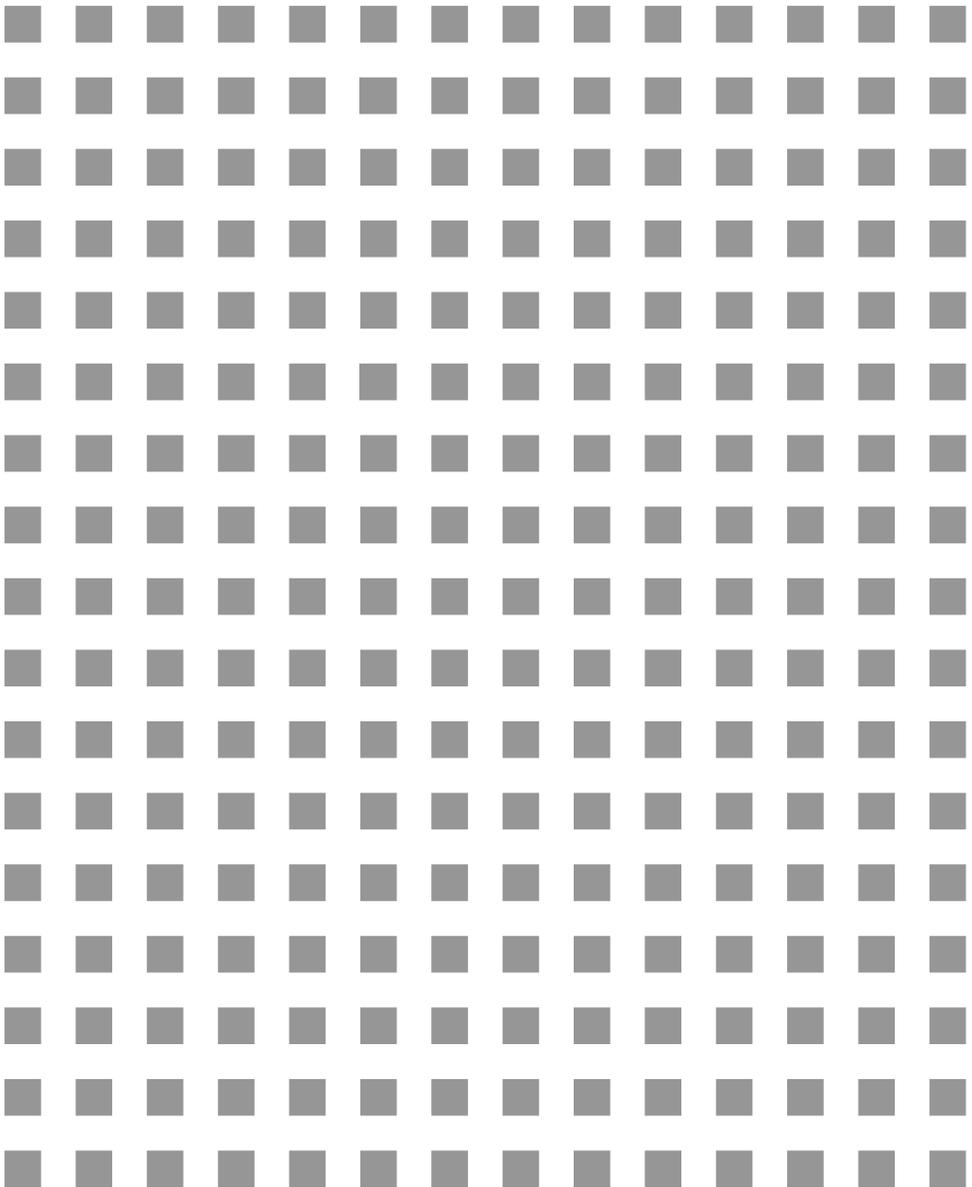




Book reviews



Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, Auksė Balčytienė (eds.) (2014), *Journalism that Matters: Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford and Wien: Peter Lang Publishing, pp. 214, ISBN: 978-3-631-65421-7.

Journalism that Matters: Views from Central and Eastern Europe — is certainly a book that belongs to the discourse of transformations of Central and Eastern Europe. A few years ago this discourse seemed to be moving towards its exhaustion. Scholars like Hungarian Andras Bozoki in 2008 or Lithuanian Zenonas Norkus in 2012 even claimed that the period of post-communist transformations were completed in 2004. But the war in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea by Russia has caused geopolitical insecurity for Poland and the Baltic States (when the Czech Republic and especially Hungary do not share hawkish anti-Russian politics). Even Finland is seriously considering joining NATO. Naturally, if geopolitical transformations are not complete, then neither cultural nor economic transformations could be completed. In this regard, Central and Eastern European transformations are incompletable not because they are forever doomed to be “post-communist,” but because Russia is an active geopolitical volcano that affects economic trade and cultural relationships. Furthermore, as we have witnessed, before any geopolitical turmoil there is an alternative Russian mediascape that bespeaks of a unique Russian civilization that is on a mission to create the New Russia on the basis of ethnic Russians spread in the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Journalists on the Russian side and journalists on the side of the EU’s Central and Eastern European countries report all about it from different ideological perspectives. They provide different “truths.” Although “on-line” reports often are without a deeper meaning and reflection, the streams of information that inundate the consumers shape the perception of where we are, who we are and what may happen to us in this volatile region of Central and Eastern Europe. Professional journalism continues to be a fundamental source of geopolitical self-orientation. By the same token, professionally falsified journalism, for example the faked or distorted reporting that currently serves the propaganda of the Kremlin, is equally fundamental for shaping alternative perceptions of how EU member states of Eastern-Central Europe (especially the Baltic States) should become “Russia-friendly” as well as how these ex-U.S.S.R. countries should be grateful for the inherited goods of the former Soviet Union after its “geopolitical catastrophe,” as Vladimir Putin called it, while having ambitions to create the “New Russia.”

The book *Journalism that Matters*, consisting of a collection of themed articles, does not touch this nerve of the war of information for a very natural reason — the articles were collected in 2013, before the EuroMaidan protests in Kiev and before all the bloodshed in the Maidan that “Euronews” journalists experienced themselves, when Berkut soldiers started their brutality against them. Nevertheless, the articles represent the topical issues in journalism of Central and Eastern Europe

before the “Maidan paradigm” and hopefully the editors will comprise a second volume of *Journalism that Matters* that would start with the analysis of the reports of injured and severely beaten journalists in Ukraine who pioneered to photograph the mansion of Viktor Janukovich, where he was hiding after dictatorial orders to shoot at the protesters in Maidan Square. No doubt the propaganda and all the creative disinformation that is unleashed from Russian media in 2014 will inspire scholars of media and communication to provide a new critical analysis of it.

In the current volume, the editors paid special attention to the specific features of Central and Eastern Europe before 2014 that are interlinked with the changes, volatility and flux of the region. The editors Michał Głowacki, Epp Lauk, and Auksė Balčytienė in their co-authors’ article discuss the region of Central and Eastern Europe as a roller coaster for journalism. A comparative analysis of different countries between Poland, Moldova, and Romania, or between Finland and Estonia sheds informative light on the differences of the altitude of this roller coaster.

What is important is that the roller coaster for journalism stands on the platform of the legacy of 1989 with all the grand narrative of the fall of the Berlin Wall. These reportages from Berlin in November 1989 as well as from Bucharest, when Nicolae Ceausescu’s regime fell after shooting at innocent protesters, serve as a quintessential basis for Central and Eastern European identity. These reportages forged the values of liberal patriotism. It seemed so... but as the co-authors rightly point out, sadly the development of democracy in various countries of the region became loose and underwent the experience of a roller coaster. As a matter of fact, democracy often became understood as “TV saturated scandals and populism.”

As we know, in the case of Hungary, democracy became *democratura*, a transition away from democracy, and as one of the authors of the book, Miklos Sükösd, observes, Hungarian democracy delivered the party “Jobbik” as the most popular anti-Semitic party. This is also a part of Central and Eastern European identity, so contradictory to the ideals of the “your and my freedom” of 1989. Bearing in mind the recent scandal about the Hungarian Bela Kovacs, who is accused of spying for Russia, and Victor Orban’s political partnership with Vladimir Putin, Hungary seems to have betrayed the ideals of 1989 and their own fight in 1956.

Hungarian *democratura* under the “Orban-ized” government of Budapest has restricted the freedom of journalism and the national News Agency, since 2010, employs only pro-government journalists. But the observation that there is an increasing role for oligarchs controlling the media in Central and Eastern Europe needs to be clarified. Oligarchy is not unique to Central and Eastern Europe. Berlusconi owned a multitude of media agencies. This suggests that Southern Europe is similar to “post-communist Eastern Europe.” The problem is that Southern Europe is often understood to be included in the umbrella term “the West.” If so, “the West” should not be idealised as a role model. Whatever “the West” is, it is the other side of East-Central Europe, and has the very bad record of Yalta, 1945 and Brussels, 2014. The West has already forgotten the annexation of Crimea and is concerned

with the “de-escalation” of the conflict and selling “Mistral” ships to Russia is still under consideration. That is the geopolitically squidgy mediascape that reaches the supposedly inferior “East” from the supposedly superior “West.”

A very important part of the book is on how the Internet changes journalism. The article by Peter Bajomi-Lazar asks: “How will the Internet — including news sites, blogs, comments, forums, chat rooms, mailing lists and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr, transform the public sphere?” (p. 63). The author reminds that Facebook and Twitter played a major role organizing the “Arab spring” in 2011. He also observes that there is lesser normative authority as journalists move further away from the truth, as hoaxed events are reported either on purpose or simply because of a lack of time without double checking. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that “hoaxed events further away from truths” apply to the “West” as well as to the “East.” Indeed, even before the proliferation of internet journalism, “Western” journalists were notorious for their inability to comprehend the specifics of Central and Eastern Europe often confusing the country names such as Slovenia and Slovakia or Latvia and Lithuania. For a long time in the Western mediascape, “Eastern Europe” as such was everything outside the Berlin Wall without the differentiations of the Vishegrad countries and Ukraine or the Baltics and Russia.

Co-authors Natalia Milewski, Paulina Barczyszyn, and Epp Lauk, compare Poland, Romania, and Moldova, contending that contextual factors play a more important role in shaping journalism cultures than professional beliefs. This insight suggests caution when implementing media ethics and standards blindly. Evidently local culture — just as soil for grapes — has the final say for the quality of media ethics.

“Media ethics as a system of standards serves as the basis of media self-regulation,” — contend co-authors, Bissera Zankova and Svetlozar Kirilov, in another article. Standards refer to truthfulness, and media ethics should define fairness. But media ethics depends on the larger ethical landscape of a country and its culture, conclude these scholars when analysing the case of Bulgaria. Due to the nation’s distinct culture of Bulgaria, media ethics is not working.

Another article by Svetlana Pasti is on journalism in Russia, where the Golden Age of journalism occurred between 1991 and 2008 and was only golden for independent reporting. Paradoxically that golden age turns out to have given less satisfaction to journalists than under the suppression of Putin’s regime. According to Svetlana Pasti article, journalism is no longer about the truth of Russia’s war crimes or corruption of the elite or violation of human rights, but about personal access to wealth and power via journalistic practices, thus, treating journalism for opportunistic means.

This thesis leads to a fundamental redefinition of what the purpose of a professional journalist is. Apparently in Russia in Putin’s era reportages are no longer meant to provide a Socratic Truth of the event, but rather they are about the power of the stronger according to the opponent of Socrates, the sophist Trasymachus,

who defined justice as the interest of the stronger. Trasymachus, being a political thinker, did not believe in any other truth, than the one of the stronger who has political power; whereas the moral thinker Socrates claimed that justice and truth are the eternal ideas independent from political circumstances. A reading of “Journalism that Matters” gives the impression that Trasymachus is correct, as research findings demonstrate, that in Central and Eastern Europe political circumstances are the determinants for the standards of media ethics. There is a hierarchy of countries with higher and lower levels of mature democratic mediascapes.

The article by Epp Lauk, who is also one of the editors, titled “Similar but so different: the practices of press councils in Estonia and Finland,” analyses why the same media ethics and media models produce different results in two brotherly countries. The conclusion seems to be that Finland after all is more mature in terms of civic-mindedness, while Estonia still has visible traces of its communist past. Thus, this article once again demonstrates that there is a hierarchy of particular countries where the quality of journalism is not the same because of scientifically determinable reasons.

Finally, for a lack of better words, I would like to conclude with a couple of sentences from the book’s introduction:

We expect that this book will interest media scholars and practitioners, but also students of media and communications in the media or in business studies in Eastern and Central Europe and beyond. Above all we believe that the interdisciplinary research presented in the collection will result in the emergence of new ideas and concepts contributing to the understanding of journalism culture in the changing mediascapes (p. 8).

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Manuel Castells (2013), *Władza komunikacji (Communication Power)*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, pp. 514, ISBN: 978-83-01-17021-9.

The book by Manuel Castells — one of the most recognised researchers of the network society — is an analysis of the relationship between power and communication. In his work, the author is trying to define the nature of power in the network society. He tackles the basic issues, like the relationship of power with the environment, resulting from managing communication processes.

One of the basic and current issues is the attempt to create political, social and economic life by the actors who try to influence the awareness of the recipients of media messages. Emphasising the importance of power, the author draws attention to entities that hold power — they have the ability to create and fill the network with content. Networking power, as Castells writes, belongs to owners and supervisors

of media corporations — governments and entrepreneurs who exercise their powers because they “turn people into recipients and sell them visions of life” (p. 414). The content of the created networks — both in the realm of content and format of information, has two principal goals: generating profit or power (also including the creation of culture) or both these goals at the same time. But as Castells clearly emphasises, multimedia networks are communication structures that are subject to procedures of access control. As such they are managed by people — “access controllers” who enable or block access to senders of messages on the Internet. Relating to the notion of individualised mass communication, the author emphasises at the same time the meaning of this notion in its dialectical aspect. He writes: “the more corporations invest in the development of communication networks (drawing great profits from it), the more intensively people build their own networks of individualised mass communication, thus reinforcing their position” (p. 413). Reinforcing the position of users involves, besides the consumption of media products, creating their own culture.

The book consists of five chapters, a summary, annex, references and names index. It has 514 pages. The first chapter is devoted to theoretical considerations about power in the network society. Starting from the traditional definition of power, the author quotes the views of Habermas, Weber or Giddens, confronting their understanding with the notion of power in trans territorial society existing in the global era. This chapter contains important and at the same time interesting considerations connected with the dependence of territorially concentrated power and network power which is characterised by more effective organisational forms, supported by technological solutions. Explaining mechanisms thanks to which relations of domination are created on the Internet, he explains how ideas create higher values, determining the undertaken activities like e.g. the fight with terrorism as exemplification of the value of safety. In this chapter Castells also explains other conceptual categories connected with the functioning of the state and its structures in the network society, thus emphasising the criterion of non-existence of time — time of the network society has no past or future.

The second chapter is devoted to communication in the network society. The author analyses changes in the communication processes in connection with technological development. He also discusses mutual relations between technological development and changes in communication processes and in organisation and managing communication in the network society (ownership concentration, platform diversification, segmentation of advertising messages and as a consequence the creation of synergy economics). He also presents interesting considerations about the relationship between global and local communication and cultural change connected with the existence in global reality.

The third chapter concerning the relationship of network and power analyses e.g. the problems of emotions and cognition in politics and in particular in election campaigns. An interesting analysis concerns the politics of beliefs and creating

“frames in mind” that, thanks to the mechanisms used in communication processes, activate the recipient’s mind. Castells bases his considerations not only in theory but he also analyses a certain example — managing misinformation during the war in Iraq.

The fourth chapter concerns programming communication networks in media politics. An important element the author pays attention to is limiting democracy by limiting access to the media — it is possible thanks to access controllers. Conclusions about designing the message by political think tanks are accompanied with a short history of these organisations. The author is right to connect media and information politics with scandal politics, which is analysed in the context of digital communication.

The last chapter is devoted to reprogramming communication networks. Here the author analyses the processes of communication, also in virtual reality, of new social movements (environmentalists), exemplification of protest politics and creation of the new public space. This chapter is in the form of case analysis. The chapter entitled “Toward a Communication Theory of Power” is the concluding part of the book.

Castells’ book is obligatory reading for everybody dealing with the processes of communication in the realm of analysis of social changes. It is not a typical scientific book. A major part of the book is the analysis of certain cases, which makes the knowledge about the relation of power and communication much more practical. The author compiled previously published works and new ideas.

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Agnieszka Ogonowska, Grzegorz Ptaszek (eds.) (2013), *Współczesna psychologia mediów. Nowe problemy i perspektywy badawcze (Modern Media Psychology. New Problems and Research Perspectives)*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, pp. 251, ISBN: 978-8-378-50163-3.

The book edited by Agnieszka Ogonowska and Grzegorz Ptaszek, entitled *Modern Media Psychology. New Problems and Research Perspectives*, fills a niche on the Polish publishing market. Fourteen authors undertook the reconstruction of the psychological context of the relationship between humans and media (the researchers focus mainly on the Internet and television). In the first part of the book the main scope of analysis is *Media Psychology* — a new scientific discipline, together with its historical and methodological features; in the second part *The traps of media reality and the psychology of Reception* — the issues of receiving media content and the

possibilities of manipulation of medium; in the third part *New media and technologies* — new communication technologies as tools of psychological support.

The text by Grzegorz Ptaszek, which begins the first part of the book, *Media Psychology — history, field of research, future*, places the rapid development of media psychology in the 1990s and points out different fields of interests of the researchers of this discipline as well as the possibilities, which it creates, for investigating the mechanisms of the human psyche in contact with media. Based on a rich list of publications, mostly English ones, the author does not delimit that discipline but rather shows it as the answer for the need to describe the phenomena connected with perceiving media representations through the language of psychology.

On the other hand, Agnieszka Ogonowska describes selected concepts of information and media competences (i.a. she presents an interesting comparison of H. Gardner's model and multiple competences approach). The author also considers the phenomenon of the digital divide, presenting it in the context of both material and mental barriers. The analysis of the models of information and media competences offered by the author could be a merit-based support for people who create media education projects.

In an interesting article by Anna Kołodziejczyk, media are analyzed from a family perspective; from the role of parents who influence access to media content as well as having a great impact on its interpretation. The author seeks connections between patterns of media use and styles of family interactions, and describes in detail parental styles of mediating media use.

The article of Mariusz Makowski, which analyses the TV HBO drama devoted to psychotherapy — *Bez tajemnic (In Treatment)*, closes the first part of the book. Considering the educational role of such projects, the author describes the opportunities and threats connected to the idea of edutainment, and presents the results of a pilot study which aimed at rating how the TV series influences viewers' approach to psychotherapy.

The possibility of having a new discipline appears in the well-developed second part of the book, whose authors focus on the psychology of reception. Konrad Maj and Przemysław Matul in their article *Is seeing believing? Suggestion and disinformation in the video transmission* present the results of their own research focused on memorizing the video transmission content in a situation of introducing a disinformation factor (e.g. a news ticker) by the experimenters. Thanks to such research, it can be proved how easily one can manipulate the transmission by using certain disinformation strategies and how the individual elements influence the integrity of the transmitted content.

Similar observations can be found in the articles by Tatiana Popadiak-Kuligowska (*The television advertising effectiveness indicator*) and Małgorzata Kuśpit (*Affective and personality factors in the perception of advertising*) although an advertisement itself as research material is, as a matter of fact, a persuasive medium and its

aim is to manipulate the viewer. But the authors focus on those elements of the advertisement reception process which could at most prove their effectiveness. On the one hand, they are personal characteristics of the viewers, which — examined respectively and used while creating the advertisements — could improve their effectiveness and the connection of the transmitted advert with the brand significantly, and on the other hand — the use of the appropriate advertising strategy.

Krzysztof Mudyń in his article *Phases of idea materialization on the example of Sherlock Holmes. Contribution to the role of the media in the social construction of reality* describes in detail the phases of “idea materialization” — from the author’s vision who creates the plot and its protagonist — Sherlock Holmes, to museums, statues, and commemorative plaques devoted to that literary character. The author is right, noticing that some fictional characters have equal rights as the real heroes and they almost seem to be real. “The Community of Shared Fiction” plays important roles then, especially in the context of new media development.

On the other hand, Lech Górniak considers psychological conditions for media trust, taking into account the factors influencing trust, such as credible choice of content by senders/media organizations, consistency with the billed direction (i.e. ideological), and the reputation of the journalists. The author also shows selected signs of caring about the contact with a receiver (e.g. creating intervention programs in which the journalists try to influence solving certain problems of a respective society).

The last part of the book focuses on the analysis of the issues connected with modern technologies which can be useful while providing psychological support. Agata Pasikowska in her article *A dialogue with a virtual and an imaginary interlocutor as a form of a psychological support and a mental health improvement* points out a possibility of using application and chatterbots for supporting people who are highly exposed to stress, but also as a tool enabling the improvement of the quality of life. Moreover, the author refers to the Internet as a medium in which, for many years, individual users can find support on different forums or aid-oriented websites.

Then, Małgorzata Styśko-Kunkowska and Marta Najbert investigate the use of the Internet by different organizations, which try to create their own image as the employers. The authors, being aware of the lack of previous research on the role of the message in rating the Internet advertisement, conducted their own research which proved that the symbolic message has greater influence on the distinctiveness of certain advertisements than the functional message.

Julia Zajac concentrates on the new forms of helping behaviour which can be realized only on the Internet. They are specific mostly because they make use of the mechanisms which are typical for entertainment or educational projects (e.g. project *Freerice.com* or *Darfur is Dying*).

To sum up, the main asset of the book is that the authors present to the Polish reader a discipline, which for many years has been a field of interest of mostly Eng-

lish and American academics, enriched with the results of research conducted by Polish academics. Thanks to such a synthetic approach, this publication becomes a book which can be inspiring for media specialists, psychologists and students who are interested in the interdisciplinary perspective on the human-media relation in the “era of engagement.”

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Antonio Momoc (2014), *Comunicarea 2.0. New media, participare si populism* (Communication 2.0. New Media, Participation and Populism), Iasi: Adenium Publishing, pp. 272, ISBN: 978-606-8622-29-3.

The book, *Communication 2.0. New media, participation and populism*, by Antonio Momoc who is Assistant Professor in Political Communication at the University of Bucharest, focuses on the intricate relationships between contemporary communication studies and political sciences, in the versatile realm of new media. It is a daring endeavor, as “new media” today are the expression of a constant technological and social change, which influences in a determinant way both journalism and political communication. The book is, from this point of view, a useful information tool for journalists, advertising and PR specialists, NGO activists, politicians, and social media users who are interested in the growth of internet consumption and its consequences on the change of media consumption habits and political communication strategies.

Antonio Momoc’s book is composed of four chapters (*Communication, Political Communication, Online Communication, and 2.0 Populism and Participation*). The first chapter puts communication 2.0 in the context of interpersonal, public and mass communication in an attempt to explain mechanisms such as influence, persuasion, propaganda and manipulation and their relation with new communication platforms. The second chapter is an overview of the main theories related to political communication. Concepts like “watchdog,” “agenda setting,” “agenda building” and “propaganda” are discussed in the context of the new media and their evolution. The third chapter addresses online communication and its contradictions. The new media encourage political participation and consumerism, at the same time (p. 129). They become a platform for political actors, but not all citizens are able to connect (the mere expression of the digital and political divide). The last chapter of the book relies on the results of recent studies on how neo-populists used new media to persuade and to attract individuals into the techno-populist movements.

Communication 2.0. New media, participation and populism's declared aim is to explain the relations between the new forms of online political communication and civic journalism (both of them encouraging and fostering civic participation) and the emergence of new forms of populism. The digital era encourages the digital and political divide and social fragmentation argues the author, quoting reputed authors like P. Norris and C.R. Sunstein. However, the “search and share” revolution strongly influenced interpersonal and social communication at the same time, changing forever the journalism, advertising, PR and marketing industries.

The author considers that the Facebook and Twitter “revolutions” polarized the analysts of the phenomenon into optimists and pessimists of 2.0 participation. “The 2.0 participation pessimists blamed authoritarian regimes in Asia, Middle East or Northern Africa for using Western technologies to supervise and control the population — Google in China or The Big Firewall etc. The 2.0 participation optimists were enthusiastic regarding the so-called Facebook and Twitter ‘revolution’ during the Arab Spring (Iran, Egypt, Tunisia) and the ways in which common people used social networks to oppose the authorities in an organized manner, considering their protests were not covered by the mainstream media,” explains the author (p. 234).

The book explains how new media mechanisms were used by moderate and populist politicians to reach electoral success: “Howard Dean (in 2004) and Barack Obama (in 2008) used social media to mobilize voters to cast their ballot. The new technologies are also utilized as attack tools against competitors: in the 2004 presidential elections in Romania, candidate Traian Băsescu first resorted to being a digital guerrilla” (p. 235). The author argues that cyber-populists or new-populists completely rejected traditional media on the grounds that it is “bought.” This rejection brought them credibility in the eyes of social media users.

In this very context of the fading credibility and usage of traditional media, the author describes new ways of practising journalism: citizen journalism and participatory journalism. The emergence of an alternative press is considered by the author as a civil society response to the lack of access to mainstream media, and as a citizens’ protest against the submission of the traditional press. The phenomenon of citizen journalism is also reviewed from the perspective of the new social movements (NSM), i.e. Occupy Movements. The public is not considered to be passive anymore, as by user-generated content it contributes to the process of selecting and disseminating of news and other types of information. The role of journalist as gatekeeper fades out, in the given circumstances. Millions of users now have the possibility to contribute to the “search and share” revolution mentioned above. New journalistic practices emerge, and the public takes over some of the traditional functions of the “old” media institutions. The paradigm of expert as epistemic authority is also subject to serious questioning in the era of communication 2.0.

The book of Antonio Momoc ends with a question to which readers are invited to find their own answers: Is access to the Internet and new technologies a possibil-

ity to foster civic responsibility or is it just an expression of social manipulation? Based on the findings in his book, we may conclude that Antonio Momoc shares an optimistic view on this matter. He believes in a society opened to real communication and real social change for the benefit of democracy. His book is, as mentioned above, a daring endeavor, which combines serious scientific research with lived experience, on “terra incognita” of communication 2.0.

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