ZRINJKA PERUŠKO, DINA VOZAB, AND ANTONIJA ČUVALO (2021). COMPARING POST-SOCIALIST MEDIA SYSTEMS – THE CASE OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE. LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP, 301 PP., ISBN 978-0-367-22677-0.

The main goal of the book *Comparing post-socialist media systems – the case of Southeast Europe* is to examine and explain why the media systems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are different from media systems in Western Europe, with particular focus on the media system in post-socialist countries of Southeast Europe. Zrinjka Peruško and colleagues want to understand the most important changes in media systems in this region and to determine why, decades after the fall of communism and the beginning of democratic transition, the media autonomy, independence and freedom of expression in that specific region still rates lower than other European countries.

The Foreword is written by Paolo Mancini, whose renowned book *Comparing media systems – Three models of media and politics* (2004), co-authored with Daniel Hallin, inspired the academic community and left such a mark in the studies of media, communication and journalism, and beyond. It is interesting to see how Professor Mancini reflects his impressions and corresponds with Peruško and colleagues, who based this book on Hallin and Mancini's empirical benchmark and expanded their original approach with historical institutionalism and other theoretical research concepts. As Mancini in the foreword explains: "This book helps to answer the question that was asked frequently when our book came out as it secures an important initial point: if one intends to compare Western Europe with 'the other Europe', that is that part of the continent that for more than 50 years passed through the Communist experience, it is necessary to speak of 'other Europes' and not just of one single 'other Europe.'"

The book consists of six chapters. The first sentences of the *Introduction* immediately snare the reader's attention as they interestingly connect the socio-political context of Southeast Europe, the fall of Berlin Wall, collapse of socialism, later unification of European Union and disintegration of Yugoslavia with references to the Eurovision song contest. This part sketches the cornerstones of the book and introduces us to the theoretical and empirical discussion that follows, particularly about the three approaches to comparing the media systems in the CEE countries, the media systems of CEE countries, which cluster with Western Europe and the important aspects of socialism and its impact on media systems.

The second chapter, *Explaining the transformations of post socialist media systems,* focused on problems about studying change, the periodization of media and social change and the aspects of comparing. This chapter starts from a rich theoretical framework and diversified concepts and approaches in contemporary scholarship to explain the transformations of post-socialist media systems. The authors base the research on three social revolutions identified as critical junctures, namely the bourgeois, socialist and democratic revolution, alongside a number of "communication revolutions", to be able to explain how the media systems in this region work today. In that context, the authors thoroughly discuss the political, socio-economic and cultural and symbolic fields which influence the shaping of media systems across identified temporal junctures.

In the third chapter, *Prelude to modernity,* the authors describe the historical development of media systems in detail, starting from the mid-19th century and the beginning of modern society in Europe. This chapter takes us through the most important social, cultural, technological and political aspects of the development of media markets, focusing on political, economic and cultural transformations which contoured the lines of contemporary media systems in this part of Europe. Readers get to know the turbulent political history of the Southeast Europe, economic privileges of those in power, the early relationships between the state and the media in the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, especially in terms of censorship. The authors describe the rise of media markets in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia in historical contexts of early modernity and later the professionalization of the press and radio, discussing the issues of political parallelism and journalistic autonomy until the beginning of the World War II.

The next chapter, *Media systems in socialist modernity,* guides us through the 45-year history of socialism in Yugoslavia, explaining how the media systems of various republics, and later individual states, have been shaped by the main political, socio-economic and cultural transformations, along with the rise of social movements, protests, and nationalism and ethnocentrism. The authors try to highlight the important aspect of the socialistic one-party state and its role in creating the framework for media environment. From this aspect, Peruško and colleagues distinguish between the three periods of media roles and development: the administrative period, in which the role of the state was extremely powerful and media at least independent; the self-management period, when the state still controlled the media, but in aspects of media production and legislative norms the media started to slowly liberalize during the 1960s; and the period of decadent socialism, characteristic for 1970s and 1980s, opened up and diversified the media and public sphere. The later development of the television market and the dominance of TV in comparison to print and radio, has been portrayed

through tables with interesting data about the viewership, genre distribution across TV channels, daily TV program dating from the 1980s, etc.

The fifth chapter, *Towards democracy – post-socialist media systems in digital modernity,* focuses on the influence of digital communication revolution on transformations in media systems of Southeast Europe from the beginning of 1990s and throughout the turbulent period of political, economic and cultural events and changes. The political post-socialist transitions are discussed within a rich theoretical framework of comparative political science approach and individual country case studies, as well as other relevant academic debates and concepts regarding the nature of democratization and its relation to the media. Thus, Peruško and colleagues carefully build the relation of changes in the political sphere with the media systems through temporal and historical highlights of important periods, such as the period of leaving socialism, the civil war and disintegration of Yugoslavia, the building of state and institutions, the problem of remaining political cleavages and polarizations as legacies of the turbulent past, and finally the period of consolidation of democracy and the establishment of hybrid regimes. The most striking transformations of post-socialist media systems of the Central and Eastern Europe in this respect, according to the authors, were the transformation of state radio and television stations into public broadcasting services, the adoption of media laws, creating media institutions, media polies, and other legislative and practical rules that protected the freedom of expression and journalists as professionals. This chapter thoroughly reviews the media policies in the six states of the former Yugoslavia, particularly the aspects of the freedom of expression with many examples of its restriction; the regulatory system for broadcasting with the description of relevant regulatory bodies; the media pluralism policies with examples of regulatory frameworks for media diversity, pluralism and transparency and the role of the state; digital media policies with points of progress and setbacks in terms of development of online communities, digital challenges and media literacy; and governance of public service media with various models tested and the remaining problems with license fees in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. The chapter also has a detailed discussion of the political parallelism, media market, media audiences, journalistic autonomy and media ratings in the post-socialist socio-political context.

In the final chapter, *Why the media systems are the way they are,* Zrinjka Peruško, Dina Vozab and Antonija Čuvalo try to answer this intriguing question by presenting "causal configurations of the conditions and paths leading to different outcomes in terms of media system transformations in Southeast Europe during the era of digital modernity" (2021: 195). The important part of this section is an unusual, but sincere, informative and very useful approach of the authors when they explain the setbacks, challenges and problems considering

their theoretical approach and research design. The final chapter presents the original research design and detailed analysis of the adaptations of political, socio-economic and cultural-symbolic fields to the classical concepts of media system, specific conditions and temporal media paths which have largely influenced the media systems nowadays. At the end, the authors discuss the "missing pieces" and suggest directions of further research in the field of comparative media studies. A very detailed and useful Methodological Appendix and Index are incorporated at the end, with an impressive list of references published across 27 pages.

The book *Comparing post-socialist media systems – the case of Southeast Europe* is rich in theoretical approach, neatly structured and easy to follow. It represents a valuable insight into the history of media and journalism development in the Southeast Europe and countries of former Yugoslavia. Peruško and colleagues contribute to the research of comparative media systems by providing informative, understandable, carefully designed and comprehensive framework for the study of the interplay between media and political, socio-economic and cultural-symbolic fields of influence. For those of us, who were born in the socialist Yugoslavia, studied journalism in the period of the country's disintegration and the rise of the authoritarian Milošević's regime, worked in professional media in times of democratic transition and now teach and research media studies and journalism in the digital era in a hybrid political regime, the book represents a much-needed guide for professional journalists, academics, researchers and students of journalism through space and time, familiar, however forgotten events and institutions, legislations, organizations, movements and associations that influenced the post-socialist media systems in this part of Europe.

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