

**Academic expert's review on the doctoral dissertation**  
**“Transformation of the communicative potential of the media: the**  
**cultural heritage of Kazakhstan in the context of globalization”**

**written by**

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**submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on the**  
**educational program 8D03203 - International Journalism**

**1. Relevance of the research topic**

The topic of the paper “Transformation of the communicative potential of the media: the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan in the context of globalization” is timely and deals with a vital issue in social communication and media studies.

Concern for culture and art in the media space in the 21st century, new forms of media cultural and art promotion, the impact of the mediasphere on culture/art, and culture/art on the mediasphere - all these issues are significant in the context of the increasing differentiation and fragmentation of contemporary public discourses.

Their relevance is primarily related to the fact that culture and art remain fundamental factors determining the evolution of human identity - both individually and collectively. In this context, the quality of cultural and art transformation translates into the quality of the ways of self-identification of both individuals and social groups. These ways, in turn, determine the choice of goals pursued individually or collectively, which leads to the harmonization or antagonization of human relations. In other words, the cultural and art condition (level of well-being) of individuals and societies is a factor that significantly modifies the course of history.

In this context, the first part of the dissertation title, which refers to the problem of transforming the communicative potential of mass media, resonates fortuitously. This potential is a source of energy that can be activated in a variety of ways - strengthening or weakening the self-identification and cohesiveness of the community within which the mass media function and on which they exert a particular influence (shaping its tastes and preferences, creating its typical system of symbols and meanings, constituting and replicating the hierarchy of values dominant in this group, as well as the key goals that the group wants and intends to pursue). In short, the mass media shapes culture and art in the XXI century, which process is the source of serious shifts in individual and group identity.

Consequently, the question of the cultural heritage of contemporary Kazakhstan under the conditions of globalization should be considered a key dilemma focusing on the concerns of Kazakhstani citizens as a political community. At the same time, this general problem implies a rich set of specific issues:

1. The need to determine the strategy of choice between global, regional, and local priorities, as well as the harmonization of the elements chosen from these three levels by contemporary Kazakhstani society (a postulate to address the phenomenon of glocalization and to find an original and autonomous



glocalization formula that will respond to the needs of the contemporary Kazakh state and society).

2. The need to choose a model that combines the values constituting Kazakhstan's civic nation with the values cultivated as determinants of the cultural specificity of diverse national groups living in the country.
3. The requirement for developing such a national identity among Kazakhstan's citizens which allows them to construct their state as a stable supporter of international cooperation, both within Central Asia and beyond the region's borders.
4. The demand for the involvement of actors co-constituting the Kazakh media sphere in the debate on the traditions that Kazakhstan should protect, as well as the innovations that the state should stimulate.

In this context, the author's choice to focus on revealing the role of both traditional (printed press, radio, and TV) and non-traditional (internet) media dealing with culture and art should be approved. This approach to the topic provides an opportunity to 1) present the tensions in promoting culture through the ways typical of traditional media and through the means often used by non-traditional media, 2) indicate the areas within which and under what conditions electronic media can/should support the actions promoting culture in traditional media.

## **2. Scientific results within the framework of the thesis requirements**

The research results presented in the dissertation are scientific in nature and fall within the social sciences. More precisely, the work is located in communication and media analyses, including international journalism studies.

The work is an original analysis of the role and importance of mass media in popularizing art and knowledge about art in the third decade of the 21st century. The subject is presented in the context of the transformation of the media sector, which, along with the development of new technologies, is subject to substantial market and ideological pressures. Under these conditions, journalism on culture and art is often treated as 1) unnecessary, as it is low-profit, or 2) subservient to ideological campaigns implemented by various socio-political forces. As a result, the cultural/art sphere is sometimes marginalized or utilitarianized in the media. The above reinforces discourses within which the intrinsic significance of culture and art is ignored or distorted, which translates into destabilization and impoverishment of sensitiveness in the life of individuals and societies (reduction of the multidimensional man, destruction of identities based on the balance of individual and community perspectives, inability to create and cultivate skills to recognize one's own location in the complex network of relations).

In this context, the author points to the differentiation of the contemporary media sphere, within which we can distinguish between traditional cultural and art journalism and new cultural and art journalism. The first type is found in the space of the printed press, radio, and television, while the second type is developed in the so-called new media, particularly through the involvement of the opportunities provided by social networks. These spheres are not separate but interpenetrate and



interact with each other. At the same time, they delineate a formal opposition that affects the dynamics of genres and content transformations in the domain of cultural and art journalism (conceived as a subsystem of the social communication system).

The tasks set by the author have been satisfactorily accomplished. The dissertation presents the author's approach to the problems identified, offering considerations anchored in the relevant and rich literature on the subject. As a result, the dissertation is original and innovative, created with reference to and utmost respect for the standards of the discipline. Thus, the author's insights and conclusions should be assessed as objectified and, at the same time, definitely belonging to the canon of contemporary research on social communication and media.

In this context, the detailed content presented in the dissertation is as follows:

- 1) presentation of the ambiguity of the term “culture;”
- 2) presentation of the typology of cultural and art journalism;
- 3) explanation of the concept of “communicative transformation” as a factor significantly affecting the shape and development of cultural and art journalism;
- 4) framing the subject matter within the framework of conceptual categories proposed by recognized theorists of modernity, with particular attention to conceptual achievements in the sphere of media studies;
- 5) definition of the methodology of the dissertation, including, in particular, the presentation of the empirical research carried out, along with the methods of collecting, systematizing, and interpreting data;
- 6) presentation of the genres of cultural and art journalism practiced today in the Kazakhstani media sphere (both traditional and non-traditional, including, in particular, social networks, portals and online channels);
- 7) pointing out that the diversification of cultural and art journalism is related to the diversification of experience and expectations of different generations of viewers;
- 8) discussing the technological, economic, institutional, ideological, and political contexts that affect the transformation of the media, including cultural and art journalism;
- 9) discussing practical measures aimed at improving the condition of cultural and art journalism in contemporary Kazakhstan;
- 10) presenting foreign experience in animation and fruitful transformation of cultural and art journalism in the Kazakhstani media sphere;
- 11) a detailed proposal for academic courses in cultural and art journalism (including a system of subjects pertaining to this media domain, as well as syllabuses indicating in detail the subject content that could/should be taught to students in the proposed courses).

### **3. Degree of validity and reliability of each scientific result (position), findings, and conclusions formulated by the applicant in the dissertation**

The work was anchored in rich literature on the subject, to which the author was able to refer creatively. As a result, her dissertation has a solid theoretical and



methodological framework, which enabled a fairly clear systematization of the collected empirical material (both in the analysis of media messages and in the course of survey research). The various parts of the work are supported by a good understanding of Kazakhstan's cultural and art journalism, as well as foreign practices in the development and promotion of this media sector.

The author presented a rich array of terms that characterize the specifics of cultural and art journalism, its varieties and manifestations. The way of handling this terminology testifies to the author's rich theoretical and practical experience with regard to the subject of her research and analysis.

The rich empirical layer of the work should also be highlighted. The author cites numerous, often comprehensively analyzed, case studies from both the Kazakhstani and non-Kazakhstani media space. She constructively criticizes them, pointing out both good and bad practices in the media field she studies. The considerations also contain significant practical value (by pointing out recommendations aimed at improving the quality of cultural and art journalism promotion in contemporary Kazakhstan - including experiences outside Kazakhstan and their contextualized application in Kazakhstani conditions).

Throughout her arguments, the author indicates that cultural and art journalism should discover an important role in the "spiritual development" not only of individuals but also of the Kazakh nation. The work even refers to the "spiritual rebirth" of the Kazakh people. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether by the term Kazakh nation the author means a civic nation (that is, all the citizens of Kazakhstan who co-create it as a state with its nationwide culture and art) or an ethnic nation (that is, Kazakhs as a nationality that dominates in Kazakhstan, distinguishing itself from other nationalities living there). In my opinion, clarification in this regard is of particular importance. Without it, the reader of the dissertation is unable to determine which kind of "Kazakh spiritual revival" the author may be referring to.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Author almost does not touch the cultural and art journalism of national and ethnic minorities living in Kazakhstan. As a result, an impression may arise that she overlooked their rights and expectations. In order to avoid this impression, it would be appropriate to point out that the development of cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan should be included in the multi-level program of creating Kazakhs as a multicultural civic nation that seeks to provide decent living conditions for all its citizens (respecting their diversity and creating conditions for the cultivation of diverse cultural identities). In this context, cultural and art journalism can be proposed and designed as a complex system of actors inspiring constructive dialogue among the diverse cultural communities living in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the media in this context appears to be an excellent promoter of cross-cultural exchange, as well as identity fusion, which can and should translate into the cultural and social attractiveness of Kazakhstan in the 21st century.

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#### **4. The degree of novelty of each scientific result (position), findings and conclusion of the applicant formulated in the thesis.**

In the reviewed dissertation, the author has collected and systematized rich empirical material showing the current state of cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan.

As a result, her work provides a comprehensive overview of the indicated media field, which means filling a significant cognitive gap.

Thanks to Aidana Nurash's work, media studies are enriched with a multi-level insight into the structure and dynamics of the functioning of Kazakhstani cultural and art media (both in the sphere of "old" and "new" journalism).

Importantly, the author shows innovatively 1) how cultural journalism is being transformed into art journalism in the context of the technological revolution, 2) how the globalization of the communications space affects the transformation of cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan (targeting the transformation of the identity of Kazakh society).

The PhD thesis's innovation also lies in reviewing development trends in cultural and art journalism that are observed outside Kazakhstan. The author shows these trends as a reference point. She convincingly and originally points out that it should not be blindly duplicated in Kazakh reality. Nonetheless, it should be treated as an important source of inspiration for the favorable development of trends in cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan, which can and should be projected.

Also creative in the dissertation are those parts in which the author presents her conception of a cultural and art journalism study program. We receive the author's development of the study program, including the courses' scheme and potential content (along with a review of issues and literature on the subject). Thus, the concept proposed by Aidana Nurash is *de facto* an idea for significant and highly innovative enrichment of the educational offer for specialized journalists at the university level.

#### **5. Assessing the internal consistency of the results obtained**

The PhD thesis is coherent and presents a thoughtful, methodically executed research project. The contributions are orderly and logical while simultaneously presenting a congruent view of the state and prospects of the development of cultural and art journalism in contemporary Kazakhstan. The theoretical, empirical, and practical parts of the work harmonize with each other, falling within a unified research field. This field is situated within the broader domain in which the author locates her inquiries, that is, within the framework of international journalism.

The comprehensiveness of the work means that some themes and parts are referred to several times by the author. These repetitions, which can dilute the focus of the work, should be carefully eliminated in the course of final editing. In addition, it is worth working on highlighting the connections between paragraphs and parts of the work (so that the connections of the methodological, theoretical, empirical, and



practical layers of the dissertation are easily grasped not only by a specialist but also by a reader less familiar with the subject).

## **6. Focus of the obtained results on the solution of the relevant problem of theoretical or practical nature**

The work testifies to the doctoral student's high focus on solving significant conceptual, structural, and practical problems.

At the level of conceptualization, the author has demonstrated a commendable level of effort in proposing her typology of cultural and art media in relation to the ongoing academic discussion.

At the structural level, the author's proposal presents a clear and comprehensive picture of the cultural and art media system in Kazakhstan. The author also sheds light on relations with this system and the dynamics of interactions, providing a coherent and insightful analysis.

At the practical level, the author presents a rich set of 1) good practices developed by selected editorial offices practicing cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan; 2) recommendations, the implementation of which should raise the status and attractiveness of cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan, as well as improve the market and institutional position of entities practicing this type of journalism; 3) educational ideas that should lead to the establishment and development of specialized higher education in cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan.

## **7. Confirmation of the completeness of the publication of the main provisions, results, findings and conclusion of the thesis**

According to the dissertation supervisor, Professor Alexandr Rozhkov, Aidana Nurash published the main results of the research presented in the dissertation in a scientific article entitled "Development of Art Journalism in Kazakhstan through the Introduction of the Experience of American Art Media." This article appeared in the journal "Media Practice and Education" in 2024, indexed in the SCOPUS scientometric database.

As the promoter points out, it is crucial to meet the requirements by placing an additional publication on the research conducted in a journal included in the list of scientific journals recommended for the publication of the main scientific activity results.

It should be noted that Aidana Nurash also presented the partial results of her research during the foreign internship she carried out under my supervision at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań from November to December 2023.

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## 8. Deficiencies in the content and design of the thesis

Evaluating the dissertation positively, I recommend the following improvements:

1. Expand and methodologically bolster the practical recommendations for developing an educational program that could train specialists in cultural and art journalism in Kazakhstan.

2. Clarify that the dissertation is about the future development of cultural and art journalism carried out by Kazakhstan's citizens who co-create a nation in the civic sense, not in the ethnic sense (including a section explaining the difference between creating the identity of a civic nation and an ethnic nation).

3. Make technical and editorial corrections in accordance with the applicable requirements (in particular, remove unnecessary repetitions and ensure that the different parts of the dissertation are clearly linked to each other).

## 9. Compliance of the thesis with the requirements

Dissertation by Aidana Amangeldykyzy Nurash on "Transformation of the communicative potential of the media: the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan in the context of globalization", submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on the educational program 8D03203 - International Journalism, is performed at a sufficiently high theoretical and analytical level, meets the requirements, and contributes to the field of journalism and information.

After introducing suggested recommendations and improvements, the dissertation can be recommended for the PhD defense in the educational program 8D03203 - International Journalism.

*Scientific expert*



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**Poznań, 12.11.2024**