

i procesów społecznych, zarówno w wymiarze synchronicznym jak i diachronicznym”.

To oczywiste, że prezentowana książka powinna stać się obowiązkową lekturą nie tylko dla medioznawców, kulturoznawców, socjo-

logów itd. Warto ją polecić także studentom dziennikarstwa, którym tytułowy „upór poznawania” powinien być szczególnie bliski.

Wiesław Sonczyk



Journalism that matters. Views from Central and Eastern Europe

ed. Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, Auksė Balčytienė

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The changes that have occurred in Central and Eastern Europe over the last twenty-five years are complex – from deep social change through the political and cultural transformations. All of this raise the legitimate questions on the role of media, which have been subjected to the processes, as well as changes in journalists and media consumers behaviors.

The search for answers to the formulated problem is not easy for many reasons, but not least, you can point out the areas in which changes are particularly evident, indicate the constitutive features of “new media”¹. This is relevant if we make a comparative analysis of the situation in several countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), in which the changes occurred. So following the idea of the three authors and editors of the volume under review, who have invited several researchers from CEE to contribute to the issue, a coherent picture of changes in the media markets might be built. “Journalism that matters” is the second

publication in Peter Lang’s series “Studies on communication and politics”. The first volume, devoted to political communication, was released in 2013².

The first chapter written by the three editors of the collection shows the changes that have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. The authors focused on the changes in media and their publics over the last twenty-five years and put the emphasis on several phenomena. The first phenomenon is the approach of what is called the public sphere. The authors refer to the processes of media tabloidization and media performance based on scandal and populism. On the other hand, changes in CEE deal with a change in the perception of the role of the citizen in society; citizen who sees himself as a member of the community, who works for the common good. Another important element, which the authors turned their attention is the commercialization of the media and the growing role of marketing. Some functions that were once in the hands of

¹ By “new media” I mean the media of the new social, political, economic and legal, not referring to this term in a broad sense understanding of new media, as online media.

² *Political communication in the era of new technologies*, ed. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, J. Garlicki, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

the state are now regulated by the market. The changes that have taken place in the text matter also indicate increased insecurity and instability in CEE societies. Another phenomenon that the authors draw attention to is the time factor. Processes that were developed in Western Europe for decades took less time in Central and Eastern Europe: „CEE countries skipped the mass participation, mass parties staged and jumped directly to the media-driven and media-logics saturated communications epoch”³.

Another chapter by Miklós Sükösd, who is a representative of the University of Hong Kong, proposed a different research perspective. Instead of focusing on changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe, such as the process of westernization, the author encourages reflection and reinterpretation of the democratic paradigm in the context of media effectiveness and recognition of “multiple post-communisms”. The author notes that the economic changes occurring in the world, the growing economic power of countries such as Brazil, China and Russia should lead us to the question whether the study of media should not be refreshed considering the change in the geopolitical balance of power in the world and the evolution of media in Central and Eastern Europe.

Václav Štětka from Charles University in Prague focused on how the media in our region fulfill the role of “watchdogs of democracy”. This is an important indicator in political systems especially in the context of corruption, which have to face all the new democracies. The article was based on research conducted among investigative journalists in the Czech Republic. The paper indicated that the media are able to fulfill the guardian of democracy and

limit corruption in a situation when they have the support from other public institutions.

Hungarian representative of the scientific community – Péter Bajomi-Lázár took the approach which has been often exploited in recent years. The paper aimed to analyze the impact of the Internet and the evolution of new media, preparation of the information, patterns of consumption as well as quality of media coverage and the public debate. This article is based on interviews conducted in ten countries in the framework of the project “Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”. The author drew attention to the most important trends that are visible at the moment and will be present in the future. This includes tabloidization, the growing interest in information and the existence of pseudo-events. Among the other tendencies are direct access to information, a new context of information, as that the same messages are cited in the following media enriched by further comments of independent experts and commentators. The birth of the fifth power or citizen journalists who control professional journalists creates another trend that draws attention. All of this when bearing in mind that traditional media will also be much more often criticized by Internet users.

Polish authors, Agnieszka Stepińska from Adam Mickiewicz University and Michał Głowacki – editor of the volume, and employees of the Institute of Journalism at the University of Warsaw, focused on comparative studies of professional roles and journalistic responsibilities. The study was carried out in a group of young journalists with relatively short experience (20–30 years old) as well as older journalists (31–50 years old), who began their career in the time of political transition.

³ M. Głowacki, E. Lauk, A. Balčytienė, *Roller coaster of social change, democracy and journalism in Central and Eastern Europe* [in:] *Journalism that matters. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, Auksė Balčytienė, Frankfurt am Main 2014, p. 13.

It seems that among all the important themes related to media evolution over the last twenty-five years is a different approach to journalistic work. Frequently additional factors have become visible, namely as the lack of professional stability, the crisis in the media, a need for adaptation of traditional media to the internet world and multitasking journalism. All of this has led to the questions on professional responsibilities and the roles of journalists?

Research results by Stępińska and Głowacki conclude that the relatively low wages and the lack of stability contribute to the lower level of the media, as indicated especially by young journalists. Interestingly external attempts to influence the media is seen by them as the problem. The older and more experienced professional journalists attach the importance to journalism independence seeing much more important role in the context of their professional mission, the fourth power and democracy guards who will explain to citizens the surrounding reality. Representatives of the oldest generation of journalists perceive the role of the media as a servant to society and ordinary citizens whose voice should be heard. In general, it seems that the media are self-conscious when it comes to contextual factors.

Another article presents a comparative study of journalistic culture in Poland, Romania and Moldova. It was prepared by the researchers from the University of Bucharest (Natalia Milewski), University of Wrocław (Paulina Barczynszyn) and the University of Jyväskylä (Epp Lauk). The authors analyzed the situation in the gutter media analyzing these countries by five factors: vocational education, gender, income, professional affiliation and the perception of professional roles by the respondents. From the research results, it has become clear that the differences dominate the similarities when it comes to professional practice in the countries surveyed, although journalists everywhere are in favor of the liberal model of journalism. The authors put, it seems a fair argument, that the

external conditions and contextual factors have a greater impact on the culture of journalism than professional beliefs and values.

Bulgarian representatives of the scientific community (Bissera Zankova, Svetlozar Kirilov) dealt with ethical issues in Bulgarian media. The authors showed that the dependence of the Bulgarian media on political and economic interests seen in recent years undermines the hope for the development of journalistic ethics. Another phenomenon that the authors emphasized is the lack of respect for the self-regulatory bodies and the lack of understanding between them. All of this causes problems with ethical behaviors in Bulgarian media. One visible example portrayed by the authors relates to the problems with immigrants and Roma.

The media crisis was the main topic of contribution by the authors from Serbia. Mirosljub Radojković, Ana Milojević and Alexandra Ugrinić pointed out that the historical changes that have taken place in Serbian media in the last period had an impact on freedom of the media, social status and economic situation of journalists. At the same time the media have to deal with the development of digital technologies, which irreversibly changed their way of functioning. The authors of the paper confirm the statement by Vaclav Stetka who argued that in Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic changes in the media markets are the closest the liberal model of journalism, whereas Serbia, as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania these are far on their way to the introduction of the Anglo-American model of media. The fear of losing jobs, low wages below the national average, the lack of confidence in the union cause high sensitivity of the local media on political and economic pressure are among the biggest problems faced by Serbian journalists.

Svetlana Pasti from the University of Tampere undertook in her article to the analysis of the Russian media market and the evolution of attitudes in the profession of journalist

between 1992 and 2008. Russia is particularly an interesting example here because, despite the guarantee of expression enshrined in the Constitution and the pro-liberty provisions in the law on mass media, the situation of Russian journalists is very heavy. The lack of transparency of the capital, when it comes to media owners and the domination of capital closely linked to the presidential center cause threats to the level of freedom of expression which, in my opinion, is very low in Russia. At the same time, as Pasti pointed out, the work of a journalist is still desirable. Few journalists see themselves as independent and – at the same time – the level of satisfaction of the profession increased by 10 per cent. Journalists are privileged as a group; being a journalist is treated as a way to social advancement, getting access to power as well as material stability and social mobility.

The last article presented a comparative analysis of the practices of the press councils in Finland and Estonia. The author Epp Lauk called attention to the fact that Finland and Estonia, although seen as culturally aligned, are different when elaborating on self-regulatory actions and the impact on the media of press councils to journalistic behaviors. Finland has a long, nearly one century-old practice of self-regulation, while Estonia (which is a pioneer in this area changes in Central and Eastern Europe) has much shorter perspective dating back to regaining the country's independence in 1991. The differences in the effectiveness of self-regulatory actions are salient. While

in Finland this is connected with the ability to self-reflection and willingness to discussing the quality of journalism, self-regulation in Estonia is in progress of making.

Emerging media image presented in all texts may tune both optimistic and pessimistic readers. Optimism should result from a sober assessment of media evolution that Central and Eastern European countries have experienced in the analyzed period. In the previous times the media which were subjected to political pressure and instrumentalization and thus struggle with censorship now perform socially important functions involved in social change. On the other hand, difficulties in implementing self-regulatory mechanisms, the low level of professional ethics and declining readership raise questions whether tabloidization give a room for careful observation of the media and the possible implementation of accountability mechanisms.

Presented publication should be considered as an extremely useful source and a starting point in the discussion about the state of journalism in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition each author, who published the text in the collection, has extremely rich bibliography which can further be useful for people interested in research and discourse about the state of the media in our region. Contributions presented in reviewed book create a good starting point for further research.

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