

coming edited volume *Close and Distant: Political Executive–Media Relations in Four Countries*. This book project spotlights interactions between political executives and media representatives and the case studies from Finland, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden, built mainly on extensive interviews with political journalists and government media/political advisors, supplemented by documentary evidence. The panel also presented the themes of the volume: government communication; social media; formality and informality; media-tization of politics; and political communication culture.

The presentations included six papers: “Variations in Political Communication Culture. New Forms of Political Parallelisms and Media–Politics Coalitions” of Aukse Balčytienė (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania), “Journalists and Political Power–Mediatization and Political Instrumentalization” presented by Gunnar Nygren (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Risto Niemikari (University of Tampere, Finland), “Journalists and their Political Sources in Poland: Describing the Interrelationship” of Jacek Nożewski (University of Wrocław, Poland), “Formal and Informal Interaction: Power and Exchange Between Journalists and their Political Sources” presented by Milda Mallin (Södertörn University, Sweden). Elena Johansson (Södertörn University, Sweden) talked about “Social Media for Top Politicians: Comparative Case Illustrations from Finland, Poland, and Sweden”. The paper “Government Communication in Comparative Perspective” of Karl Magnus Johansson (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Tapio Raunio (University of Tampere, Finland) concluded the panel.

After the presentations, the panel respondent, Svetlana S. Bodrunova from St. Petersburg State University (Russia) offered her suggestions and insights, underscoring the importance of and the need for (de-westernized) comparative research. This was followed by a short question and answer session including the audience.

Text: Marta Łysik

Photo: Jacek Nożewski

<https://www.messenger.com/t/lena.degtereva>

<https://www.facebook.com/jacek.nozewski/posts/1676905275690634>

The 11th Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference CEECOM 2018, Szeged, Hungary, 30th May–1st June 2018

The 11th Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference (CEECOM) was organized by the Department of Communication and Media Studies, and the Department of Political Science of the University of Szeged, where the conference took place, gathering around two hundred media and communication experts and guests from all around the world. It took three days to discuss the main conference topic: the diverse issues and relationships between the ‘communicative space and political space’, and to present the whole range of concepts and findings which describe the current state of research on CEE media and communication issues. The relatively dense program (34 thematic sessions, more than 140 presentations and 4 full-time keynote addresses) did not leave much time for discovering



Photo: Participants of CEECOM 2018

the enchantment of the town of Szeged (although the organizers planned some sightseeing attractions, such as the night baths, a wine tour, or visit to the salami Pick Museum).

By picking the central topic set as 'a broad spectrum of ideas related to ongoing changes and transformations of the concept of space', the conference organizers aimed at highlighting such perspectives as those of the 'physical political spaces as communicative spaces', 'mediatized spaces', 'social and control issues in politics and media', 'online / digital spaces', and 'the regulatory nature of politics and media'.

The conference program included four keynote speeches, encompassing different aspects of the transformation of media and journalism in Central and Eastern Europe. The first speaker was Epp Lauk, an Estonian, representing the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. In her speech, called 'Understanding the Transformation of CEE Journalism Cultures: A Comparative View', she tried to assess the regional processes of transformation from the point of view of broadly-defined cultural factors of change in a long comparative perspective. By pointing out that the prominent feature of journalisms cultures [the plural is intentional] in the CEE in the twentieth century has been the logic of disruption rather than continuity, and stressing that we have experienced many individual paths of change in the region so far, she challenged the sense of a rapid and imitatory cultural transformation that drew — as an easy solution — from the Western model of professional standards of journalism. 'If you are buying shoes, you don't cut off your toes — you just choose another pair to fit your feet', she concluded, explaining why we first should systematically learn the real social and cultural factors that shape media landscapes — like the systems of values, moral philosophies, attitudes to religion, customs and traditions etc. — to be able to describe and explain the dynamic models of journalisms in a credible way.

In this context Epp Lauk mentioned the 'Worlds of Journalism Study' project, a multi-dimensional empirical comparative study carried out in 67 countries, with the goal of assessing journalism around the world.

The second keynote speaker, Jérôme Monnet, represents the University of Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée, the Paris School of Urbanism and the Laboratoire Ville Mobilité Transport. While being a stranger in Central Europe and in media and journalism studies (to quote his words), he provided really interesting insights into the main conference topic, by addressing the question of how public space can be a communicative space. Drawing many examples from his socio-urbanist studies in Los Angeles, Mexico, and Paris, he focused on

urban landscapes, in order to provide meaningful instances of communication. Among others, he was illustrating how urban space itself is setting and communicating social rules, and how it is used by people to fulfill certain collective endeavors: as glorification of the past or marking one's colonial power (monumental architecture), running commercial activity, enabling social / political subversion and protest, or attributing symbolic meaning to an urban landscape.

The third speaker, Sabina Mihelj from Loughborough University, opted for intellectual provocation in her keynote titled 'A Decline of Publicness: Rethinking the Transformation of CEE Media After 1989'. Drawing from her recent project 'Screening Socialism: Television and Everyday Life in Socialist Eastern Europe' (including data from the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and GDR), she argued, in her words, 'in a deliberately provocative manner, that what we have witnessed in Eastern Europe since 1989 has in fact been, in some ways, the decline of publicness, which started pretty much immediately after 1989'. This decline was not limited to post-communist countries, but was defined as part of a practice of global transformation. This presentation rested on the following premises: first, the narrative used by Central Europeans to describe the essence of transformation from communism into capitalism (narrative of regaining freedom) has been too simplistic, binary, and thus obscuring understanding of real processes; second, CEE media were wrongly accused of being equal with political institutions (in fact, the media were not 'handmade of politics'); third, when we include the period after 1989 we clearly see that a unilinear process of transition is a false assumption — in fact, the communist black legacies are not relevant to analyze the CEE transition in a broader historical sense (particularly, in a logic of progress these binaries do not count); fourth, instead of using the narrative of freedom, we should use the category of publicness (in a special, narrowed sense) to understand the transformation; fifth, a good medium to test the aforementioned claims is television — its developments and functions played in post-war Europe.

The following argument is also pretty unflinching: when we do some research on television in socialist countries — we must realize that, in fact, 'contrary to common perception', the whole subsequent, post-cold war period [in CEE] 'was marked, in some respect, with the decline of publicness, or shrinking of publicness'. And further on, when we compare the (declared) functions of television, we must find out that, in the communist period, there were many systemic similarities between Western public media (like the BBC), and socialist state television and its mission. Sabina Mihelj points out that the key contrast lies 'not between communist and non-communist media, but between commercial broadcasters on the one hand, and public and communist broadcasters' on the other. It is perhaps worth stressing here, that one of the key proofs for openness and 'true publicness', and 'undeniable similarities' of the BBC and Polish television in the 1960s was... a quote from Włodzimierz Sokorski — the Polish Communist Party President of the Committee for Radio and Television (a Red Army Brigadier-General and flamboyant one), who in 1960 described the main tasks of Polish Television in the following words: 'It's our specificity to not only inform quickly and objectively, deepen human knowledge about the world, scientific discoveries, the most recent phenomena in the domain of social, economic, and political tendencies, but also to give people decent entertainment, develop their taste of culture, art, and develop their ethical (...) needs'. No wonder that Sabina Mihelj's presentation stirred some confusion among those from the audience who could remember socialist television, as well as the very absence of the public sphere in those years...

The fourth keynote speaker was András Bozóki from the Central European University in Budapest, a political scientist and author of important books on the divergent aspects of post-communist transition, European public sphere, democracy, political culture, and mechanisms of change in CEE countries. In his presentation he was analyzing the main factors and contexts that determined the nature of political discourses which have been shaping the post-communist transformation. Bozóki set off from an overview of public roles of intellectuals in the twentieth century, having assumed that discourses on the one hand, and social actors who cultivate them on the other, cannot be separated. Then, drawing from social scientific authors, he presented the whole range of public roles played by, or ascribed to intellectuals since the middle of the twentieth century. These roles can be grasped along the line from the separated from society, relatively silent seekers of universal truths, and 'organic' thinkers involved 'in observation and synthesis' (1930–1950), through professionals, then rebels after 1968, and dissidents of 1981–1990, and legislators of the early 1990s, finally down to the interpreters and social mediators now. According to András Bozóki, every one of these concepts is important to understand the political change and post-communist transformation in its divergent paths, and to reconstruct the relevant waves of public discourse.

Speaking about Hungary, but having in mind a more general application, Bozóki discerned three main political discourses which organized public understanding and social practices during the transformation after 1989: 'the liberal discourse' (critical against socialistic centralism, and fostering the consensual expression of rights and freedoms, as well as universal values of democracy), followed by 'the discourse of TINA' in the first decade of the transformation (critical against state interventions and centralism, and fostering the market freedom, capitalism, and neo-liberalism), and finally 'the national populist discourse' after the crisis of 2008–2012 (critical against elites, representative liberal democracy and traditional politics, and fostering populism, nativism, and popular sovereignty).

Apart from keynote presentations, the program of the CEECOM conference included 34 thematic sessions and more than 140 presentations. The panelists split into two groups: those who followed the central theme, and those who remained consistent with their traditional topics. Related to this issue, there were nine thematic sessions oriented to the 'communicative and political space'. Following one's duty as a chronicler, let's recall the titles: 'Political Space of Entertainment in Late Night Talk Shows and Prison Radios', 'Secular and Sacred Public spheres', 'Spaces of the nation: constructing spaces, memories, and rituals', 'Politics, Music and a Diva: Spaces of Entertainment', 'Spatial Experience and Mediated Places in Central and Eastern European Television Fiction', 'Discursive sense of place: time-space (de)compressions in the times of uncertainty', 'Activism, Communication, and Locality', 'The Politics of Space and Contemporary Media', and 'Understanding digital space beyond web analysis'. Further on, there were twenty five thematic sessions which provided the whole spectrum of the research and expert knowledge on media and communication in Central and Eastern Europe. Also from this point of view, the 11th CEECOM conference was a great success.

Finally, it is worth stressing the strength of the Polish representation, roughly counting up those who appeared to 5 chairs and 24 panelists. For the record, these thematic sessions were chaired by Michał Kuś ('Contemporary Forms of Free Speech Censorship in Europe — The Place of the State in the Media System', two parts), Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska ('Network Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe. Communicative Political Power and Empowerment of the Digital Generation'), Bartosz Wiśniewski ('Contemporary Forms

of Free Speech Censorship in Europe — The Place of the State in the Media System’), Jacek H. Kołodziej (‘Discursive sense of place: time-space (de)compressions in the times of uncertainty’) and Michał Jacuński (‘Understanding digital space beyond web analysis’). Polish panelists make the impressive list of additional 24 names — for the record (in chronological order): Waldemar Tłokiński, Bartosz Wiśniewski, Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, Agnieszka Szymańska, Bartłomiej Łódzki, Justyna Arendarska, Jacek H. Kołodziej, Michał Bukowski, Joanna Grzechnik, Rafał Leśniczak, Anna Adamus-Matuszynska, Piotr Dzik, Anna Sytnik, Bartosz Pietrzyk, Sylwia Męćfal, Michał Kuś, Piotr Sula, Jakub Nowak, Małgorzata Tadeusz-Ciesielczyk, Katarzyna Gad, Dominika Popielec, Michał Jacuński, Anna Szwed-Walczak, and Jan Pleszczyński.

Text: Jacek H. Kołodziej

Photo: Ferenc Halof

The 4th National Congress of Political Science, “The State in Times of Change” Lublin, September 18–20, 2018

On September 18–20, 2018, at the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the 4th National Congress of Political Science was held, entitled “The State in Times of Change”. More than 700 scholars from Poland and Europe presented results of their research and participated in 124 thematic panels. The panels were dedicated among other things to political communication in Poland, the role of women in the public sphere and political science in Poland, foreign policy, political elites and political parties.

The Congress began with a speech from the keynote speaker — prof. Stefano Guzzini (Former President of the Central and East European International Studies Association), and a plenary session dedicated to the main subject of the conference. Professor Teresa Łoś-Nowak, prof. Andrzej Antoszewski, prof. Roman Kuźniar, prof. Zbigniew Czachór, prof. Alicja Stępińska-Kuczyńska, prof. Jarosław Hrycak and prof. Mirosław Karwat spoke about various aspects of understanding and studying statehood in a period of change. After the session the official opening of the Congress was held, attended by the Minister of Science and Higher Education, the Rector of UMCS, the President of the Polish Political Sciences Association, the Chairman of the Political Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Marshal of the Lublin Voivodeship, the Mayor of Lublin, and the President of the International Political Science Association.

Employees of the *Central European Journal of Communication* also participated in the Congress. Professor Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska joined with dr. Paulina Barczyszyn-Madziarz, M.A. Julia Trzcińska, dr Justyna Arendarska and dr Róża Norström to present the results of an international research project made in cooperation with the George Washington University, as part of the panel entitled “The coverage of the change of the PiS government (1st December 2017/31st January 2018) in the perspective of Polish television broadcasters: between politicization and commercialization”. The researchers presented