

**JÁN VIŠŇOVSKÝ, JULIÁNA MINÁRIKOVÁ, MIROSLAV KAPEČ (2022).  
SLOVENSKÝ MEDIÁLNY PRIEMYSEL (SLOVAK MEDIA INDUSTRY).  
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*This text is a counterview of the book by Ján Višňovský, Juliána Mináriková and Miroslav Kapec, entitled “Slovenský Mediálny Priemysel (Slovakia’s Media Industry)” published by Wolters Kluwer ČR which Magdalena Ungerova previously reviewed in the Spring Issue, 2023 of the Central European Journal of Communication.*

Primarily, the publication seems to be a “special deal” production, in which publishers offer a range of preferential terms to authors who order an electronic or hard copy of their books. These “special deal” books are not sold through the publisher but go directly to the author. The key aspect is that this type of production, albeit by a recognized and possibly a foreign publisher does not offer any guarantees of the content being of the same high scientific level of the publisher. Ultimately, anyone can publish almost anything this way, provided they are willing to pay.

The imprint of the book states that „The authors are responsible for the professional and linguistic aspects of the publication.” Ultimately, the name of the publisher only serves to create the impression that it is a quality scientific publication. The publisher Wolters Kluwer ČR, a.s., does not publicly endorse the publication, its website does not promote the book, nor does it sell or distribute it in any other way.

Special deal publications may not be easy to find, which was initially the case with this book. Currently, the publication is freely available on the Internet. However, on the front page, immediately after the cover, it is paradoxically stated that „This work, or any part of it, cannot be published without the consent of the copyright holder.”<sup>1</sup> Does this mean that this restriction no longer applies, or is one of the authors arbitrarily violating it? Or has the meaning of „to publish” fundamentally changed, also in connection with the uncertain or de facto symbolic determination of the publisher’s role, as mentioned in the first paragraph? Be that as it may, a somewhat unusual and normatively difficult-to-accept explanation

<sup>1</sup> <https://fsvucm.academia.edu/JanVisnovsky>

is offered: that the real and extensive dissemination of the publication's text (new knowledge) was not the original intention of the authors. Considering the support for writing and publishing the text from public sources, and formally scientific research, this is an incomprehensible and normatively absurd situation.

The authors (as well as the reviewer Ungerová, who quotes them) admit that „the monograph does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the three media industries – print, radio and television, and the Internet, respectively, calculation of all factors that would determine the current state of selected areas of the media system in Slovakia. However, that was not even its intention.” (p. 8). But then, why is the publication based on the grant project no. 1/0283/20 entitled „Synergy of media industry sectors”? What synergy was or could be discussed here? Based on which criteria, did the authors select the factors determining the current state of the media system, or, more precisely, its selected areas?

Furthermore, aren't there already four (or even more) media industries, namely press, radio, television, and internet media, instead of just three? After all, it is clear that radio and television no longer share a unique common link in the form of electronic or digital signal processing and distribution. Additionally, we already have a convergence of different media (e.g., online editions of traditional print media or podcasts). The author of the third part of the publication was aware of this fact: „However, the Internet industry has modified (not absorbed, as was originally assumed) all existing (not only) media industries...” (p.85). Likewise, in the second part of the publication, we find a discussion on media convergence, beginning on page 62. The structure of the work used by the authors made thinking about paradigmatic changes in the media system more confusing.

Convergence, or converged media (e.g., podcasts), should be set aside in a special section, or at least in a section titled „Internet industry in the context of the domestic media environment.” Likewise, it would be better if radio and television broadcasts were already analytically separated. Such an analytical division does not at all contradict the trend of institutional merging of radio and television broadcasters. Alternatively, we can think primarily in terms of the division between traditional media and new media. This discussion is not unimportant; the authors originally intended to investigate the „synergy” of the press within the grant, which is primarily related to their technological convergence. What was the authors' intention? In the introduction, they specify their research plan as „the most important facts and aspects shaping the current nature and character of the three media sectors” (p. 8).

In reality, however, we do not find any paragraph in the introduction that systematically defines „the most important facts and aspects shaping the current nature and character of the three media sectors.” Only some, apparently randomly selected, factors are mentioned – for example, these concern „the legal regulation of the status of publishers and operators of web portals, ownership and

ownership relations in the publishing sector, an overview of current ownership structures and the largest publishing houses, and the impact of the economic crisis of 2008” and broadly defined “other important milestones in the development of the printing industry” (p. 6). These „facts and aspects” contradict the later definition we find, somewhat illogically, only in the section on electronic media. There, the authors dealt with individual frameworks that „constitutionally define” the media system. (p. 7).

What are the „constitutional frameworks of the media system?” First, we find only a fairly general definition of the media system: „a social system that includes, in addition to the activities of all mass communication media and their products intended for the mass customer, the system of media enterprises with their social, ownership, economic, cultural and political structures and ties, including links to other social subsystems – economic, political, cultural, educational, etc.” (p. 47). Such a definition is possible, but it is unsuitable for the scientific analysis of the media system. The authors were probably aware of this because they ended the discussion of this key definition by citing D. Hallin and P. Mancini, who identified four elements of the media system. These are: „1. the development of media markets concerning the development of the press with mass circulation, 2. political parallelism – represents the level and nature of the connection between the media and political parties, or the extent to which the media system reflects the political division of society, 3. the development of journalistic professionalism, 4. the degree and manner of state intervention in the media system. (p. 47).

Such an analytical division of the media system is possible, although it is now obsolete and indeed not useful for discussions about converged media. In any case, it is unclear why the authors did not use it, even in a modified form, in the structure of their work. The outline of their work does not take into account the division of the media system into the four key elements mentioned by Hallin and Mancini. The work is divided into three essential parts: the Slovak periodical publishing industry, the radio and television industry in Slovakia, and the Internet industry in the context of the domestic media environment. It is not explained why the authors did not employ the more analytical approach cited, which they identified internally, as they essentially concluded the theoretical debate on this topic here. They did not even mention (except for the introduction) that they wanted to use a different analytical approach. Perhaps the only indication in this line can be found in their focus on economy and ownership issues (p. 48).

The entire theoretical discussion, including the determination of the elements of the media system, is then useless. The selection of criteria for analysis seems to be random, possibly customary, and certainly unsystematic. This can be seen, for example, in the conclusion (p. 114), where it is stated that „an overview

of listenership, or viewership of individual radio and television stations provided a relevant basis for the analysis of selected economic aspects and media ownership ratios, which contributed to the primary fulfilment of our ambition – mapping the economic potential of the segment of radio and television broadcasters in Slovakia.” One may then wonder whether determining the economic potential of radio and television broadcasters in Slovakia was the primary aim of the second part of the book.

In the conclusion (p. 114), the authors then claim that „from the given data on the profits of individual companies or on viewership, we can conclude that their position on the media market is still strong and they are still able to position themselves in the competitive environment of new broadcasting and income opportunities to keep”. In other words, the economic potential of the media system is defined as the ability of large media companies to remain competitive in the market. We will not learn much about the impact of convergence. We do not get information about the ability to stay in the market in the case of individual media or smaller and medium-sized publishing/media houses, and where has the key topic of synergy been lost? The authors state (p. 6) that one of the main goals of the project was „to bring a set of knowledge that, in the context of multidisciplinary starting points, leads to the definition of synergies among individual branches of the current media industry.” A summary of all the main objectives is also missing. It appears that this was a relatively free and indefinite form of writing, covering a wide range of topics, and it can be said that, naturally, the results turned out that way as well.

A lack of a systematic approach can be documented as early as the first part, which begins with the legal regulation of periodical publication. The second part starts with the previously mentioned discussion of the media system. In contrast, the third part completely omits the legal regulation of the Internet and social media, and as previously indicated, traditional media that have converged with online forms. It does not matter that convergence is, in part, included in the Act on Media Services, which was partly discussed earlier. And there is no systematic mention of self-regulation (apart from occasional references to the wording of the law in that respect), which has flourished in Slovakia, especially in the context of internet communication. It should also be noted that, upon analyzing the wording of the law, it should be subordinated to the goal of the work – either its possible or real economic impact, or its possible or actual impact on media synergy and convergence.

The book’s structure contradicts the authors’ theoretical discussion, which was supposed to clarify the research methodology. The selection of criteria used for analysis is consequently unclear and random rather than systematic. The goals of the work are also vague, and in some cases, contradictory. Finally, the authors, as well as the cited reviewer, somewhat unexpectedly openly admit that the

monograph does not provide a comprehensive analysis of media industries, nor a list of all factors that would determine the current state of selected areas of the media system in Slovakia. In other words, we have a partial analysis, primarily a description, based on randomly selected analytical and evaluation criteria.

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