

## Guest Editor's introduction



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In the book *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible*, the British journalist Peter Pomerantsev (2015) gives the picture of a society where the image means everything. This society is Putin's Russia, where the role of media is to create images supporting power and the question of truth is secondary. Pomerantsev tells many good stories from inside the Russian TV industry to illustrate these 21st century "Potemkin fake villages". But it is also important to remember that this use of media is not only present in Russia — the American scholar Michael Schudson (2009) has discussed the notion "truthiness" to describe the same phenomena. This is when media stories are created to look like some kind of truth, stories that "could be true", as was the case in a large part of the media coverage in the US before the 2003 Iraqi War.

In this issue of the *Central European Journal of Communication* several articles discuss questions concerning how media relates to political power, how events are framed and adapted into certain perspectives, but also how individual journalists can make a difference in the search for some kind of truth about society.

In an analysis of media policy in Lithuania, Deimantas Jastramskis shows how neo-liberalism has changed to an increasing state influence in the media sector. By changing taxation and increasing state financing of public services (still under-financed) the political sector in society has gained potential power. More journalists are working as freelancers, selling their work without contracts, and the influence of non-government organizations in the regulatory institutions has decreased in favor of political appointments. Still, media freedom is high in Lithuania, placed 35th in the rankings of the 2016 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). But the changes in media policy bring questions about future development. Neighboring Poland has fallen 29 places in the rankings in the last year, after the new conservative government took power over public service media. Today Poland is in 47th place, still above her southern neighbor, Hungary, where state control over all kinds of media puts the country in 67th place in the rankings (Reporters Without Borders, 2016).

In Ukraine, media have had an important role in the dramatic events of recent years. In an analysis of the media coverage of European integration, Oleksii Polegkyi

shows four different media frames for the understanding of the events. The main frame is telling the story of Europe vs Russia and Ukraine as the borderland in the middle, either a clear geopolitical confrontation between the US and Russia (often the Russian version) or a civilizational choice where Ukraine is returning to the European home (the Ukrainian version). But there are also other frames, either European integration as a chance for modernization of Ukraine or negative frames as Ukraine as the “dump” of Europe. All these frames are present in the pluralistic Ukrainian media reflecting the diversity of opinions in the country. But probably also reflecting different interests of oligarchs behind media companies (the power of media owners and oppression of journalists, especially in the eastern part of the country, gives Ukraine 107th place in the 2016 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2016).

There is also hope some for truth-seeking journalism in this issue of the CEJC. In his article Andrej Školkaý tells the story of Tony Papaleo, a story very timely published, just after the big international revelation of the “Panama papers”. Tony Papaleo is an Italian journalist working in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. He works as a freelancer and is a member of the Consortium of Investigative Journalists (the organization behind the “Panama papers”). In 2013 he published a story about money laundering, concerning a Slovakian businessman who used banks in Hong Kong to make “black money” from Central Europe, white. This story resulted in large publicity in Hong Kong and the money launderer was sentenced to some years in jail. But — according to Školkaý — in the Czech and Slovak media the story received modest coverage. Tony Papaleo himself was threatened, and during a visit in Thailand he was stabbed and severely injured by criminals (he received police protection after the attack, even if no connection to the story could be proved). The moral of the story is that individual journalists can make a difference in the coverage of corruption and abuse of power. But there are also risks for the journalist.

There are also other interesting articles in this issue, for example about the use of anonymous sources in political reporting in Pakistan. Two articles discuss PR and major macro trends in PR — important questions in times when PR is growing and the newsroom is steadily reduced. Altogether the six articles and book reviews give a broad representation of media research from and about Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Many of the questions concerning political and economic influence and the journalistic search for “the true story” are eternal — but still need to be researched and discussed as long as there are media and researchers.

## REFERENCES

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