Editors' introduction:
How to approach change in modern communications

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The scale, scope and speed of change that our societies are going through are indeed striking. We are living in times of diverse inflations, crises and devaluations. The fields of journalism and communication are not excluded from these many modern-day challenges. Only in recent years has the news media been confronted with a crisis of unplanned magnitude and scale its most significant effects were observed in the shifts on the scale of media autonomy and its subordination, the changing structures of journalists' careers and their professionalism. In fact, media instrumentalization has been registered in many countries around the world, and a particularly interesting detail here is that these many changes, often registered as failures and drawbacks, have been observed not only in the young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, but also in Western democracies with longstanding traditions of professional journalism and commercial business of the mass media. The failures of powerful news media to meet democratic performance criteria and its growing concerns with marketization and hybridization of news production, and also other scandals surrounding both the economic side and professional practice of journalism, were assessed as of a striking scale indeed.[1]

Although these many changes have, once again, heated the discussions about the independence of journalistic institutions, they actually signal much more. The dimensions of change are indeed multiple — in the field of politics for example, ongoing changes were already registered a few decades ago when strategic news management and marketization of politics as well as the rise of permanent campaigns were

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[1] The shifting role of the media in the democratic world is once again confirmed by the recent events revolving around one of the biggest worldwide media moguls, Rupert Murdoch, and the companies of his family, News Corporation and News of the World. The scale of mobile phone hacking by NOTW journalists was exposed in the summer of 2011 and has led to a major official inquiry into UK news media practices. A lot of controversy also surrounds other international media tycoons, Leo Kirch, Silvio Berlusconi, tycoons who influentially roughed up the media business in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.

observed and immensely critiqued. Today these many criticisms and worries are focused on more profound and diverse changes, such as the death of ideals and political ideologies in certain contexts, most particularly in small Central European nations, or, in contrast, a gradual consolidation of political parties in other nations, and even the rebirth of partisan journalism in the West, particularly in the United States.

Indeed, the surrounding reality is very complicated and ambiguous. It is hard to identify, recognize and comprehend. It is becoming more and more difficult to make predictions about the world where a multitude of simultaneous processes are in a constant struggle, such as rapid globalization, technological diffusion, social and cultural differentiation and the rapid birth and gradual death of ideals. Thus, a number of questions are at stake: How to assess our complex realities? What is at the core of these many changes? What metaphors should one apply to explain change in the fields of journalism and communication?

Clearly, the available social theories and empirical instruments and also the well-known models of communications research, especially those coming from the Western media analysis tradition, do not have the necessary potential to identify, disclose and name these many changes and challenges that modern societies as well as their media and communications are going through. Journalism is a social phenomenon. It does not develop in a closed and abstract system. It does not develop in a vacuum. It is not a neutral profession. The institution of journalism, its routines, practices and all professional considerations, as well as its discourses, take over the coloration of its surrounding social and political reality. If analyzed from the perspective that communication is a ritual, thus a unique form of conversation (Carey, 1989), the primary function of news media is not just the transmission of news and information; on the contrary, the primary goal of journalism is the confirmation of a certain social and cultural "order" in which journalistic activity is carried out. This cultural approach does not isolate media performance from its context, from the so-called social and cultural "air" which is formed by the behaviors and norms that are characteristic of a society in general and that are not just part of any particular professional culture. The same view also claims that journalism was and still is affected by such features as a country's geo-political location and its marginality, in addition to its cultural and linguistic distinctiveness, etc. Indeed, the moral of these arguments is quite simple: when seeking to evaluate the functions, reactions to change and adaptability to new challenges of even a separate-country's media, one must first understand that country's social culture, its historical and cultural experiences, and functions of journalism.

The most unusual characteristic describing the field of modern communications is associated with its diversity and multiplicity, with a certain hybridity and poly-centrality of different power centers regulating and managing diverse communicative flows. Needless to say, the mass media is losing its omnipresence and leading role in modern societies. With the emergence of the Internet and social networks

and their growing popularity and dominant role in everyday life situations, with gradual fragmentation of public needs and ideals, with development of complex networks of users who are rapidly changing and switching their roles between being professional and amateur communicators, we indeed are facing dramatic changes in both how news and information is collected and used, and also in how and by whom it is created, framed, prioritized and put into the public agenda. With rapid development of new online spaces and changing communicative flows there is no one source of information. There is no just one attitude and opinion. There is a multitude of them. There is no one mainstream or leading news media or source of inspiration. There are many of these, which can be accessed through niche, specialized, community-based conventional media or virtual networks and social media. These new informational sources accessible through specialized channels, community media or blogs have become a common place and practice for millions of writers, public intellectuals and bloggers to offer their audiences and followers to choose and read their commentary, recommendations and input on things that interest them. With the growing availability and usability of new communicative forms these online channels are indeed forming new conditions and opening new opportunities for completely new social movements and online formations to be formed which allow the building of temporal and liquid, of virtual and de-territorialized groups of users who follow and support both professional and amateur communicators. And it is not only the voicing of diverse and alternative opinions that counts on these new channels. It is not only the diversity and multiplicity that counts here. The biggest qualitative change in modern communications and democracy comes from their potential to have an impact on public discourse by changing and reframing the dominant and established views and ideologies. What we are discussing here is actually becoming a regular, well-developed and also rewarding activity for many users and communications professionals in many countries around the world (Boyd-Barrett, 2007).

These many changes and developments, indeed, could be used as a broader metaphor of some of the most important trends and changes in our contemporary societies. The increasing fragmentation, social polarization, growth of diversity and pluralism, gradual loss of impartiality and objectivity in mainstream media, are indeed turning into regular practices and social and cultural formations of our everyday life. In principle, these many observations discussed above go in line with the many descriptions named as risk, liquidity, hybridization, consumerism, even McDonaldization of our modern lives, — and these many ideas were put on the scholarly agenda already quite some time ago by leading theorists and social thinkers of the second and liquid modernity (Beck, 2009; Bauman, 2008; Ritzman, 2011). Media and communication scholars, however, have only recently stepped into these many debates and started to look for adequate names and keywords to describe rapid change. Their attempts and their observations about the change in our surrounding realities are indeed very fresh and there are not too many of these. How-

ever, their visions and ideas seem to be not only intriguing but also far-reaching: certain myths are disclosed, such as the myth of convergence and homogenization of journalism and development of some universal, unified journalism culture, and also certain biases are named (Hallin & Mancini, 2012).

Among the core issues that nicely connect the many themes addressed in the articles of this special issue of "The Central European Journal of Communication" is the debate on tensions and struggles between change and continuity in communicative practices and patterns of journalism. Each article takes a different line in that particular argumentation — a certain number of these texts apply a historical perspective and gradually disclose the contextual and cultural nuances observed also in contemporary communications, whereas other authors address the ongoing struggles between the tensions of globalism and localization in modern communications. Still another group of articles delve deeply into exploring the social and technical affordances of new media and communications. As demonstrated, it is indeed no accident that all these texts move around the idea that a general culture, or more specifically the society's traditions, values and norms is playing a crucial role in modern communications; that understanding of journalism histories is significant in understanding their different cultures and degrees of adaptations to changing political, economic and social conditions, and that a number of new challenges are also emerging in the field of communications from the technological side.

The collection starts with the paper by Elza Ibroscheva on the past, present and future of relations between journalists, media owners and politicians in Bulgaria. The study offers a critical analysis of the history of the spy/journalist duality, addressing its evolution from the initial political resistance and the role of the media in initiating the public debate about secret files. In addition, the paper underlines the ultimate application of current Bulgarian law, which led to the disclosure of the names of Bulgarian journalists and media owners who spied for the communist authorities.

An in-depth study of post-revolutionary political discourse during Bucharest's University Square protest against the National Salvation Front's government of Ion Iliescu is provided by Ioana Literat. By emphasizing the political situation in Romania in the aftermath of December 1989, the paper investigates how Ion Iliescu legitimized his party's claim to power and simultaneously antagonized the budding civic sphere of democratic activism, represented by the student demonstrators.

The next paper, written by Natalya Ryabinska, deals with the issue of foreign news production in Ukraine. Based on interviews with media experts and practitioners from several national media organizations, the study highlights historical developments and current problems and constraints in foreign news coverage with respect to sources of international news as well as the role of economy, technology and journalism culture.

The issue of news production in the era of convergence and new technologies is explored by Paulo Nuno Vicente. Based on a comprehensive literature review, the study addresses the state of the art in international journalism production and further emphasizes new typologies of correspondence in the multidimensional information society. In addition, the study underlines the process of remixing international news reporting, the culture of foreign correspondents, new roles of journalists as well as the growing importance of the public.

The usage of news sources in the process of election reporting is widely discussed by Daniela Dimitrova and Pietia Konstantinova. The study, examining the newspaper coverage of the 2009 Bulgarian parliamentary election, defines domestic politicians as the dominant news sources and further underlines the number of articles where more than one source was used. Finally, by underlining relations between article type and the use of news sources, the research points out the main features of political communication culture in Bulgaria.

A different approach to media change is developed by David Dobrowsky, making attempts to define identity and individual competences of communication on the social network Facebook. By using the methods of network analysis the study explores relations between the structure of new media platform and competences of communication and also emphasizes the impact on identity constructed on social networks.

The role and development of new media platforms is further discussed by Anda Rožukalne in a study on media usage among young people in Latvia. Based on quantitative data collected in the period 2007–2010, the paper defines patterns of young media users' behavior in connection to media consumption, production of media content and interaction of young media users with new communication technologies.

Finally, the issue ends with the research on emerging patterns and trends in citizen journalism in Africa. Based on in-depth and focus-group interviews with selected experts and citizen journalism practitioners, as well as a review of the existing research framework, Bruce Mutsvairo and Simon Columbus make attempts to define the main features of participatory media development, paying particular attention to the Zimbabwean case.

We wish to thank all the contributors for their work and efforts towards the development of this interdisciplinary collection. We believe that the multi-level analysis presented in "The Central European Journal of Communication" will go a long way to explaining different paths of media development as well as struggles between continuity and change in contemporary studies on communication and media.

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