

Dan Schill, Rita Kirk, Amy E. Jasperson (eds.) (2017). *Political Communication in Real Time. Theoretical and Applied Research Approaches*. New York: Routledge, pp. 282, ISBN: 978-1-138-94941-6.

Social media are considered as a dynamic communication environment where people's moods, opinions, and specific social and political reactions are reflected. This is the actual place where users can share their thoughts, sympathies or antipathies freely. The current category of social media has changed and now it includes all of the platforms that allow users to comment on social and political reality instantly. Nevertheless, many communication processes are seemed to be elusive because of a still changeable and unstable information environment powered by users' activity. Because of this, researchers and analysts need appropriate, comprehensive and sufficient tools that more reflect and catch the elusiveness and multiplicity of processes occurring within the social media environment.

The book *Political Communication in Real Time. Theoretical and Applied Research Approaches* provides a wide and great view of communication processes analysis within new media using Real Time Response (RTR) methodology, Moment to Moment (MtM) data collection and Continuous Response Measurement (CRM). This collective work is a great repository of knowledge for those who want to base their studies on innovative research methods and analytic tools. The reviewed book is a part of the Routledge Studies in Global Information, Politics, and Society and together with other works from this set, fills the gap in political communication research, especially when it comes to social and new media research.

The reviewed position consists of twelve chapters grouped into three main — well-thought out parts. Part I includes a set of four articles and introduces the reader to real time response methods. In the first article D. Schill provides a historical perspective and describes the development of real time methodologies and its meaning for modern communication studies. The next article, written by J. L. Burton et al., explains the important role of continuous response data for the field of political and communication sciences. The authors describe a complex mechanism of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing continuous response data. The third chapter is devoted to various uses of RTR when it comes to voter engagement measures and its usage by news organizations. In this chapter, R. Kirk emphasizes the value of such methodology, by answering the question how it actually is adapted by particular enterprises to play a vital role when it comes to consumer experience measurement. The fourth and final chapter in this part, written by S. Evins encompasses considerations about the term “connected voter” which is an implication of social media and new media structural and technological development. The author presents how social media are formed to encourage users to be engaged in

communication processes. Evins is focused on the 2012 presidential campaign, midterm elections in 2014, and the 2016 primary race.

The second part of the book is called *Real time effects: measuring political message effects by the second?* and introduces to readers numerous ways of political message measurement and how the process of analysis looks step by step. A. Gelman et al., show how to manage high-frequency polling with non-representative data. The authors' view is based on the conviction that with proper statistical adjustment, non-representative polling can be used to accurately and continuously track public engagement. In the next chapter, S. Maynard Calinedo, Ch. D. McIlwain and E. Dudash-Buskirk turned their attention toward the potential and importance for race-based appeals in U.S. political campaign communication. In this research the authors found that viewers (and potential voters) react negatively when it comes to racial cues, for instance. In the next article, S. Ottler, et al., have presented interesting research measuring the effects of candidates on voters in Germany. The authors analyze how television appearances imply the way people perceived political candidates. The next chapter brings the reader's attention to mobile platforms and its role when it comes to response measurement. P. Resnik, et al., focused their considerations on the presentation of mobile reactions measure.

The third and final part of the book is devoted to the subject of partisanship and polarization and encompasses considerations focused on selective information processing. S. Iyengar, et al., try to present a model of the polarizing effects on campaign ads. The authors use novel methodology to explain the fluctuations of voters' reactions during the 2006 senate campaign. The next chapter stays on the same subject and focuses primarily on the links between party identification and polarization. J. E. Jaspersen, et al., present the insights based on moment-to-moment analysis of likely voters during the presidential campaign in 2012. The authors claimed that party affiliation has a strong influence on the preferred channel of choice and the degree of response polarization. Another article in this part written by M. Bachl investigates how particular political candidate activity and statements imply the effects of the viewers' perception about politics. Bachl based his research on two quasi-experimental studies conducted during the live broadcast debates. The book is closed by the Hughes and Bucy article. In this work the authors use *z-score* transformations to investigate moments where viewer reactions diverged the most during the 2012 presidential debates. The authors' intention was to present both visual and verbal debate content which led to partisan divergence.

The review of *Political Communication in Real Time* book revealed many interesting and insightful considerations about politics and communication which should coexist in modern analysis. It has to be emphasized that the whole book is written in simple and understandable language, however, a significant part of the book is based on calculations, thus, it requires from the reader the basics of statistics at least. The meaningful advantage of the reviewed position is the fact that it

was written by practitioners in the field of communication and marketing. The perspective taken by the authors is still something new and methods RTR, CRM or MtM provide a new and fresh view on the political communication issue.

One very important thing is that all authors perceive and treat social media not only as a platform for communication but rather as a dynamic and changeable environment. D. Shill pointed out clearly that as voters and campaigns alike are adjusting to this new environment, researchers must also adopt and study political communication as it is practiced (p. 3). This conviction is the main and inseparable part of the book. The conception of social media's rise and rise of the many, leading to the crystallization of the "connected voter" is another interesting input. S. Evins' perspective explains accurately how the emergence of social media implied the change in traditional norms of innovation which have been disrupted (p. 72). It has to be emphasized that disruption is a natural process of technological development. Today's social media should be treated as a separate and self-sufficient media sector with the enormous potential to activate people's engagement and to establish new information cycles based on the users' activity and news involvement.

Without any doubt the most insightful are those chapters which present concrete research based on case studies. In the book, readers can find many analyses that measure the perception of voters, participation in news or people's response to campaign debates etc. Today's media space is filled with people's behavior which leads to communication processes shaping. The authors of the book took it into consideration, which is why the reader many times may find issues related to psychology. This is a very good point when it comes to communication studies and political science, where people's perceptions play an indispensable role giving momentum of political communication in particular. According to that, the authors agreed that political advertising is more likely to generate polarized responses (p. 195). This contradiction is very clear, especially in comparison to "more objective" forms of political messages or even news reports. Nevertheless, the application of still emerging methodology is limited sometimes (p. 122) and there is much more work to be done. The authors are aware of such limitations and emphasize that on many occasions analyses based on binary system are sometimes insufficient. Anyway, the presented methodological tools and perspectives in connection with other approaches — social network analysis or system dynamics, could give us an even more accurate picture of communication behavior within new media. The mix of two or three tools seems to be reasonable when it comes to providing new research perspective. It would be good if the authors introduced some propositions of methodologies combining and possibilities of extending the presented studies. Anyway, this is not a complaint and not an implication of any disadvantage.

The *Political Communication in Real Time* book can be recommended for all researchers who want to apply a new and more comprehensive toolbox for their

analyses. This position is addressed mainly to scientists with the basics in statistics, however it is a good base for lecturers who want to present another and/or new perspective for students.

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Péter Bajomi-Lázár (ed.) (2017). *Media in Third-Wave Democracies. Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. Paris, Budapest: L'Harmattan Publishing House, pp. 238, ISBN: 978-2-343-13011-8.

Although this international collection of studies is a conference volume, it could make good use as a handbook on the current state of media freedom in the less fortunate half of the old continent. Editor Péter Bajomi-Lázár, distinguished scholar of comparative media studies, provides a broad overview — both theoretical and historical-factual — which convincingly supports his initial concept of “party colonization of media”. In recently-democratized societies, all attributes of democracy, including their media systems are still much more vulnerable than their ‘Western’ counterparts, no matter what sort of democratic institutions they have adopted on the requirement of the EU, claims Bajomi-Lázár. “Yet to date former communist countries still have a long way to go: they evince poorer democratic and economic performance, as well as low levels of media freedom compared with much of the rest of Europe” (forward, referring to the 2015 report of Freedom House). Among the main reasons for the differences between East/Central/South and Western Europe the author rightly mentions lesser density of population, belated industrialization and technological development, as well as unconsolidated political systems and more fragile economies in the East (South).

The book offers a multi-dimensional model, a coherent construction based on the theoretical framework in the first part and country case studies in the second. The first part elaborates on the three arguably most relevant aspects of contemporary media communication: national and international legal conditions (Judith Bayer), the changing relationship between producer and audience of journalistic content (Auksė Balčytienė) and the spread and influence of new media in the defined region (Dorka Horváth). Their statements and conclusions are regularly echoed and reflected upon in the case studies of the second part of the volume. One of the most significant achievements of this collection is breaking with the great illusion of the 1990s, which laid down the basis of practically all EU legislation, namely that democratization is a linear and irreversible process, and no political power will ever have the motivation to stop it. As a consequence of this belief, the EU lost its chan-

ces to efficiently interfere with the emergence of autocracies, as the protection of democracy as such now falls beyond the competences of the EU.

Still, the rather bitter conclusion of Judit Bayer related to media pluralism — “deficiencies cannot be changed by national measurements, but external intervention is needed” — sounds like an incentive for another discussion. It is not only the “big framework”, the legal foundations of the EU that are too old and rigid, incapable of furthering democratic processes in member states, but so are the traditional patterns of professional journalism, media on a grass-roots level. The outdated concept of informed citizenship is unable to shape public opinion in countries that recently went through societal transformation and “collective regrouping of societies” — as Balčytienė argues in her paper. According to Dorka Horváth’s excellently documented paper, the technological developments in media communication and the use of the Internet is more confusing than liberating in the context of unstable democracies or semi-autocracies. In other words, technology does not promote change in these societies but rather strengthens their traditionally present features.

The case studies of the second part cover seven countries — Greece, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia — seven exciting stories of fighting for media pluralism and the freedom of the press, all with unclear and dubious results. These country reports written by insiders in a highly disciplined and credible manner all grant this volume a special value and make it a must-read for every scholar interested in the region, as the presented stories give a more precise insight into these countries’ recent history than any history-textbook. The concluding chapter by Josef Trappel provides a highly insightful and comprehensive synthesis of theory and cases, creating a new level of cohesion for the volume.

A comparative study in any academic field can follow two paths: a typological and a genealogical. *Media in the Third Wave Democracies* focuses more on the typological than on the genealogical side of the problem. The decline of liberal values and the emergence of home-grown authoritarian regimes in some of the post-state socialist countries follow a similar pattern: the legal-constitutional and institutional guarantees of media freedom and media pluralism prove to be insufficient. International organizations have no impact on local factors and public opinion, the independence of public service media is toyed with by political powers. Commercial media is sold by multinational media groups to national business oligarchs, who are closely related to politicians, while independent, ‘real content-providing’ journalism gets completely marginalized. The vicious circle is closed: the Habermasian ideal of publicity is left far behind, and the only thing media scholars can do is create new metaphors for describing parallel situations, such as “Berlusconiisation”, “Iberisation”, “colonization”, “media capture”, etc. Still, the volume leaves several questions open. It might need a different, genealogical approach as well, analysing social processes and societal reactions rather than describing the general “markings” of the existing parallelism. The Huntingtonian term “third

wave democracies” was coined at the very beginning of the 1990s to theoretically frame and explain the common origin of obvious similarities. It soon received heavy criticism for its American ethnocentrism and insensitive selection of indicators for measuring the level of democracy, and these days is less powerful for explaining the spread of authoritarian infection in the second decade of the 21st century. The rising illiberal autocracies are at least as complex, if not more complex than traditional democracies, and are ideologically and even “genetically” interconnected in a very peculiar way. The new Central/Eastern European as well as Southern political forces are highly susceptible to adopting Eastern “worst practices” (Putin, Erdogan or even Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore) together with the attached ideologies. Nowadays, however, even the most well-established Western democracies serve with ‘evil models’ — see for example the excellent analysis by J. E. Stiglitz *Toward a taxonomy of media capture* about the USA. (https://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/faculty/jstiglitz/sites/jstiglitz/files/Capture2_Taxonomy-of-Media-Capture.pdf).

Another related question is how new autocracies create their “bad” or “obedient” public, and how it is possible that the level of dissatisfaction of democratically-minded people in these countries never reaches a critical threshold. Attempts are made in the discussed volume to shed some light on these issues, although a more critical perspective on the correlation between social trust in international (mostly EU) institutions and the role played by multinational capital and its impact on local economies (and also media) might provide a more inspiring frame for analysis.

This volume is certainly a valuable contribution and will be of particular interest to those working in the field of comparative social sciences related to Southern and Central/Eastern Europe. *Media in the Third-Wave Democracies* convincingly demonstrates the local effects of global trends in media pluralism, and at the same time provides a rich basis for further analytical work on the correlation between politics, economy, technology, and society.

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