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(eds.)

# Democracy and Media in Central and Eastern Europe 25 Years On



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## Editors' introduction

Democracy, as well as relations between media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have been widely analyzed in several scientific publications and further discussed during international and national conferences. So far, the media and democracy in CEE have been widely analyzed through the lenses of models of media systems, journalistic autonomy and the state of media freedom. In addition to this, several of the attempts indicated problems, risks and challenges related to political and cultural transformations, the development of the public sphere, civil society, journalism culture, and the role of traditional media. The rise of new media and technologies in the fast-changing information society of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century enabled citizens to get actively involved in the public debate through new platforms, devices and services. The public, which has now become more active in terms of content creation, production, and dissemination has called for a redefinition of traditional relations between media and democracy, in terms of power shifts, decentralization, democratization of policy making, as well as the empowerment in decision-making and control. All of this has a profound impact on the functioning of state authorities and institutions as well as relations between the public and media enterprises, which now allow users to contribute, collaborate and co-create. In many countries around the world, including Central and Eastern Europe, the public has proven to be able to mobilize and act in order to achieve selected goals. The changing nature of mediascapes, a shift from media policy towards the processes of governance, together with the growing importance of citizen journalism, blurring the division between producers and consumers as well as examples of civic activism, generate a plethora of new opportunities for a large-scale evaluation of existing models and theories.

Bearing in mind the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the collapse of communism in many Central and Eastern European countries and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first CEE countries' accession to the EU, we focused on changing approaches to media freedom and the public sphere and we tried to stimulate debate about the next phase of media and democracy model going forward during the 7<sup>th</sup> International Central and East European Conference Media titled "Changing Media and Democracy: 25 Years of Media Freedom and Public Sphere in Central and Eastern Europe". The conference was organized in June 2014 in Wrocław. The event gathered more than 160 scholars from 30 countries in CEE and beyond.

Chapters published in “Democracy and Media in Central and Eastern Europe 25 Years on” were presented during this conference. In this collection we take the holistic approach in order to analyze changes in Central and Eastern Europe with a special emphasis on new types of transformations in politics, media and civil society. All the changes analyzed here are being treated as ongoing processes, contributing to the emerging approaches and searching for models of media and democracy. Our hypothesis is that countries in CEE have not yet fully recognized the potential of new contextual factors to improve the quality of democracy, media and the public sphere. One of the reasons for this is the lack of the role for media to play. The aim of this book is not only to focus on EU members, but all 21 countries in CEE emerged after the collapse of the communist bloc. They are on a different level of democratization process and media reform (Rozumilowicz, 2002). After reading all the examples and emerging concepts in contemporary studies in CEE we decided to add two analytical chapters at the beginning and in the end of this collection.

Contextual frames for media-political relations in CEE are being deconstructed in the opening chapter by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska. Based on previous studies as well as indexes on media freedom, the author evidences the existence of four types of Central and Eastern European media systems. The author proposes a new concept of four models of media and politics in CEE. It is also an attempt to explain what happened during the last two and half decades, and what kind of consequences the changes generated, generate or will generate in the future.

Media transformations and their (un)expected outcomes are being discussed in the following three chapters. The research of Auksė Balčytienė is dedicated to relations between institutions and cultures. It is an analytical framework for the study of democratization and media transformations in CEE. The Russian scholars Svetlana S. Bodrunova and Anna A. Litvinenko present four Russias in communication and fragmentation of the Russian public sphere in the 2010s. By posing question “Back to the Future?” Natalija Mažeikienė and Kristina Juraite further reconstruct a puzzled transformation of post-Soviet television.

Four chapters are dedicated to journalism and media performance. David H. Weaver takes a comparative perspective when looking at demographic traits, working conditions and professional values of journalism. Svetlana Pasti discovers a “passion for Robin Hood”. She analyses a case study of journalistic (in)dependence in Russia and tries to define a degree of journalistic freedom in Russia. In empirical research, Vasyl V. Kucherenko and Cindy T. Christen consider “guarded or guardless” and try to indicate the role of political knowledge in spotting manipulation in the news about international affairs and resisting its persuasive effects. Marína Urbániková and Jaromír Volek present the data collected in their empirical

comparative studies conducted in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Sweden, and dedicated to journalism students' culture.

Civil society and new forms of journalism is a common idea for the next four chapters. Jelena Kleut and Dušan Spasojević write about monitory democracy online and deconstruct two Serbian civic initiatives. Václav Štětka and Radim Hladík analyze the use of social media in Czech news production. Agnieszka Hess elaborates on the Polish think tank scene. Mariyan Tomov and Lilia Raycheva try to explain the Facebook image of the 2013/2014 social protests in Bulgaria.

The book ends with a chapter by Michał Głowacki, summarizing the main findings from the perspective of power shifts, democratization and the potential of civil engagement. The author concludes with a list of research questions for the further analyses of emerging studies and approaches.

We believe that all the ideas presented in this collection will be of help to media and communication scholars as well as students of journalism and political science, media practitioners and policy makers in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. We hope that this book will contribute to future discussions on the media and democracy model going forward.

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