

Reproducing Political Capitalism in the Media of East-Central Europe

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SUMMARY

The article examines a decade of changes in the media after the collapse of the socialist system in East-Central Europe. Several structural tendencies in the ECE countries may be identified which are, in different degrees, spread throughout the region and reflect the imitative nature of the new systems. It is argued that the imitative nature of the newly emerging systems is an almost unmanageable obstacle to the development of more democratic systems in the region. The imitative tendencies are clustered in two broader groups: (1) those imitating external environment, primarily Western Europe and the USA, which comprise Italianization; denationalization and privatization; commercialization, and inter- or transnationalization; and (2) those "imitating the past", i.e. the former system of state socialism: renationalization, and nationalistic and religious exclusivism. In addition to the domination of unilateral imitation, the greatest impediment to the progress in media democratization represents an immense increase in lawsuits against journalists and the media, in which journalists are often found guilty of libel and offence and severely fined or even imprisoned. Consequently, the developments in the ECE countries led to the establishment of a kind of "political capitalism" and created a system of "paternalist commercialism" in the media, with the state (government) often acting both as a powerful political and economic actor.

Ključne riječi: politički kapitalizam, postkomunističke zemlje, demokratizacija medija, upravljanje medijima

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The Rise of Political Capitalism

We may use the term “political capitalism” to denote the form of transition from the former socialist system to a new (quasi)capitalist system in the East-Central European (ECE) countries as a transformation from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, in Tönnies’ terms (1887/1991). Essentially this means that still no clear differentiation between the state and the market, and between political parties and civil society exists. It is a type of transition that Tönnies would relate to two opposed forms of property: “the property of an organic will” typical of *Gemeinschaft* and “the property of a reflexive will” that predominates in *Gesellschaft*. The reflexive will’s property, brought about by the “commercial civilization,” is considered an “expense” and is essentially nothing but a means for the people to reach a desired end (i.e. profit). However, the organic will’s property, which is prevalent in a less developed social structure, is “irrationally” assimilated by the subject (owner, e.g. the state), so that there is no clear separation of means and ends of human or state actions.

Clearly, the market place alone or in combination with political (party) pluralism does not guarantee *equality in freedom* since market forces can both expand and reduce the democratic potentials of the media. The market is essentially a terrain for different policies and coalitions – based on different ideologies – but media systems are established, maintained and eventually abolished by *political decisions*. In the former socialist countries, however, the state often acts both as a political and economic actor. It is unavoidable that a state that rigidly controls the economy cannot tolerate the kind of political competition that independent media would represent. Yet, as the state is also the safeguard of civil society, it ought to perform its duties and establish a regulatory framework of the media to serve democracy. In practice, however, institutions of civil society and public opinion are still marginalized. While the absence of a market economy makes the media politically dependent, the opposite does not hold true: a market economy cannot guarantee political autonomy media. The developments in the ECE countries led to the establishment of a kind of “political capitalism” and created a system of “paternalist commercialism” in the media.

The question of how to advance the democratization of communication and media – often raised both in administrative discourse and academic analysis – primarily applies to media *regulation*, but not to state *intervention* into the media. Rather, media regulation involves a number of competing interests in addition to the interests of the three branches of state power. At least five distinct *classes of interest* in the mass media could be identified: (1) media owners’ interest in using their media as a means of self-expression and profit maximization; (2) the general interest of capital to advertise commodities on an ever larger scale; (3) demand from audiences for media uses; recipients’ interest in receiving information and opinions; (4) various civil society groups’ interest in having access to the media to publish their opinions; (5) a general interest in maintaining the rights of all citizens and in the media performing their public service functions. Striking a proper *balance* between different actors is the fundamental problem of regulation. For instance, the idea of media democratization in the framework of press freedom has been confronted from the very beginning particularly by those who advocate

the free market as the most efficient regulatory system. The contemporary development of satellite television and global computer mediated communication networks is accompanied by a legal vacuum – or at least vagueness – regarding legal regulation. It seems that these problems and conflicting interests stimulate the tendency of *globalizing the market-type regulation*. It certainly produces the least legal uncertainties, but at the same time – and with no less certainty – (definitely) buries the idea of public service media, which are fundamental to the 20th-century notion of democratic communication.

Lessons from Post-Communist Countries

With the breakdown of authoritarian structures in East-Central Europe in the late 1980s, the idea of an active public is rooted in political transformations as an intellectual motive and practical goal. The media had, and still have, an important role in the historic battle for democracy and pluralism in the region in at least three senses: (1) In a number of former socialist countries, the media were agents of revolutionary political changes of the 1980s. (2) At the same time, in all East-Central European countries, revolutionary changes in society were aimed at the transformation of the party- or state-owned media. (3) Finally, in one way or another, all the central questions of transition of these societies pertain to the media: the role of the state and civil society, the question of democratic pluralism, problems of denationalization and privatization of the means of production, the quest for sovereignty and, of course, the liberalization of the media systems themselves. In the 1990s, all countries in the region privatized the press and introduced a form of dual (“public-commercial”) broadcasting system. Soon after the early period of strong political dependence of the broadcasting sector on the new political élites, radio and television take the path of commercialization characterized by cheap studio programs and talk shows, increasing re-runs and, particularly, increasing foreign (mainly US) entertainment. The withering away of the idea of a (new) public sphere in the region is caused by a combination of *internal commercial pressures* (e.g., technological underdevelopment, economic problems) and *external influences* (e.g., TV stations controlled or directly owned by transnational corporations, like SBS and CME).

Before democratic (r)evolutions, fundamental reforms in the institutions of communication, particularly in broadcasting, were considered by civil movements essential for any process of democratization. Yet, after systemic changes, many of East-Central European state broadcast organizations remained essentially unchanged or even re-regulated as typical state institutions by the newly established political élites. While the post-Communist governments liberalized the print media immediately, they slowed down the de-etatization of state radio and television in order to control powerful media and propagate their ideas to an increasingly disenchanting society. Everywhere, television was the most “attractive” choice. Thus, it happened that a part of the former “anti-state” intellectual opposition came once again in the position to require public “protection” of the media against party and/or state interference.

Compared with the situation prevailing before 1989, the media in Central-Eastern Europe have certainly noted significant gains in their liberalization and pluralization.

However, in contrast to demonopolization, which has made decisive progress, other fundamental prerequisites of media democratization – e.g., media differentiation, professionalization of journalists, access to the media – are far from being materialized. State monopoly was abolished everywhere, but politicians in all countries tend to constrain journalistic freedom by using or introducing anti-defamation laws to penalize journalists for writing openly about public officials and institutions. Particularly in the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Romania, and several former Yugoslav republics, poor economic conditions, the lack of a developed advertising market, continuing monopolies (e.g., of press distribution) and a considerable degree of state control (with subsidies and content-based criteria for registration of newspapers) leave little room for a truly independent press. Democratization is also impeded by slow progress in the professionalization of journalists, understood both in the sense of highly developed individual skills and competence, and in the sense of collective professionalization in which journalists perform public service and develop professional organization to enforce the service ideal and to protect the autonomy of the profession.

In almost all the former Communist countries, a broadcasting law providing for demonopolization and the introduction of the private sector has been adopted. However, demonopolization does not equal differentiation of the media and democratization of the communication sphere. Both the ruling coalitions and the oppositional parties, as well as the Catholic Church, still tend to see (particularly public broadcast) media as a corporate “democratic” organ of the new “pluralist” party-state, i.e., in the same perspective as they were regarded by the former authorities. This old authoritarian conception of the total polity practiced for decades by the old socialist regimes may be found in other activities as well, for example in controlling nominations of chief personnel in educational, cultural and health institutions, or in wooing intellectuals to become party members or prophets.

Censorship has been legally abolished in all former socialist countries in Eastern Europe, but not yet the state control of broadcasting. Although the new media laws are generally (but with some exceptions) more liberal than the old ones, they still have loopholes that offer governments the opportunity to influence the media and journalists. The need to re-regulate broadcasting was widely recognized, particularly in terms of creating procedures for granting licenses to new private/commercial broadcasters, but the process of developing new law was politically contentious and therefore protracted. There were also genuine constitutional difficulties with the institutional arrangements for regulating and controlling public and private broadcasting which widely reflected a country's system of government.

Communist media systems were based on secondary content regulation that was expected to limit the flaws and “side effects” of media markets (e.g., different forms of publications or, generally, information subsidies), although market economy does not exist in the sphere of communication. That is probably the main reason for the complete disappearance of secondary regulation during the re-regulation period in the 1990s, because it is considered a form of state intervention like in the former system. Consequently, even public media are not liberated from competition for (advertising) income; neither are they politically independent and protected against particularistic (political) interests. Mass media remain vulnerable to manipulation by political forces

and, in addition, became dependent on commercial corporations, which limit resources, variety, and autonomy. It is obvious that the media are not inevitably instrumental to democracy; they are no less effective as instruments of manipulation. The cumulative effects of the development of a free market economy and a general economic underdevelopment do not stimulate “media differentiation, professionalization of journalists, demonopolization, decentralization, a degree of democratization,” as Jakubowicz (1995) describes the fundamental prerequisites for media change in East-Central Europe. The underdeveloped economy is impeding the deployment of new information and communication technologies for computer mediated communication and the Internet, i.e., in sectors left to private initiative and commercial interests like the de-nationalized press. Even the denationalization of broadcasting – which resulted in a dual broadcasting system – turned into a paradoxical negation of the development of public service media.

It is difficult or even impossible to generalize validly the main tendencies in the development of the press and broadcasting during the last ten years in the countries so diverse as, for example, Russia and the Czech Republic, or Rumania and Slovenia. Nevertheless, several tendencies may be identified which are present, in *different degrees*, throughout the region. Seven of them are, I would argue, particularly important in sustaining “political capitalism” in the media: (1) renationalization; (2) Italianization; (3) denationalization and privatization; (4) commercialization; (5) inter- and transnationalization; (6) nationalistic and religious exclusivism, and (7) criminal prosecution and civil lawsuits against journalists.

Re-nationalization

In almost all countries in the region, the new governments did not hesitate to use regulations and strategies of the former regimes to retain control over national broadcasting – either a direct control by appointments of boards, directors and editors, or a more indirect control over the budget and other economic instruments (e.g., state advertising). In some countries, as for example in some former Yugoslav republics, the former broadcasting acts have been changed to (re)establish the control of the state over radio and television organizations. While in the former self-management system, the right to participate in appointments to managing and editorial positions in the media was granted to media workers, the amended broadcasting acts in all Yugoslav republics have abolished this workers' right and made it a privilege of either the government (e.g., in Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo, Croatia) or the parliament (Bosnia and Herzegovina). In Slovenia, this right of media employees was reintroduced in 1994, after a four-year interruption, but abolished again five years later.

The media have been largely used as the battleground of party élites tending to maximize their political power and to change the political map. Not surprisingly, broadcasting is still largely organized in accordance with the former “collectivist” ideology and the dominant role of the party-state, and its restructuring aimed at establishing a national, politicized and (quasi) commercial “public” broadcasting *subordinated to state authorities and party élites* rather than to public accountability. Political parties, parliaments or even

governments usually act as the only representative of “the public,” thus having the right, for example, to appoint both the board and directors and editors of broadcasting companies. Although the new systems differ from the former ones in that these functions were transferred from the Communist Party to the democratically elected state organs, this does not change the fundamental dependence of the media on external political authorities, and the reduction of the public to the masses of passive consumers. New *forms* of broadcasting regulation in East-Central Europe are apparently borrowed from the West-European countries. However, *access* to the “public” broadcasting is either still severely limited to political élites in most countries of the region – in some countries even only to those of the ruling coalitions – or commercially based. Broadcasting councils as the main regulatory bodies are, as a rule, appointed by parliaments or (partly) even by governments. This also applies to supervisory bodies of public broadcasters. In both cases, civic associations, societies, and movements have no access to the institutional forms of media management and control.

The strike by journalists and media workers at Czech Public Television in Prague in December 2000 – ten years after the “velvet revolution” – was “a moment of truth” for media democratization not only in the Czech Republic, but also in the entire region of post-communist countries. Journalists demanded from the Czech authorities to remove Jiri Hodac, the newly-appointed General Director of Czech Public Television and former close adviser to Vaclav Klaus, the President of the Parliament and Leader of the ODS, the conservative Democratic Citizens Party, and to reform the television council, which was under total control by political parties. Hodac has tried to purge the editorial department and dismiss key leaders of the management, who rebelled over his new regime and asked him to resign. He responded by dismissing four of them. The journalists' anger over political interference reached breaking point with the appointment of Jana Bobosikova, another former close adviser to Klaus, to head the political department at the station. She immediately fired 20 editorial staff, which led to the newsroom revolt. Almost all countries in the region experienced similar attempts by governments and political parties of political dealing and complete disregard for the principles of editorial independence during the last decade, but the Prague strike was the first to get tens of thousands of citizens to rally in support of media freedom.

Italianization of the Media

Large parts of the broadcasting systems in East-Central Europe were re-nationalized and put under a direct or indirect control by the leading political parties. I call this process “*italianization*” of the media, because it is almost a mirror image of what happened for decades in Italy until the *partitocratic* political system crashed in 1992. The emerging media systems in East-Central Europe are similar to the Italian system in the 1980s as characterized by Mancini (1991: 139): (1) The media are under strong state control, either directly, as in the case of state-owned television, or indirectly through various forms of state-owned and/or economically supported press. (2) The degree of mass media partisanship is strong; the political parties have always been involved in editorial choices and the structure of the mass media. (3) Equally strong is the degree of

integration of the media and political élites; for example, there is a strong professional mobility between the worlds of politics and journalism. (4) There is no consolidated and shared professional ethics among media professionals. In addition, post-socialist media are in a similar position to those in Italy in the 1980s because of the instability of political systems, which represent a kind of “*coalitional complex*” consisting of a large number of parliamentary parties or single “great coalitions”. Unlike in Italy, however, the media landscape in East-Central Europe is much less differentiated and pluralistic, and the commercial – particularly broadcast – sector is far less developed, which is related both to the transitional nature of the ruling political coalitions and to the general economic crisis. Nevertheless, the Italian model of a rapid and largely unregulated development of private television of Berlusconi may serve as a warning: not only because of its strict commercial orientation, which – as in other Western countries – challenged the traditional quality orientation of public television, but also because of its final *de facto* politicization, when Berlusconi's party won parliamentary elections in 1993.

De-nationalization and Privatization

After decades of state-controlled media, it was largely believed that freedom of ownership and particularly private ownership is the guarantor of democracy and a free press. Privatization was seen as the only instrument that can reduce and possibly abolish state intervention in the media. In practice, the disentanglement of state property and its conversion into private property has been intensely political.

During the early post-Communist period, one of the most significant characteristics of ownership changes in the press was the elimination of the previous dominant role of the state. Practically all newspapers and some local radio stations were privatized, and a number of new, privately owned and commercially oriented radio and television stations were set up. East Central European countries have widely embraced liberal-pluralist economic and political models. Here, press freedom is equated with private ownership by individuals, and the market is seen as the surest safeguard against state interference. But in practice, governments did not withdraw completely and the press throughout the region is still heavily saturated with politics. Besides intervening through media and cultural policies, some degree of direct or latent state ownership could be still found in many print media sectors. The case in point represent recent efforts by the Hungarian government to use public money to establish a right-centrist newspaper. Similarly, the first Slovenian post-Communist government financed the establishment of a privately owned conservative daily, the owners being primarily party officials. The licensing of new broadcasting stations was often much more a party-political decision than the result of (or at least attempts at) identifying the needs and interests of publics, e.g., through public hearings, as practiced in some Western countries rather than based on the selection of the most appropriate (or highest) bidder. As Vartanova (1999) argues, “the long-standing authoritarian tradition of state pressures over the Russian media has marginalized the scope of market activities of independent newspapers or TV stations. In recent years state owned and Government run

media have got a dominant position at the media market being increasingly used for getting political benefits, not revenues.”

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Commercialization

As it is necessary to distinguish between “traditional” re-nationalization and “modern” Italianization, a distinction should be drawn between privatization and commercialization of the media. Not only private newspapers and radio and television stations choose to entertain and satisfy mass demand (and powerful advertisers), in order to increase readership and audience, and hence, profits. Public broadcasters went the same way because they are surrounded by private economy, which substantially limits their production autonomy (Negt and Kluge, 1973: 191). As a consequence, even public service media react to the environment as business companies: for example, the results of the measurement of audiences become a sort of “television money” that determines the value of programming; they are managed according to the same managing principles as any other company; and they are directly involved in transactions with private (foreign) suppliers of programs and equipment, which are often in a monopoly position.

A kind of *paternal-commercial* media system is emerging, with a tendency of privatization and commercialization of the media (particularly the press) on the one hand, and of exercising and maximizing political power over the media (television in particular) on the other. In many countries in the region with developing market economies, the lines between political and business interests are blurred. The competition for consumers causes competition for the latest news and makes journalists vulnerable to politics; political authorities enter journalism either directly through interviews and press conferences, or indirectly through “information subsidies” (making information available to journalists on a *quid-pro-quo* basis), influence the journalistic agenda setting, if not attitudes and actions, and eventually make journalism subsidiary to *public relations*. Tabloid journalism was a “salvation” out of the press of conflicting

powers. The blending of facts and opinions, real events and trivial fictional material, news and entertainment replaced factual and reliable accounts of daily, particularly politically relevant events. This in turn results in an increased number of lawsuits against journalists based on the legal provisions that they should not harm the rights to privacy and reputation of individuals.

Inter – and Transnationalization

The state of the economy and the development of the free market are crucial for the development of capital-intensive media such as television. In many countries in East-Central Europe it was argued that without foreign investment into the media it would have been impossible to improve newsprint and printing quality, modernize editorial offices and, primarily, to establish and equip radio and television stations. Thus, all countries in the region made media markets accessible for foreign capital. Post-communist media became increasingly internationalized at five levels: those of reception, media contents, funding, regulation and organization, including foreign media ownership (Jakubowicz, 1996). Foreign investments and ownership contributed to move away the previously overpoliticized media from direct influence of the state. These results are perhaps – certainly not always – least dependent on the present party politics. In addition to foreign capital, they include the import of Western managerial and professional practices in the media operation and a diversification of media products, e.g., sorts of magazines, tabloids, and new types of programming.

Media internationalization and globalization may have opposing and controversial consequences: on the one hand the international circulation of cultural products may enrich national cultures if adopted creatively by the local populations, but on the other hand it may help to extinguish local cultures. However, in East-Central Europe the consequences of this process are predominantly negative, because all countries in the region became merely its “recipients,” but not its actors. In a number of countries in the region, for example Hungary, Poland, and Czech Republic, more than 50 per cent of the national dailies are owned by foreign companies. Thus Fabris (1995) argues that the “Westification” of East Central European media has fully progressed and there is a good chance that East-Central Europe will become a “supplemental engine for the Western European media industry.” The processes of privatization and “colonization” of the East by the West could lead to “a stratified press in which the majority of the population will be effectively denied access to information about matters of public importance” (Sparks, 1991: 20).

Nationalistic and Religious Exclusivism

The end of totalitarian rule in East-Central Europe marked a new stage in the process of re-creating civic *identity*. By providing an instantaneous source of “referential points,” the media, particularly television which, often emerge at the forefront of the processes of the search for self-assertion, both individual and collective. Revolutionary

political and economic changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s resulted in the dissolution of former legitimizing identities and in the construction of new ones. This search for new identities is predominantly not based on individual and group points of identification which could replace the state-provided and institutionally embedded identities, but is again a clearly institutionalized process led by political parties, the State and the Catholic Church. The restructuring of identities is often based on the “collective rights” doctrine, largely expressed in ethnic and religious terms. New identities significantly depart from the former ones based on the ideology of “socialist internationalism,” but they are not really new: in fact, they are a sort of hybrid of past and more recent ideological “coalitions” based particularly on the national or ethnic pride, religious fervency, historic places of origin, or economic ambitions. These identities are likely to be used to discriminate among people: speaking “the right” language, being part of the dominant ethnicity and religious denomination, may condition one’s access to the “national” media and politics in general.

Prosecution of Journalists

In a number of ECE countries power élites introduced rather “endogenous” strategies of interference with the media, including intimidation and harassment of journalists, and even assassinations are used to silence unwanted voices. Several prominent journalists and editors of independent media were assassinated during the last couple of years. Even if not the most dreadful, the most widespread and epidemic peril of independent journalism and the media is an increased number of lawsuits against the media based on the legal provisions that journalists should not harm the rights to privacy and reputation of individuals. The anti-defamation laws do not differentiate between legally respected intervention into privacy of public personality and the protection of privacy of other citizens, as it is the practice in democratic countries. Even if the liability of journalists is legally restricted to dealing with the individuals who are not “public persons,” such provisions are largely misused to discipline journalists. Generally, there is almost no risk involved in suing journalists. Libel is considered a criminal offence and covered in the Penal Codes. Individual plaintiffs and, in some cases (to “protect” the highest state officials), public prosecutors *ex officio* may file a criminal charge against journalists for defamation. Citizens also have the right to sue and collect damages according to civil law, with no fee to pay when asking for damages.

From a detached perspective, a rapid increase in lawsuits against journalists could be primarily considered a necessary and favorable consequence of an increased freedom of expression and gradual implementation of new legislative and judiciary policies toward freedom of the press. Yet this is certainly not the case if defamation is legally treated as criminal offence whose perpetrator could be imprisoned, and which is prosecuted *ex officio* by public prosecutor, as it is the practice in a number of ECE countries. Moreover, as Slovak judge Drgonec (in Skolkay, 1999: 1) points out, the “evidence of truth” is considered legally irrelevant, “because true information can be equally the outcome of illegal intervention into privacy as false information. This results in lowering of the possibilities of the mass media to apply their control function

through public opinion vis-à-vis public personalities.” The possibility of convicting a journalist for a probable violation, not caused by falseness, of a public person’s personal interests may seriously limit freedom of the media. In a situation where the plaintiff is a public figure, public official, or even public prosecutor ex officio, “a libel action may be a disguised way of preventing the press from performing a checking function” even in countries with a much longer democratic tradition (Powe, 1991: 292). As statistics of judicial decisions in a number of ECE countries indicate, journalists are often found guilty by courts and severely fined or even imprisoned.

Conclusion

During the last ten years, the newly formed states in East-Central Europe mostly re-regulated their media systems with varying degrees of efficiency. In fact, the general success of these efforts to establish a truly democratic system based on the public service sector is very limited. The substantial changes in media legislation mainly concern structural and contents regulation, but they largely failed. *Structural regulation* (media ownership, organization, financing, management, control, procedures for licensing, rules for access, etc.) remains ineffective, since legal violations are often not prosecuted either for political reasons and/or for a general lack of personnel and technical means to enforce the respective laws. *Contents regulation* (what content and how should it be selected and presented in programming, including quotas?) did not contribute to increasing quality.

There is no doubt that the former centralized socialist economy based on state ownership was both *economically inefficient* and *inimical to democracy*. But it would be also mistaken to believe that free markets and private property are the only (or, at least, the best) alternative in *both* respects. The question of an alternative to *laissez-faire* is particularly important for such vital activities in civil society, as are education, science, culture, and communication. Although an advocacy of any form of socialized markets and social ownership is regarded highly suspiciously in the period of the proclaimed *laissez-faire* doctrine in ECE, it should be acknowledged that the imposition of narrow commercial criteria threatens the integrity of civil society and hands the initiative to greedy commercial interests.

The *imitative nature* of the newly emerging systems is an almost unmanageable obstacle to the development of more democratic systems in the region. Imitation, if reciprocal and based on accumulation, i.e. *active*, may well lead to real changes and innovations. Yet the type of imitation practiced in the ECE countries is basically negative and passive: it is unilateral (only from West to East), and based on substitution (revocation of all old institutions and criteria). Uncritical imitation of democratic institutions developed in older democracies may be a risky business. Instead, as Dahl (1991: 15) suggests, the countries in transition to the inauguration of democratic institutions should “discriminate between the aspects of the mature democratic countries that are essential to democracy and those that are not only *not* essential to it but may be harmful.” Such a critical view is particularly needed because in some cases the extent and forms of privatization of the mass media in ECE exceed what has been prac-

ticed in Western capitalism, and ECE countries are becoming a kind of experimental zone for those strategies of privatization activated by Western media capital, which are still held back by the social responsibility doctrine of the media in the West. Western-type capitalism should not be simply imitated through substitution also because of immense *cultural differences*.

The absence of market economy makes the media politically dependent, but the opposite does not hold true: a market economy cannot guarantee political autonomy media. The developments in the ECE countries led to the establishment of a kind of “political capitalism” and created a system of “paternalist commercialism” in the media, with the state (government) often acting both as a political and economic actor. Thus the access to the media is in practice either still severely limited to political élites – in some countries even only to those of the ruling coalitions – or commercially based, whereas institutions of civil society and public opinion are largely marginalized.

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Oživljavanje političkog kapitalizma u medijima Srednje i Istočne Europe

SAŽETAK

Autor analizira promjene u medijima Srednje i Istočne Europe u desetljeću nakon raspada socijalističkog sustava. Uočava nekoliko strukturnih tendencija u tim zemljama koje su, u različitoj mjeri, prisutne u cijeloj regiji i odražavaju imitativnu narav novih sustava. Po autorovu mišljenju, imitativna priroda novih sustava u nastajanju predstavlja gotovo nesavladivu prepreku u razvoju demokratičnijih sustava u toj regiji. Te imitativne tendencije mogu se svrstati u dvije veće skupine: (1) one koje imitiraju vanjsko okruženje, prvenstveno Zapadnu Europu i Sjedinjene Američke države, a obuhvaćaju talijanizaciju, denacionalizaciju i privatizaciju, komercijalizaciju, te inter- i transnacionalizaciju; (2) one koje “imitiraju prošlost”, to jest, bivši sustav državnog socijalizma, a zagovaraju renacionalizaciju i nacionalistički i vjerski ekskluzivizam.

Pored dominacije jednostranog oponašanja, najveću prepreku napretku u demokratizaciji medija predstavlja ogroman porast broja sudskih tužba protiv novinara i medijskih kuća zbog klevete. Nerijetko se proglašavaju krivim zbog klevete i uvrede časti i osuđuju na visoke globe ili čak na zatvorske kazne. Tako je u zemljama Srednje i Istočne Europe uspostavljena jedna vrsta “političkog kapitalizma” i stvoren sustav “paternalističkog komercijalizma” u medijima, u kojem se država (vlada) često javlja kao moćan politički i ekonomski akter.