception: Classic Edition*. New York and London: Psychology Press, 119–136.

Ginzburg, Kseniya = Гинзбург Ксения 2020. 'Фабрика нетроллей, или Как чиновников отправили следить за общественным мнением горожан'. – Фонтанка, 27 November 2020. https://www.fontanka.ru/2020/11/27/69580113/ (25 June 2021).

Hammersley, Martyn; Atkinson, Paul 1983/2019. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (4th edition). London & New York: Routledge.

Horbyk, Roman 2017. *Mediated Europes: Discourse and Power in Ukraine, Russia and Poland during Euromaidan*. Dissertation. Södertörns högskola. Stockholm.

Horbyk, Roman 2018. 'Discourses on Languages and Identities in Readers' Comments in Ukrainian Online News Media: An Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory Perspective'. – *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 5,2, 9–35.

Huet, Ellen; Tobin, Michael 2020. 'Private Social App Clubhouse Courts Fresh Controversy'. – *Bloomberg*, 30 September 2020. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-29/private-social-app-clubhouse-courts-fresh-controversy (25 June 2021).

Hyland-Wood, Bernadette; Gardner, John; Leask, Julie; Ecker, Ullrich K. H. 2021. 'Toward Effective Government Communication Strategies in the Era of Covid-19'. – *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications* 8, 1, 1–12.

Jenkins, Henry 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, Henry; Clinton, Katie; Purushotoma, Ravi; Robinson, Alice. J.; Weigel, Margaret 2007. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century.* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Kolomiytseva, E.Yu. = Коломийцева Е.Ю 2021. 'Голосовая социальная сеть Clubhouse: возможности и перспективы'. – Вестник Волжского университета имени В.Н. Татищева 2, 2, 119–126.

Kostiuk, Iryna = Костюк, Ірина 2021. 'Кого слухати в Clubhouse? Зібрали поки головні українські кімнати в аудіосервісі'. – *The Village*, 19 February 2021. https://www.the-village.com.ua/village/business/business-guide/307885-clubhouse-ukrainian-rooms-banda-ukrainian-show-planeta-kino?fbclid=IwAR35sxcy5bkD9ShviBhRELzrQWmSMsdaujv7J4QLmEO7qBPlfYwHzEw6kGo (25 June 2021).

Levina, Iljana = Левина, Ильяна 2021. 'Расследование года: как попасть в ClubHouse?' . – *VC.RU*, 12 February 2021. https://vc.ru/social/208217-rassledovanie-goda-kak-popast-v-clubhouse (25 June 2021).

Light, Ben; Burgess, Jean; Duguay, Stefanie 2018. 'The Walkthrough Method: An Approach to the Study of Apps.' – *New Media & Society* 20, 3, 881–900.

Marchal, Nahema; Au, Hubert 2020. '"Coronavirus Explained": YouTube, Covid-19, and the Socio-Technical Mediation of Expertise Social Media'. – + *Society* July-September, 1–4.

Mazidah, Mohamad Siti 2021. 'Creative production of "Covid-19 social distancing" narratives on social media'. – *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 111, 3, 347–359.

Meduza 17 February 2021. 'Алла Пугачева пришла в Clubhouse: спела, похвалила Лободу, поговорила с Федуком. А потом выяснилось, что это была не Пугачева'. https://meduza.io/shapito/2021/02/17/alla-pugacheva-prishla-v-clubhouse-spela-pohvalila-lobodu-pogovorila-s-fedukom-a-potom-vyyasnilos-chto-eto-byla-ne-pugacheva (25 June 2021).

Meduza 2 March 2021. 'Clubhouse официально все: «Отряды Путина» призвали срочно закрыть соцсеть – ведь там притоны, пьянство и «сплошная аморальность»'. https://meduza.io/shapito/2021/03/02/clubhouse-ofitsialno-vse-otryady-putina-prizvali-srochno-zakryt-sotsset-ved-tam-pritony-pyanstvo-i-sploshnaya-amoralnost (25 June 2021).

News ABC 20 January 2021. 'Clubhouse: What They Reveal About the Business Model'. https://newsabc.net/clubhouse-what-they-reveal-about-the-business-model/ (25 June 2021).
Norman, Donald A. 1999. 'Affordance, conventions, and design'. – *Interactions*, 6, 3, 38–43.
Norstrom, Roza; Sarna, Pawel 2021. 'Internet Memes in Covid-19 Lockdown Times in Poland'. – *Comunicar* 29, 67, 1–10.
Oswal, Sushil K.; Palmer, Zsuzsanna B. 2021. 'Culturally Situated Do-It-Yourself Instructions for Making Protective Masks: Teaching the Genre of Instructional Design in the Age of Covid-19'. – *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 35, 1, 160–166.
Ovinnikova, Tetiana = Овіннікова, Тетяна 2018. '«Загони Путіна» з бойових бабусь – все не так весело і безневинно'. – Радіо Свобода, 5 листопада 2018. https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbas-realii-z-kym-voyuyut-zagony-putina/29580849.html (5 November 2018).
Parfenenkov, Yegor = Парфененков, Егор 2021. 'В Clubhouse появилось «Общество мертвых поэтов». Там боты Ахматовой и Бродского читают стихи'. – SRSLY, 6 March 2021. https://srsly.ru/article/show/8389/
(25 June 2021).
Parikka, Jussi 2012. *What is Media Archaeology?* Cambridge: Polity.
Perez, Sarah 2021. 'Clubhouse Says Its Android Launch Will Take 'A Couple of Months''. – *TechCrunch*, 22 March 2021. https://techcrunch.com/2021/03/22/clubhouse-says-its-android-launch-will-take-a-couple-of-months/?guccounter=1 (25 June 2021).
Pink, Sarah; Horst, Heather; Postill, John; Hjorth, Larissa; Lewis, Tania; Tacchi, Jo 2016. *Digital ethnography: Principles and Practice*. London: Sage.
Popova, Olga = Попова, Ольга 2021. 'Политическая онлайн-коммуникация молодежи российских мегаполисов'. – *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies* 2, 28–54.
Roskongress = Росконгресс 2021. 'Роман Чуков'. https://roscongress.org/speakers/chukov-roman/biography/ (25 June 2021).
Shockley, Kristen M.; Gabriel, Allison S.; Robertson, Daron; Rosen, Christopher C.; Chawla, Nitya; Ganster, Mahira L.; Ezerins, Maira E. 2021. 'The fatiguing effects of camera use in virtual meetings: A within-person field experiment'. – *Journal of Applied Psychology, 106*, 8, 1137–1155.
StopFake 20 March 2016. 'How to Comb Russia's TV News'. https://www.stopfake.org/en/how-to-comb-russia-s-tv-news/ (26 January 2022).
Stratton, Jon 2021. 'Parodies For a Pandemic: Coronavirus Songs, Creativity and Lockdown'. – *Cultural Studies* 35, 2–3, 412– 431.
Strielkowski, Wadim 2021. 'Clubhouse: Yet Another Social Network?' – *SSRN*, 8 March. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3832599 (8 June 2021).
Suneela, Garg; Nidhi, Bhatnagar; Navia, Gangadharan 2020. 'A Case for Participatory Disease Surveillance of the Covid-19 Pandemic in India'. – *JMIR Public Health Surveillance* 6, 2.
TASS = ТАСС 25 February 2021. 'В Роскачестве назвали главные угрозы Clubhouse'. https://tass.ru/obschestvo/10776833 (25 June 2021).
Zeng, Jing; Schäfer, Mike S. 2021. 'Conceptualizing "Dark Platforms": Covid-19-Related Conspiracy Theories on 8kun and Gab'. – *Digital Journalism*, 1–24.