

**Call For Papers**  
**Women and Digital Political Communication in Non-Western Societies**  
IAMCR online pre-conference 10 July 2022

**Pre-Conference Organizers:** Sally Osei-Appiah (University of Leeds), Kristin Skare Orgeret (Oslo Met University), Bruce Mutsvairo (Utrecht University)

A selection of papers presented at the symposium will be published in a special issue of the international Journal Information, Communication & Society (ICS).

This one-day virtual symposium focuses upon the specific non-Western context of digital political communication and women. While much research has been undertaken and published upon the use and impact of social media, largely by male politicians and policy makers in the West, there has been a paucity of similar investigations elsewhere in the world. Research has shown that political communication is shaped not only by cultural context (Shehata & Stromback, 2011) but also by gender (Osei-Appiah, 2021; Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2018). This symposium is predicated upon the contention that the study of digital political communications requires a recalibration of focus that produces both a more comprehensive international understanding, and one that is sensitive to gendered relations of power and inequality.

Politicians in non-Western countries do not grapple with the same contextual influences as those encountered by Western politicians. For one thing, while many Western countries are advanced democracies, a great number in the Global South are either authoritarian or fragile democracies. Access to digital infrastructures which, in Western countries, may be a given, remain underdeveloped, inaccessible or unreliable for many in various parts of the non-Western world, (Dwyer & Molony, 2019). Again, while recent research has documented politicians' increasing use of digital technologies in campaigns (Kreiss et al., 2018; Metz et al., 2020), those in Africa for example, still rely primarily on traditional forms of campaigning such as rallies (Paget, 2019; Willems, 2016). Further, there are political cultures reflecting national or ethnic idiosyncrasies incomparable to those in the West. How do these and other contextual variations shape political communication differently from what is known in the West? Besides context, gender also significantly shapes political communication as women politicians do not face the same challenges as their male counterparts. The masculinized nature of politics legitimizes male politicians as the norm while women politicians are positioned as outsiders who need to justify their presence in politics (Ette 2017; O'Neil et al, 2016). This historical gender distinction sets up women politicians, from the onset, to encounter a different set of experiences relative to men. Media representations of politicians frame male politicians as agentive, competent actors whereas women politicians are delegitimized through portrayals that consistently render them invisible, incompetent or trivial (Kasomo, 2012; Wagner et al, 2017). It has also been argued that gendered representations of women politicians result in reduced sponsorship (Wagner et al, 2017) and voter share (Hopmann et al, 2010) while also shaping political discussions (Hooghe et al, 2015; Vos, 2013), candidate evaluations (Boomgaarden et al, 2016) and uptake of communication technologies such as social media (Larsson and Kalsnes, 2014; Ross & Burger, 2014). When contextual factors are thrown into the mix, women politicians in non-Western countries encounter additional set of barriers, which further shape their communication choices. Many women still face long-standing effects of colonization embedded in patriarchal structures that inhibit their access to and continuity in politics (Bawa and Sanyare, 2013).

Following calls to diversify theory and research in political communication (Lawrence & de Vreese, 2020; Moyo, 2020; Orgeret & Ronning, 2020), this symposium and the subsequent ICS special issue aims to gather research that investigates the relationship between gender and political communication in non-Western societies. We seek contributions and theoretical insights probing

ways through which gender interacts with context to shape non-Western-based political communication trends. Topics of interest include but are not limited to the following:

- What kind of theoretical or methodological contributions might best be deployed to advance intersectional scholarship on women and political communication?
- How do contextual factors like ethnicity, religion, socio-economic, post-colonialism influence cultural norms that might shape women politicians' communication with voters?
- What is the impact of contextual factors on voter evaluations of women politicians?
- How do women politicians utilize digital and other communication technologies in their campaigning, political marketing or self-branding?
- What is the impact of political structures and cultures on women politicians' campaign strategies?
- Are there alternative channels of communication deployed by women politicians compared to men politicians?

**Key Dates:**

We invite 400-word abstracts outlining empirical, theoretical or policy-orientated papers that address these or related questions. Abstracts should be accompanied by a 100-word biography of the presenter(s) together with contact details, all sent to [s.osei-appiah@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:s.osei-appiah@leeds.ac.uk)

**Abstract submission deadline:** 15 March 2022

**Notification on submitted abstracts:** 31 March 2022

**Date of Preconference:** 10 July 2022

**Time:** 9 am (London Time)

**Full Article submission deadline:** 1 February 2023