

Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, Auksė Balčytienė (eds.) (2014), *Journalism that Matters: Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford and Wien: Peter Lang Publishing, pp. 214, ISBN: 978-3-631-65421-7.

Journalism that Matters: Views from Central and Eastern Europe — is certainly a book that belongs to the discourse of transformations of Central and Eastern Europe. A few years ago this discourse seemed to be moving towards its exhaustion. Scholars like Hungarian Andras Bozoki in 2008 or Lithuanian Zenonas Norkus in 2012 even claimed that the period of post-communist transformations were completed in 2004. But the war in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea by Russia has caused geopolitical insecurity for Poland and the Baltic States (when the Czech Republic and especially Hungary do not share hawkish anti-Russian politics). Even Finland is seriously considering joining NATO. Naturally, if geopolitical transformations are not complete, then neither cultural nor economic transformations could be completed. In this regard, Central and Eastern European transformations are incomplete not because they are forever doomed to be “post-communist,” but because Russia is an active geopolitical volcano that affects economic trade and cultural relationships. Furthermore, as we have witnessed, before any geopolitical turmoil there is an alternative Russian mediascape that bespeaks of a unique Russian civilization that is on a mission to create the New Russia on the basis of ethnic Russians spread in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Journalists on the Russian side and journalists on the side of the EU’s Central and Eastern European countries report all about it from different ideological perspectives. They provide different “truths.” Although “on-line” reports often are without a deeper meaning and reflection, the streams of information that inundate the consumers shape the perception of where we are, who we are and what may happen to us in this volatile region of Central and Eastern Europe. Professional journalism continues to be a fundamental source of geopolitical self-orientation. By the same token, professionally falsified journalism, for example the faked or distorted reporting that currently serves the propaganda of the Kremlin, is equally fundamental for shaping alternative perceptions of how EU member states of Eastern-Central Europe (especially the Baltic States) should become “Russia-friendly” as well as how these ex-U.S.S.R. countries should be grateful for the inherited goods of the former Soviet Union after its “geopolitical catastrophe,” as Vladimir Putin called it, while having ambitions to create the “New Russia.”

The book *Journalism that Matters*, consisting of a collection of themed articles, does not touch this nerve of the war of information for a very natural reason — the articles were collected in 2013, before the EuroMaidan protests in Kiev and before all the bloodshed in the Maidan that “Euronews” journalists experienced themselves, when Berkut soldiers started their brutality against them. Nevertheless, the articles represent the topical issues in journalism of Central and Eastern Europe

before the “Maidan paradigm” and hopefully the editors will comprise a second volume of *Journalism that Matters* that would start with the analysis of the reports of injured and severely beaten journalists in Ukraine who pioneered to photograph the mansion of Viktor Janukovich, where he was hiding after dictatorial orders to shoot at the protesters in Maidan Square. No doubt the propaganda and all the creative disinformation that is unleashed from Russian media in 2014 will inspire scholars of media and communication to provide a new critical analysis of it.

In the current volume, the editors paid special attention to the specific features of Central and Eastern Europe before 2014 that are interlinked with the changes, volatility and flux of the region. The editors Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, and Aukse Balčytienė in their co-authors’ article discuss the region of Central and Eastern Europe as a roller coaster for journalism. A comparative analysis of different countries between Poland, Moldova, and Romania, or between Finland and Estonia sheds informative light on the differences of the altitude of this roller coaster.

What is important is that the roller coaster for journalism stands on the platform of the legacy of 1989 with all the grand narrative of the fall of the Berlin Wall. These reportages from Berlin in November 1989 as well as from Bucharest, when Nicolae Ceausescu’s regime fell after shooting at innocent protesters, serve as a quintessential basis for Central and Eastern European identity. These reportages forged the values of liberal patriotism. It seemed so... but as the co-authors rightly point out, sadly the development of democracy in various countries of the region became loose and underwent the experience of a roller coaster. As a matter of fact, democracy often became understood as “TV saturated scandals and populism.”

As we know, in the case of Hungary, democracy became *democratura*, a transition away from democracy, and as one of the authors of the book, Miklos Sükösd, observes, Hungarian democracy delivered the party “Jobbik” as the most popular anti-Semitic party. This is also a part of Central and Eastern European identity, so contradictory to the ideals of the “your and my freedom” of 1989. Bearing in mind the recent scandal about the Hungarian Bela Kovacs, who is accused of spying for Russia, and Victor Orban’s political partnership with Vladimir Putin, Hungary seems to have betrayed the ideals of 1989 and their own fight in 1956.

Hungarian *democratura* under the “Orban-ized” government of Budapest has restricted the freedom of journalism and the national News Agency, since 2010, employs only pro-government journalists. But the observation that there is an increasing role for oligarchs controlling the media in Central and Eastern Europe needs to be clarified. Oligarchy is not unique to Central and Eastern Europe. Berlusconi owned a multitude of media agencies. This suggests that Southern Europe is similar to “post-communist Eastern Europe.” The problem is that Southern Europe is often understood to be included in the umbrella term “the West.” If so, “the West” should not be idealised as a role model. Whatever “the West” is, it is the other side of East-Central Europe, and has the very bad record of Yalta, 1945 and Brussels, 2014. The West has already forgotten the annexation of Crimea and is concerned

with the “de-escalation” of the conflict and selling “Mistral” ships to Russia is still under consideration. That is the geopolitically squidgy mediascape that reaches the supposedly inferior “East” from the supposedly superior “West.”

A very important part of the book is on how the Internet changes journalism. The article by Peter Bajomi-Lazar asks: “How will the Internet — including news sites, blogs, comments, forums, chat rooms, mailing lists and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr, transform the public sphere?” (p. 63). The author reminds that Facebook and Twitter played a major role organizing the “Arab spring” in 2011. He also observes that there is lesser normative authority as journalists move further away from the truth, as hoaxed events are reported either on purpose or simply because of a lack of time without double checking. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that “hoaxed events further away from truths” apply to the “West” as well as to the “East.” Indeed, even before the proliferation of internet journalism, “Western” journalists were notorious for their inability to comprehend the specifics of Central and Eastern Europe often confusing the country names such as Slovenia and Slovakia or Latvia and Lithuania. For a long time in the Western mediascape, “Eastern Europe” as such was everything outside the Berlin Wall without the differentiations of the Vishegrad countries and Ukraine or the Baltics and Russia.

Co-authors Natalia Milewski, Paulina Barczyszyn, and Epp Lauk, compare Poland, Romania, and Moldova, contending that contextual factors play a more important role in shaping journalism cultures than professional beliefs. This insight suggests caution when implementing media ethics and standards blindly. Evidently local culture — just as soil for grapes — has the final say for the quality of media ethics.

“Media ethics as a system of standards serves as the basis of media self-regulation,” — contend co-authors, Bissera Zankova and Svetlozar Kirilov, in another article. Standards refer to truthfulness, and media ethics should define fairness. But media ethics depends on the larger ethical landscape of a country and its culture, conclude these scholars when analysing the case of Bulgaria. Due to the nation’s distinct culture of Bulgaria, media ethics is not working.

Another article by Svetlana Pasti is on journalism in Russia, where the Golden Age of journalism occurred between 1991 and 2008 and was only golden for independent reporting. Paradoxically that golden age turns out to have given less satisfaction to journalists than under the suppression of Putin’s regime. According to Svetlana Pasti article, journalism is no longer about the truth of Russia’s war crimes or corruption of the elite or violation of human rights, but about personal access to wealth and power via journalistic practices, thus, treating journalism for opportunistic means.

This thesis leads to a fundamental redefinition of what the purpose of a professional journalist is. Apparently in Russia in Putin’s era reportages are no longer meant to provide a Socratic Truth of the event, but rather they are about the power of the stronger according to the opponent of Socrates, the sophist Trasymachus,

who defined justice as the interest of the stronger. Trasymachus, being a political thinker, did not believe in any other truth, than the one of the stronger who has political power; whereas the moral thinker Socrates claimed that justice and truth are the eternal ideas independent from political circumstances. A reading of “Journalism that Matters” gives the impression that Trasymachus is correct, as research findings demonstrate, that in Central and Eastern Europe political circumstances are the determinants for the standards of media ethics. There is a hierarchy of countries with higher and lower levels of mature democratic mediascapes.

The article by Epp Lauk, who is also one of the editors, titled “Similar but so different: the practices of press councils in Estonia and Finland,” analyses why the same media ethics and media models produce different results in two brotherly countries. The conclusion seems to be that Finland after all is more mature in terms of civic-mindedness, while Estonia still has visible traces of its communist past. Thus, this article once again demonstrates that there is a hierarchy of particular countries where the quality of journalism is not the same because of scientifically determinable reasons.

Finally, for a lack of better words, I would like to conclude with a couple of sentences from the book’s introduction:

We expect that this book will interest media scholars and practitioners, but also students of media and communications in the media or in business studies in Eastern and Central Europe and beyond. Above all we believe that the interdisciplinary research presented in the collection will result in the emergence of new ideas and concepts contributing to the understanding of journalism culture in the changing mediascapes (p. 8).

Tomas Kavaliauskas

VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY, LITHUANIA

Manuel Castells (2013), *Władza komunikacji (Communication Power)*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 514, ISBN: 978-83-01-17021-9.

The book by Manuel Castells — one of the most recognised researchers of the network society — is an analysis of the relationship between power and communication. In his work, the author is trying to define the nature of power in the network society. He tackles the basic issues, like the relationship of power with the environment, resulting from managing communication processes.

One of the basic and current issues is the attempt to create political, social and economic life by the actors who try to influence the awareness of the recipients of media messages. Emphasising the importance of power, the author draws attention to entities that hold power — they have the ability to create and fill the network with content. Networking power, as Castells writes, belongs to owners and supervisors