Media – Migration – Politics: Discursive Strategies in the Current Czech and Slovak Context

SPÁLOVÁ, L. et al.: Media – Migration – Politics: Discursive Strategies in the Current Czech and Slovak Context. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2022. 245 p. ISBN 978-3-631-86275-9.

Michaela Fikejzová

The reviewed publication takes on the task of mapping out the media discourse surrounding the issue of migration in the current Czech and Slovak context (especially the years 2015 – 2020). The binational collective of ten authors, including Jan Beneš, Ladislav Cabada, Petr Just, Jakub Charvát, Martin Charvát, Denisa Charvátová, Peter Mikuláš, Eva Niklesová, Přemysl Rosůlek and Lucia Spálová, offer, as is noted in the introduction, *"a transdisciplinary approach in the fields of political science, psychology, sociology and media studies"*, (p. 12) and the publication is the first of its kind, both regarding its transdisciplinarity and the focus on purely Czechia and Slovakia. The monograph is divided into nine chapters, each one taking on a different methodology and lenses to discuss the topic in its whole complexity.

The first chapter deals with the issue of (re)presentation of the migration crisis in both 'traditional' and digital media. Firstly, it gives an overview of the Czech and Slovak media landscape, especially its transition from state-controlled media to private ownership and the commercialisation of the media culture. Then it moves on to analysing the digital media market and social media as an information source. This overview lays groundwork for the analysis of migration as a topic of political communication. The authors point out especially the discrepancy between the actual positive changes, e.g., the international pacts regarding limits of migration, and the strengthening negative attitudes toward refugees among Czechs and Slovaks. The last section of the first chapter deals with migration as a topic in the Slovak and Czech media context and the authors present the conclusion of their primary quantitative research monitoring, both in digital and 'traditional' media, between the years 2015 – 2020. Unlike the other eight chapters, it is missing a conclusion, which is unfortunate as it would give a space for the authors to connect the first two parts of the chapter with the primary research more tightly.

The second chapter analyses the narration about the so-called migration wave, which is the authors' way of emphasising that the term "migration wave" itself is a *"highly connotative and mythological expression"* (p. 38). The authors conduct a discourse analysis, where they stress several nod points of the media discourse surrounding the topic of migration, e.g., the notion of a "wave" signifying something uncontrollable, something we must fight against, the importance of the dichotomy of 'us versus them' as the basis of the whole narrative, both pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant. From these, according to the authors, arise two types of fantasy – fantasy of sovereignty, characterised by *"the right to defend home and our tradition"*, and the fantasy of bestiality, characterised by regarding refugees/migrants as animals or beasts, bringing unwarranted violence to 'our home'. The authors give examples of these fantasies both from more traditional media, such as the Czech Television, and from social media, such as anti-immigration *Facebook* groups.

The third chapter deals with the issue of anti-modern and/or anti-liberal rhetoric and the historical sources of hate speech regarding the migration crisis. The authors stress the importance of nativism in contemporary politics, especially among populist and far right actors. The chapter firstly lays a theoretical groundwork, including the operationalisation of "nativism" as a concept, a brief history of anti-modern and anti-liberal legacies in (East) Central Europe. Then the authors present an analysis of the Czech nativist discourse and the migration issue, where they identify specific breaking points strengthening the nativist discourse, such as the rise of Tomio

Okamura and his Dawn of Direct Democracy, followed by the creation of the political party SPD, the role of President Zeman as *"a capable populist"* (p. 59) and Prime Minister Babiš's cooperation with SPD, bringing him *"closer to the nativist positions"* (p. 61). What is also stressed is the fact that President Zeman, Okamura, along with Foldyna and former President Klaus support the pan-Slavic stance. The authors do not omit the importance of *"promotion of and cooperation with (pro-)Russian media, such as Parlamentní listy, Aeronet or Sputnik"* (p. 61).

The topic of the fourth chapter is "Czechness and Othering Others: From Anti-Germanism to the Advent of Anti-Islamism" and it takes on the task to map out *"the national exclusivist character of the Czech national identity"* (p. 65). The authors track the history of othering since the Hussite movement, through the cultural and linguistic nationalism during the national awakening, where anti-Germanism was the most prominent 'othering' practice, moving onto anti-Germanism in the times of President Masaryk and Nazi occupation, along with the Jewish 'question' and the rise of anti-Semitism. The chapter also analyses the development of 'othering' the Roma population and the Slovakian 'question'. The chapter does not omit the Sudeten Germans and the Vietnamese, who became the new victims of 'othering'. Along with the Vietnamese came the *"advent of islamophobia"*, significantly strengthened by the media discourse surrounding *"Islamic terrorism"*, which gave rise to the ultranationalist scene (p. 79-83).

The fifth chapter deals with the issue of nationalism and xenophobia in the sphere of political communication of the far right in Czechia and Slovakia. The authors focus on the communication of two political parties, Czech SPD and Slovak ĽSNS, with the goal of finding out what is the main ideology of those parties and to which current or direction of the far right do they belong (p. 88). Through rigorous analysis of the founding documents, structure, attitudes towards the EU, relationship to ethnic and social minorities and to other political groups and order, the authors conclude that both parties *"show a strong representation of views promoting national and patriotic interests"* (p. 106), where SPD is significantly nativistic and ĽSNS neo-fascist.

The sixth chapter is tightly connected with the previous chapter, as it as a case study of ĽSNS and how its position was influenced by the ruling of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic. The authors firstly analyse a previous case of the Supreme Court's decision to dissolve the party's indirect predecessor – SP-NS. Then they give an overview of ĽSNS's political history up until the Prosecutor General's proposal of dissolution of ĽSNS and consequently the Supreme Court ruling. Lastly, the authors map out the impact the ruling had on ĽSNS within the Slovak political system and include examples of the cooperation of other parties with ĽSNS.

The seventh chapter contains an analysis of SPD's rhetoric regarding migration during the run-up to the European election. The authors focus on the migration discourse on social media during the hot phase of the campaign, and the televised debates of Czech nationwide television stations. In their analysis, they focus on so-called deceptive arguments and offer the reader a thorough analysis of several debates, showing the prevalence of argumentation fallacies in the rhetoric of SPD members. The authors also track the overall intimidation rhetoric, which is frequent in SPD's *Facebook* posts both in text and in used imagery.

The eighth chapter takes on the quest of a qualitative approach to the media discourse surrounding migration. Through psychosemantic methods, the authors conduct a discourse analysis, sentiment analysis and create semantic maps. The conclusion of the chapter is that negative sentiment towards migration is predominant and that anti-migrant attitudes are extensive in the given discourse.

The last, ninth chapter introduces the results of analysing social advertising. Firstly, social marketing theory is clearly explained, along with an account of migration as a topic in critical artistic reflection. Then the chapter continues with a case study, where social marketing theory and critical artistic reflection are combined.

The reviewed publication offers a highly complex analysis of migration media discourse in the Czech and Slovak context, supported by relevant theoretical background. Each chapter provides different lenses for studying such a topic, making the monograph a useful kaleidoscope of several approaches. It is suitable and beneficial for academics and students, may it be sociologists, media and communication scholars or political scientists, as well as for the general public.

Mgr. Michaela Fikejzová, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Pátkova 2137/5, 182 00 Prague 8, Czech Republic

Selected Problems of Studying Media Culture I.: Hypermodern Society

RADOŠINSKÁ, J.: Okruhy problémov v štúdiu mediálnej kultúry I. Hypermoderná spoločnosť. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2021. 208 p. ISBN 978-80-572-0189-2.

Miroslav Kapec

Nowadays, there are only a few groups of people in our society that do not have regular and intensive contact with media or their outputs in any form. The fact that the media themselves and their effects are an important part of our daily lives cannot be disputed. At the same time, media culture influences and shapes our experience, opinions and attitudes to specific events, things and phenomena in various ways. Due to this, J. Radošinská's textbook, *Okruhy problémov v štúdiu mediálnej kultúry I. Hypermoderná spoločnosť* (in English: *Selected Problems of Studying Media Culture I.: Hypermodern Society*) is a desirable and welcome text (not only) in the academic environment.

This publication is a result of the author's many years of scholarly interest in the addressed field of academic studies and research. We will briefly mention *Aktuálne trendy v mediálnej kultúre* (in English: *Current Trends in Media Culture*) by J. Radošinská and J. Višňovský, *Digital Role-Playing Games as Artefacts of Media Culture or Mediálna zábava v 21. storočí* (in English: *Media Entertainment in the 21ˢᵗ Century*) written by the author. It is clear from this that the author systematically addresses this issue and the publication of a textbook focusing on media culture is therefore an expected and positive step. Especially given the fact that media culture is a subject of university students' education and part of their necessary overview. Understanding media culture and its historical and current meanings is a fundamental and crucial aspect of understanding contemporary society.

The textbook itself consists of four main parts, in which the author gradually explains and clarifies the definitions or features of media culture. At the same time, she looks at media culture through a late modernity perspective or explains it in the context of a hypermodern society. The textbook also includes a resumé in English. In the introduction the author states that this text has the ambition to name and explain the basic problems related to the true nature of media culture. We believe that the author's goal was fully achieved. At the same time, the textbook considers the needs and level of understanding of university students. The language used in the textbook corresponds with the level of knowledge that is expected from the target reader. The informative value of the reviewed textbook is also increased by some information being presented through graphs or tables. Summaries consisting of brief points, included at the end of each chapter, point out most important findings that should be emphasised, as the author surely intended. Precisely constructed points also capture the essence of each chapter. In addition to summaries, questions are also included at the end of each chapter. These questions encourage students to think once more about the received information, which amplifies memorability and understanding. The reviewed textbook provokes students to think about individual aspects of media culture and at the same time leads them to a deeper understanding of the given issue. The author also gives tasks and proposes activities to readers, which leads them to a critical reflection on media culture and its specific elements. Recommended literature is a natural part of all chapters. As the author mentions, most similar texts, especially in the Slovak media environment, have the character of monographs, which are intended for social scientists in the field of cultural studies. Consequently, in this textbook the author tries to explain media culture using specific examples. Current problems related to media culture are respectably explained using these examples. For instance, in the textbook, the author explains the term "neotribalism", which is especially typical in recent years. To explain this phenomenon, the author uses illustrative examples supported by visual materials. As a result, the theoretical definition takes a clearer and more comprehensible form for students.

In the words of the author, this textbook is by its nature and scope dedicated to university students of Master's degrees, especially targeted at university studies in the fields of media and communication studies and cultural studies. She also adds that the text could be just as useful for university educators interested in culture, society and media. As it is a university textbook, it primarily relates to academic subjects taught at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, within the study programmes mass media communication, digital games theory and applied media studies. After reading and understanding the textbook, students should be able to lead a critical discussion about the cultural aspects of contemporary media communication. The author also adds that after studying the textbook, students will improve their understanding of their own cultural needs, which are drawn from contact with the media. This textbook also has the potential to attract the average reader, whom it will address with practical examples and an understandable explanation of the issue in the summaries at the end of each chapter. The author is aware and openly admits that the textbook presents only a part of her reflections on current media culture. After all, its aim is not to exhaust all relevant knowledge, but to systematise scientific views on the features of media culture emerging in a hypermodern society. At the same time, she adds that it is necessary to continue creating teaching texts, mostly in textbook forms. At the end of this review, we would like to agree with the author that scientific knowledge on media culture is not easily explained because it cannot be completely separated from one's own media preferences. Nevertheless, we perceive this textbook as a study aid that was missing from the university study environment and has great potential to help students understand the given issue.

Mgr. Miroslav Kapec, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic

A New College Textbook on Media Has Just Seen the Light of Day

PITOŇÁKOVÁ, S.: Úvod do štúdia mediálnych produktov. Žilina : Žilina University, 2021. 154 p. ISBN 978-80-554-1834-6.

Karol Orban

The textbook *Introduction to Studying Media Products* (published in Slovak as *Úvod do štúdia mediálnych produktov*) outlines the discussed issues within a broad spectrum of perspectives, relying on the knowledge of prominent Slovak media experts (Brečka, Lehoczká, Magál, Vrabec, Labík) and foreign media scholars (Flusser, McQuail, Köpplová, Trampota and others), specifically explaining their approaches and definitions. In addition, the author also presents the results of research on media literacy conducted by various companies (Eye, ODYZEO, Picodi.com – distribution of domestic and foreign books, etc.) and by individuals (Bachelor's thesis by Štadániová from 2014 entitled *Cultural Heritage in the Media*, which includes interesting findings on the extent of cultural heritage presentation in the main news programmes of RTVS, TV JOJ and TV Markíza).

In the introduction, the author defines the mission of the publication: *"The content of the undergraduate textbook is adapted to the curriculum and content of the Media Production course and represents a collection and interpretation of knowledge on the basic aspects of the key topics. Concepts, theories and processes relating to the world of media will be introduced in turn, often with a brief historical excursus or, conversely, with links to current events."*[1]

---

1   PITOŇÁKOVÁ, S.: *Úvod do štúdia mediálnych produktov.* Žilina : Žilina University, 2021, p. 7.

The structure of the publication is conceived in a relatively clear and logical way; the individual topics are logically connected to each other (the historical context of the emergence of the media, introduction of the types of individual communication models, functions of the media, the activities of the Media Literacy Centre IMEC FMK in Trnava). The author finds here mutual interdisciplinary contexts when confronted with marketing, which she has been dealing with for a long time; in 2014, she published a book entitled *Marketing Communication of Universities*. This scholarly monograph was written in response to the lack of comprehensive titles mapping the issues of university promotion and public relations. In general, the book offers a comprehensive overview of the complex of elements and tools necessary for creating a positive image of an educational institution.[2]

We encounter excessive presentation of marketing activities in the field of news, where we observe elements of a persuasive nature (e.g., political advertising, propaganda, ideological manipulation). The stated fact about the ideologization of the media is clearly outlined and elaborated in the publication. The publication thus raises topical issues related to current media trends – panvisualisation (print media), hybridisation (journalistic genres), mythologisation (news media), infotainment (news resulting from a fusion of informational and entertainment value), gatekeeping (the pressure to disclose information in the media).

The above trends are the result of the globalisation process significantly affecting the media industry; in this context we observe a significant retreat from 'traditional' topics related to the cultural heritage of the nation (within television news), the disappearance of several journalistic genres (print – newsreel, film – melodrama) and their marginalisation (in our latitudes it is an obituary; in the USA it is a preferred genre placed on the front page), the application of persuasive tactics in the news environment using the principle of mythology – the victim in connection with a catastrophe, an ambush, a natural disaster; a scapegoat (an object of moral denunciation), a hero (a successful individual with exceptional abilities). The author mostly describes and sometimes confronts these individual problems with media practices. She also mentions the characteristic features of episodic television production which is created with an emphasis on gender differences between men and women in terms of their professional status. She mentions the tabloidisation of the media only briefly, and does not discuss it further; it would be worth defining it at least (see Lincényi and Kohuťár's work from 2009 or Veverková's publication, 2014) and give examples from practice. The former publication is specific thanks to looking at the given issue from different perspectives: *"The publication analyses a cross-section of the tabloid media in Slovakia, focusing mainly on the print media, which are the most watched component of information channels regarding social, cultural and political events in the life of society."*[3] The latter publication is almost in a similar vein: *"The main aim of our publication was to supplement the existing information with knowledge about the specific features of the Slovak tabloid print media and their penetration into the communications of the non-tabloid press published in Slovakia."*[4]

Key attention in the publication is paid to the principles of interpreting media products, namely to content analysis and semiotic-structural analysis, and also to the typical legislative parameters (the Law on Periodical Press and Agency News, the Audiovisual Law) to be observed in relation to media products. In the framework of semiotics, it conveys general information related to the basic definition of the concept and the widely accepted taxonomy of signs (icons, indexes, symbols), looking at the issue through the prism of representatives of Catholic Scholastic philosophy (Thomas Aquinas) and pragmatism (Charles Sanders Peirce). The textbook also introduces the semiotic triangle proposed by the linguists Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards. An interesting moment in the publication is the author's inherent statement related to digitalisation of the media, which has caused the rise of multiple communication channels and the subsequent disappearance of mass audiences.

2   PITOŇÁKOVÁ, S.: *Marketingová komunikácia vysokých škôl.* Žilina : Žilina University, 2014, p. 5-6.
3   LINCÉNYI, M., KOHUŤÁR, M.: *Fenomén bulvár na Slovensku.* Bratislava : IRIS, 2009, p. 7.
4   VEVERKOVÁ, V.: *Bulvár a bulvarizácia dennej tlače.* Ljubljana : KUD Apokalipsa and CERI-SK Ljubljana, 2014, p. 8.

Nowadays, social media content is slowly gaining more followership because there is a demand for the freshest information which is available faster compared to the 'traditional' processing of news. This is a proof that digital media are gaining importance; after all, the promotion of so-called life in a media bubble, popular, by the way, within the value frameworks of the younger generations (Generations Y, Z), is embodied by social media and semantic media (intelligent mobile phones, tablets). The content of the publication is very sophisticated; the author is able to precisely formulate the theoretical background of the problem, to look for solutions, to work with facts properly and to argue logically, based on meaningful statements.

The author's the writing style is characterised by high professionalism, but there are some minor stylistic shortcomings (typos, verbosity, substandard expressions). Nevertheless, the publication is stimulating; it raises a number of questions related to the overall direction of the development of mass media in Slovakia and therefore I highly recommend it to students of journalism, marketing communications and cultural studies.

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. PaedDr. Karol Orban, PhD., Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Academy of Arts, Jána Kollára 22, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic
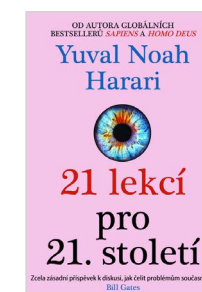
21 Lessons for the 21st Century

Dušan Pavlů

Prognostic vision? Prediction of evolution? View of the future? Speculation about other days of our life and that of the entire humankind? We could ask these questions feeling a little uneasy, had someone informed us about the contents of the book entitled *21 lekcí pro 21. století* (originally published as *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*) written by Yuval Noah Harari.

However, after studying it we can clearly see that the author tries very seriously to answer several fundamental questions that everyone, who thinks about their life, situation, and the way our own society, continent and the world is going, has to ask – where are we heading? His two previously published bestsellers made him an international superstar – in *Sapiens,* he explored our past, in *Homo Deus,* he looked to our future, and now Harari wants to zoom in on the here and now. The style of his writing is typical of giving a synthesised, cross-sectional, and interdisciplinary picture of the topic dealt with, interlinking the findings from many social sciences and humanities to drawing an overall, plastic, and with arguments backed up ambiguous picture of the future world including possible ways to make it happen. The editors summarised the mission of the book into three theses:

·   We created myths to unite our species.
·   We tamed nature to give us power.
·   We are now redesigning life to fulfil our wildest dreams.

But do we really know ourselves anymore? Or will our inventions make us irrelevant? Two decades of the 21st century have passed, and every day we can see the disturbing questions raised by Harari becoming more and more urgent and in need of a prompt response. Climate change, war conflicts, lack of food, problems with gaining access to drinking water sources, tornados, floods, increased carbon footprint, limited resources

of raw materials and energy, circular economy, COVID-19 pandemic, changes in the quality and quantity of information about the world around us after the rise of the Internet – all of that are pressing issues, complex contemporary challenges the humankind tries to resolve – to greater or lesser success.

It is my belief that anyone can contribute to the positive development of our world, of all problems raised by Harari in his new book, presenting them with a pressing urgency to the public and honestly trying to find ways to their solution. The 21 chapters centre on five key features: The Technological Challenge, The Political Challenge, Despair and Hope, Truth, and Resilience. Each part has subsections which could be independent topics in their own right. The chapters analyse our world in detail and the crucial points of its development and prognose a possible variant of the future.

In the first section the author examines whether 'the end of history' has already happened, and asks about the future labour market and possible changes in the structure of professions – in his opinion, we should be prepared for a world dominated by artificial intelligence and robots automatising some mechanical processes: *"Technological revolution might soon push billions of humans out of the job market and create a massive new useless class, leading to social and political upheavals that no existing political ideology knows how to handle."* He warns against personal decision-making being replaced by algorithms, which, in his opinion, would undermine both freedom and equality, ruin and destroy faith in liberalism, and might create digital dictatorship. One of his lessons is that because of it, when you grow up, you might not have a job. He pays attention to the possible structure of new professions which, however, will not be needed to the volume to provide a job to all who have lost it; and discusses the possibility of universal basic income provided to those who have not found a job. He analyses the rise of digitalisation of the human world, warns against abuse or misuse of private data in the management of human society, and states that those who own the data own the future.

Addressing The Political Challenge, Harari looks at the problem of politics from many angles. He says that average human rarely knows more than 150 people in their life – and gets valuable social contacts. He finds the fact that the character of interpersonal relationships is changing in a very disturbing manner – social capital is being lost, people gather on social media rather than in clubs, interest groups and friends' groups. Some people are then more impressionable, easy to succumb to information pressure, fake news, mass psychosis, manipulation and nationalism. In this relation he analyses the role of *Facebook* in detail. He points out that there is just one civilisation in the world, and therefore concentrates on the integration efforts of the type of the European Union and their role in the current trends in coordination of international politics, solution to urgent and pressing issues of the humankind, underlining the fact that global problems need global answers. He shares interesting thoughts about religion – its origin, development, current role in society, and in creating identity.

The third part (Despair and Hope) treats global issues in five essays: Terrorism, War, Humility, God, Secularism, and ultimately states this: *"Though the challenges are unprecedented, and though the disagreements are intense, humankind can rise to the occasion if we keep our fears under control and be a bit humbler about our views."* He perceives the 9/11 attacks as the turning point in the perception of terrorism and the moment of mobilisation of the world public opinion and actual steps of many governments to restoring the balance of power. He assesses the role of wars in the development of the world and deals with the function of ethics and religion in relation to wars. He also pays attention to secularism in confrontation with religion in the fight for power.

The term of "Truth" in the current digitalised world is apparently most frequented in the mass media and even more so in the universe of electronic communication. Y. N. Harari asks an important question: *"How to find the truth about the world, and avoid falling victim to propaganda and misinformation?"* He studies the role of rationalities in liberal thinking and concludes that to believe too much in individual rationality is a mistake, as most of our views are shaped by communal groupthink rather than individual rationality. He underlines that the main barrier to knowledge is great power, and who wants truth needs to escape the black hole of power. He cannot avoid questions associated with manipulative communication, with the era of post-truth. He uses examples to show how manipulative political and propagandistic slogans can change the thinking and behaviour of large social groups and

how they might lead to a change in the power balance. *"Once a lie, always the truth,"* says Harari. He examines the ways of *"getting out of the brainwashing machine"* – if you want reliable information, pay good money for it, if some issues seem important to you, make an effort to read the relevant scientific literature, and scientists, for their part, need to be far more engaged with current public debates and bring proven, checked facts.

"How do you live in an age of bewilderment, when the old stories have collapsed and no new story has yet emerged to replace them?" This is the motto of the fifth part of Harari's book, titled Resilience. And resilience is the decisive attribute to succeed in the dynamically changing world, into which a new structure comes, along with new reality, tools, inventions, technologies, media, etc. Y. N. Harari understands the world as the space where change is the only constant, and where education will play the decisive role. Characterising the current youngest generation, he asks a crucial question: *"What to teach children that will help him or her survive and flourish in the future world? What kind of skills will he or she need in order to get a job, understand what is happening around them, and navigate the maze of life?"* He defines the key prerequisites for a successful life: people need the ability to make sense of information, to tell the difference between what is important and what is unimportant, and above all to combine many bits of information into a broad picture of the world. He prefers four Cs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity – i.e., the study subjects present in the curriculum for study programmes in colleges and universities of communication and shows their impact on us at present. He points out the historical stories that created human culture and shows how they influence us even now. Y. N. Harari ends his book in a largely non-traditional way – thinking about the role of meditation in the current pace of life and its significance for the individual's rationality and emotionality.

The reviewed publication is more than a rich offer of stimuli and motives for thought for each of us about the world around and ourselves. It would be a shame not to drink deeply from this well of knowledge.

Prof. PhDr. Dušan Pavlů, CSc., Professor Emeritus specialising in media studies, history of advertising and marketing communications, 100 00 Praha, Czech Republic
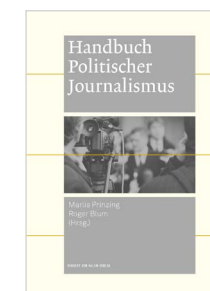
Handbook of Political Journalism

Magdaléna Ungerová

Media play an important role in our present-day life and society, while typically covering a range of areas, including politics, economy, domestic and foreign news, technology and science, culture, society, the arts, sports, etc. It is absolutely the field of politics that media (and their consumers) are especially interested in and there are numerous reasons for this: political parties come with their visions and policies on how to run the given country, politicians propose and pass new legislation, which inevitably affects large groups of people, political authorities use specific language to communicate with their potential voters, and political representatives also try to make use of media to spread their ideas and views. To the traditional political representatives (ministers of governments, members of parliament, political parties), we also have to add regional politicians, interest groups, or various civic organisations. And they all want to have their say in the media. On the other side, there are journalists who work hard not only to cover the vast field of politics, but also to expose related scandals, affairs and possible misconduct on the parts of the governments and politicians, while remaining

impersonal. The editors of this extensive publication, Marlis Prinzing and Roger Blum, state the following in the introduction: *"Political journalism has its power and at the same time it is inevitable for a democracy. It puts citizens in the position to take into serious account their political rights and obligations. And in authoritarian and totalitarian systems it casts light on unacceptable circumstances. Thus, political journalism is not dead, quite the opposite."*[1]

The notion of "political journalism" is wide and is not easy to put simply. However, one of the tasks of this handbook was to describe the most significant related issues, involving its roots, functions, concepts, methods, sources, forms, circumstances, places, problems and challenges primarily in German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Luxembourg). Nevertheless, attention is also paid to their neighbouring countries and three other large and important states: the UK, the USA and Russia, which makes it broader than only the German-speaking territories. Political journalism is a part of general journalism, but also a component of political communication. Therefore, not only media, their structure, functions, and current changes and issues (news values, gate-keeping, logic of media, agenda- and frame-setting, etc.) stand in the foreground of attention, but also political science, political communication and current politics with all its forms and manifestations (elections, media conferences, media campaigns, etc.) and their interaction with media, including online media. Needless to say, an extensive publication needs a numerous group of 125 authors, including scientists and journalists not only from the German-speaking countries, but also from other European states and even the USA.

The reviewed publication includes 21 chapters focused on the following areas – Part I: Theories of Political Journalism, Part II: History of Political Journalism, Part III: Functions of Political Journalism, Part IV: Fields of Political Journalism, Part V: Agenda of Political Journalism, Part VI: Places of Political Journalism, Part VII: Players of Political Journalism, Part VIII: Relations of Political Journalism, Part IX: Marks of Political Journalism, Part X: Channels of Political Journalism, Part XI: Concepts of Political Journalism, Part XII: Forms of Political Journalism, Part XIII: Ethics, Rights and Obligations of Political Journalism. Part XIV, Sources of Political Journalism, Part XV: Methods of Political Journalism, Part XVI: Problems of Political Journalism, Part XVII: Reception and Effects of Political Journalism, Part XVIII: Education and Training in Political Journalism, Part XIX: Political Journalism in Selected Countries, Part XX: Political Journalism in the 21st Century, Part XXI: Political Journalism in Trial Station. Each chapter is followed by a list of relevant international sources. Moreover, the publication includes an index with the most important terms arranged in alphabetical order and pages, where more information on each entry is to be found.

The handbook can serve academics and researchers, students of political science, media and communication studies, journalism, and sociology well. However, also media professionals, especially journalists, and others who are keen on the issue of political journalism can find much inspirational information. Notions, concepts and issues elaborated in individual chapters and sub-chapters may function as the basis not only for the theoretical, but also empirical follow-up research.

I particularly appreciate the extent of the book, the authors of which were trying to elaborate in detail all aspects of the subject matter. The findings published in this handbook may also serve as the foundation for an institutional debate on the current position of and challenges for political journalism, which is still so crucial for our democracy. The topicality of the book is not reflected only in the discussed topics, but also in the language itself; it is written in German and in many instances the contributors use modern and for many still controversial gender-inclusive language.

Mgr. Magdaléna Ungerová, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic

1   PRINZING, M., BLUM, R.: Introduction. In PRINZING M., BLUM, R. (eds.): *Handbuch Politischer Journalismus*. Köln : Herbert von Halem Vertrag, 2021, p. 17.

Recognition as an Issue of Justice and Its Media Reflection

Ján Višňovský

The world we live in is full of paradoxes. Evidence of this bipolarity is to be found not only in the theoretical and often visionary, even futuristically looking works of social scientists, but is also present whenever the current state of society and its future are discussed, i.e., from the law, through the problem of poverty to global climate change. In this context, I wish to provide a few topical examples: while the Western world, which professes the Christian tradition, emphasises the need for dialogue and diplomacy, there are fierce battles taking place beyond its borders; while freedom of expression and the free dissemination of ideas have become commonplace in a civilised democratic world, within the same 'world' we are facing an unprecedented pandemic of hoaxes and disinformation spread over the Internet; while some countries are actively involved in the fight against global climate change, others are moving away from or criticising this platform, or conversely, benefitting from it. And these are just a few instances of global paradoxes that society perceives relatively intensely. It is acknowledged that transnational intercultural dialogue still has its stronger and weaker sides. We have no doubt about the importance and influence of globally operating media and their power to shape the flow of information and guide public opinion. However, it is questionable to what extent they take notice of these paradoxes, how they report them, and whether the media themselves are not one of the tools promoting imbalances and discontinuities in the society.

With the monograph *Recognition as an Issue of Justice and Its Media Reflection*, which was published in Slovak as *Uznanie ako problém spravodlivosti a jeho mediálna reflexia* by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava in 2021, its author Martin Solík re-engaged in a discussion about the idea of recognition, which has become an important phenomenon in (hyper)modern society. The concept of "recognition" and the struggle for it entered the discourse of philosophy, but also other social science disciplines during the second half of the 20th century. It has gradually become a tool for interpreting and arguing the differences in many branches of (hyper)modern society. It can be stated that the monograph summarizes the author's already published reflections on the phenomenon of recognition, which Solík has been dealing with on a long-term basis. On the other hand, the erudite reader will notice the updating moments, consisting, for instance, in the media's reflection on recognition, whether we are talking about culture, world economy or the global reach of the media. However, as he himself points out, there coexist several initiatives in the fight for recognition, such as those interested in the rights and freedoms of people of different sexual orientations, people with disabilities, ethnic or cultural minorities, and we cannot confuse these initiatives.[1] Their common element is that they oppose marginalisation, oppression and contempt, even though they are less visible than other globally ongoing initiatives.

As far as the structure of the monograph is concerned, its content is subsumed into four chapters. The arrangement of these thematic units reflects the author's project of thinking about the phenomenon of recognition. While in the first chapter he anchored it in terminology, defining its position in critical theory and pointing out methodological differences in the dominant concepts of "recognition", in the following two sections he deals with the analysis and interpretation of recognition in the thinking of the German philosopher,

1   SOLÍK, M.: *Uznanie ako problém spravodlivosti a jeho mediálna reflexia.* Trnava : FMK UCM, 2021, p. 113.

sociologist and representative of critical theory of society Axel Honneth (b. 1949) and the Canadian philosopher and sociologist Charles Taylor (b. 1931). Although both philosophers proceed from different positions, Solík outlines the main elements of trichotomy – criticism, explanation and normativity, and defines the central methodological differences in their concepts of recognition. Honneth requires a connection between reconstruction, construction and genealogy, which he follows by defining his own formal concept of morality, thus moving from criticism to normativity. Taylor attempts a more extensive model than Honneth in terms of intercultural recognition; however, he is less analytical in his argumentation and focuses more on multiculturalism. Honneth, on the other hand, does not protrude national recognition. A certain shortcoming that the author identifies in Honneth's work is that in many respects he reciprocates Hegel's ideas and takes over his tripartism regardless of today's modified context. At the same time, however, we can state that Honneth constitutes normative claims, and thus, he can afford this approach, since he derives the normative structural transformation of the society from the initiative of the struggle for recognition. Taylor pointed out the fact that we are dealing with a new understanding of individual identity, which is connected to our individual selves and its source is hidden in us. Social categories that no one questioned are a thing of the past and Taylor thus refers to the collapse of the existing hierarchy. This naturally implies a new perspective on the concepts of honour, justice and dignity. Taylor sees in this collapse the chance for an individual who can break out of their original scenario. He comes with a policy of universalism and a policy of differentiation, and both of these policies are ultimately concerning the same thing in the final summary – everyone should be recognised for their unique identity. In conclusion, the author states that recognition has two variants, namely social and economic recognition, and political and cultural recognition.

From the perspective of media philosophy, the most appealing is the fourth chapter of the monograph, where the author puts in media reflection, especially on social recognition in global and transnational contexts, while emphasising the media's lack of interest in solidarity issues at the global level.[2] He points to the indifference of multinational media conglomerates towards what is happening in the countries of the 'developing' world (perhaps with the exception of events arousing emotions), the deficit of intercultural dialogue and cultural imperialism of the Western world disseminated by the media, the problem of respect for human rights and the coexistence of democratic societies and those that do not have such order. At the same time, he is returning to the problem of social justice on a regional and global scale. Media should strengthen their information function and provide relevant information about what is happening in those parts of the world where world commodities such as cotton, coffee, salt, and fruit are produced, with these countries belonging globally to the poorest in the world. However, the economic intentions of transnational corporations are probably the limit in this process.

This publication is a proof that issues of recognition in both local and transnational contexts go beyond philosophical thinking and concern numerous practical areas of life for individuals as well as society as a whole. Global media and modern information and communication technologies are tools how to highlight current inequalities and other problems. However, the question remains as to how they will be able (and willing) to actually make use of this potential.

Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ján Višňovský, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic

---

2   SOLÍK, M.: *Uznanie ako problém spravodlivosti a jeho mediálna reflexia.* Trnava : FMK UCM, 2021, p. 94.

Debunk, Check and Tell Others – New Player in the Fight against Disinformation in Central Europe

Ľuboš Greguš

With the beginning of the 21st century, the world and especially Europe found themselves in a whole new situation – with the expansion of the online environment and democratic regimes that had replaced previous Communist governments, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, society shifted technologically and informationally into unexplored waters from which, after more than 20 years, new dangers have been constantly emerging. Despite the fact that fake news and disinformation campaigns are nothing new to humanity, whether in academia or the general population, they have become more and more popular in recent years. No one denied their existence, but they manifested themselves in full force, especially with the arrival of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic pointed to the phenomenon of disinformation even more, since there were no longer just attempts to change political regimes, voting preferences or consumer habits. Disinformation about a hitherto unknown disease that has hit the world without any effective treatment or vaccination has directly threatened not only health, but also human lives. Quarantine and isolation have caused more atomisation of people in the real world, and the grouping of individuals into communities in the virtual world has multiplied. In addition to this, other disinformation pressures and campaigns have been added, in connection with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which are trying to legitimise and approve this aggressive and unacceptable course of actions.

It is in the context of the growing threat of disinformation campaigns, the growing number of fake news and hoaxes that a network of digital media observatories has been set up within Europe to combat disinformation. One such observatory has also been established in Central Europe under the name CEDMO – Central European Digital Media Observatory. It covers Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland as linguistically close countries in the region and focuses on debunking disinformation and verifying facts in the context of these nations. The aim of the CEDMO project is also to research the impact of disinformation on the media, communities and society, and also to analyse information disorder trends and raise awareness. A key feature of the project is the use of artificial intelligence to map and detect the spread of disinformation within Central European Slavic languages, as nothing similar exists yet.

CEDMO is a multidisciplinary project and hub led by Charles University in Prague (Czechia), and the project involves the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (Slovakia), the Kempelen Institute of Intelligent Technologies (Slovakia), Czech Technical University (Czechia), *Demagog.cz* (Czechia), SWPS University (Poland) and AFP (France) as a global leader in fact-checking. A total of 4 higher education institutions, 1 research institute, 1 technological company and 5 fact-checking organisations are thus involved in the project.

CEDMO carries out regular fact-checks in four languages – Slovak, Czech, Polish and English, focused on all aspects of social life, which are published on the project website – *cedmohub.eu* (separate categories and attention are given to COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine), as well as research focusing on disinformation circuits, regulations and the impact on the media, communities and society and activities aimed at increasing

media literacy. CEDMO also offers useful tools for the general public, media, fact-checkers and education professionals.

Not only digital immigrants, but also digital natives are jeopardised by information disorders these days. Anyone can be in danger of encountering disinformation, fake news or hoaxes. Since the impact of such information can be major and longitudinal, there is a need for more projects like this not only at present, but also in future.

FMK's Involvement in International Horizon 2020 Project

Slavomír Gálik

Researchers from the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava (Prof. PhDr. Slavomír Gálik, PhD.; Assoc. Prof. Mgr. Norbert Vrabec, PhD.; Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Zora Hudíková, PhD.; Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ľudmila Čábyová, PhD.; Prof. PhDr. Hana Pravdová, PhD.; Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Jana Radošinská, PhD., Assoc. Prof. PhDr. Ján Višňovský, PhD.; PhDr. Sabína Gáliková Tolnaiová, PhD.; Mgr. Peter Krajčovič, PhD.; Mgr. Andrej Brník, PhD.; Mgr. Juliána Mináriková, PhD.; Mgr. Magdaléna Švecová, PhD.) participate in a three-year international research project, which is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 programme to support research and innovation.

The project entitled "Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape" (MEDIADELCOM) is conducted in cooperation with 17 research centres (universities, NGOs) from 14 European countries. The researcher and coordinator of the research is Prof. Halliki Harro-Loit from the University of Tartu (Estonia).

Project partners:

ESTONIA (project coordinator): University of Tartu
SLOVAKIA: University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
AUSTRIA: Austrian Academy of Sciences
BELGIUM (Global Partner): Media Diversity Institute Global, Brussels
BULGARIA: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
CROATIA: University of Zagreb
CZECH REPUBLIC: Masaryk University
GREECE: Greek Foundation for European and Foreign Policy
LATVIA: University of Riga
GERMANY: European Institute of Journalism named after Erich Brost

POLAND: Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw
ROMANIA: Centre for Independent Journalism
SWEDEN: School of Education and Communication at the University of Jönköping
SWEDEN: Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping University
SWEDEN: Central Swedish University
HUNGARY: Mertek Media Monitor
ITALY: University of Milan

The overall objective of MEDIADELCOM is to develop a diagnostic tool (a multiple scenario building model) for policy makers, educators, media critical bodies and institutions, as well as for media experts and journalists, which enables the provision of holistic assessment of risks and opportunities concerning deliberative communication and consequently social cohesion in Europe. The results of the research will be gradually presented in scientific publications, reports addressed to media representatives and policy makers in individual countries and at European level.

Work on the project began very intensively in March 2021, through regular online meetings and the development of conceptual and operational variables for each defined domain. The Slovak team was given the task of developing variables for the area of 'media users' competencies'. The Slovak team worked on this domain until June 2021. In September 2021, a working meeting was held in Tallinn, which was attended by Dr. Švecová and Ing. Hrušková. In October 2021, all teams began working on the first case study. The Slovak team was able to map 865 academic and non-academic outputs, which covered 4 domains: legal and ethical regulation, journalism, media usage patterns and media related competencies. Within this research, Prof. Gálik and Assoc. Prof. Vrabec attended an online conference held in Bulgaria. The first case study was completed in December 2021, and in January 2022, intensive work began on the second case study. It examined in-depth critical junctures in the development of the media in Slovakia, with an emphasis on opportunities and risks in relation to deliberative communication. The consortium is currently working on a fuzzy set methodology and another working meeting is being prepared in Dubrovnik (Croatia) on 10th – 14thApril 2022. In conclusion, I would like to add that the MEDIADELCOM project clearly helps to move FMK UCM in Trnava to the top international level in the field of media and communication studies.