

TWELVE CONCEPTS REGARDING MEDIA SYSTEM EVOLUTION AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES

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The present book is a contribution to the effort to take stock of changes in media systems in post-communist society, as well as of the scholarly debate on the subject. Of course, it is not yet possible to formulate final and definitive views on either topic, given both the enormous scope of the process of change after 1989, and the fact that that process is far from finished. Nevertheless, several strong themes concerning the nature and effects of the process emerge from the papers included in the book. What sets the present book apart from much of the literature on the subject is its comparative perspective, placing developments in post-communist countries in a much broader context. Perhaps for the first time, Central and Eastern European media scholars are willing to take a cold, critical look at other media systems and assess what is happening in their own region also by reference to processes unfolding elsewhere.

Since the collapse of the communist system in 1989 to 1991, Central and Eastern European societies¹ have been overtaken by a process of change that is perhaps of unprecedented magnitude and complexity in modern world history. This has involved “triple”² or “quadruple”³ post-communist transformation, as well as (in addition to, but also in tandem with, or as a result of, transformation), modernization, globalization and international integration, including particularly (for selected post-communist countries) accession into the European Union. In this introductory essay,⁴ we try to outline twelve conceptual frames that may help to capture the key features of this deep and many-sided transformation, with a special focus on changing media systems in the post-communist world. As Sparks notes in his contribution to this volume, traditional “transitology” is in crisis. No coherent theory of the process unfolding in post-communist countries has emerged to replace it, nor indeed is expected to emerge. Therefore, our intention here is quite modest: to point to key aspects of the process in the hope that this will contribute to better understanding of its complexity.

1. Media as a key area of systemic change: spillover effects

Media system change is, of course, part and parcel of the general process of what may be called systemic social transformation. McQuail (2005) describes the media system as the actual set of mass media in a given national society, characterized by such main dimensions as scale and centralization, degree of politicization, diversity profile, sources of finance and degree of public regulation and control. Each system is also characterized by certain organizing principles expressed in what Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) call a “philosophy” of the press system as well as in a set of normative goals the system is intended to pursue. These, in turn, reflect the given society’s general circumstances and its view of the media, resulting in its media policy. Media system change results from changes in both these cultural (cognitive, conceptual) and structural (policy, economic, institutional etc.) factors.

According to liberal theories of democratic state, such as those of John Stuart Mill, democracy is unthinkable without freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of association. Accordingly, media freedom is generally seen today as a necessary precondition of democracy – and vice versa. This volume confirms that the media are both an independent and a dependent variable in democratic development. Much is made in the literature of the need for an “enabling environment” for media freedom and contribution to democracy. What, however, if the social, political and economic environment is less than favourable and “enabling”? In the present volume, Bajomi-Lazar looks at the prerequisites for consolidation of media freedom, while Sparks, Mungiu-Pippidi, Jakubowicz and Gross analyse the reasons why in post-communist countries the media often operate in a “disabling environment”.

To perform its functions, the media have to fulfill a number of expectations and provide a number of services for democracy. Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) list eight key expectations regarding the democratic performance of the media:

- Surveillance of the socio-political environment, reporting developments likely to impinge, positively or negatively, on the development of citizens;
- Meaningful agenda setting, identifying the key issues of the day, including the forces that have formed and may resolve them;
- Platforms for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy by politicians and spokespersons of other causes and interest groups;
- Dialogue across a diverse range of views, as well as between power holders (actual and prospective) and mass publics;
- Mechanisms for holding officials to account for how they have exercised power;
- Incentives for citizens to learn, choose and become involved, rather than merely followed and kibitz over the political process;
- A principled resistance to the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence, integrity and ability to serve the audience;
- A sense of respect for the audience member as potentially concerned and able to make sense of his or her political environment.

We should remember, however, that at the beginning of the post-communist transformation, mass publics did not have much or, indeed any, experience of democracy. Democratic change in 1989 to 91 started after 40 to 45 years, or over 70 years of communist rule (in Central Europe, Soviet domination began between 1945 to 1949, and in the Soviet Union the communists took over in 1917). One should add that most countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe had

never experienced fully developed democracies, as they had been run by authoritarian or semi-democratic regimes also in the pre-World War II period (the only exception probably being Czechoslovakia).

In this historical context, the media also performed particular roles that characterized the specific post-communist situation. As the political agenda of the early transformation period was dominated by democracy building (and also by nation-building in several countries), democratic expectations of the media included roles in related processes. In partial overlap with, but also adding specific demands to the list above, the media had to perform several specific roles in the post-communist media systems, as indeed in any young democracy. These included (Sükösd 1997/98, 2000):

- Introduction and legitimization of the concepts of democracy, rule of law and constitutionalism;
- Introduction and legitimization of the concepts of political pluralism, competition; and new political parties and candidates as legitimate competitors;
- Developing civil society by introducing NGOs and other civic groups as legitimate public actors;
- Democratic agenda setting and framing of current issues along the concepts above;
- Challenging the space and degree of transformation for further democratization;
- Safeguarding new democratic institutions;
- Exploring wrongdoing by old as well as new elites (e.g., investigative journalism) and covering socio-political scandals to define boundaries of acceptable conduct
- Developing accountability to citizens/viewers;
- Personalization of politics: introducing candidates and parties before the first democratic elections by applying criteria regarding democratic programs and personal skills;
- Democratic education regarding elections and voting procedures;
- Offer a space for democratic evaluation of national past (including the communist period and its leaders) and the discussion of historical justice;
- Contribution to national integration along democratic lines (in many newly formed countries, contribution to nation building);
- Democratic performance of the media as a contribution to the democratization of other sectors (media communication as a facilitator).

In the process of nurturing young democratic institutions and democratic citizenship, democratic performance of the media had an important impact on democratization in general, but also on its specific sectors. By covering issues of the day as well as longer term trends, media democratization often had *spillover effects* (or *trickle-down effects*) regarding democratization of particular institutions.

By framing stories and building agendas according to democratic criteria, media performance had the opportunity of shaping public opinion about concrete cases reinforcing rule of law both in politics and the economy. By uncovering wrongdoing and abuse of power, investigative reporters and political scandals in the media helped to set the norms of acceptable vs non-acceptable behaviour in new pluralist democracies (on the role of political and media scandals in defining socially acceptable norms of conduct, see Lull and Hinerman 1997; Markovits and Silverstein 1988). Insofar the media performed their democratic roles, they also contributed to the process of consolidation of democracy in all its five dimensions listed by Linz and Stepan (1996, 7-15).

2. The ontogenesis of democratic media institutions

Besides spillover effects, another relationship between democratization of media and systemic democratization may be captured by the metaphor of *ontogenesis*, introduced by Jakubowicz in his paper. The concept of ontogenesis in developmental biology captures “individual development of a living thing, all sequence of its transformations”.⁵ In other words, it means that every specimen of the species repeats in the course of its development all the stages of evolution that the entire species had gone through in the process of its phylogenesis.

As the starting point of the transformation, the official Central and Eastern European media systems up to 1990 were characterized by a wide-ranging system of censorship overseen by Communist Party agencies, the monopoly of state broadcasting and exclusive state/party ownership of the press, party *nomenklatura* as media executives, and hegemonic propaganda content (Sükösd 2000).

Given this historical context, as Jakubowicz notes in his paper about public service media in the emerging democracies,

Central and Eastern European countries are thus discovering that when they transplant an institution copied on Western patterns, they are in reality launching a process that will retrace the developments that ultimately led to its successful development elsewhere. They must therefore repeat – albeit probably in an accelerated form – the experience (and all the mistakes) that Western European countries went through before they were able to achieve something close to the desired results (PSB is strong and truly independent only in a few Western countries). It is almost like the process of ontogenesis in biology.

In a historical view of systemic transformation, the concept of ontogenesis may refer to the development of particular institutions of democracy, replicating (in whole or in part) the historical sequence of their earlier development in other societies. The institutional pattern of newly established and transplanted democratic media institutions may be seen as one in which democratic potentials are encoded. However, whether such potentials can be realized and the institutions can be utilized according to their basic principles remains subject to conflicts and particular conditions of their social, cultural and institutional embeddedness.

In Central and Eastern Europe, repeated media wars, i.e., continued struggle for media independence, have been characterizing media system transformation. In media wars, journalists, editors, their unions, media managers and civic groups fought in various coalitions with governments, oppositions, political and as well as business clans. Media wars and other similar developments can be seen as subsequent periods through which the ontogenesis of democratic media institutions proceeds.

Such media wars included fights by various clan media and several phases of struggle against central control and for independence in Russia and Ukraine from the 1990s; Hungarian media wars around public service broadcasting that became focal conflicts of political struggles (during the 1990s); a famous strike of public television personnel against government intervention in the Czech Republic (2000); similar recent developments in Slovakia; street protests against the persecution of the Rustavi-2 TV station in Georgia (October 2001); street protests in Moscow against the elimination of NTV, an independent TV station (2001); a campaign against changes in PSB law, threatening its political subordination in Slovenia (2005); protests in Poland against pressure being put on public and independent media and against ultimately unsuccessful attempts to vet journalists for possible history of collaboration

with communist-time secret police, with the threat that they would be banned from the journalistic profession for ten years if they refused to submit to this (2005–2007).

All this has had the effect of qualifying the role and impact of the media on the democratization process, as they were caught up in a struggle against what we have called “the disabling environment”.

As Hungarian sociologist Elemér Hankiss, first president of Hungarian television in the post-communist period, notes about resistance to repeated attempts by authoritarian leaders in his country’s media war,

In their stubborn fight for autonomy, Hungarian Television and Radio became the major actors of a society protesting against and authoritarian efforts of the government.... [We] had to learn that democracy cannot be... established overnight by a first and free election. It may be generated only in the course of a long and tedious process in which everybody has to take part and has to take up his or her responsibilities... The facts that two fragile public institutions, which could rely only on the letter and spirit of the law, were able to protect their newly won autonomy against extremely strong pressures and attacks from the government and the governing parties proves that all the main political actors observed, at least until the last act, the rule of law, and have accepted the basic rules of the democratic game.

In this sense, ontogenesis refers to a long societal learning process, with all the attendant crises and conflicts, in which democratic rules ultimately become accepted “as the only game in town” and respect for media independence finally wins the day. The legal and institutional framework for that may exist on paper, but political and cultural preconditions needed to safeguard it take a long time to develop.

Media institutions are exceptional organizations as they are very visible and by nature occupy central positions in their respective countries’ communication system. When media executives openly resist prime ministers’ and presidents’ attempts to exert control over national television and radio, their resistance, supported by journalists, editors, civic groups and public intellectuals, becomes not only well known, but also sets an example and sends a message about legality and professional norms to audiences in all segments of society.

It was an interesting exercise in learning about democracy. It was almost moving to see how governing party deputies, or at least some of them, struggled with their consciences—to see how they tried to squeeze their party interests (and their antipathies for this meddlesome television president) into the forms and straitjacket of legal rules. By that time, the whole country was watching. (Hankiss 275)

Eventually, Hankiss and many other media executives like him were removed in heavily disputed procedures, authoritarian actions of post-communist governments. Nevertheless, the ontogenesis of democratic media system continues through acts of professional and political resistance like his.

3. Political, market and social demands in post-communist media policy

In an empirical sense, the media in Central and Eastern European transformation only partially fulfilled the normative expectations listed above. The democratic performance of the media was largely up to media policies crafted by post-communist elites.

Raboy, Proulx and Dahlgren (2003) differentiate between “market demand” and “social demand” legitimization for media policy – in addition to official public policy, oriented to serve the public interest. While “market demand” conceptualizes public interest as “what the public is interested in”, i.e. what the public is prepared to consume, “social demand” would allow for legitimization of types media/cultural policy which incorporate a fuller understanding of the public interest and its ties to the exercise of democratic cultural citizenship.

Media policy in all countries in Central and Eastern Europe has been a mix of the three types of approaches. The “public policy” orientation – though often serving political, rather than public interest objectives – predominated in the early period of most regimes, and in later periods of non-competitive, war-torn and authoritarian regimes. The “market demand” orientation strongly impacted media systems in competitive as well as concentrated political regimes. Several papers in this volume, e.g., those by Peruško and Popović, Hozic, Lauk and Baltyciene, illustrate the resulting commercialization of the media and impact of the market on media and journalism evolution. The “social demand” orientation made itself felt primarily in the competitive regimes.

However, we should highlight that all three logics have been continuously present in all countries and it is their relative strength that characterized specific systems in specific periods. Perhaps what differentiates the historical dynamics of post-communist regimes from other regimes types is the heavy impact of political demands in the early period, and then the emergence and relative strengthening of “market demands” and “social demands” in later parts of the transition, especially in competitive regimes.

A framework for analysis of communication policy-making should, at a minimum, encompass the various actors and their goals and objectives; the level at which policy is made (supra-national, national, regional etc.); the issues which preoccupy policy-makers most at any given time (resulting from general processes in the media and the challenges they pose); and the process by which policy is made (see Siune et al. 1986). Formulation of media policy involves several stages: identification of issues requiring action or resolution, policy analysis and choice of appropriate policy instruments, development of regulatory instruments (if required), usually involving consultation (at least in a democratic process of policy-making), implementation and evaluation.

We may distinguish several types of media or, more broadly, communication policy:

- Systemic media policy – formulated with a view to creating, maintaining or changing the overall shape of the media system;
- Sectoral media policy, oriented towards some sector of the media (e.g., broadcasting policy);
- Operational media policy, involving the resolution of issues arising within an already existing media system.

The task that all early post-communist societies faced was the formulation and implementation of systemic media policy, i.e., the development of a media system that differs fundamentally from media systems under communist rule. Within this overall systemic transformation (and usually only after the primary system had been set up), sectoral media policies were crafted. In that sense, several sectoral policies were hammered out or fine-tuned in what may be called a “second wave of media reform” that targeted specific tasks (e.g., the formation of community media policy or minority media policy) (Sükösd and Bajomi-Lázár 2002). Finally, operational

media policy has been performed by the institutions that were set newly set up and started to function in a gradually consolidating fashion.

Of course, in democratic societies the aims of media regulation combine political and democratic with both cultural and economic objectives. Many of the former are public policy objectives and they may potentially clash with economic ones, including the encouragement of free choice and competition, facilitating exports and free trade, stimulating domestic and independent production and encouraging international competitiveness. The opposition between public policy and economic objectives may indeed be seen as the key dilemma of media policy. Accordingly, one of the fundamental choices to make in developing policy is between different forms of intervention into the media market, as types of regulation may range from minimal regulation through market-opening, industry-based (i.e., self- and co-regulation), market-correcting and up to market-overruling regulation (Thomas 1999). That, in turn, depends on the nature of the objectives being pursued and on the socio-ideological context within which policy is formulated.

4. The challenges: compressed waves of media change

Above, we used the metaphor of *ontogenesis* to describe a key aspect of media development in post-communist countries. This process also encompasses replication of the broader process of media system change in Europe and elsewhere in former communist countries where the media system was largely frozen for several decades in a form needed by the political system for its command and control purposes.

Kopper (2000) lists the following “spheres of change” in European media: technological change and convergence; progressive fusion of public and private spheres and of information and entertainment; commodification; changing structures and functions of the media; economics and financing; visuality, interactivity etc.

Another way of approaching analysis of the process of change in the history European media (and, to a degree, the history of democratic media systems in general) could be to list its particular elements and manifestations. The following list, seeking to arrange them in an approximate chronological order, is one attempt to identify those elements:

- “Media differentiation”, or separation from government and/or political structures, began with the formation of the public sphere (i.e., Enlightenment journals) in the eighteenth century, continued with the gradual separation of independent press from party newspapers during the nineteenth century and the establishment of public service radio after WW I. Media differentiation was given a boost after WW II, but continued in the 1960s and 1970s in those Western European countries which still had state- or government-controlled broadcasting systems that were then transformed into public service ones.
- Professionalization of journalists involved a gradual shift from partisan roles to embracing objectivity and non-partisanship as central professional norms (during the twentieth century, in Western Europe particularly after WW II).
- Democratization promoted by a powerful movement in western media oriented to satisfying what was perceived as a general need to communicate and realize the right to communicate, to provide opportunities for social access to, and participation in running the media in Europe (in the 1960s and 1970s).
- Media decentralization, specialization and diversification, promoted by both a public-service- and a market-driven desire to identify and cater for social and interest groups, as

well as minorities inadequately served by mass-audience national media (from the 1960 to 70s).

- Demonopolization, “deregulation” and liberalization of the broadcast media in the western world, resulting from the triumph of neo-liberalism (as exemplified by Thatcherism or Reaganomics) and involving a reduction of public interventionism into the media and abolition of state broadcasting monopoly, setting the stage for the emergence of a private sector of broadcasting in Western Europe (in the 1980s).
- Commercialization of private and partly also public broadcast media as a result of subjecting them to liberalization and market laws as well as the increasing role of market realities in financing them (advertising, sponsorship, product placement) and in organizing them (e.g., market segmentation) in the 1980s.
- Europeanization, i.e., the formation of a common European media market as a result of EU trade and media policies, the harmonization of some key aspects of television policy (EU regulation (Directive) and the emergence of major European media companies (from the late 1980s).
- Concentration of media ownership at national and international scale, to be followed by the formation of dominant multinational media and telecommunication/digital media companies that control the whole value chain from production to distribution and merchandizing (especially from the 1990s).
- Internationalization, transnationalization and globalization, both of content (especially of television, film and music) and in many cases of ownership and scale of operation, which in means globalization of some media conglomerates (from the 1990s).
- Commercialization of content, including political news and other current affairs programmes (tabloidization, infotainment, human interest stories, new genres fusing popular culture and public affairs).
- The emergence of and massive access to digital, interactive new media (the Internet and mobile communication technology) from the 1990s.
- Digitalization and convergence with all their wide-ranging ramifications for the entire media system, economy and society (from 2000 onwards).

The dramatic feature of post-communist societies’ media systems is that they faced, and partly performed or became subjected to, all these historical processes in an extremely compressed, short period of time. Many of these waves of change hit them immediately after communism fell, while others had deep impacts in the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century. If one were to list the main tendencies in media system evolution in post-communist countries, one could identify the following processes or clusters of complementary or contradictory processes:

- Demonopolization and (partial) remonopolization
- Commercialization and marketization of media systems (along with the rise of infotainment and tabloidization of political content)
- Change as regards media freedom and independence
- Democratization of media
- Pluralization and diversity in the media
- Professionalization of journalists
- Development of public service broadcasting from state media
- Internationalization, Europeanization and globalization of content and ownership

- ICT development and impact on the media
- Digitalization and convergence of media systems

Indeed, the two lists are very similar. The major changes in European (and, to a certain degree, global) media also later characterized media system evolution in post-communist countries. The challenges are the same; however, one may discern certain limited exceptionalism of post-communism in the speed (the historical time frame) of the process, and certain specific factors characteristic of post-communist regions (e.g., the relative lack of domestic capital, professional skills and democratic political culture).

The fact that commercialization and marketization are placed so high on the list of processes transforming media systems in post-communist countries may seem surprising. That they should play such a role certainly was not the intention either of the idealistic dissidents before the collapse of the communist system, nor of the policy-makers immediately after its demise. Nevertheless, as pointed out by a number of authors in this volume, it is the market forces which now provide most of the impetus for media evolution and change in post-communist countries, especially those where democracy is the strongest and societal conflicts (that always intensify political pressure on the media) have, to an extent, been contained and channelled in the political process.

5. The responses: idealistic, mimetic and atavistic orientations in media policy

How did post-communist societies, particularly media policy-makers, react to the compressed (and, at the same time, pressing) challenges that are listed above? One may identify three media policy orientations that contributed to shaping views on the new media order.

The first was the “*idealistic*” orientation. In line with the tendency of dissidents, underground democracy activists and democratic oppositions to think in terms antithetical to the communist system itself, this orientation assumed the introduction of a direct communicative democracy as part of a change of social power relations. This was promoted by the intellectual, cultural and later political opposition to the communist system, fascinated with western concepts of “access”, “participation” and “social management” of the media. The idea was to implement the democratic participant press theory and create a media system based on the values of equality/justice and solidarity (McQuail 1992: 66–67), with a facilitative and dialectical/critical role for journalists (Nordenstreng 1997). While the concept of “public service broadcasting” may have appeared in this thinking, the real plan was to turn “state” into “social” broadcasting (i.e., directly managed and controlled by society).

Another strand within the idealistic orientation grew out of theorizing *samizdat*,⁶ the self-published, underground literature that broke censorship and the official communication monopoly of the Communist Party. This independent communication network involved participation in an emerging public sphere in which authors and activists freely discussed matters of the public (Habermas 1989). The creation of a *samizdat* culture originated from the Soviet Union (Hollander 1972, 1975; Feldbrugge 1975; Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin 1977; Rubinstein 1980; Cohen 1982) with acts of exercising free personal and public expression and artistic freedom as human rights, and a desire to avoid censorship. Later, *samizdat* related to the socio-political idea of “self-limiting revolution”, i.e., the strategy “civil society against the state” of the Polish opposition (Arato 1981), the idea of “parallel polis” by the Charta 77 movement in Czechoslovakia (Skilling 1989) and the idea of “second public” and “second society” in Hungary. Central concepts in this stream of thought included freedom of artistic and

political expression (Haraszi 1988), freedom, independence and peacefulness of communication while the importance of institutions, markets and the state was downplayed. In terms of general political theory, this orientation related to a vision of non-authoritarian, self-managed civil society, particularly to the syndicalist features in the philosophy of the Solidarity trade union (Staniszki 1984) and self-managing workers councils during the 1956 revolution in Hungary (Lomax 1976, 1990).

The strengths and, indeed, historical achievement of the “idealistic” orientation of media policy was the emphasis on freedom in general and freedom of speech and press in particular. The value of freedom helped to defy censorship, publish freely and to use independent social and political communication to organize democratic resistance against the party-state. *Samizdat* communication also introduced democratic discourses (most important, that of human rights), agendas and frames. However, the weakness of both strands of the “idealistic orientation” is their lack of institutional models, let alone a blueprint for the democratic transformation of “the official” media systems. This may be explained by the fact that basically up to 1989, nobody expected the sudden crash of Soviet type communism and the whole Yalta system (i.e., the end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe), so it seemed there was no need for such blueprints.

After the democratic breakthrough in 1989 to 91, the “mimetic” orientation in media policy was conceived as a way of achieving realistic and practical approximation to “the West”, including full liberalization of the print media would and creation of a dual system of broadcasting. On the one hand, the “mimetic” orientation was dedicated to the pursuit of the goals of the public service phase of media policy development in Western Europe. Accordingly, influences on the “mimetic orientation” included the social responsibility press theory, a guardianship/stewardship role for the media, an administrative paradigm, service and democratic surveillance functions for journalists.

However, on the other hand, neo-liberal economists’ arguments for a free market in general and for a free media market in particular prepared liberalization of the media market and the introduction of commercial broadcasting. Under the umbrella of the key terms of “westernization” and “Europeanization,” public service enthusiasts and neo-liberal free market advocates forged an alliance in the “mimetic” orientation.

The third impact on the formation of the “mimetic” orientation was that of the European Union. Several societies and governments in the Central and Eastern European lands looked at EU membership as one of the major goals of post-communist transformation. During the long 1990s, when the EU conducted decade-long accession talks with national governments, “harmonization” with European standards became the key jargon, and the full transplantation of the *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU regulation) to national legislation became the key policy goal in several new democracies. Joining the EU meant that these countries had to comply with EU regulations (though in the media field as related to society and democracy the EU admits to relying primarily on Council of Europe standards), thus, “mimetic” could be understood literally in this sense. It is remarked by some analysts of normative media theories that no “post-communist media theory” has been developed. In these circumstances, it never had a chance to develop, as thinking outside the “EU box” was actively discouraged. It is only now that new, original thinking can emerge (though, of course, there is no certainty that it will, indeed, produce a new normative media theory).

In the typical political scene of the post-communist world, elites representing “westernization” and “Europeanization” discourses fought with nationalist and other counter-elites for

domination. In the Central European and the Baltic States, “westernization” and “Europeanization” became dominant discourses (often, with some variation of democratic nationalism) right from the fall of communism, and then hegemonic discourses during the 1990s. In several former Yugoslav republics, post-communist elites adopted nationalist discourses that recently gave way to “westernization” and “Europeanization” discourses after years of ethnic wars and international marginalization.

The mimetic orientation focused on transplanting – in some aspects importing without any change – Western European media institutions and policy models assuming that they would work (in line with the institutional focus of transition and consolidation studies in mainstream political science). Few understood at the beginning of the transformation that social, political, cultural (and, in some cases, economic) prerequisites for the proper operation of independent and impartial media, including public service broadcasting organizations, did not really exist. During the last one and a half decades, however, that transplantation of the legal and institutional frameworks of PSB (and in a sense other democratic media as well) would have to be followed by a long period of development of the kind of political and journalistic culture required for PSB to be able to flourish.

One of the very clear messages of several papers in this volume (see those by Sparks, Jakubowicz, Gross, Hozic, Lauk, Balčytienė) is that of disappointment with “western models” and their applicability to post-communist countries, as well as with the ability of those countries successfully to adopt such models and breathe life into them. The strong impression is that the international community and organizations, as well as all the other western players involved in the process, presented to post-communist societies an unrealistic, idealized and wart-free image of “free and democratic” media and journalism to emulate, while the reality in their own countries may have been different. Jakubowicz shows that public service broadcasting in Mediterranean European countries is as distant from the ideal of independent public service media, as it is in post-communist countries.

The third orientation could be called “atavistic”. What really emerged in post-communist countries after transition was not civil society but a political society, “partitocratic” systems of political and public life dominated, indeed, “colonized” by political parties. There is no doubt that the new power elites, while ostensibly accepting the “mimetic” orientation, in many cases sought to cling to any elements of the old command system they could still maintain. This, then, was a plan for a media system based, in different proportions, on social responsibility, paternal, development communication and authoritarian press theories, infused with different versions of nationalist discourse. All this served the pursuit of the value of “order” imposed from above, performing the functions of hegemony or guardianship.

In this model, journalists are expected to be “cooperative”, i.e., guided by a sense of responsibility for the process of transformation and assist the government as the leader of the process, rather than exercise an independent, impartial and critical watchdog role. The same applied to public service broadcasting, if its introduction was proposed at all instead of the continued old state television and radio stations. In Russia, post-communist political and business clans used “westernization” and “Europeanization” discourses against communists and right-wing populists during the 1990s, to be replaced by a strong development state and nationalism discourse under President Putin whose administrations refused the mimetic orientation and implemented authoritarian media policies.

Since the “idealistic” orientation was immediately discontinued and rejected everywhere after the demise of the communist system, only the use of the other two orientations – usually

some combination of both – remained a possibility for Central and Eastern European countries. One could say that in more democratic post-communist countries, mimetic elements dominate over atavistic ones, while in the less democratic ones, the reverse is true. We may observe several versions of this, a typical regional blend being political elites using “mimetic” discourses, while engaging in “atavistic” actions of behaviour.

Nevertheless, the contribution of Kaposi and Mátay in the present volume suggests that there may yet be hope for the “idealistic” media policy orientation which proposed a system of direct communicative democracy as a remedy for the ills of the command-and-control media system of the communist times. They show how Hungarian radicals were able to use the Internet and mobile phones at a time of violent street protests against the government in September-October 2006, completely bypassing the traditional media system, to express their views on social and political issues, to create an alternative public sphere and participate in ongoing political action. Formally, this was “semiotic democracy” in action, showing that new technologies offer grass-roots organizations and individuals a chance to practice direct communicative democracy. This may be a portent of future changes in the system of social communication and media policy.

Ironically, the radicals described by Kaposi and Mátay represented extreme right-wing populism, mystical monarchist nationalism, xenophobia and violent mobilization which was the opposite of “self-constrained revolution” strategy of civil society in the 1980s, or deliberative online democracy today (cf. Dahlgren 2002, 2003). Moreover, the contexts also differed completely: radical mobilization in 2006 took place against a constitutional state and a democratically elected government that enjoyed formal legitimation. Nevertheless, the concept of direct communicative democracy is a valuable contribution by the “idealistic” media policy orientation to the study of media democracy, civic cultures and interactive digital media networks today. Blogging represents the *samizdat* of the twenty-first century.

6. Factors of change: domestic vs international, structural vs cultural

Having outlined the international environment and orientations of post-communist media policy, we may want to locate systemic media transformation within the wider context of social transformation in Central and Eastern European societies. An attempt to create a model of systemic change in post-communist countries has yielded the following result (see Figure 1).

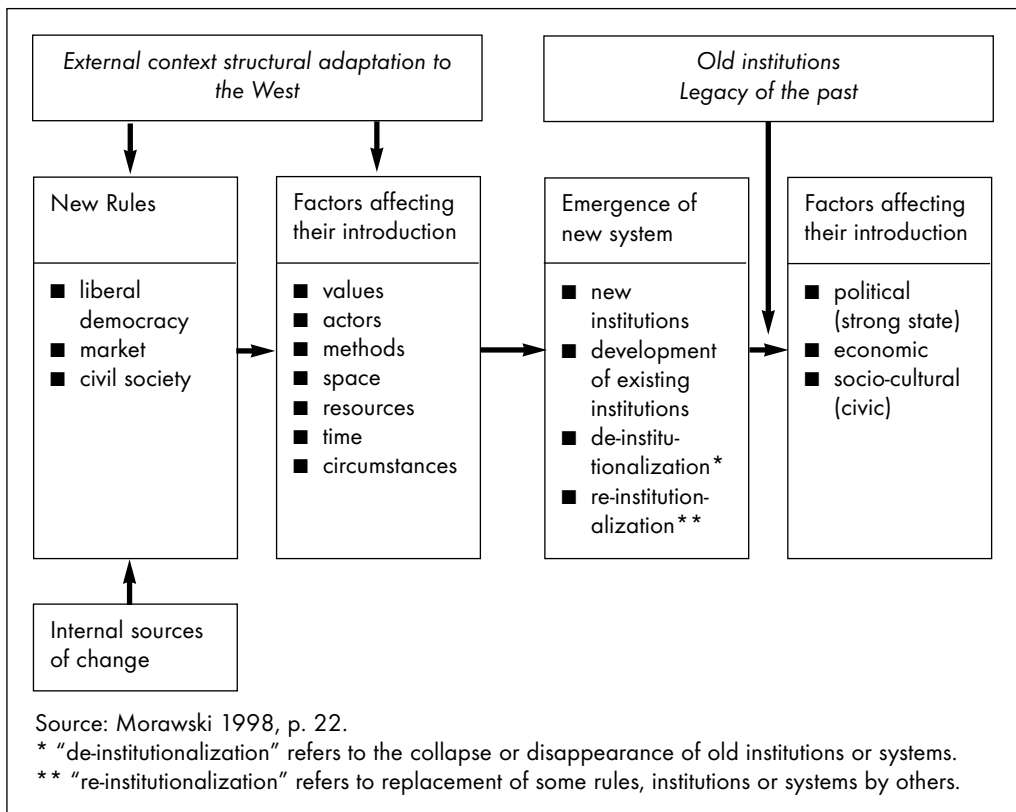
This model would need to be significantly developed in order fully to render the complexity of the process of post-communist transformation (see Jakubowicz 2007 for its further development). However, it will suffice as a starting point for our purposes.

Systemic social transformation encompasses a wide variety of processes, involved in the elimination of the communist legacy and in “triple” or “quadruple” transformation. Moreover, as post-communist countries are integrated into the European and global community, they are overtaken by global processes of political and economic change and come under ever stronger impact of external forces. Thus, developments in post-communist countries must be studied as resulting from the interplay of transformation, integration and globalization.

To this, we could add technological and economic change resulting from the onset of the Information Society. In this sense, transformation in Central and Eastern European countries comprises at least three sub-processes, adding up to accelerated social change (Figure 2).

As we try to identify enabling and limiting factors as far as media transformation is concerned, we may have to look at the set of interrelationships between processes of media change and key sectors of social change. The scheme below offers an outline of such an analysis, focusing on the role of political, economic and cultural conditions (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Institutionalization of Systemic Change



Looking at the historical dynamics of media change, it may also be important to explore the interplay of *cultural* vs *structural* factors. In the beginning of the transition period from 1989 to 1991, one may witness the key importance of cultural factors: cognitive patterns and value orientations of political and cultural elites (including democracy activists, public intellectuals,

Figure 2: Sub-processes of Social Change in Post-Communist Societies

Sub-process	Description
Elimination of communist legacy	Programme of managed (or partly managed) change serving to eliminate the communist legacy
"Triple" or "quadruple" transformation	State- and (where necessary) nation-building, economic and political reform and the consequences of these processes (e.g., operation of democracy, changes of government and policy; effects of economic growth etc.)
Response to global and European change	Involvement in processes of global and European integration, efforts to pursue informatization/digitalization, response to globalization etc.

Figure 3. Processes of Media Change as Influenced Key Areas of Society in Post-Communist Countries

<i>I. Depending on political factors, the media can:</i>	<i>II. Politics, economy determine whether the media can:</i>	<i>III. Economy, market mechanism, techno-logical development favour or hinder:</i>	<i>IV. Cultural conditions and “cultural change” are required for:</i>
Be deregulated and demonopolized Become pluralistic and open Be covered by a democratic legal framework Enjoy an enabling and effective policy for digitalization	Gain autonomy Decentralize Diversify in content Address minority groups Internationalize Promote professionalization of journalists	True removal of media monopoly Commercialization Concentration Globalization Tabloidization Development of ICTs and convergence	Non-existence or resolution of national and ethnic conflicts Depoliticization of media Rule of law Ability to define and serve the public interest Role for public opinion The media to serve as impartial watchdogs

reform-communists etc.) contributed greatly to the conceptualization of post-communist order, including its constitutional system and the formation of key political institutions (Bozóki 1999; Glenn 2001). This was a period of democratic planning, thus, patterns of thought and visions about democratic models by the key architects of post-communist societies as well as their foreign advisers played important roles (Glenn 1999). Such cultural capital was mobilized by in the face-to-face round-table negotiations between democracy activists and late communist elites (Bozóki 2001) and, even more importantly, the first democratically elected governments that passed “founding legislation” and policies that defined the patterns of post-communism. For a few years such cultural “framing power” could utilize structural opportunities (McAdam et al. 1996) that resulted from the unique historical environment, the fall of Soviet-type socialism.

However, once the major constitutional models were decided upon and the building of a new institutional system in all sectors was underway, the dynamics of change shifted from active cultural “framing”, “planning” and “design” to institutional and structural factors. In all sectors of social life – legal, political, economic – the newly created institutional system and capitalist market economy introduced a new social order with structural constraints. In the area of media, “mimetic” media laws and regulations institutionalized changes of and defined new roles for all actors. In commercial media markets, profit-oriented media investors, domestic owners and western companies positioned themselves as hegemonic actors. The transformation of state media to western type public service began by the transplantation of public service broadcasting institutions. The new institutional order and new structural factors significantly weakened the relevance of creative “framing power”.

However, after media laws and institutions had been transplanted from Western to Eastern and Central European contexts, the danger became apparent that democratic laws would not be implemented, or implemented only partially, and democratic institutions would serve as a façade for non-democratic practices. Without the supporting environment of democratic political culture, democratic institutions remain empty, and the implementation of democratic norms as well as their proper operation and performance is missing (Gross 2004). Moreover,

such empty institutions often turn into a Potemkin village: they satisfy merely formal criteria while their essence is misinterpreted and misused in the interest of political and economic elites.

This brings the issue of culture, particularly political culture, back to centre stage. Democratic political culture, which is necessary for substantial consolidation of democracy, would rest to a large degree on a supportive civil society, including networks of trust and social capital that developed in long historical trajectories (Seligman 1992, 2000; Putnam 1993). However, civil society is historically weaker (and acts of civic and journalistic courage remain less forceful) in the East and Central European region than in Western Europe (Bibó 1991; Szűcs 1983). Of course, it may be a mistake to engage in cultural essentialism as political culture itself is also changing as a result of institutional and structural factors. However, its change is slower – one can thus witness a discrepancy between the pace of systemic and cultural change.

7. Is post-communism over?

What it is that is actually happening in post-communist societies is, of course, the object of a heated debate. In the present volume, this issue is taken up by Sparks who believes that of the two approaches that he considers – “transitology” (positing revolutionary transition from communism to liberal democracy and market economy) and “elite continuity” – that of elite continuity has superior explanatory power. (Ironically, this thesis in Eastern and Central Europe is much touted by right-wing forces, such as the Law and Justice Party in Poland, that challenge the post-1989 arrangements as a sell-out to former communists and – as if reliving the Chinese cultural revolution – seek to remove the post-1989 elite from power and to replace it with their own power elite.)

Here, we will proceed from the assumption that there is more to what has taken place in post-communist countries than just elite continuity: multiple transformations *and*, within them, a certain degree of elite continuity, together characterize these societies.

Taken literally, neither social, nor media transformation can ever be “over”, of course. Change never stops, though it may be faster or slower, depending on the circumstances. Also in a *normative* sense, media democratization is an open-ended process. Communicative participation and public deliberation based on access to information are processes where it would be wrong to suggest that an endpoint of evolution may be reached. Communicative democracy remains a normative ideal that may serve as a guiding principle and that may be approached by certain communities in certain empirical contexts – but, perhaps, never fully realized.

Generally speaking, in the context of Central and Eastern Europe today, the question refers to a specific historical process of post-communist transformation. Determining when this form of transformation is over depends on whether or not it is seen as a *teleological* process, implying a preconceived or normatively defined end result, or a certain pre-determined set of outcomes. If so, the question becomes whether that result should be defined in a *negative* or *positive* way. If, on the one hand, post-communism is defined as abolition of communism (negative result), then transformation was over once that had been done in the great majority of countries in the early 1990s (some Central Asian republics may be seen as continuing the old system, in a different form), irrespective of what followed that process.

If, on the other hand, transformation is seen as serving the creation of a different and sustained institutional order (positive result), then transformation will be over when that has happened. This was the mainstream transition studies or “transitology” tradition in American political science that focused on institutional variables (Stepan and Linz 1996). This approach

may be illustrated by the questions put by Philip G. Roeder (1999, 747–749) as he sought to ascertain the progress of transformation by the end of the 1990s:

- First, at the end of this decade, did the country constitute a consolidated nation-state?
- Second, at the end of this decade, did a democratic regime rule this country? Following Robert Dahl’s definition, democratic states both guarantee political liberties for unfettered public contestation and extend the franchise to the entire permanent resident adult population.
- Third, at the end of this decade, were economic decisions concerning production, pricing, and distribution made in the private sphere and marketplace rather than in governmental agencies? Countries may be divided into two categories based on the extent to which the government continued to play a commanding role in the economy.

Of course, a fine-tuned assessment of the quality of democracy (differences between competitive, majoritarian, liberal and other forms of democracy) is missing here. Also, there exist a number of democratic capitalisms with multiple roles of the state and state-economy relations, so the simple alternative between the free market vs government agency is not tenable. However, assuming for a moment such a teleological understanding of transformation we may distinguish a number of principal criteria for assessing its progress:

- The first criterion concerns the reversibility of change: when change (of whatever nature and proceeding in whatever direction) has reached the point of no return, partial transformation has already taken place (i.e., the old order no longer exists as a functioning system and cannot return, even though no coherent new order has yet emerged). We may call this transformation out of the old order.
- The second relates to the achievement of critical mass of transformation into a new order. This is an interim stage when enough features of a new, internally consistent system have crystallized for this system to function, whatever shortcomings or legacies of the past still remain.
- And the third principal criterion concerns the consolidation of the new order, coalescing into a new integrated whole. In this phase, the process of fundamental systemic change is replaced by “business as usual” of change and procedure of reforms.

In terms of media policies, Lukosiunas (1998, p. 3) combines the first and the second criterion in assessing the situation in the Lithuanian media system:

One may probably say that the first phase of the transition - which included the disruption of Soviet media system and emergence of the new structure of the media which is capable of integrating Western journalistic practices and is ready to be integrated into the structures of Western media businesses – is over, and the next stage – which is to find its place and voice in united Europe – has just started.

In the teleological paradigm, we may also consider different criteria for assessing whether transformation is “over” or not. They are:

- Systemic criteria, e.g., the transition is over when the problems and the policy issues confronted by today’s ‘transition countries’ resemble those faced by other countries at similar levels of development.

- Concentrating on formal outcomes, as in the view that transition is over for the post-communist countries when they become members of the EU.
- And institutional, i.e., whether the old institutions have been dismantled and new ones created and sustained for a historically longer period.

In the teleological tradition, transformation can be also said to be over when the media of a post-communist country resemble those of western democracies rather than those of a communist state (once again, the criteria would be typically institutional). Using a longer term perspective, another conceptual benchmark could be when processes of continued change no longer have anything to do with overcoming the legacy of the communist past (although indirect causal relations may be very hard to evaluate empirically).

So is post-communism over? On the one hand, if we accept that social change in post-communist countries encompasses the three sub-processes listed in figure 2: a) elimination of communist legacy, b) “triple” or “quadruple” transformation and c) response to global and European change, then not one of these sub-processes has been accomplished fully. If we define communism not so much in an ideological sense, but as a period of national development which was radically different from what older democracies went through at the same time, then its legacy continues to weigh heavily over everything else. Such a legacy cannot be removed or forgotten in just one generation. At the very least, all Central and Eastern European countries are still “post-communist” in this general sense of social path-dependency.

On the other hand, however, some believe that the label “post-communist” should no longer be used, as the transformation is “over” and Central and Eastern European societies have entered a qualitatively new stage of their history. One may also argue that groups of countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the last twenty years became so different in terms of democratic performance, capitalist transformation and economic integration with global markets (e.g., some are liberal democracies in the European Union, others are authoritarian states or even dictatorships) that the common denominator “post-communist” has lost most its explanatory power.

In the area of media systems, this position could be supported by comparative perspectives suggesting that commonalities between certain Central and Eastern European countries and media systems elsewhere (e.g., southern Europe) could be already more significant than structural similarities within the post-communist world. Another comparative approach could offer the concept of “multiple post-communisms”, i.e., typologies pointing to differences between groups of countries (e.g., Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe, the Baltics and other groups of post-Soviet states).

8. Comparative approaches

Comparative approaches to systemic media change may offer alternatives to the teleological paradigm. Instead of focusing on a trajectory from a point of departure (the communist media system) to an endpoint (a normatively defined end result, or a certain pre-determined set of outcomes), perhaps more can be learned about substantive issues via comparative methods.

The archetype of comparative media systems theory, *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al. 1956), is seldom quoted recently. However, its concepts made a deep and sometimes unconscious impact on generations of media scholarship. Although the four models (the authoritarian, the libertarian, the Soviet and the social responsibility theories of the press) suggest a comparative perspective, they also imply deeply normative discourses in two senses. On the one hand, they present a description of all four models in an ideal typical way, i.e., how

the four models should be (and not how they, in fact, empirically are). On the other hand, positive characteristics are grouped on one side (the libertarian and the social responsibility theories), while negative traits characterize the other side (the authoritarian and the Soviet theories of the press). These two related processes of normativization result in a polarized classification. Instead of exploring how media systems function in different parts of the globe and what accounts for their differences, we are presented a bipolar opposition that reflects a Cold War dichotomy.⁷

The *Four Theories of the Press* remained influential in media research as well as journalism education up to the end of the Cold War and even beyond that, and we suggest it also made its impact on the teleological understanding of the transformation of East and Central European media systems. The *Four Theories of the Press* matched well with the logic of “transitology” in political science: in their polarized opposition a transition from the communist political system (and the Soviet media model) took place targeting an idealized, “western” democratic system and free market (and the libertarian, or social responsibility, media model).

As empirical evidence and cases regarding media change in Central and Eastern Europe became available during the 1990s, the need for less ideological comparative approaches became obvious. In *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*, Gunther and Mughan presented a systematic framework for the analysis of ten single-country cases in different regime types: consolidated democracies, cases of democratization after WW2, as well as emerging democracies of the third wave of democratization (Gunther and Mughan 2000a, 2000b). Their approach transcended the Cold War logic in several ways. First, they broke with the idealization of any western models and introduced critical and historical aspects regarding their change (in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands).

To be sure, this association of democracy with a free press and authoritarianism/ totalitarianism with a media enslaved is overdrawn and has never been fully convincing. The media in non-democratic regimes, for example, never enjoyed the pervasiveness penetration, or omniscience popularized in George Orwell’s 1984. In the same vein, the media in democratic societies have never been fully free of government control.... [T]he traditional stereotype of the uniformly positive contribution to democracy by free, unregulated communications has come under increased scrutiny and criticism. (Gunther and Mughan 2000a: 5, 7)

In contrast to an idealized view of the performance of western media, they call attention to trivialization and personalization of politics, the spread of infotainment instead of substantive political issues, a focus on ephemeral matters, unsubstantiated rumours and personal insults (e.g., in US talk radio), and negative advertising that supposedly gives birth and cynicism and disillusionment with politics (2000a: 7–8).

Second, Gunther and Mughan compared post-communist transitions (Russia and Hungary) with post-World War II waves of democratization (Germany, Italy, Japan) as well as post-authoritarian democratization in southern Europe (Spain) and Latin America (Chile). This had some parallels in political science (e.g., Linz and Stepan 1996).

Third, they synthesized micro- and macro-level perspectives. By considering both media impacts on audiences (especially agenda setting, priming, framing, and media effects in election campaigns) as well as its media impact on systemic change, they argued that “what accounts for change in the relationship between media and politics of democracy and democratization is the *interplay* between macro- and micro-level developments” (2000a: 15,

italics in original). Using a political communication perspective, they focused mostly on media as an independent variable, asking how the media impacted democratization, “government-initiated liberalization of political communications helped to undermine support for authoritarian or post-totalitarian regimes, as well as the contribution of the media to the transition to, and consolidation of, political democracy” (2000a: 2).

Finally, they also synthesized major political science concepts (like voter de-alignment) with a media communication perspective and developed a framework of variables that conditioned specific media impacts. These variables included “political culture, electoral law, historical legacy, type of social structure and party system, style of executive leadership” [...] “be they in the area of democratic transitions from authoritarianism or in influencing popular attitudes and behaviours in established democracies” (2000a: 9) .

In the process of the emergence of empirical comparative perspectives on media systems, Hallin and Mancini’s *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (2004) represents a milestone. On the one hand, they offer a systematic comparative study of eighteen West European and North American democracies, by empirically testing hypotheses concerning the relationship of media system and political system variables. These variables include development of media markets, the degree of parallelism between political and media systems, journalism cultures and the nature and degree of state intervention into the media system. They identify variation in media systems and the political variables which have contributed to their formation.

On the other hand, based on those empirical patterns in these variables, Hallin and Mancini identify three main models of media systems. The *Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist* model characterizes countries of relatively late democratization in southern Europe with political systems of polarized democracy where state dirigisme relates to a strong role of the state in media affairs. The parallelism between state and media is high, with strong political instrumentalization of broadcasting, a partisan press and weak journalistic professionalism.

In turn, the *North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist* model usually represents earlier democratization that resulted in consensus democracy with a strong welfare state (e.g., Germany). The media system is characterized by a tradition of state intervention ensuring external pluralism, a balance the role of the state and freedom of media and media markets and strong journalistic professionalization.

Finally, the *North Atlantic or Liberal* model (e.g., the US, UK, Ireland) features majoritarian political systems of early democratization, a liberal role of the state, internal pluralism of the media and market-dominated media systems (except strong public service broadcasting in the UK and Ireland).

Although Hallin and Mancini emphasize that their models emerge from empirical evidence from a limited and relatively homogeneous group of countries (2004: 6), they also suggest that their models could be used for developing more comprehensive, comparative perspectives. Given this opportunity, we need to determine if and how these models are useful for understanding media systems in Eastern and Central Europe.

9. Mediterraneanization of post-communist media systems

The title of this book refers to “finding the right place on the map”. It is actually less surprising than it might appear that post-communist countries may experience difficulties with finding where they are on the map. First of all, they all emerged out of World War II with different borders than before. Secondly, after the collapse of the communist system, post-Soviet countries

regained national sovereignty and borders, while other post-communist countries fell apart (to mention only Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia).

Another dimension of this issue is, of course, geopolitical: most post-communist countries sought to shed their “Eastern European” identity and to “return to Europe”. One of the “theories” which have been developed to explain why different post-communist countries have fared differently after 1989 is the “proximity theory”, according to which those with cultural and physical proximity to Western Europe, and greater receptivity to historical waves of western influences resulting from that, have been more successful. The Baltic States have always identified more with Scandinavia than with the Soviet Union and that has been an important factor in their ability to resist the Soviet influence and to find their bearings after 1989 more easily than some of the countries that had been more isolated.

And, then, there has been the question of “media models”. Central and Eastern Europe have provided a venue for “a battle of the models”, where the American and Western European concepts of media system organization fought for dominance (see the article by Hozic in this volume). The “Western European model” finally won – not least because it was supported by the European Union which left candidate countries in no doubt as to what was expected of them in terms of “systemic media policy”. In any case, post-communist countries themselves wanted to build their new media systems by “testing the best of the West” (Kleinwächter 1995), i.e., by putting together a patchwork of ideas and solutions for democratizing the media from various sources. They soon realized, however, that there is no one single Western European model, but a variety of systemic arrangements, not all of them necessarily very democratic or in keeping with what we have described as the idealized, wart-free image that they were supposed to emulate.

Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) book on media systems offer a framework, also in geographical terms, for defining the parameters of this search for models. Policy-makers and researchers in post-communist countries have to answer the question where on this mental map of media systems their countries were (i.e., whether in the liberal system of northern Europe, or the democratic-corporatist system of Central Europe, or finally in the polarized pluralist model of the Mediterranean), and on what model and area of Europe to set their sights in planning the future development of their media system.

This issue is taken up most explicitly by Jakubowicz who uses the Hallin-Mancini framework for conducting a comparative analysis of PSB in post-communist and polarized pluralist media systems and concludes: “Thus, we may have found a place on the map for post-communist media systems. Contrary to what an encyclopaedia may tell you, post-communist countries appear to be located – figuratively at least – around the Mediterranean, and on both its sides, too, as some of them are politically closer to North African regimes than to any Southern European country.” This confirms Slavko Spicalar’s (1994) diagnosis that post-communist countries have been witness to the “Italianization” of their media.

Jakubowicz points out that if countries like Spain, Portugal and Italy have not yet been able to create conditions for truly public-spirited and independent public service media, then it is unrealistic to expect that post-communist countries could have done it in less than twenty years.

10. Multiple post-communisms

Hallin and Mancini emphasize that their three models are crystallized from eighteen countries in Europe and North America that are all democracies. They also call attention to how limited and homogeneous the group of case selection was (2004: 6). This presents a challenge to students of post-communist media systems as the democratic character of many countries in the

post-communist lands is questionable and some countries are clearly not democracies. It also poses limits on the applicability of the Hallin and Mancini typology (including the Mediterranean model).

However, the great variation of post-communist societies calls for the development of typologies in which political as well as media system characteristics are pinpointed on the basis of empirical evidence. Such a typology could also combine normative (if not teleological) and comparative approaches.

In terms of political systems, the World Bank (2002) has developed a typology of four types of post-communist states as they were at the end of the 1990s, based on the extent of political contestability and consequently in strategies of economic reform, if any. "Competitive democracies" have maintained both a high level of political rights to compete in multiparty democratic elections and an extensive range of civil liberties, as well as advanced economic reform.

"Concentrated political regimes" conduct multiparty elections, but have either curtailed full rights to participate in those elections or otherwise constrained civil liberties. They comprise both political systems which have a high degree of political contestability, but with power concentrated (usually) in the executive branch of government, to those where oligarchs and insiders capture the state. Partial economic reforms mostly fail to support effectively functioning markets. These countries exhibit high levels of corruption.

"Non-competitive political regimes" constrain entry of potential opposition parties into the electoral process and sharply restrict political participation through the exercise of civil liberties. They have been most likely to reject key elements of market transition and to maintain greater continuity with the previous command system.

"War-torn political regimes" have engaged in prolonged wars or civil conflicts, generally rooted in ethnic or territorial divisions. Such conflicts have placed severe strains on the capacity of the state, resulting in some of the countries in a prolonged loss of political order and control and serious weaknesses in the provision of basic public goods. War-torn countries have been characterized by weak state capacity and a zigzag pattern of economic reform, creating an environment that is not conducive to entry and investment.

Comparative aspects become especially complex when we take into consideration Russia and other post-Soviet countries where the democratic nature of the state may be questioned and media freedom faces major limitations. Regarding Ukrainian media, Dyczok (2006) suggests that censorship intensified under President Kuchma and this may be seen indicator of the country's democratic backlash before the Orange revolution as recently as 2004. Becker defines contemporary Russian media as a "neo-authoritarian media system" (2004). Simons and Strovsky focus on "censorship" (2006), and several authors point out recent authoritarian tendencies in media control under President Putin (Lipman and McFaul 2003; Ryabov 2004).

As table 1 indicates, there exist dramatic differences between groups of post-communist countries in the level of media freedom that they enjoy. Media freedom is not respected in several post-Soviet states while other groups of countries like the Baltic or Central European states became, according to Freedom House data, comparable to consolidated democracies.

How could one develop a typology for the large post-communist and post-Soviet spaces that include semi-authoritarian, authoritarian, dictatorial as well as democratic states? This task would involve the consideration of different (including non-democratic) roles of the state, based on normative concepts (but not teleological transitology) and empirical variables that may be operationalized and supported by qualitative and quantifiable data.

Freedom of the Press in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union 1989–2006⁸

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006					
	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status	Status				
Albania	NF	NF	NF	PF	PF	53	PF	67	NF	71	NF	PF	56	PF	48	PF	49	PF	51	PF	50	PF	
Armenia	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	PF	52	PF	57	PF	56	PF	PF	57	PF	60	PF	64	NF	64	NF	64	NF	
Azerbaijan	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	NF	70	NF	69	NF	74	NF	73	NF	77	NF	73	NF	71	NF	72	NF	73	NF
Belarus	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	PF	66	NF	67	NF	85	NF	80	NF	82	NF	82	NF	84	NF	86	NF	88	NF
Bosnia & Herzegovina	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	NF	70	NF	72	NF	71	NF	74	NF	56	PF	49	PF	48	PF	45	PF	45	PF
Bulgaria	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF	43	PF	39	PF	44	PF	36	PF	39	F	30	F	35	PF	35	PF	34	PF
Croatia	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	NF	56	PF	56	PF	63	NF	63	NF	50	PF	33	PF	37	PF	37	PF	39	PF
Czech Republic	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	F	21	F	19	F	20	F	20	F	23	F	23	F	22	F	20	F
Czechoslovakia	NF	PF	F	F	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Estonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	F	PF	28	F	25	F	24	F	20	F	20	F	18	F	17	F	17	F	16	F
Georgia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	73	NF	70	NF	68	NF	56	PF	57	PF	54	PF	54	PF	56	PF	57	PF
German Democratic Republic	NF	PF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hungary	NF	PF	F	F	F	30	F	38	PF	34	PF	28	F	30	F	23	F	20	F	21	F	21	F
Kazakhstan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	60	PF	61	NF	62	NF	66	NF	68	NF	73	NF	74	NF	75	NF	75	NF
Kyrgyzstan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	49	PF	52	PF	60	PF	61	NF	61	NF	68	NF	71	NF	71	NF	64	NF
Latvia	N/A	N/A	N/A	F	PF	29	F	29	F	21	F	21	F	24	F	19	F	17	F	17	F	19	F
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	N/A	F	PF	30	F	29	F	25	F	20	F	20	F	18	F	18	F	18	F	18	F
Macedonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	N/A	34	PF	36	PF	44	PF	42	PF	46	PF	50	PF	53	PF	51	PF	49
Poland	NF	PF	F	F	F	30	F	29	F	21	F	25	F	19	F	18	F	19	F	20	F	21	F
Republic of Moldova	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	PF	41	PF	47	PF	62	NF	58	PF	58	PF	59	PF	63	NF	65	NF	65	NF
Romania	NF	NF	NF	PF	F	55	PF	50	PF	49	PF	44	PF	44	PF	38	PF	47	PF	47	PF	44	PF
Russian Federation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	40	PF	55	PF	58	PF	60	PF	60	PF	66	NF	67	NF	68	NF	72	NF
Serbia & Montenegro	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	86	NF	87	NF	77	NF	81	NF	81	NF	40	PF	40	PF	40	PF	40	PF
Slovakia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	47	PF	55	PF	41	PF	30	F	30	F	22	F	21	F	21	F	20	F
Slovenia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	40	PF	37	PF	27	F	27	F	27	F	19	F	19	F	19	F	20	F
Tajikistan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	93	NF	93	NF	96	NF	94	NF	94	NF	80	NF	73	NF	74	NF	76	NF
Turkmenistan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	89	NF	84	NF	84	NF	86	NF	89	NF	92	NF	95	NF	96	NF	96	NF
Ukraine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF	44	PF	42	PF	39	PF	50	PF	60	PF	67	NF	68	NF	59	PF	53	PF
USSR	NF	NF	PF	PF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Uzbekistan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NF	85	NF	79	NF	75	NF	83	NF	84	NF	86	NF	84	NF	85	NF	90	NF
Yugoslavia	NF	NF	PF	PF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* CEE/FSU = Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union

Sükösd (2007) has suggested twelve variables for empirical comparisons of media democratization in East-Central Europe and Eurasia:

- State violence against journalists
- Structural censorship: from general limitations on human rights (freedom of speech, press freedom) to softer measures (penalty taxes, blacklists, t'erniki, monopoly of printing etc.)
- Government control of state/public service media
- Media laws and their implementation (rule of law)
- Independent media structures (national, regional, local) and their audiences
- Freedom of information regulation and implementation
- Access to media by minorities and ethnic minority media
- Nationalist hegemony in the media
- Journalism cultures (partisanship)
- Media ownership (pluralism, problems of western vs local ownership)
- Commercialization of media (tabloidization)
- Internet control/freedom and access/participation

These variables can be operationalized by comparative, open-ended indicators, and allow for the use of both quantitative (cf. Freedom House, Reporters Sans Frontieres etc.) and qualitative data. Based on the variables above, one may break "post-communism" into "multiple post-communisms", i.e., classify groups of political and media systems:

- Dictatorial (e.g., Belarus)
- Authoritarian (etatist: e.g., Russia; paternalistic: e.g., Kazakhstan; depressed: e.g., Moldova, southern Caucasus)⁹
- Democratic (e.g., East-Central Europe, Baltic)

The comparative variables above (potentially with other analytical angles) may also contribute to the comparative analysis of late communist media systems of China and other South-East Asian state socialist countries, as well as Cuba, that are still mostly before post-communist transformation. Such comparative work can also help to see if and how the Central and Eastern European experiences may be relevant for later waves of the exit from communism.

In a sense that would be a comparative exercise that relates to the past of Central and Eastern European societies. However, in light of recent trends of media change one may also attempt to update the list of democratic expectations of the media to make it more relevant in the twenty-first century. In the context of widespread commercialization, the emergence of interactive media, digital convergence and related user segmentation, the democratic expectations of media performance could also include these demands:

- Encourage democratic citizenship and participation in a stimulating and easy to access fashion;
- Provide opportunities for interactivity and feedback;
- Create publics for community-building;
- Representation and self-representation of minorities;
- Multicultural and intercultural communication, reducing negative stereotypes and hatred in society;

- Coverage and analysis of trends related to globalization;
- Offer a space for public information campaigns.

11. Media and nationalism

No matter where they are located on the cognitive map of media systems, the real contours of national borders and substantive national identities within them remain contested subjects in the post-communist world. As mentioned above, three multinational, federal states –Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union – dissolved after the collapse of the communism system and gave birth to many new nation states. More than a dozen post-Soviet countries in Eastern Europe, the Baltic region, the southern Caucasus and Central Asia regained national sovereignty. Czechoslovakia transformed into two separate states. Yugoslavia disintegrated into several countries, and the process still continues, as Montenegro and potentially Kosovo secede from Serbia.

In this context, media and nationalism scholars should join forces to analyze the interaction of the mass media with different types of nationalism, nation-state formation and contemporary nationalist political practice, and consider the impact of media on national and regional identities. Such research could take several approaches.

First, historical approaches to earlier forms and waves of nationalism may offer useful tools to understand the interplay of nationalism and media systems in the development in contemporary post-communist nation states. As new nations are being born in front of our eyes, Anderson's (1991 [1983]) concept of "imagined communities" about the role of media communications in creating national publics (originally, the historical role of the print press in the birth of modern nationalism) could be as timely and relevant as ever. This calls attention to the ubiquitous nature of "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) which is played out by innocent and unrecognized ways by the mass media: weather reports on national media always use maps of *our* nation, sports programmes always put *our* team to the forefront (and eventually cover the national anthem and show the flag), and political coverage also usually offers implicit national frames of reference. All this serves unintentionally national integration which is so high on the agenda in new nation states (and which is also an explicit task for public service media in many systems).

Second, structural and institutional approaches explore media policies that contribute or hinder national integration, democratic patriotism, but also aggressive forms of nationalism. According to concordant analysis of several authors, the decentralized media system played a major role in "the disintegration and ethnic division in former Yugoslavia" (Sofos 1999) as well as "forging war" (Thompson 1999) along ethnic lines (Slapsak et al. 1997). The media of conflict curbed war reporting and representations of gendered ethnic violence (Zarkov 2001), as "killing screens" identified mythical national heroes of the past with present-day warriors by their ability of compressing space and time (Reljić 2001 [1998], 2001). But after "prime time crime" (Kurspahic 2003), how could the media contribute to "forging peace" (Price and Thompson 2002), i.e., how could foreign intervention and domestic policies contribute to post-conflict peacemaking and ensure media freedom and peaceful national integration at the same time? (See the chapter by Hozic about Bosnia and Herzegovina in this book.)

Third, war propaganda is efficient if it is supported by silencing opposition to the war. "War on terrorism", e.g., in Russia, "has provided the authorities with ample excuses to curtail media reporting, such as protecting the work of the security forces in combating terrorist activity, stopping the spread of terrorist propaganda" and others (Simons and Strovsky 2006: 189).

Security concerns are used as legitimating different forms of communications control in several post-communist countries as well as other parts of the world: a “security state” tends to restrict media freedom by nature.

Fourth, regarding media content, media anthropological approaches (Dayan and Katz 1992; Alexander and Jacobs 1998; Marvin and Ingle 1999) could give special attention to nationalist rituals (including flag ceremonies, public commemorations, reburials (Verdery 1999), symbols and myths, their construction and representation as media events by mass media and their use in political communication; gendered images in nationalist media; the media construction of Us, the Other and the Enemy; and the structure and discourses of media propaganda.

Fifth, journalistic practices are important as they produce nationalist vs responsible (diversity oriented, sensitive) media coverage. Difference and diversity are conceptualized here as ‘otherness’, be it ethnicity, religion, race (but also other diversity issues such as age, physical abilities, gender or non-traditional sexual orientation) in different multicultural communities of post-communist societies.¹⁰

Finally, other important questions concern nationalism vs. the creation of transnational identities by media structures. Are ‘cool’ or ‘civic’ forms of nationalism qualitatively different from ‘hot’ nationalism in terms of the role of the media production of ethnic loyalties? Should national identities indeed be perceived as a barrier to European integration? This seems to be the unspoken assumption of EU policy as well as scholarship, but is this assumption justified? How should and could transnational European publics be created in an environment that does not feature any significant pan-European commercial or public service media as we know these institutions from the experience of nation states? How can media contribute to the creation of the culture of Europeanness and European citizenship?

12. Traumas of transformation, globalization, and democratic backlash

Taking a historical perspective, we may suggest that a few more decades may be needed in Central and Eastern Europe for the development of supportive political culture and democratic media institutions, including public service media. At least that is the time span that comparable and still unfolding media change in southern Europe indicates as realistic. This is small comfort, however, as there is a price to pay for disappointed expectations. Society’s patience is limited and the existence of flawed institutions, failing to fulfil the promise that attended their creation, soon turns into a race against time and potentially rage against the regime.

What will come sooner: full observance of the law (e.g., the broadcasting law that introduced, on paper, independent public service broadcasting) as a result of successful consolidation of democracy or public disillusionment and cynicism in a situation when parts of the law constituting a democratic institution may be honoured more in the breach than in the observance?

Such frustration and disillusionment may prove dangerous, as public opinion may not be prepared to wait forever. This may contribute to a more general backlash, as people realize that democracy and societal change are failing to bring the expected benefits. Such a backlash may lead to a change of political course, for example, in the direction of populism, authoritarianism or managed democracy.

Recent general elections in a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe have changed the political situation and brought to power very different coalitions than previous ones. A coalition government of right-wing populist and extreme right-wing parties took over in Poland

in 2005 and sought to impose highly centralized government, dismantle the checks and balances of liberal democracy (e.g., to weaken and control the courts) and engage in media capture (by taking direct control of public media and exerting pressure on private media). In Slovakia, the formation of an unusual government coalition, that includes the Slovak National Party (an extreme right-wing, nationalist and anti-minorities party led by Ján Slota), has been creating concerns internally and internationally since 2006. A series of violent riots by the extreme right rocked the democratic system in 2006 on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution in Hungary. In Russia, under President Putin, in addition to censorship and government media control, state security is used against political opponents and leading journalists, threatening not only democratic pluralism and competition, but also the lives of those in the way of the regime.

Related to this regional backlash, there is evidence in these as well as other countries that new governments and parliaments have succeeded in changing broadcasting laws or have actively pursued negative policies with other means vis-à-vis the media, including particular public service broadcasting organizations.

The question is if the nature of the political process will change significantly and how it is impacting on the situation of the media, their freedom and independence, and their role in democracy in the longer run.

The answer will depend in each country on the political evolution since the fall of the communist system; the level of consolidation of democracy; the nature of political actors, the political process unfolding in the past few years; the background and the factors leading to any significant change of political orientation and culture; and, consequently, to changes in official media policy. Any such changes, whether of a formal nature (changes of legislation etc.) or of an informal one, should be analysed and assessed in terms of their impact on the democratic performance of the media. Where appropriate, this analysis should be conducted against the background of the general process of consolidation of democracy, noting any positive or negative impact on this process. In the case of EU member states, the interrelationship between the political process and membership should also be considered.

How deep and relevant this backlash remains to be seen. There are many signs of tension and exhaustion (and also of maturation, progress and hope) as a result multiple shocks or traumas that post-communist societies suffered during the transformation:

The first was the anticlimax of the early post-1989 years when it was discovered that the removal of the Communist system not only did not solve all problems, but in fact created a host of new ones; when the leaders of the opposition were found to be squabbling politicians, no necessarily averse to corruption and arrogance.... The second came when the ideas and ideals that had kept the opposition alive and serve as an inspiration to rise up against the Communist system had to be discarded overnight as impractical and useless. The third was when the true nature of the capitalist system became apparent. The fourth was when European unification turned into a tedious process, often seen as humiliating, instead of the joyful embrace of long-lost brothers. And the fifth came when the realization sank in that "Westernization" and "Westification" are the best that can be hoped for and that Western Europe appears to think that Central and Eastern Europe has nothing of value to contribute except its markets. (Jakubowicz 2007: 370)

Several new items must be added to this list of traumas, such as the realities of twenty-first-century capitalism, globalization and its discontents: rocketing social inequalities, job insecurity, and

the threat of unemployment in daily capitalist competition (and under politically motivated public administrations), deep reform of security systems (health, pension), and privatization of risk in societies where basic material security and full employment had been the norm for decades. Another set of traumas comes with decreasing sovereignty and increasing weakness of national governments in the global competition for transnational investments, and globalization of everyday culture, in a region where nationalism remained a source of pride, inspiration and resistance during decades of illegitimate rule or foreign occupation. What also has to be considered are ambiguities with consumer society as a hegemonistic ideal that puts pressures on every family and individual, but that also contributes to visible environmental degradation and new risks to present and future generations.

All this comes on top of earlier traumas such as the Holocaust that have not yet been worked through (the subject of the Holocaust was basically under taboo during the decades of communism, and debates like the German *historikerstreit* hardly begun in Eastern and Central Europe). Further, constituencies in these societies are deeply divided over issues like moral responsibility for the crimes under communism, and in the case of post-war societies, moral responsibility for the war and war-related genocide and the political solutions.

The list also includes tensions around fundamental issues of the political community and national identity, such as the republican vs monarchic (or, in Russia, even communist) foundations of the state, or state-church relations. As a result, fundamental constitutional questions (and related issues like symbols of the nation, the flag and the anthem) remain highly contested and unresolved in many countries, resulting in socio-political stress. Finally, add ethnic tensions and related issues of territorial claims and citizenship between numerous ethnic minorities and majorities.

Will these traumas and challenges overwhelm our societies' collective ability to cope and integrate tensions related to these experiences (cf. Alexander 2004)? Will the sense of being overwhelmed give birth to anomie, resentment, hostility and frustration, and reason to blame others for one's frustration?¹¹ Will Eastern and Central European societies continue to create enemies, to protect themselves from culpability? Will jealousy, inferiority complex and the rejection of the democratic system emerge from emotional stress, triggered by collective shocks? Or will disenchantment lead to a collective learning process, maturity, self-awareness, self-assurance and confident action?

* * *

No human being, no medium and no media system is an island unto itself, but embedded in social and ecological networks, "the web life" (Capra 1997). Accordingly, in media research a socio-centric approach to the media is by far preferable to a media-centric approach. In this introduction we have tried to adopt precisely such a socio-centric approach to aid our understanding of why media system evolution and democratization in post-communist countries is the complex, multidimensional and prolonged process it is. Contributors to this book explain this further and in more detail.

Notes

1. In this essay, we use the term interchangeably with "post-communist countries" (except in section 10 where we also present data re post-Soviet states in Southern Caucasus and Central Asia).

2. According to Offe (1999), “triple transformation” comprises (i) the issues of nationality and territoriality involved in the delineation of borders and the national or ethnic composition of particular countries; (ii) constitutional issues involved in determining the system of government; (iii) and issues of the economic order, property and management of the process of production and distribution. Ekiert (1999), too, speaks of “triple transition”, but in the sense of the simultaneous transformation of political, economic and social structures.
3. Kuzio (2002) says that unlike other Central and Eastern European countries, which are undergoing “post-authoritarian transformation”, former Soviet countries are in the process of “post-colonial transformation”, comprising the quadruple processes of democratization, marketization as well as state- and nation-building.
4. It draws, in part, on Jakubowicz, 2007.
5. www.endeav.org/evolut/age/sntut/sntut.htm. Last accessed on 18 Sept. 2007.
6. *Samizdat* (самиздат, the Russian term for “self-published”) was the clandestine copying and distribution of government-suppressed literature and other media in Soviet-bloc countries. In the history of the Polish underground press, the term used in the 1980s was *drugi obiegi* or “second circulation” of publications, the “first circulation” referring to legal (censored) publications. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samizdat> Last accessed 18 Sept. 2007.) In the first period of *samizdat*, a few handwritten copies were made, and those who got a copy were requested to make more copies. With more advanced copying and printing technology, however, *samizdat* reached larger audiences. In the 1980s in Poland, the independent Solidarity trade union reached millions of readers directly with independent newspapers. Foreign radio stations (especially Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty) used *samizdat* as a news source and rebroadcast their content, reaching large audiences in all countries behind the Iron Curtain.
7. This Cold War dichotomy represents structural sameness with the superpower rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union and the ideological construct of “Free World vs Evil Empire”.
8. Source: Freedom of the Press Historical Data, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=274>. From 1980 to 1993, Freedom House rated countries by category, e.g., “Free”, “Partly Free”, or “Not Free”, but did not provide numerical scores. From 1994 onwards, data regarding both category designations (F, PF, NF) and the more nuanced numerical scores are available. In the numerical scores, smaller values indicate higher observance of freedom of press.
9. Vartanova (2007) differentiates Eurasian etatist (Russia), paternalistic (Central Asia), depressive (Moldova, trans-Caucasian countries) media systems without using generic terms like authoritarianism.
10. Cf. Media Diversity Institute (MDI) “Overview and summary of the project Training the media, empowering minorities: a project for improved media coverage of ethnic and minority issues in the South Caucasus” 2005. <http://www.media-diversity.org/about%20MDI.htm> (last accessed 12 September 2007). The MDI teaches best practices of media coverage of diversity by analyzing examples of irresponsible reporting as well as successful cross-cultural and intercultural conflict resolution and collaboration. Their “Reporting Diversity” programme offers responsible journalism methods and curricula to journalism schools. They also explore the main obstacles, focusing on stereotypes and prejudices in media discourses. Presentations and demonstrations are accompanied by role-playing and developing story ideas. See also the Society of Professional Journalists’. Guidelines for Countering Racial, Ethnic and Religious Profiling, 2005. <http://www.spj.org/divguidelines.asp>. (Last accessed 12 September 2007.)
11. Cf. “Psychological trauma”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_trauma.

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