

demnation of Western hypocrisy. The West is called out for condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine while simultaneously tolerating civilian casualties in Gaza. Additionally, the author mentions Trump's violation of the fundamental ethical principles of the Western European civilization during his first term. This trend continues even more extremely in his second term, further increasing the instability of the West and calling its unity into question.

Finally, it appears that the author achieves her goal of reviewing civilization research by compiling the works of the most significant scholars in the field, while also providing a detailed account of the emergence, history and characteristics of the nine civilizations according to Huntington. Furthermore, she shows that some of Huntington's predictions have indeed come true and that the concept of civilization still has its place in international relations today. The author expresses concern and raises important questions about the future use of civilizational identities as justification for conflicts and for shaping the domestic and foreign policies of certain states. She demonstrates that dialogue, cooperation and the exchange of beneficial elements between civilizations are possible, while simultaneously preserving the traditions of one's own civilization. Therefore, the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations is possible. She concludes that predicting the development of global politics is extremely difficult, but with a measure of caution and restraint, she allows herself hope for a future in which dialogue between civilizations exists.

David Koletić
University of Zagreb,
Faculty of Political Science

Book Review

Zlatan Krajina **Mediji i publike u svakodnevnom životu**

Fakultet političkih znanosti and Leykam International, Zagreb, 2025, 259 pp.

Krajina wrote the book *Media and Publics in Everyday Life* to address the limited supply of Croatian-language media studies literature. In this comparatively small scientific milieu, such lack unfortunately often compels the use of English-language literature in teaching. But the book is more than a pedagogic tool. At the same time, it is a statement of Krajina's own approach to studying media and its publics. It is not developed as a manifesto, but as a synthetic work, through respectfully addressing various other theories, interpretations, studies, and empirical cases contributing to the tradition of researching media publics. Certainly not structured as a classic textbook, it eschews gradual and comprehensive presentations of the research field and is by no means a dry compendium; instead, it interweaves ideas, interpretations, examples, and anecdotes in a lively style. It contextualizes and scrutinizes a number of common myths about media, its publics, and power structures surrounding them. As stated, the main locus of this exposition are the "relations between individuals and society" (p. 213) as intermediated by the media, especially in the context of everyday life.

The introductory first chapter sets the scene, locating the narrative within the disciplines of sociology (showing us the organization of the social world), media studies (showing us the functioning and roles of media), and cultural studies (showing us the contextualized processes of meaning-making). All three perspectives are vital for investigating the field of *everyday life*, the “key generative context” where key social relations and struggles intersect and culminate, its research revealing deep societal structures (p. 14). It is a highly dynamic and even contradictory field, its subjects neither unconsciously reproducing it, nor being fully reflexive; in research terms, a “terrain that cannot be exhausted by any map” (pp. 15-16). This also implicates media use in daily life – while media are created with an intended use and interpretation, in actual daily use they are reinterpreted, repurposed, intermittently foregrounded and backgrounded, and creatively reimagined by its users. The users, the *public*, are equally elusive, forming, reforming, collapsing, adapting their practices and interpretations of the world.

Yet Krajina tempers the fluidity of these phenomena. Insisting on the importance of a critical viewpoint, he points towards relations of power structuring society and media, and with it, everyday life. Cultural studies, emanating from its British roots in the works of Stuart Hall and others, are sensitive to questions of social domination, hierarchies, and struggles, working through a post-Marxist perspective where clashes occur not just on the axis of class, but gender, race, nationalities, and other social identities. Publics are thus equally likely to accept the preferred (i.e. domi-

nant, hegemonic) readings of media content. “We interpret media using meanings which we already use in everyday life and which emanate from real conditions that we live in and the context of interaction (relations with others, spatial conditions, etc). In short, we are all set within ‘webs of meaning’, both media and publics, without an exit from such ‘semantic webs’” (p. 31-32), with these webs also being defined by relations of power. Yet publics still retain the possibility of resistance and reinterpretation, which tends to be forgotten when we talk of media as overpowering and directly influencing the minds of its users. In this context, Krajina defines several key terms in this chapter – society, publics, everydayness, ideology, mediation, etc. All these topics are further elaborated in the following chapters.

The second chapter starts off with the topic of media power and the widespread belief in their dominating influence, occasionally culminating in moral panic which finds the scapegoat for social crises in (new) media technologies. As the *sine qua non* of modern life, media remain a powerful “ideological force” (p. 39), but this should be carefully and critically approached in research. Krajina presents his own approach as *non-media-centric*, where media themselves are positioned not as the main object, but as conditions of social interaction (keeping in mind the broader context, like the historical, geographical, political, and economic), which only gain sense and meaning for publics in local, everyday activity. In other words, media are ‘inhabited’ in everyday life. Thus, Krajina defines media as “technologies, infrastructures, institutions, contents, and practices of communication at a distance,

or the creation and exchange of information and presentation of identities, groups, and social reality” (p. 48). They’re both symbolic (content, information) and material (bodily practices like typing, or things like devices). As such, media are entangled with everyday life, positioned in our discourses, practices, but also our spaces (“the politics of spatial relations” (p. 49), e.g., the television in the living room). They connect us and frame the world, bringing us closer to – but at the same time also distancing us from – remote places and events, bridging the public and private spheres. In these conditions, enmeshing in everyday life, media become background, near invisible, routine, and entirely ordinary and quotidian. This normalization can obscure the workings of media power (Krajina quotes Hall and Althusser on ideology), but also, as Krajina later explains, holds the seed of resistance and reappropriation. He invokes Hall’s encoding/decoding model of communication to show how publics are always active – they are served media communication encoded in the mode of preferred/hegemonic reading, but they themselves need to do the work of decoding/interpretation, creating the possibility of oppositional or negotiated readings, often developing them in discussion with, e.g., family and friends. Still, these activities happen under wider historical, social, and cultural conditions, influencing their possibilities and outcomes.

The third chapter, titled “Media Publics in the Communicological Landscape”, considers the relation between concepts of publics and communication. The march of modernization and the rise of industrial and urban society entailed the development of mass media that served an inte-

grating social function. They provided a common symbolic field, facilitating communication across increasingly complex societies, forming imagined communities (which include a wide range of individuals, at the same time excluding others). The needs of advanced industrial societies begat social sciences, and with them the study of media and its publics, to be captured by various forms of measurement and explanatory models. The motives for investigating publics shifted with time, reconceptualizing them variously as consumers, communication nodes, active users, etc. Krajina considers the concept of communication as the binding matter between media and publics, which enables meaning-making and understanding of the world, as well as the creation and maintenance of communities. In the wider sense, it can be understood in terms of the spatial notion of ‘movement’ – “of information, goods, and people” (p. 71). Yet publics are not entities which precede communication, waiting to be addressed by the media or identified by researchers. They are a fluid and diffuse phenomenon, forming and reforming in flows of communication, attending to media in a great variety of ways. In the research context, they’re constructs, conventions that attempt to mark down the research object. They’re groups of people, but there is no “group of people that socially identify themselves like this” (p. 78). Krajina considers several models of communication and their implications, from Shannon and Weaver’s transmission model to the circuit model characteristic of cultural studies.

The fourth chapter, “Culturological Views of Media Effects”, directly deals with the power of media and the various

ways it has been conceptualized in research when revolving around the notion of *media effects*. Simply put, media effects are “any measurable results of an individual’s encounter with media content” (p. 91). The assumption of the existence of effects is paramount to the entire media enterprise and its attendant practices – such as marketing that would not push advertisements if it did not believe they influenced people to buy their products. Yet in media research, the question of media effects is contentious, especially from Krajina’s perspective of cultural studies of everydayness. Approaches seeking to determine media effects tend to passivize publics (which are thereby no longer seen as publics, but ‘audiences’), ignore the situational context of media consumption, and focus on surface meanings of content. All things considered, media effects are very hard to conclusively prove, since the media experience cannot be isolated from its multiple contexts, i.e. the multitude of possible intervening variables. Still, Krajina believes the media effects research legacy holds good value and is worth attending to, if for no other purpose than to be productively reassessed from the cultural studies perspective. The media effects assumption is still very much alive in various professions, from the aforementioned marketing to social media platforms’ predictive content algorithms. Krajina considers the century-long tradition, identifies its historical phases, and showcases several strains: the pessimistic Frankfurt school approach, the administrative approach, functionalist approaches, etc. Concluding the chapter, he considers the pessimistic view of media effects and various instances of moral panic where media have been blamed for ad-

verse societal phenomena, such as media depictions of violence directly increasing violence, or television producing passive “couch potatoes” (p. 120).

The fifth chapter turns its attention towards sociological literature and the concept of the everyday. Drawing from Anthony Giddens and John Thompson, amongst others, Krajina sketches out the difference between premodern life, which revolved around entirely local spaces and timeframes where communication was predominantly immediate, and modern societies compressing space/time thanks to technology enabling instant communication at a distance. The waning of absolute monarchies and gradual democratization of the 19th and early 20th centuries brought with them the public sphere, hinging on novel forms of communication and media. This entailed the dissolution of traditional forms of sociality, which was partially filled by media and their integrative function as they became sources of *ontological security*, a term coined by Giddens. Krajina then turns to microsociological perspectives (e.g. Erving Goffman) which show dynamics of “development, negotiation, recognition, adoption and maintenance of norms, procedures, rituals as bottom-up ways of maintaining social order” (p. 129), but also points to Giddens’ theory of structuration as means of bridging the micro- and macrolevels of analysis. The routine and habitual activities of the everyday media use reinforce ontological security, connect us to the communicationally extended world, creating its “experiential texture” (p.137), bridge the gap between private and public, local and global, real and virtual, etc., and contribute to the formation of the self. Krajina concludes the chapter

by considering theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau which discuss the emancipatory potentials of the everyday in its active and tactical reappropriations.

The sixth chapter, titled “Postmodern Encounters with Media and Politics of the Flow”, starts by considering media’s *modes of address*, the ways media conceive of their users and relations with them, i.e. imagining the ideal user and constructing the medium and its contents around this figure. This feeds into the concept of the *flow* – developed in researching television programmes, where the continuous and uninterrupted stream of content contextualizes the whole media experience. With television, the mode of address did not require uninterrupted, fully focused watching, but enabled sporadic, inattentive glances (unlike, e.g., cinema). This case is exemplary of diverse modes of media use, which are certainly not exhausted by default modes of address, but, as mentioned, can be creatively reappropriated. Krajina continues with a discussion of discrepancies between media use and experience – media enable us to witness distant events, often tragic ones, yet such distance exculpates us of any moral responsibility for such events. This is showcased in various discussions on “narcotizing disfunctions” (p. 179) of media use. Yet Krajina also points to the work of Margaret Morse, who argues that dissonant, yet ultimately palatable, media experiences are analogical of life in complex industrial societies, creating an illusion of a coherent whole out of the unfathomably complex mass of mediatized events. Inattentive and superficial engagement with media is entirely concordant with such context, but is not without its misgivings and needs to be subject to critique.

In the final chapter before the Conclusion, “Critique of the Media Everyday”, Krajina interrogates how media become normalized and ‘invisible’, even while being factually omnipresent in everyday life. He concludes that “encountering media in everyday space, we are invited to accept as normal that we are drawn into becoming media publics, without choosing to do so each time” (p. 198), in reference to, e.g., screens in public spaces or advertisements. Thus, he seeks a method that “questions the unquestionable” (p. 200), allowing us to see through the invisible everyday with media, reveal its context and make conscious our practices within it. He looks at the works of situationists, dadaists, and surrealists, who sought to defamiliarize participation in consumer society in order to open up new spaces of reflection and freedom. The normal(ized) world is to be made ‘weird’ through various interventions (artistic or otherwise) as to reveal its arbitrary and constructed elements previously taken for granted. Krajina points at several programs and projects operating in this register, e.g. various unorthodox observation schemes, like journaling everyday observations in one’s neighbourhood, or the situationist method of *dérive* – unplanned, spontaneous travel through cities. In the brief Conclusion, Krajina sums up the intentions and lessons of the book.

Krajina’s book is rich in concepts, sources, examples, critiques, and opened questions, to a degree that cannot be encompassed in such a brief review. As he states in the Preamble, the book is written with multiple audiences in mind. For other researchers, it offers a valuable discussion of various open questions in the field, aptly

showcasing both drawbacks and strengths of various approaches and theories. For professionals (journalists, as Krajina pinpoints), it offers a compelling overview of various ways of thinking about their field of work and the entities inhabiting it. The general public is also addressed, and the book enables them to “better understand their own habits in using media” (p. 9). But, perhaps most importantly, the

book is intended for students, as Krajina shows great care for this section of readers throughout the book. Various creative teaching and explaining methods are suggested, and Krajina is obviously inspired by his experiences in the lecture hall, not content with *ex cathedra* approaches, but rather inviting a lively and even playful engagement with the topic and the objects of media studies.

Leon Cvrtila
University of Ljubljana,
Faculty of Social Science