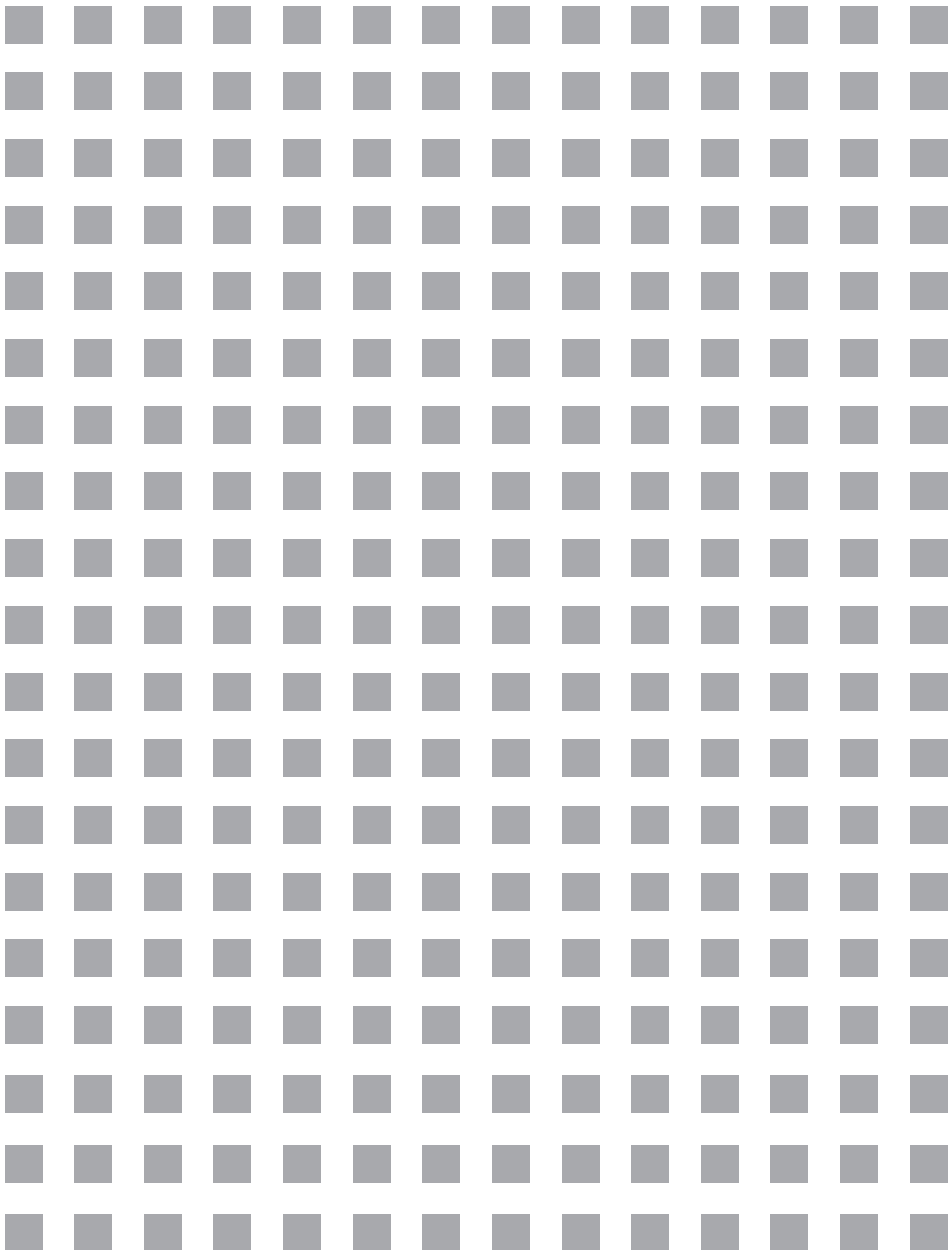




Book reviews



Miklós Sükösd and Karol Jakubowicz (eds.) (2011). *Media, Nationalism and European Identities*. Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, pp. 428, ISBN 978-9-6397-7674-6.

Miklós Sükösd and Karol Jakubowicz's edited book *Media, Nationalism and European Identities* is one of the few works approaching the European Union topic by abandoning the traditional patterns of the European divide on Eastern or Western processes analysis and creates a transnational perspective on the EU common future. As the authors specify, the "book is testimony to the new mindset" searching for novel means in order to unite the two different Europes. The nonexclusive agents, which are both the binder and the disrupter of this unit are "communicative processes," "mass media" and "public opinion." The editors identify a crisis at the level of these three factors characterized by "the persistence of a legitimization deficit [which consists of five other different but interrelated deficits of media, communication, media policy, democracy and identity] regarding the EU" which are "blocking its further integration" (p. 2). Based on these general aspects, Miklós Sükösd and Karol Jakubowicz have structured their book in three chapters that present various issues related to the European public sphere and integration, national and transnational identities, and European media policy.

One of the authors' dilemmas refers to the existence (or not) of a European public sphere. The chapter of Slavko Splichal "Transnational/Europeanization of the Public Sphere/s" not only avoids an answer to this dilemma, but also identifies many other older or newer theoretical and applied perspectives and questions that should be considered for the identification of the European public sphere, such as what is the difference between the national and European public sphere, could a public sphere pass through a transnationalization, who are the actors influencing the ("strong") public sphere formation, etc. As Slavko Splichal concludes, in order to understand this unclear and often confused with others ("public opinion," "public") concept, the only solution to make the EU public sphere relevant and comprehensible is by "[i]mproving our capacity to articulate ideas" about placing it in relation to the consequences of a transnational organizational model of the European Union (p. 45).

The theoretical applicability of the EU transnational approach represents the problematique of the other chapter of this volume "The Media and Nationalism, East and West: A Revision of Existing Debates." The author, Sabina Minelj, after a critical review of the classical theories of nationalism and media and an examination of key differences and similarities between nation-building projects and patterns of cultural diversity in Eastern and Western Europe, proposes two recommendations/solutions "to move beyond the truisms of classic theories of nationalism and mass communication," because nationalism itself has always been a break in the process of European integration.

On the one hand, she proposes “a rejection of the nation-state-centric bias inherent in most of the classic writings on nationalism and mass communication, but also warns against an uncritical application of the more recent theories of transnational communication;” on the other hand, the author suggests “a broader understanding of nationalism, which includes not only the most easily discernable, hate-driven or violent forms of nationalism, but also the more invisible, banal, supposedly benign or “peaceful” forms” (pp. 190–191). In fact, all this theoretical analysis is a call for incorporating both Eastern and Western European comparative studies, because only such researches “could allow for a better understanding of how and to what extent the relationships between the media and nationalism vary in countries which have different trajectories of nation-state building, different configuration of national identity, and different historical experiences with ethnic conflicts” (p. 191).

Karol Jakubowicz responds to this call through an extensive chapter on the practical consequences of the transnationalization of EU regulations and the way they are reflected in the European audiovisual policy. His paper “European Melting Pots? European Integration and EU Audiovisual Policy at a Crossroads” supports the idea of EU integration through European culture and identity as unifying forces that have to be regulated by European policies. However, nowadays “[t]he official policy of the EU does not appear [...] sufficiently to have recognized this fact” and in consequence “the audiovisual policy of the EU is primarily economically-driven and is not diversified and sophisticated enough to respond to the complexities of these conflicting currents, all the more so that it is separate from the European Commission’s “communication policy” which appears to be more attuned to these needs” (pp. 313–314).

With the book *Media, Nationalism and European Identities*, the editors Miklós Sükösd and Karol Jakubowicz try to balance and to reconcile traditionalist and new approaches of social and cultural EU construction. According to them, theoretically, the EU can become truly united (not just between East and West) if it changes. And the solution, also theoretical, seems to be a European transnational/post-nationalism/post-modernity model, driven by “strong” European communicative processes, mass media, and public opinion. In reality as the editors say, quoting Ivan Krastev “the energy for change is missing in Europe. There is no alternative that can mobilize the sentiments of the people. The very strength of the European project its focus on piecemeal engineering and institutional reforms can also become (and be seen as) its key weakness. This makes Europe boring and unattractive” (p. 15). However, historically, Europe has managed to reinvent itself every time.

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Nico Carpentier (2011). *Media and Participation. A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle*. Bristol: Intellect, pp. 406, ISBN 978-1-8415-0407-0.

The notion of participation is complex and thus has become the subject of several different debates addressing its theoretical and empirical nature in social science for years. The development of new technologies, followed by a social change and the growing importance of the publics, call for new concepts and studies, emphasizing the role of engagement, involvement and participation in contemporary democracies and media organizations today. One of the most current attempts to develop the study on participation and its ideological role in democratic-political processes has been made by Nico Carpentier in the monograph entitled *Media and Participation. A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle*.

One of the main goals of this book is to analyze the changes and challenges facing the notion of participation in the aftermath of these new technological developments and the transformation undergone by the public. In line with this, it is of special interest to define the main challenges and the role of participation in the broader process of democracy development. The book is divided into two parts, emphasizing the theoretical background and specific debates on keywords and case studies accordingly.

The opening chapter explains the role and legitimization of participation in democratic theory and beyond. The analysis is being conducted on the basis of several different conceptualizations and models, underlining Marxist, Anarchist and New Left approaches to participation, as well as radical and deliberative theories of democracy. Special emphasis is being put on the minimalist and maximalist model of democratic participation, translated into the media sphere into the next parts of the book respectively. An in-depth study of different audience theories helps to further define participation in media production and interaction with media content in specific media organizations, including community and alternative media, talk shows, reality TV as well as new media and players. To this end, relations between access, interaction and participation (the AIP model) are being discussed. The analysis ends with the valued discussion on the main differences between them with respect to power and decision-making processes.

The second part of the book, dedicated to different cases of media practice, starts with the debate on participation, power and control. Given that “the media sphere is one that allows citizens to participate in public debates and to deploy their discursive powers by voicing their views” (p. 147) power relations are further analyzed with respect to specific cases in the media sphere. An in-depth empirical study conducted in this part underlines the main management and audience relations in the north Belgian audience discussion “Jan Publiek” and the access TV programme “Barometer”. By emphasizing unequal power relations and the role of media professionals the study underlines the main problems for the development of participatory practices in the mainstream television channels. A reception analysis of “Jan

Publiek” followed by an analysis of the reality TV programme “Temptation Island” is used to explore the issue of identity, while the examples of BBC’s “Video Nation” and “RadioSwap” underlines the role of organizational structures when enabling participatory practices today. Finally, the notion of participation is being examined in connection to quality and technology, pointing out practices that have emerged in several different organizations to date.

The multi-level analysis, connecting different theoretical approaches, research methods and historical development with specific examples is among the main advantages of the book. The book differs from previous publications on participation and media as it looks at the subject from the broader social and political perspective and intense ideological struggle. Among the main valued inputs of this publication one may also find new approaches to audience activities, content production, development of the AIP model and, last but not least, an innovative attempt to structure elements of participation. Reading all of the model assumptions one may ask whether participation with all its complexity and instability is possible to measure at all. The author sees it as an opportunity, arguing that “it is exactly the notion of struggle that provides the entry point into this complex, dynamical process of signification” (p. 351).

In line with this, it is expected that participation can become a real vector for democracy by offering tools for “those who want to have their voices heard” (p. 359). Hence, looking for examples embracing balanced power relations, fostering users’ participation and further linking professional and non-professional content creators should be among the guiding principles when developing modern and competitive media organizations today. This particular approach should find its place in contemporary studies on communication and media and shall further stimulate the development of new discussions on media and participation in Europe and beyond.

Michał Głowacki

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Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (2011), *Polski system medialny na rozdrożu. Media w polityce, polityka w mediach* [The Polish Media System at the Crossroads. Media on Politics, Politics in Media]. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 226, ISSN 0239-6661.

Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska is a well-known media and political communication researcher, therefore, the author’s new book under the promising title *The Polish Media System at the Crossroads. Media on Politics, Politics in the Media*, will undoubtedly be of interest to both theorists and practitioners of Polish political life.

The work takes up the problem of mutual relationships between the media and the world of politics, their complex character and, as a consequence, their influence on the form of these two systems: political and media.

The author has made an attempt to answer the following questions: How much media is there in politics? How much politics is there in media? The author has creatively developed the approach of D. Hallin and P. Mancini with respect to the political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and mediatization of politics (the issue of media content and their distance to the authority). The author refers to theoretical achievements regarding the models of media systems of D. Hallin and P. Mancini, and also other reputable authorities, such as J.G. Blumler and M. Gurevitch and the achievements of academics from Central and Eastern Europe such as: S. Splichal and K. Jakubowicz (p. 14–15).

The book concentrates on the relations between media and politics which is a fragment of the media system just like the reaction of the center of the system with political actors located on the secondary market (p. 13). The author has made the assumption that Poland is an example of a medley of features appearing in the model of polarized pluralism (being biased, control over public media) and liberal model (autonomic private media), whereas the place of political parallelism is taken over by political and/or economic instrumentalism (p. 171).

In deliberations regarding the professional culture of Polish journalists, the author notes that currently the strongest influence comes from two factors: political and economic instrumentalism. The analysis conducted in the light of models construed on the basis of multidimensional criteria (p. 27) such as the attitude to power/authority, approach to performance of the interests of citizens, objectivity or idealism in reaching goals, brings the author to the conclusion that: “the consequence of political instrumentalism is the politization of media, in economics commercialization” (p. 55). In Poland, political instrumentalism is particularly dangerous because it is “strongly fixed in the Polish tradition,” which is especially seen in the scope of public media (p. 55). The diagnosis of the condition of Polish journalism culture is not explicitly pessimistic because it “evolves and modernizes itself under the influence of global development trends,” which brings good but also bad models (de-professionalization, tabloidization). Polish journalists are also far from the ideals of objectivity and perceiving their profession in categories of social service paradoxically leads them to the vision of necessity of “personal engagement in the political course of events” (p. 63).

The author attempts to answer the question if and at what degree did political parallelism develop in Poland and if the relations between political parties and media have characteristics close to the model of polarized pluralism (p. 112). The relations between them were analyzed by the author on two levels: from the point of view of participants of the political scene, that is politicians and political parties, and from the perspective of media themselves. As a result of this analysis the

author concluded that in Poland media bias can be noted, however it cannot be said that there is a party dependency on the media system or a high level of political parallelism. The author underlines that, for example, in Poland “neither party is the owner of a newspaper, radio station or television station” despite the “high level of party dependency” in the sense of “voluntary connection of a medium with a political party” which is often seen, but it includes media strongly “ideological,” with a clearly determined editorial line (p. 80). Polish commercial media has shaky political relations, and dependent on the current political climate. Commercial media have even worked out a political autonomy and the logics of media dominate in this segment, which means the dependency comes rather from economic pressure from the side of the owners and advertisement providers. Only public media has “turned out to be weak and lost the battle for independence” (p. 113). The reason why political parallelism in Poland has not developed too strongly is, in the author’s opinion, (p. 112), the weakness of political parties that did not create strong relations and connections based on intimacy on private grounds with politicians and media owners as has happened in France or Italy.

In Poland, we can also observe the mediatization of politics with all of its consequences including situations when “commercial media logic based on the spectacularization of political communication” (p. 117) starts to dominate over the political discourse. This means a deep change in political communication, which is starting to be ruled by marketing strategies and specialists from political public relations (spin doctors, surveys, spokesmen). How does Polish politics look on this background? Research regarding publicizing of politics, in particular during election campaigns, has allowed the author to formulate a thesis on the high (above European average) placement of Poland as a country in which the “framing of politics as a game” and a horse-race, where media “concentrate on the winners and the losers in the race for power, is often enriched by the publication of election surveys” (p. 122) taking place. The author also indicates the important influence on the political mediatization of the catastrophe in Smolensk (crash of the government plane that took place on April 10, 2010) as a result of the deep polarization of the political scene, which can be observed in the content of media and also in journalism culture (p. 172).

Prof. Dobek-Ostrowska’s book is an outstanding academic work which contains important observations toward the Polish media system that constitute a mature synthesis regarding relations between politics and media, which are — as a result from the author’s deliberations — inseparably connected with each other.

Alicja Jaskiernia

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Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska & Michał Głowacki (eds.) (2011). *Making Democracy in 20 Years. Media and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 314, ISSN 0239-6661.

In an analysis related to individual countries of this region, the authors have focused on the role of the media in this process and the ongoing relationship between politicians and journalists, proving that exactly those relations between media and politics have turned out to be a key factor which has had an influence on the process of consolidating democracy in the countries of the region.

An additional advantage of this publication is accepted in its prospect, that is, in the last twenty years, taking the current situation under consideration. Thanks to the individual authors who analyze the specific experience of various countries in the region in this view, the readers will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the specificity of these processes in particular countries and to compare these experiences. The volume starts with the text of Karol Jakubowicz devoted to reflections on the condition of democracy in post-communist countries after 20 years of its building, especially to the development of media systems and the role of media in building and consolidating democracy. Other articles have been divided into two parts. The first part of the publication, consisting of seven texts, was dedicated to the role of political actors in supporting democracy. Piotr Sula, Robert Alberski, Ludmila Malikova, Andrej Školkay, Imrich Gazda and Albert Kulla, Dominika Kasproicz as well as Radosław Zenderowski analyze the process of transformation in Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, describing the key moments and specificity of this process in particular countries. The second part of the publication, consisting of eight texts, is focused on the role of media in building democracy in this region. Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, Stanisław Jędrzejewski and Adam Szynol analyze the situation in Poland, Jaromir Volek, Jan Jiráček, Barbara Köpplová, Branislav Ondrášik, Martin Škop, Tomáš Trampota and Jakub Končelík in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Katrin Voltmer, Barbara Pfetsch and Alina Dobreva in Bulgaria.

The advantage of this publication is the validity and topicality of the taken topics and the possibility to compare the process of transformation in the particular countries of the region. The publication constitutes an important position in the research on building democracy and the role of media in this process. It can also provide a basis for further research in this field. Therefore it is recommended to all interested in the transformation of political systems and media systems in Central and Eastern Europe, and political communication in this region.

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Agnieszka Stępińska (ed.) (2011). *News in Europe. Europe on News*. Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, pp. 238. ISBN 978-3-8325-2703-7.

Intensive and constant technological development stimulates broad and deep global changes in many dimensions. One of the most important fields of globalization is the sphere of communication, within which news media are evolving rapidly. A lot of aspects of this sector are being altered: structure, activity, tastes and preferences of audiences, possibilities of broadcasters, publishers and journalists, comprehension of the essence of “news,” its form and content, typologies, criteria of selection, methods and techniques of production and distribution.

These phenomena — researched and explained for years — are the leading objects of interest in the reviewed book. In the preface of the publication we can read that its aim is to “promote an interdisciplinary, comparative, multi-methodological approach to the study of the news media operating in Europe and/or reporting about the European issues” (p. 7). Moreover, “The objective is to contribute to our understanding of a process of selection and a phenomenon of framing in the news media”.

The papers collected in *News in Europe, Europe on News*, prepared by 18 researchers from 9 countries, are very diverse. Because of their distinct cultural feedback and institutional experience, the authors formulate very specific dilemmas and conduct studies with very different methods and techniques.

In the book we can find some chapters submitting crucial theoretical and methodological problems. But there are also some interesting case studies. The publication gives us a chance to watch the changes in news media in a macro as well as on a micro scale. Furthermore, in the book rationalistic and empirical approaches are mixed together. This all means that the reader receives a multilevel landscape of media in Europe and Europe on media.

The book is divided into 5 parts, composing of 16 chapters. Part I, “Foreign News: A Theoretical and Methodological Approach,” includes papers regarding the problematic nature of international comparative studies on media coverage, especially those about Europe and European integration. In this part Jürgen Wilke reviews the previous most noteworthy, comparing news flow studies. The paper presents not only the outcomes of the discipline but also deficiencies and limitations which should be overcome in the future. Besides, Paolo Mancini reveals the backwardness of the comparative research in media studies with relation to comparative system analysis in political science. The author also tries to recognize the main causes of the delay, showing differences in objects of interest and methods, data availability and structure of the research team in both disciplines. Also the chapter by Ruud Wouters has a general and retrospective character. Juxtaposing many different definitions and studies about ‘foreign news,’ he proves that it’s really hard to conclude about long-term trends in the sphere of covering foreign issues. Moreover, the author underlines that existing typologies of ‘foreign news’ are insufficient and should be deeply developed and operationalized in the

era of global interconnections. In another chapter, Tomasz R. Szymczyński, applying Pierre Bourdieu's theory, interprets the journalism concerning Europeanization and globalization as 'a field.' Participants of this space are seduced by many myths, which induces a harmful influence on reporting and perceiving regional and global processes.

Part II, "Covering Europe," contains three reports concerning empirical studies about European issues, broadcast not only in Europe. Chapter 5, by Jürgen Wilke and Christine Heimprecht, presents the way of covering Europe in 14 countries in five regions of the globe. Generally speaking, the authors claim that "Each continent or region in the world has a different distortion in its picture of Europe. But besides that, there are also similarities" (p. 96). In the next paper Beata Ociepka considers the outcomes of a content analysis of two newspapers, published in Poland and Germany by Axel Springer. Using concepts of news values and framing, she examines how both periodicals covered European events. In chapter 7 Elizabeth Godo and Abby Goodrum analyze Canadian news reporting of European matters. Asking if media in Canada "become subordinate to national loyalty" (p. 116), they try to find out who and what was presented in scrutinized material as an authority.

Part III, "European Media and Journalists," deals with changes regarding not only media but also audiences. In chapter 8 Suzanne Franks argues that technological development gives rise to a situation in which journalism no longer "could be seen as a series of separate conversations" (p. 131). It means that a contemporary global public sphere is emerging and this causes that the distinction between foreign and domestic news is out-of-date. Another paper, by Agnieszka Stępińska, also describes a formation of international audiences. The author illustrates this process with a content analysis of an online channel of communication between editors and viewers of Euronews TV. And, in chapter 10, Kevin Rafter shows the history of Irish foreign journalism, showing how its institutional, technical and personnel resources have been evaluated.

Part IV, "Covering Politics," regards transformations of political communication. In the first chapter in this section, Dorota Piontek examines the tendency of journalists to cover the same stories in the same way ('pack journalism') as an element of the framing process. She argues that this phenomenon "is not profitable for democracy" (p. 182) and has two main reasons: organizational as well as political. The former has its origins in the fact that contemporary journalists and editors are permanently uncertain about what is political news. The latter arises from the behavior of politicians who constantly try to gain the attention of the media and the public. Michael Nitz and Alicia Coggins present how the presidential elections in U.S. in 2008 were covered in the Norwegian press. They prepared the case study in accordance "with scholars who argue for more cross-national perspectives that explore the differences between U.S. and European framing news" (p. 183). In chapter 13 Gabriele M. Murry compares the way of showing and discussing the 'war on terror' in U.S. and Germany.

Part V, "Political and Legal Framework of the Media in Europe," includes analyses of the politicization of media in Europe as well as changes in European media policy and media law. Krystyna Doktorowicz characterizes Polish public service broadcasting and evaluates it in the light of EU guidelines respecting this sector. In chapter 15 Jędrzej Skrzypczak presents the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive, depicting it as a new framework of broadcasting. And Magdalena Melnyk-Niewiadomska examines Spanish contemporary news media as a sphere under strong pressure of politics.

The advantage of the book is that the activity of news media is not showed in a static manner. The authors have been trying to reach and show dynamics of Europeanization and its connections with global changes, transformation of European media system(s) and the processes of informing about Europe, European countries and institutions.

Furthermore, the very precious fact is that in most of the chapters we can find statements which show that studying news media becomes less and less obvious. The authors repeatedly underline that at the same time the media sphere develops and logic of creating news evolves. It means that our language used to describe, explain and predict the communicational reality, is inadequate and inopportune. In other words, the reviewed book reminds us that contemporary mediamorphoses are a daunting challenge both for participators in the media market and for communication scientists.

The publication brings a lot of data about media in Europe, and Europe in media. But, what is more important, it also inspires us to think about the amorphous nature of scientific categories available in the field of social sciences, especially in communicational research. This encourages discussion about communicational phenomena with not much certainty and a lot of caution.

Bartosz Hordecki

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