

Guest Editor's introduction



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This issue of the CEJC is of the “generalist” kind: no special topic, but a rich collection of interesting articles that cover a number of domains that make communication studies so fascinating. And it is not focusing on solely Eastern and Central Europe either. One article takes us to Spain and another as far as to Australia. When as guest editor I had to coordinate the reviews of all article proposals, I wondered whether a journal focusing on Central Europe should include also submissions from the “outer world.” The answer could not be other than yes, for the simple reason that it would be senseless to fix artificial borders to scientific production. This openness to contributions from the larger community than the one that the journal addresses is to be considered an indubitable enrichment and improvement, that, to be true, has been pursued by the Journal from its foundation.

The articles presented in this issue are all based on sound documental and empirical research. They help the educated reader to discover events, phenomena and aspects that are largely unknown, and analyses and interpretations that confirm the correct impression that they are grounded in mainstream scholarly reflection.

So, Igor Vobič unveils the developments of journalistic objectivity in Slovenia through the decades of the 20th century — an exciting excursion — and helps us to understand what and how it has changed by framing it into the varying societal roles for journalism, from utilitarianism to self-management, to pragmatism.

Urszula Doliwa and Larisa Rankovic revisit the concept (and the phenomenon) of “community media,” which was indeed popular among media researchers from the late 1970s in Western Europe, eventually set aside when it became clear that it was marginal vis-à-vis the sweeping liberalization of media systems across Europe and especially the rise of the Internet. Yet, the aura of democratic participation that it possesses continues to attract scholarly attention. Their study is an interesting attempt to look at community media from an Eastern perspective, given the potentialities that this type of media still has for fostering democratic information.

In the third article Rocío Zamora and José Carlos Losada illustrate the atypical case of a Spanish regional leader who exhibits rare capacities to use what Nye (2008) calls “contextual intelligence.” The two researchers conducted an empirical analysis based on three electoral surveys to test Nye’s theory on regional leadership. The findings are thrilling, as they appear to demonstrate the validity of such views. The reading of the article stimulates

the curiosity if that case study is a pretty unique case in the political leadership landscapes not only in Spain but also elsewhere.

Vasyl V. Kucherenko and Cindy T. Christen move the spotlight back to Eastern Europe and especially on Ukraine, even if beamed from the United States. The study is of the experimental kind, not so often implemented nowadays by social scientists, but very seminal in the early stages of mass communication research. The focus is on the relationship between political knowledge and ability to spot manipulation in the news: 146 undergraduate American students were exposed to simulated *New York Times* reports on the Ukrainian Orange revolution. The authors provide a detailed account of the methodology and explain the intriguing finding that “participants with higher levels of political knowledge were less inclined to trust news reporting.”

Dara Taradai's article touches upon a timely and highly sensitive topic in Ukraine: the “domestication” of news about events that take place elsewhere but can have (and do have) a significant impact domestically. The study is based on content analysis of the coverage of Ukrainian media of the 2008 South Ossetia War. The findings confirm to a large extent the expectation that the domestic media reflect the political cleavages existing in the country.

Wojciech Walczak exercises in a field still in its early childhood, that of social networks, because these phenomena are too recent and developing so fast to be fully grasped. That said, Walczak adds his little but precious contribution to the growth of academic understanding of the social meaning and impact of Facebook. The study, as stated by the author has a number of limitations, but offers significant support to the “Social compensation hypothesis” that says that the socially disadvantaged users of FB compensate for their situation by developing a more extensive online social presence.

Li Ji takes us to Australia and China at the same time, as she investigates how Australian media created and projected a certain image of China's environmental standing and policy. The study draws on constructionist approaches, framing analysis, and rhetorical devices applied to news coverage, it displays an impressive methodological apparatus and convincingly discusses the four frames the author identifies in the image projected by the media: environmental problems, environmental governance, global role, and international cooperation.

Overall, the “patchwork” of topics chosen and methodologies implemented by the authors of this CEJC issue is all but a disarranged set of contributions. Media and communication studies, worldwide, find themselves in the middle of a paradigm change. The “old” mass communication seems to have lost its allure for scholars in favor of web communication. The theories that have been worked out and applied to media-driven phenomena in the past century might no longer explain the new complexities and respond to the new questions. It is a challenge that has to be addressed by communication scientists, especially of the younger generation. What should be avoided is to completely disregard the impact that the old media still exert in society. The articles published here are encouraging examples of intelligent awareness that societal dynamics are affected by a composite aggregation of media influences.