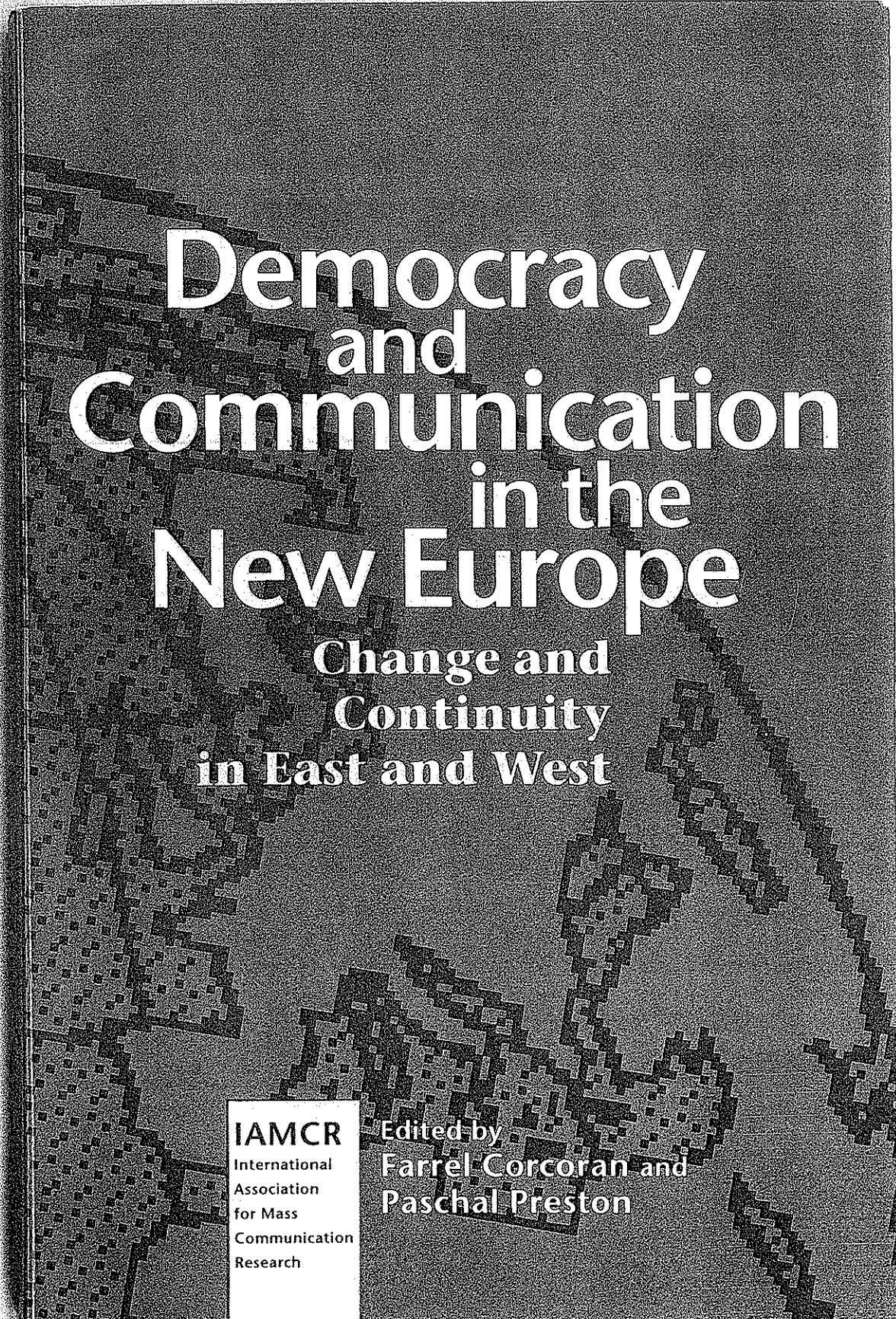




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From State Control to Commodification: Media Democratisation in East and Central Europe

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INTRODUCTION

When in 1989 and 1990 the old authoritarian structures began to break down with an almost inordinate speed all around Eastern Europe, it was hardly imaginable what would be the "final" results of these dramatic changes in which civil society played a prominent role. Several attempts at counterrevolution initiated by the old power structures took place afterwards in Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Nationalistic clashes dramatically appeared in a number of former socialist countries which had previously declared nations (and nationalisms) as one of the products of capitalism that ought to disappear owing to "proletarian internationalism." In other countries such as Albania and Bulgaria, radical changes are still impeded by the old political powers. Nevertheless, it is evident now that no historical turning back is possible anymore. In a very short period of time, civil society was created in East and Central Europe; almost overnight, it succeeded in inaugurating parliamentary democracy. But at the same time, the processes of political reconstruction and economic restructuring imperiled again the existence of civil society.

Deregulation and privatisation of the national economy and the media—particularly the press—are considered by the new power elites in Central and Eastern Europe not only as fundamental prerequisites to solve the weaknesses of bureaucratic control and achieve a higher level of productivity, but also as necessary conditions of general democratisation and, thus, autonomy and development of the media. Arguments for such changes are similar to those prevailing in Western Europe (cf. Keane 1991) and already domesticated in some developing countries. In the classical liberal model of the media, their primary democratic role is defined in terms of a watchdog function; accordingly, the media ought to control and limit the power of the state authorities. It is precisely this function that determines forms of ownership and organisation of the media. Because the primary task is to safeguard the autonomy of the media from the state, and because only private property is said to ensure such an autonomy, the fundamental condition for a democratic media system is its firm and exclusive foundation in the free market. Any state or public regulation may essentially limit the critical role of the media. Although such a regulation is believed to have been "acceptable" in broadcasting in the period of technological limitations (e.g., because of the "scarcity of frequencies"), contemporary developments in communication technologies (e.g., satellites and cable systems) now support a complete independence of the electronic media from the state as well.

THE LIBERAL MODEL OF MEDIA AUTONOMY

The classical liberal model is based on several normative and historical (partially implicit) assumptions, which are completely neglected by the new Eastern European (de)regulation endeavours. At least four of them are mentioned here. First, in accordance with the traditional conception of the relationship between the state and civil society, in which the latter included citizens as the owners of the production means, the critical role of the media as "instruments" of civil society was understood in terms of limiting and preventing the abuses of state power. The task of the media was to control and limit the principle of maximisation of political power.

Second, before the rise of the mass press on the eve of the 19th century (Splichal 1981: 99), the press was highly politicized and clearly related to party interests. The growth of the mass press, particularly radio and television in the 20th century, generated depoliticisation of the media and their commercialisation based on the growing importance of their entertainment function. This trend obviously challenged traditional liberal conceptions restricted to the political role of the media. The third assumption is that traditional divisions between the state and civil soci-

ety were challenged by the development of new media functions—entertainment and particularly, advertising—and the economic restructuring of advanced capitalist societies. Similar to the state, agents of "invisible power" (capital), their transnational agglomeration and the principle of profit maximisation they tend to advance jeopardize the independence of the media and journalists and the freedom and equality of citizens.

The fourth and final assumption is that processes of oligopolisation and monopolisation in the economy and, specifically, in the media have changed the traditional relationship of independence among the state, capital, and the media. Although traditionally the state wanted to avoid public media control and penetrate the media (e.g., by legal regulation), now it cooperates with media conglomerates which, on their part, try to influence governments and get governmental support for their projects.

The controversies related to these assumptions make the validity of classical liberal conceptions of the media dubious. For example, as Barber (1992: 63) demonstrated, "importing free political parties, parliaments, and presses cannot establish a democratic civil society; imposing a free market may even have the opposite effect." The uncritical imitation of democratic institutions developed in older democratic societies may be a risky business. Instead, as Dahl (1991:15) suggested, 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."

There is no doubt that a centralised socialist economy based on state ownership was both economically inefficient and inimical to democracy. But it would also be mistaken to believe that "free markets" and private property are the only (or, at least, the best) alternative in both respects. Although an advocacy of any form of socialised markets and social ownership is regarded with considerable suspicion in the period of the proclaimed *laissez-faire* doctrine in East and Central Europe, it should be acknowledged, as Blackburn (1991: 234) claimed, that "the imposition of narrow commercial criteria menaces the integrity of civil society and hands the initiative to rapacious commercial interests." The question of an alternative to *laissez-faire* is particularly important for such vital activities in civil society as education, science, culture, and communication.

Such a critical view is particularly needed, as Becker (1992: 13) argued, not only because the extent and forms of privatisation of the mass media in Eastern Europe exceed what has been practised in Western capitalism until now, but also, or even primarily, because Eastern Europe is becoming a kind of experimental zone for those strategies of privatisation activated by Western media capital, which are still held back by the social responsibility doctrine in the West. A policy

not willing to restrict the operation of the free market in the media is clearly in favour of corporate speech rather than free speech; it is far from being a continuation of the ideas of the former democratic opposition in Eastern Europe. Jakubowicz (1992: 72) even maintained that "the results of the Solidarity revolution and the rule of post-Solidarity forces are almost the reverse of what was originally intended."

The (re)construction of multiparty parliamentary democracy and a market economy in Central and Eastern European countries points to the radical changes from socialist statism (sovietism) toward capitalism. The Communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe failed to reform their systems, which denied "any difference between political and social power, public and private law, and state-sanctioned (dis)information and propaganda and freely circulated public opinion" (Keane 1988: 2). The merger of economic and political power in the hands of the state produced a totalitarian, self-obstructing "command" system that was not even able to generate valid information about what was going on in society and, particularly, the economy. In short, the autonomy of civil society had been "replaced" by an all-powerful state. At the same time, the ineffectiveness of socialist economies led to the decay of these countries as typical peripheral entities unable to collaborate (let alone to compete) with the core of developed countries.

New political elites in Central and Eastern Europe generally rejected state socialism and tried to introduce capitalism; consequently, we may expect a total reorganization of society around the logic of capital and the marketplace. A few years ago, the entry of private capital in the arena was politically and ideologically unviable. When discussing "informatization and restructuring of Soviet society," Chereskin and Tsalenko (1989: 1084) still pointed to "possibilities and specific features of socialist economy" and rejected a capitalist market economy. Now, however, it is believed that these tasks may be assumed only by private companies that may be prepared to supply telecommunications services and to satisfy the demand, which far exceeds the supply.

"PRIVATISATION IS DEMOCRACY" VERSUS "PRIVATISATION OR DEMOCRACY"

Leaving aside the question of the feasibility of the new economic policies, contemporary processes of denationalisation and privatisation in former socialist countries can be challenged from four main perspectives.

First, the nature of privatisation with the dominant role of the state ("centralised privatisation") contradicts the proclaimed quest for democratisation of society and the state; although the public interest is

the key phrase used by governments to justify their efforts toward privatisation, it is not a guarantee for an extension of citizens' rights and freedoms. The new primary right to private property and private ownership of economic enterprises may support political liberty, but certainly not political equality. It may be that free enterprise is a prerequisite for a free press, but it is also clear that market mechanisms cannot guarantee the diversity and quality of information needed by citizens in a democratic society. As Barber (1992: 59) put it, a free market does not equal an open and democratic society.

Second, privatisation is often considered as an almost universal solution to improve the efficiency of former socialist economies. However, it is in fact more motivated by the need to fill the state treasury than by economic efficiency, which could be improved also without privatising, for example, by introducing competition among public enterprises (Przeworski 1991: 45). Third, denationalisation and privatisation forced by the state are primarily aimed at a redistribution of wealth and power (for example, the redistribution of control over systems of communications) rather than at a more effective economy; instead of a means to rationalise the economy, they are implemented as the (political) goal in and of itself.

The fourth relevant perspective here is that the success of transplanting Western capitalism and private ownership into postsocialist countries is limited by the indigenous social structure and superstructure of these societies. Developmentalists in the late 1950s and early 1960s believed that press freedom correlated with and spurred on economic growth, but they largely ignored the cultural and historical context that often plagues political development in developing countries toward a Western-type democracy.

In contrast to capitalism, political and economic activities in former socialist countries are still largely monopolised by the state. In practice, for example, the policy of liberalisation and privatisation in communications applies only to the press and local (or regional) broadcasting, whereas, at the same time, national broadcasting organisations were largely renationalised and put under the direct control of the government. The reason for such a contradiction is quite evident: *Privatisation* is often used as a metaphor to indicate some (and to conceal other) dimensions of much more complex sociopolitical realities.

Nor is privatisation only a question of ideological legitimization. In addition to ideological legitimization, it is even much more important that contemporary privatisation policies in Eastern Europe are mainly concerned with allocative control over the economy rather than with the question of ownership itself, or with operational control aimed at an effective use of available resources. These policies are mainly related to the question of the redistribution of political power and control over the

economy and are aimed against the "red managers" (Mencinger 1991: 23). They are—once again and similar to nationalisation performed by the former socialist state—aimed at establishing a new social structure through the political force of the state and the new effective owners. As Zeleny (1991: 3) argued, "the selling of social property in the CSFR has been misused for political purposes," which is but "a propaganda in an election campaign for a new totalitarianism."

As a matter of principle, efforts to privatise the whole economy by state intervention are paradoxical. The historical process of transformation of ownership is asymmetrical: Although it is possible to nationalise the private sector by state intervention, it is impossible to (re)establish it by the same means. State-directed privatisation is as voluntaristic as was the nationalisation of the means of production by the revolutionary socialist state. Nevertheless, new East European governments want to renationalise former state or social property first—to achieve political control over industrial privatisation and over the economy in general. This "ought to assure them, in accordance with the marxist doctrine of production relations and social superstructure, the permanence of power" (Mencinger 1991: 23).

MEDIATION OF THE MEDIA BETWEEN THE OPPOSING SPHERES OF THE STATE AND ECONOMY

The role of political parties and powerful economic actors has been significantly changed during the last century, thus making the border line between the state and civil society less transparent, but the principal function of mass communication remains, at least theoretically, unchanged. The mass media operate simultaneously in the realms of the state (politics) and economy (within or without civil society) and mediate between them, or, according to Gouldner (1976: 123), they "stand between the public, on the one side, and, on the other, the official managers of institutions, organizations, movements, or the society's hegemonic elites," thus making the relations of the media "to political parties here and elsewhere, the relations to the business world and to the numerous groups and interests who influence and who are influenced by the public" (Weber 1924/1976: 99) the real site of the problem. If the mass media, by definition, link the two opposing spheres and perform simultaneously political and economic functions, there is no rationality for the media to be totally subsumed under either of them.

The problem with market liberalism, which insists that market competition of the media is the most important precondition of their freedom, is precisely in such an invalid subsumption. Market liberalism

assumes that the basic right to private property—because everyone has this right—guarantees both freedom of the media (their independence from the state) and freedom of citizens (free choice between different media and contents). In fact, this is clearly an ideal type of "free market" which in practice does not exist due to the processes of capital concentration and centralisation. As a consequence, the "free" media market is largely oligopolised, and the "free" choice is severely limited by constrained supply.

The fundamental failure of market liberalism is the inability to distinguish and then comprehend the contradiction between the *economic sphere* (representing either a part of civil society or an autonomous subsystem as conceptualized by Gramsci) and the *political sphere* of the state, "between the economic and the political at the level of their value systems and of the social relations which those value systems require and support" (Garnham 1990: 110). If two incompatible—economic and political—sets or systems of values and relations exist, and the media mediate between them, why should they be subjected to the laws of economy rather than polity? The media are political institutions par excellence, not just commercial enterprises. By forcing political communication to channel itself via commercial media, public communication is transformed into the politics of consumerism, and citizens are made into consumers.

There is no doubt that the need for the political independence of the media is still great and perhaps greater than in the past. As Garnham (1990: 110) argued, it is also possible that the "pursuit of political freedom may override the search for economic efficiency." However, this is only one side of the contradiction between the two spheres. The other is that "the extent of possible political freedom is constrained by the level of material productivity."

The contradiction between the economic sphere (of civil society) and the political sphere of the state is fully developed in Western capitalist societies. As a number of studies report, the contents of privately owned television stations (still) diverge significantly from those of public corporations in terms of structure and values. However, public broadcasters do not strengthen their distinctive image of serious public affairs journalism, cultural programming, and educational programming vis-à-vis commercial stations. On the contrary, they largely yield to the competitive pressures of commercial stations and include more fiction and other "denationalised" lightweight entertainment programs. As an NBC executive in the United States pointed out, "a network cannot bow to higher standards if its competitors all round adopt lower ones. It becomes a greyer issue when it's all around you, and you're the last person crying 'Wait a minute'" (Blumler 1991: 9).

In the former socialist countries in East and Central Europe, this contradiction is partly "softened" by the absence of a truly developed

market economy and the continuing domination of the state over the economy. At the same time, however, the contradiction is strengthened by the low level of investment in domestic programming. Rising production costs lead to an increase in less expensive imported commercial programs transmitted by "public" television stations. Thus the contradiction between the state and civil society in the media sphere is not just a question of (formal) ownership and control, but it is much more a question of values and ideologies dominating the global market.

One of the main questions we have to address is whether and how a "postsocialist" civil society can be constructed to "deregulate" the dependence of the media on the state and/or the market and to maximize freedom of communication. The situation in East and Central Europe differs from that in the West at least in one crucial dimension. Whereas in the West democratic efforts are aimed particularly at decomposition of the media and limitation of the profit-maximising principle, East and Central Europe is facing only the first consequences of denationalisation and privatisation. Commercial motives of the media are thus often regarded as mainly limiting state penetration, without having any unfavourable consequences. Journalists see media commercialisation as an important instrument to achieve their own autonomy from the state, whereas the question of how the media care for the interests of the citizens is beyond their "professional" interest.

The basic problem is the lack of money and capital needed for a practically efficient and not only nominal privatisation, rather than the danger of an excessive power of capital. This makes very feasible a monopolistic coalition between the state and media professionals (journalists), although the latter may now play a more important role than in the former system in which a similar coalition existed in that both systems have in common the exclusion of a third part—the audiences. The domination of any of these three groups—the state, media professionals, and audiences—or a coalition between two of them against the third one inevitably produces an imbalance of power and domination of the interests of a minority (in authoritarian systems) or a majority (in paternalistic systems) against the interests of those not participating in the coalition.

In his early writings on freedom of the press, Marx criticized the liberal conception of freedom of the press, which reduced it to, or subsumed it under, freedom of entrepreneurship. At the same time, however, he admitted that "it is no transgression, when a German perceives the unknown goddess of freedom of the press as one of the goddesses he already knows, and accordingly he names her after them, freedom of entrepreneurship or freedom of ownership" (Marx 1842/1974: 68). This is exactly the case with the contemporary situation in East and Central Europe after the decades of nonmarket economy and state controlled media and economy. It is largely believed that freedom of ownership and

particularly private ownership is the guarantor of democracy and a free press. Privatisation is seen as the only instrument to reduce and possibly abolish state intervention in the media. Private ownership is simply the only "goddess" known and experienced by the majority of people, although to a very limited extent.

Although freedom of the press was declared as one of the fundamental freedoms (though not of individuals) under the previous regimes, private ownership was banished; now the goddess of private ownership was resurrected as was the religion itself. On the other hand, social and economic equality, which was the highest value in socialism, is devaluated by the anti-communist "movements" or even declared to have a negative connotation. Similar to socialism, which neglected, in contrast to Marx's ideas, the culturally progressive side of capitalist expansion (Garnham 1992: 3) and developed essentially as anticapitalism, anti-communism now represents "a total negation of socialist values, the suppression of the entire Marxism and not only Leninism, the rejection of contractual and cooperative relations, and forcing of egoism, competitiveness, and private ownership" (Rus 1992: 21).

Apparently, the media in East and Central Europe are not yet dominated by commercial corporate speech—mainly because the process of denationalisation and privatisation of the former state- and party-owned media is far from being completed—but continue to exist under another form of domination. The actual autonomy of the media is limited by the state, which tries to exhibit and strengthen its sovereignty. In a way, East and Central European media are in a similar position as those in capitalist countries: On the one hand, they are under the persisting pressure of state censorship and control; on the other hand, they are exposed to the "self-contradictory and self-paralysing tendencies of market-based communications media" (Keane 1991: 116). Thus, the fundamental question of whether a genuinely democratic communication system can be worked out may be (and should be) addressed simultaneously to both capitalist (commercial) and postsocialist (paternalistic-commercial) systems.

IS A "RADICAL DEMOCRATISATION" POSSIBLE?

The fundamental difference between the two media systems—the Western capitalist commercial system and the emerging paternal-commercial system in postsocialist countries—is the fact that East and Central European societies have never experienced political democracy in any full sense. With the exception of Hungary and, partly, Poland, which has been often split between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, they represented for centuries stateless nations, although with different degrees of autonomy: Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs, and Montenegrins

until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, following the war between Russia and Turkey; Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, and Croats until the end of the first World War and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Both multinational empires were actually destroyed by nationalisms. Similar to the other two great empires that dominated in Eastern Europe, Russia—although independent itself—always represented the “jail of nations.” Political democratisation, which started in some of these countries after the first World War, was blocked by the second World War, and after the end of war by Soviet occupation (with the exception of Yugoslavia). As Walzer (1992: 164) argued, the internationalism of communists, which was aimed against the imperialism of “great empires” and their dynasties, actually owes a great deal precisely to that imperialism.

The absence of any fully developed democratic tradition certainly prevents these countries from establishing an indigenous political democracy compatible with the nature of their own culture(s). The lack of other—mainly economic and technological—resources makes the dependency road even more likely to be followed by East and Central European countries. Thus Sparks is right when he said that by “looking at what is entailed in the profitable operation of the press and broadcasting in a developed market economy we can perhaps gain some insight into the future development of the media in the emerging market economies” (Sparks 1991: 13). This does not imply that East European societies will simply follow the path traced by those in the West, due to both internal and external (global) limits to growth. However, it does mean that external patterns of growth and “progress” are so powerful that peripheral societies like those in East and Central Europe cannot compete with them successfully. At best they can react and adapt to change in a rational way, but their autonomy or rationality is limited to certain degrees of freedom in implementing others’ experiences and plans.

The importance of the differences between the two systems also applies to the market or democracy dichotomy, which has specific components in the former socialist countries, or even a different nature in comparison to the West, partly because democracy in East and Central Europe is (still) less endangered by the dominant commercial principle of profit maximization and partly because civil society seems to dispose of more indigenous power. The question of the kind of counterpower civil society has at its disposal is one of the main problems related to its autonomy from both the state and the economy. In developed market systems the autonomy of civil society from the economy seems problematic because huge economic power is concentrated in economic organisations and the state, whereas the “alternative power” in the hands of civil society (e.g., moral power and information) is severely limited. In East and Central Europe, however, the influence of intellectuals based on their “cultural capital” and ethical—rather than political or economic—

power (still) compares favourably with that held by political and economic actors. Under socialist regimes, the cultural sphere represented the only possible alternative to the institutional political sphere. Important political initiatives against the monopolised political power were taken by intellectuals, mainly writers and social scientists, under the mask of artistic freedom and cultural autonomy.

In a number of former socialist countries, particularly in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia, the intelligentsia entered new political careers after the overthrow of the former regimes. In some cases, this appeared as “selling off intellectuals.” However, different parts of the former political “alternative” capitalized their former political investments to different degrees; civil society did not simply “come into power” without having to restructure itself. In Slovenia, for example:

the new political order brought most disenchantment to that part of alternative which firmly stuck to the “anti-political” aims. The core of this project was the rejection of the “battle for power” and striving for a radical remaking, by arousing the potentials of “civil society”, the relationship between the politics and society. (Bernik 1991: 18)

Although intellectuals actually caused the decay of civil society by establishing political parties and entering political (state) institutions after democratic elections, they may (and already do) help to reconstruct civil society either from within or from without. In different forms, the early proponents of democratic changes—dissident intellectuals and radical theorists—have been largely dismissed:

Not only the Velvet Revolution but also the “Velvet Evolution” has brought to its initiators and protagonists, or at least to some of them, “hard times”. . . . The difference between both cases is that of quantity rather than that of quality: the relatively smooth transition to democracy has enabled at least some of the “theorists” to adapt to the changing circumstances, whereas the rapid changes have made the coping with new situations much more difficult. (Bernik 1991: 19)

Media democratisation might be considered a typical case. Before democratic (re)volutions, fundamental reforms in the institutions of communication were considered by civil movements to be essential for any process of democratisation. Yet after democratic changes, many of the East and Central European broadcast organisations remained essentially unchanged or even re-regulated as typical state institutions by the newly established political elites. A part of the former “antistate” intellectual opposition was once again in the position to require public “protection” of the media against party and/or state interference.

The ruling coalitions see the media, particularly television and radio, as corporate "democratic" organs of the new "pluralistic" party state, that is, in the same perspective as it was regarded by the old authorities. This old authoritarian conception of the total polity practised 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.

As before, the idea of public service media is once again and quite often used as a cover for paternal or authoritarian communication systems (Williams 1976: 134), in which a high concern for people is based on the protective role of the media, in contrast to commercial systems that are characterized by a very low concern for recipients as recipients or users and a high concern for consumers whose consumption capacities can be sold to advertisers. What is now needed is to create a new kind of public service media that would be based on public funding and not controlled by the state or dominated by commercial interests and characterised by high concerns for production and recipients as users who are defined and define themselves in terms of social and collective needs, in contrast to consumers who are defined in terms of privatised individual desires. Such a new public system certainly cannot be the only system; rather, it should compete with those developed by the state ("paternal systems") and the market ("commercial systems"; see Table 3.1). But the fact that civil society would have its "own" communication system would make it less vulnerable than it is now, due to a portion of communication power it will gain and generate.

The main problem is how to limit the control and power held by commercial groups and political institutions in order to protect and increase, and not to injure, the independence of the media or to prevent coalitions between the media and the state or capital that are detrimental to consumers. From a theoretical perspective, this would imply the inauguration of an "autonomous, 'self-organized' public" (Vreg 1990: 317) and "radical democratization" of the public media, political, and economic competition (Krueger 1991: 26-8).

First, the public use of the media should allow for a symmetric change between the diverging perspectives of participants and observers. If not, the potential public media could degenerate into economic enterprises or propaganda departments of the state or political parties. Second, institutional autonomization of political competition should be counteracted by: (a) the recognition of the public media as the fourth "soft" or symbolic-argumentative power, so as to preclude their subordination under one of the three classic powers; (b) an ever-renewed "federalisation" of all four powers to limit their drives toward centralisation; and (c) a lowering of the thresholds of citizen participation in democratic political competition.

Table 3.1. Differences Between Media Systems in Attention Given to Audiences and the Media

System	Concern for audiences	Concern for the media
Authoritarian	low (restrictive) ^a	low
Paternal	high (protective) ^b	low
Commercial	low (consumptive) ^c	high (imperative) ^d
Democratic	high (supportive) ^e	high (supportive) ^f

^aAuthoritarian interest in audiences is restrictive in the sense that it limits, by means of censorship, the amount and diversity of contents available to audiences.

^bPaternal interest in audiences is protective because media controllers aim at protecting audiences against certain kinds of ideas and values that would be damaging to them.

^cCommercial interest in audiences is consumptive because it considers them only as (potential) consumers of the advertised goods and services.

^dCommercial concern for the media is imperative because technological and professional development of the media is a necessity to survive the market competition.

^eDemocratic interest in audiences is supportive because it is aimed at advancing competencies (the right to transmit) and opportunities (the right to receive) of audiences to participate in communication processes, including their access to the media.

^fDemocratic concern for the media is supportive because it promotes and subsidises media diversity.

Third, economic competition should be socioculturally regulated through: (a) the political separation of powers; (b) the limitation of the costs of bureaucratisation caused by (a); and (c) the extension of the customary models of co-determination, for example, by the inclusion of representatives of the public sphere.

What exactly should (or could) be the nature of such a system is certainly beyond the scope of this contribution. Mulgan (1991: 260), for example, believes that three types of "regulation and public control seem likely to survive in most conceivable societies": (a) traditional contents regulation of the core mass media, (b) infrastructure policies to ensure universal access to the basic communication networks and their connectivity, and (c) policies and laws regulating common standards and providing free public services. If there is much doubt about institutional forms of future public regulation, it is clear, however, that the marketplace alone or in combination with political (party) pluralism does not guarantee equality in freedom; rather, it is only a terrain for different possible policies and coalitions based on different ideologies. Rolland and Ostbye (1986: 122) argued that different media systems are "estab-

lished, maintained and eventually abolished by decisions made in political systems, and only indirectly by actions taken in the market." It would be too difficult to forecast the possible outcome of the present developments in East and Central Europe. We might think of different forms of democratisation of regulatory processes and social direction of economic activities, which would enable the media to develop as the necessary communications infrastructure for all citizens. However, as long as the key agents of power in East and Central Europe do not refrain from the "benefits" they may gain from an authoritarian or paternal, or a purely commercial system, the idea of nonmarket- and nonstate-driven media will be marginalised even more than in traditional capitalist societies.

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