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Russian Media 2007: Convergence and Competition

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Abstract:

his collection of research reports is a final result of the project *Russian Media 2007: Competition and Convergence* that took place between 1 May 2007 and 31 September 2008. The project was conducted by the Faculty of Journalism of the Moscow State University and the Communication Research Centre, Department of Communication in the University of Helsinki. The project's academic directors were professor Elena Vartanova and professor Hannu Nieminen. The Helsingin Sanomat Foundation provided the main funding.

The main issues that the project has aimed to answer were formulated in the original research plan as follows:

1. What is the contemporary structure of Russian media industry, media market with a particular focus on traditional media segments (newspapers and magazines, analogue television and radio), as well as on new media (internet, digital broadcasting and mobile telephony)? What are the major patterns of ownership structures?
2. What is the role of the growing advertising market in creating of new formats, content strategies and programming concepts for the Russian media? How new modes of financing are transforming Russian media at the national and regional/local levels? What effects on media systems have been made by the growth of advertising industry and how advertising shapes the present structures of national and regional/local markets? How convergence has changed the configuration of national and regional media markets? What are the most affordable business-models in the Russian media at national and regional/local levels?
3. How market-based Russian media industry is affected by the requirements of national and regional audience? What are the present trends in media use by Russians with the particular emphasis on who uses, what, where, for which purpose and how with an emphasis on residential, economic, gender, educational, and life style factors? How increased media competition has influenced the patterns of media uses in Russia?
4. How changing structure of Russian media and patterns of audience behaviour have affected the state's media policy and what are currently the main trends in state regulation?

This collection is the first attempt to cover such a vast research area. This version is meant as the final report of the project. In due time it will be properly edited and published in an academic book format.

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Foreword

This collection of research reports is a final result of the project *Russian Media 2007: Competition and Convergence* that took place between 1 May 2007 and 31 September 2008. The project was conducted by the Faculty of Journalism of the Moscow State University and the Communication Research Centre, Department of Communication in the University of Helsinki. The project's academic directors were professor Elena Vartanova and professor Hannu Nieminen. The Helsingin Sanomat Foundation provided the main funding.

The origin of the project is in the discussions that Elena Vartanova and Hannu Nieminen had in summer 2006 in Helsinki. It was then realised that there is no comprehensive account in English of the present state and future prospects of Russian media. Helsingin Sanomat Foundation offered generously financial support for the project, and this made it possible to recruit MA Minna-Mari Salminen as a Finnish researcher for the project, as well as to collect a group of experts in Moscow University to contribute to the project.

The main issues that the project has aimed to answer were formulated in the original research plan as follows:

1. What is the contemporary structure of Russian media industry, media market with a particular focus on traditional media segments (newspapers and magazines, analogue television and radio), as well as on new media (internet, digital broadcasting and mobile telephony)? What are the major patterns of ownership structures?
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The reader can now assess by him- or herself how these questions have been answered. Several of the questions have proved to be too difficult yet to offer answers, either because of lack of material, time or resources, or because of other questions emerged as demanding more urgent importance. What appears evident is that much more attention and resources are needed in future in order to keep us

updated on the developments in Russian media – it is evolving at such rapid speed that an attempt for a general overview becomes very soon impossible even to imagine.

The project held several meetings and seminars, both in Moscow and in Finland. It soon became evident that the most fruitful approach would be that the Finnish part would concentrate on the knowledge and expertise of the “Western” – mainly Anglo-American – academic community, and Russian researchers would give attention to more empirical mapping of the Russian media reality. This division of work is visible also in the structure and contents of this report.

It must be emphasised that this collection is, to our knowledge, the first attempt to cover such a vast research area. There has been published a number of valuable books and articles that can provide further knowledge on the subject, and for them, the reader can refer to the literature listed in the reports. Also it is necessary to stress that this version is meant as the final report of the project, and in due time the text will be properly edited and published in an academic book format.

There are a number of people who have contributed to the success of the project. All the writers of this volume have given their most valued efforts. Special thanks belong to Minna-Mari Salminen, who in a very short period of time developed a mastery in issues concerning Anglo-American research in Russian media. Markku Kangaspuro gave the project his valuable expertise as a Research Director of the Aleksanteri Institute. Professors Irina Fomicheva and Ludmila Resnyanskaya facilitated the project immensely with their special knowledge on different aspects of Russian media. Researchers Maria Anikina, Anna Chukseeva, Denis Dunas, Olga Khvostunova, Sergey Smirnov, Ilya Srechin and Ekaterina Voinova have all been elemental for the success of the project.

Other people who deserve particular thanks but are not part of the writing team include professor Yassen Zassoursky, whose hospitality was once again heart warming, Professor Arto Mustajoki, Dr. Markku Lonkila, Dr. Jukka Pietiläinen and M.Soc.Sci. Katja Koikkalainen. Our warmest thanks go also to all those researchers and staff members who assisted the project at the Faculty of Journalism in the Moscow State University. Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation and personally to Ms. Heleena Savela, without whom this project had not seen daylight.

Helsinki & Moscow, 4 November 2008

Hannu Nieminen
Elena Vartanova

Markku Kangaspuro

Review on the Role of Media and Communication in International Russian Studies

Russian Studies have been closely tied to the topical political situations, especially in studies related to the social sciences. During the 1990s, the dominant discourse adopted transition theories, which repeated the idea of a final victory of capitalism and liberal democracy after the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989:

‘What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.’

This statement was formulated by Francis Fukuyama, whose position already at that time was an disputable idea, in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). This was the common, normative starting point and context in which transition research was conducted and mainstream convicted scientists and publicists advocated and justified liberal capitalism and democracy in an orthodox way. However, this firm perception hindered scholars from making a deeper analysis of the history and failure of the state socialist system of the Soviet block.

Two main trends have encouraged the convictions that the transition of Russia from the old system to the new Western-type system was inevitable. The first one has been the end of the old Cold War and the misunderstanding of the essence of it. The Cold War has been understood too much in terms of an ideological context. After the fall of the Soviet Union, during the new Russia of the nineties, the prevailing assumption was that the deep juxtapositions between Russia and the West have faded away. What was missing from this assessment of international relations was an analysis of the contradictory interests of economy and politics among the major parties. As soon as Russia returned to the world politics from her deep political and economic depression after its culmination in the rouble crisis of 1998, the international situation and its provisional balance started to falter.

The outstanding, strong economic boom in Russia as well as throughout the world economy, boosted optimism and postponed the latent interest clashes between the world's leading economies. As long as the West was happy to buy and Russia was happy to sell an increasingly amount of energy, the situation continued to be beneficial for both parties. However, soon after Russia started to seek a stronger position in international politics and demand openly that its interests had to be taken into account, the new international situation has no longer resembled a new one but has become similar to the old, big power game with their allies. In this game, Russia is a newcomer from the past and thus disturbing the prevailing new Western world order.

Obviously this turn in international relations is respectively anticipating a turn in the dominant approach of international Russian studies. Russia has ceased to be a self-evident transition country following the development of the West in history.

In the course of those events, transition theories, theories of modernisation and theories of market capitalism as a precondition to the birth of middle class and its drive at liberal democracy, have been challenged. This return to the *Realpolitik* was preceded by the events of 11 September 2001. In the United States in particular, this undercut the optimism about both the inexorable march of globalisation and the rationality of human nature. In addition, this gave a new boost to the studies and interpretations of the particularities of situations at the micro and local level which have been inspired by the works of Greetz, Foucault, and Bourdieu.¹

This all means that the old conceptualisation of the Western-dominated research on post-communism, which focused primarily on constructing a market-oriented, liberal democracy that is integrated into global capitalism, will be inevitably challenged in the context of the new circumstances of Russia and her politics.²

Origins of two interpretations on Russia

The totalitarian school originated from the Cold War attitudes from the 1950s. The revisionists challenged this totalitarian interpretation from the 1960s and their roots can be seen in détente politics. The parties have had longstanding and enthusiastic argumentation on the one hand, on how much the burden of the Russian past has determined the development of the Soviet society, and on the other, how much the development of the whole Russia society has been determined from the top down policy, Stalinism. The revisionists have questioned this totalising suggestion and they have set a question whether the Russian society is not developing as all other societies as a result of human social interaction. The typical totalitarian emphasis has been that the official ideology and the policy of the Kremlin have determined the entire life of society, whereas the approach of the revisionists have analysed mainly the social and political development of the Soviet Union in terms of Russian social development, culture and history.

In terms of politics, the totalitarian approach has usually justified different Cold War definitions of the Soviet Union as the 'state of evil' and the 'fierce foe of free world'. A prominent representative of the totalitarian school is Robert Conquest, whose books have been translated widely in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Conquest has written extensively about Stalinist purges and ideology. In 1978, his studies on the victims of famine launched a fierce debate between two schools. During the heated dispute the *Guardian* picked up steam and revealed that Conquest had worked in the British secret service in the Information Research Department from 1948 to 1956. Besides analysing information, the task of the Department was to fight Communism, falsify information about Communism and to feed this information to media. Conquest denied that his former career had had any influence on his studies and interpretations.³ Why this prehistory is worth mentioning is that the assessments of the Soviet Union, the definitions of its essence and its legacy have had direct impact on the current perceptions and discourses of the development in Russia.

¹ Victoria E. Bonnell and George Breslauer, 'Soviet and Post-Soviet Area Studies'. UCIAS Edited Volume 3. The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines, year 2003, Article 4, 30.

² Bonnell and Breslauer, 23.

³ Leigh David, 'Deat of the Depatrmnt that Never Was'. The *Guardian*, 27.1.1978, p. 13; Lashmar & Oliver 1998; Conquest 1999.

Revisionist critique was based on the perception that the Soviet Union was a ‘normal society’ within its own limits and deficits or as Vladimir Shlapentokh⁴ puts it, the Soviet Union was a ‘normal totalitarian society’ if we are not adopting normative judgements grading societies according to the of Western normality. Shlapentokh points out that the Soviet regime lasted 84 years, which is enough long time to prove that it has been functionally a normal society and capable to meet challenges; the Soviet Union reached its aims from industrialisation to Sputnik space flights and it ended up from an illiterate rural peasant society to a modern urbanized society with an educated population. For the revisionist school, the question has not been so much of the ideological battle of the Cold War, but more a question of understanding the processes and their reason in the Soviet Union and in the new Russia. As a result of the missing normative judgement of the Soviet society, the revisionists have been accused of not only aiming at understanding but also at accepting the Soviet Union and her policy.

The third school of the Soviet and Russian studies has been the modernisation theory and this has taken a stance somewhere between these two other above-mentioned approaches. The developmental approach to Stalinism treated the Soviet regime as a type of modernising dictatorship that sought to break out of the constraints on economic and political transformations that were found in most Third-World Countries. The post-Stalinist Soviet Union was therefore viewed as a product of the Stalinist developmental experience: a society that had achieved certain features of ‘modernity’ and ‘industrialism’, which were analogous to those in Western Europe and North America. This raised the question of adapting accordingly the Soviet, and later on, the Russian political-organisational and administrative, widely speaking institutional formats.⁵ Vladimir Shlapentokh’s analysis of the development of the Soviet society is very close to modernisation theories.

If the approach to the development of Russia has had roots in totalitarian tradition, it has also had consequences of the theoretical framework of the study. Logical consequence of this approach has been shock therapy in the economy, the destruction of the former model of the ‘socialist welfare society’ without offering anything in its stead, emphasis on the concept of a liberal democratic civil society and parliamentary democracy. It is obvious that the mainstream transition theories of the 1990s are deeply indebted to the totalitarian school. If the former system was rotten from its roots, the only option was a real revolution, shock therapy, the destruction of old institutions and structures, and an ideological break. From this point of view, the dominant Western transition studies of the nineties took an obvious ideological and political stance.⁶ At the same time it abandoned the possibility of evolutionary transition from Soviet society to the new Russia, actually the very same evolutionary way as Russia was developing in reality. This bias has been one of the reasons why the West was disappointed again by so much Russian development. In short, the theory of the West and the reality of Russia did not meet and the Russian people and institutions did not behave as they were supposed to behave according to the theories and expectations.

⁴ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society. How the Soviet Union Functioned and how it Collapsed*. New York – London: M.E. Sharpe-Armonok, 2001.

⁵ Bonnell and Breslauer, 26.

⁶ See e.g. Stephen F. Cohen, *Failed Crusade*, pp. 41-42.

In fact, shock therapy based on biased emphasis of economic transition theories has its prehistory. Some researchers have suggested that the structural turn of the capitalist countries to deindustrialisation with both mass unemployment and soaring inflation, prepared the way for the revenge of neoliberalism, spearheaded in industrialisation's country-of-origin. Göran Therborn suggests that when the new economic doctrine turned out to be an unexpectedly aggressive challenge, the main powers that were supposedly 'building socialism' adopted different strategies. As a result, the Soviet Union fell apart when she tried to placate political liberalism while letting the economy spiral downwards and tolerating aggressive attacks on its fundamental legacy and principles. In contrast, the Chinese took the 'free-market' road: if capitalism is the only show on earth, we are going to run it.⁷

This perception of the only option, Fukuyama's 'The End of History' will lead to the idea that the precondition of the Russia's road to normality is to export the Western ideas, democracy and free markets there. The idea is not far from the classic principles of John Locke, who argued that legitimate government must be based on the consent of the citizenry through a representative government. Locke's first priorities resemble those from the 'transition studies' textbooks: the Western way to modernity has demanded a priority in property rights and freedom for citizens is thereby conceived as possessive individuals from state-imposed constraints.⁸ Joseph Schumpeter reinterprets this liberal tradition of representative government in terms of an economic calculation of the utility-value of strategic choices and as a method for replacing the ruling group of a party with another section of the elite. There is therefore no reason for widespread political participation outside elections: political civil society has no intrinsic value (unless political parties are counted as elements of political civil society). Civil society thus consists mainly of the private actors in the marketplace. The meaning and significance of democracy lies in its guarantee that the ruling elite can be replaced through elections; this conception of democracy is procedural and strategic.⁹ From this point of view, the only way we can discuss democracy and civil society is in terms of economic development, that is capitalist and market-based, including transition and privatisation.¹⁰

The mainstream Western and Russian scholars have conducted their studies on Russia in the context of these basic concepts based on a new wave of modernisation theories, in which Therborn divides four main lines.¹¹ The prevailing line has been the neoliberal interpretation of the 1980s. Therborn claims that the Kantian notion of rational enlightenment has lost much of its appeal and very little of it is left; it remains at the centre of such controversies as, for example, how to explain, prevent and cope with HIV-AIDS. Secondly, the concept of the collective emancipation of liberation has undergone a remarkable mutation over the past few decades as part of the process of postmodernisation. This concept has largely lost its former social referents, which includes the working class, the colonised, women, even gays and lesbians, if we are not speaking about Russia and former Eastern Europe, and above all, its earlier

⁷ Therborn, Göran, *After Dialitetics*, p. 66.

⁸ Crawford B. MacPherson, *The political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 3.

⁹ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2d ed. Stanford University Press, 1996, 157-198.

¹⁰ Heikki Patomäki and Christer Pursiainen, *Western models and the 'Russian Idea': Beyond 'Inside/Outside' in Discourses on Civil Society*, 55.

¹¹ Therborn, 75.

socialist horizons of its emancipation from capitalism. Now it has re-emerged in militant liberal-democratic discourse, representing a form of right-wing modernism, where it refers to liberation from a select group of 'anti-Western' authoritarian regimes: Communist, post-Communist, or Muslim and Arab.

Thirdly, horizons of growth and progress still govern the expectations of all modern economies: the 'construction of socialism' as well as of every variety of capitalism, including the reigning neoliberalism. Fourthly, after their post-Fascist quarantine the survival of the fittest and Social Darwinism have been given a new impetus by neoliberal globalization. According to this view, only the fittest and the meanest will deserve to survive the free-for-all of global competition.

In Russia and the former Eastern Europe, it was expected that in terms of modernisation theories, the major determinants of societal progress, material abundance and better future, would be the privatisation, parliamentary democracy and other institutions of western democracy and the free (possessive) individual within the growing middle class. And to be exact, the mainstream version of these *zapadnik* ideas tend to emphasise the economic modernisation theory. These therefore involve property rights, the capitalist entrepreneur, and the market form the core of civil society. Consequently, in the Russian *zapadnik* discourse, the best guarantee of ensuring the continuation of this line has been the elite, who function as the 'subject of modernisation'. Hence the question is not about the totalitarian development option but one that is authoritarian, which does not put too much weight on civic virtues or on political participation.¹² In addition, Eastern European dissidents often left aside socio-economic democracy and instead argued for a more participatory political civil society as an end in itself and as a means to guarantee democratic development within a state. Patomäki and Pursiainen have noted that these thinkers and the current leaders of former Eastern Europe often distinguished civil society from the party system of a constitutional democracy.¹³

No doubt, the social sciences have played an important role in the process of developing the discourse and of disseminating transition and modernisation theories for societal use within the prevailing context. In Russia, the interests of the mainstream *zapadnik* elite and the Western business community and political elite all fused together. The main concern of both parties has been the stability of Russia for several reasons, above everything else for military security and ensuring economic boom. All in all, the modernisation theories of the 1990s often have been embedded by political presuppositions concerning what would be the best development for 'transition societies' to avoid foreseen difficulties.

The postcommunist era has also revitalised another theory that is closely related to the modernisation theories, convergence theory. The advocacy of a market democracy, and the faith that it can be made to succeed in the post-Communist world, that 'they' will converge in our direction, represents a revival of that variant of convergence theory that was most popular in mainstream American scholarship in the 1950s.¹⁴ As a response to the disappointment in the unexpected results of the development in the former Soviet Union during the Putin's reign, we have witnessed a return to

¹² Patomäki and Pursiainen, 66-67.

¹³ Patomäki and Pursiainen, 58.

¹⁴ Bonnel and Breslauer, 26.

totalitarian theories. At its worst, a comparison has been made between a 'totalitarian Russia' and the ideal models of 'liberal democratic' western societies, between societies which in reality do not exist anywhere.

The worst consequence of the revival of the totalitarian approach has been missionary type attitudes in Western discourse: the export of democracy and 'Western values' to Russia and consequently, normatively have brought research aimed at narrowly presented policy recommendations and in the worst-case scenario, justification for the implemented policy. Notwithstanding the judgement of the value of totalitarian theories, this renaissance has had obvious consequences for academic research. For instance, it has channelled researchers to ask certain questions while leaving aside others. This has also led to scholars defining the hierarchy of important and less important features of the societal change and consequently answering questions which have made selectively in this new context of research.

In Russian discourse, modernisation has always been embraced as an inextricable part of the definition of the Russian identity, as a part of the argumentation of Russia's relationship to Europe dating back to the rule of Peter the Great's.¹⁵ The modernisation of Russia has been carried on from above and in many times by force, which has established a reason to keep alive the totalitarian interpretations of the development of Russia. Authoritarian rule has not been alien neither the Zapadnik tradition nor the Slavophiles. Therefore we can say that democracy does not form a dividing line between the two Russian major traditions and the goals of modernizers (i.e. westernisers) do not encompass goals of democratisation of the society in Russia. Iver B. Neumann has suggested that within Russia's identity-building process, Europe has represented the main 'Other'. Furthermore, the Zapadniks (westernisers) and Slavophiles have represented the competing interpretations of Russia's development. Zapadniks hold that the precondition of Russia's modernisation lies in her contacts with the West and in imitating and borrowing Western solutions, institutional and technological models and adapting them in the Russian way. This clashed with the Slavophiles' National Romantic traditionalism, emphasised Russia's historical uniqueness: spirituality (*dukhovnost*) and comprehension that Russian is an organic entity that distinguishes her from Europe. Vesa Oittinen has illustrated how the Slavophiles' has seen the difference of Europe and Russia. In his conclusion Oittinen points out that from Slavophiles' point of view the problem of Europe in Russia was not related to the nationalism as it has been traditionally understood or to the nationalities questions and struggle. For Slavophiles Europe represented qualities, which were common to the whole modern world, qualities and development from which Slavophiles wanted save Russia in the future. This standpoint established also the ground for the *Russkaja idea*, Russia's separate and unique development which was also seen a possible alternative for the West.

Besides the Slavophile and Zapadnik division, Neumann makes a distinction between two major traditions in Russia: the Russian narodnik-voluntarist or Slavophil-Bolshevist tradition that contradicted the liberal and Marxist-European style of premises concerning the evolutionary way of modernisation. The major issue for the Russian revolutionaries was whether they should try to stage a coupe before

¹⁵ Vesa Oittinen has written a wide analyse on 'Russian idea'. *Venäjä ja Eurooppa. Venäjän idea 1800-luvulla*. Vesa Oittinen (toim.). Helsinki, Aleksanteri-insituutti – Vastapaino, 2007, 9–52.

capitalism became firmly entrenched, or whether they should resign themselves to the necessity of copying European capitalism in order to reach socialism?

However, there were crucial difference between the Marxist-Slavophile debate and the Menshevik-Bolshevik debate, and it hinged on one, single move. Revolutionary populists such as Tkachev had wanted to stage a coup in order to keep industrialisation *out of* Russia. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, wanted to seize power so that they could surge ahead with industrialisation. The revolutionary populists and the Bolsheviks were both voluntarists in that they thought it was possible to will a transfer of power. The populists, however, had wanted to use that power to steer Russia clear of decadent Europe and its perverted course of development. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks wanted to save Russia from the clutches of bourgeois Europe and to plunge it directly into the final stage of historical development - socialism.¹⁶ What both of these schools have had in common has been the persuasion that the prerequisite of Russia's modernisation is the strong, even authoritarian rule conducted by an enlightened elite who will lead the nation to the brighter future. Actually this elite-led modernisation or revolution from-above thinking is repeated regularly in Russian history. During the last twenty years its most prominent advocates have been Mikhail Gorbachev's and his team, and Boris Yeltsin and his administration with leading liberal politicians of the nineteenth. After Yeltsin's term president Putin continued the forced modernisation from above taking in use authoritarian presidential rule. The transitional nature of the Russian society has usually been used as a justification of the authoritarian modernisation policy and exceptional solutions.

Thus, little has changed since the Soviet times in the current discourse and traditional modernisation ideas have come up in the discourses of the leading Russian politicians. Patomäki and Pursiainen have pointed out that both the above mentioned traditions, Westernizers and Slavophiles, tend to end up with a similar emphasis on the strong state rather than on an autonomous civil society that would be seen as inherently valuable.¹⁷ After the postmodern movement of the 90s, the different variants of modernisation theories have become a more and more visible feature in the public discourse about the Russian way of development.

A striking example of this discourse has been the public speeches of former President Vladimir Putin and the present President Dmitry Medvedev. Both of them have paid considerable attention to the modernisation of Russian society by emphasising the might of industrial capacity and the improvements of the infrastructure, underlining the necessity to increase the GDP and to create a broad middle-class and post-industrial society in Russia. The emphasis in the agenda of Russia's leadership has been first of all to boost economic development. Civil society, democratisation and as a whole, the political development of society, come far behind these economic priorities, and until today, Russian society has produced more consumerism than citizenry. Furthermore, the middle class has been more interested in increasing their standards of living than in demanding broader democracy and a liberal democratic society.

¹⁶ Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe. A study in identity and international Relations.* London and New York, Routledge, 1996, 73-74.

¹⁷ Patomäki and Pursiainen, 60.

When it comes to media research, the question is to what extent we can discuss the media and its role in Russian society as an independent dimension and how central role the media has in the development of Russian society. This leads us back to the discussions about Russia's path, to what extent it is unique and culturally bound and to what extent Russia will follow the 'universal western model' of development. Discussions ongoing in international discourse seem to offer various suggestions: on the one hand China, Vietnam and also to some extent Russia, have referred to the fact that free markets and private property rights do not inevitably give birth to liberal democracy and vice versa: the connection between capitalism and liberal democracy might be looser than previously expected. If anything else, the principal aim of Russia's rulers has been to stabilise society by guaranteeing the sustainability of her economy. This has left behind all the other objectives, including the performance of democracy. From this angle, Russia's development suggests that ideas based on modernisation theories have been her long-standing model, notwithstanding the prevailing social order. In this respect Russia has, however, more in common with European development than with the features which distinguish her from it.

If the above analyse holds true, it has two consequences. On the one hand, Russia is not exception of the world history and the only relevant way to study it is to use normal, universally used research methods of social sciences and humanities. This means that the special 'Russian studies' or former Sovietology-type of science is not needed. And on the other, research needs multidisciplinary projects, constant dialog between methodology and empirical findings, and constructive dialog between Russian and Western researchers. In other words, although we do not understand Russia as an exception in history, this does not mean that she is following exactly the same path as her counterparts in Western Europe. More adequate countries for comparison to Russia would be India, Brazil or Turkey than would the Western European or Scandinavian countries which if anything, represent exceptions in the world. Consequently, it is also worth discussing the all encompassing explanatory power of theories and generalisations based on the experience of the Western societies.

Therefore it is essential to emphasise both a multidisciplinary research and a dialogical approach to research and research methods. A dialogical approach refers to the dialogue between Western and Russian researchers and between theories and empirical findings and field work. As for the other way round, this approach helps us to verify the explanatory power and limits of the theories in use and gives us the capacity to develop them. In terms of a deeper understanding of Russia and at the same time the world, it is essential to have a better understanding of the systemic logic of culturally and socially variable societies, to find out their overlapping as well as distinctive features. Cultural sensitivity helps us to assess the role of the media in general and in Russia in particular. Empirically verified research results helps us also avoid simplified conclusions based on the comparison between the abstract theories of the idealised role of the Western media and the tough reality of Russian media environment.

Besides this, there is need to identify the normative and epistemological differences of research and to contribute to the critical discourse between the different schools. Scholars also need to discuss critically the consequences of the prominent role of the 'anglo-american' discourse in the social sciences. The essential question is how much

this 'bias' directs research to make normative choices between important and less important questions, leads us to decide in which historical and cultural context they are assessed and how the research results are to be interpreted. Finally the question comes back to the discussion on the Fukuyman thesis of 'the end of the history', models of democracy and in general options and variation as to how different societies are developing. In this context, the role of civil society and media is not so self-evident as it has been suggested from the Western European perspective. The main question is about the various models of societies and the role of several concepts in it: democracy – economy/consumerism, public – private, regime – citizens, individual – collective, holy – profane, etc.

Bonnell and Breslauer have underlined the fact that the real issue is how to combine cultural sensitive area studies with 'theory'. Components of this approach are contextual knowledge in examining the impact of general trends or global pressure and they are designed to study how the global and the local interact.¹⁸ In other words, these are empirically-grounded analyses which can enrich our understanding of local conditions in a global environment, can provide us grounds for testing exploited theories, and can help us to develop and complement them.

Literature

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Hannu Nieminen

Russian Media 2008: the view from outside

The review of Western research in Russia media, as shown in the two previous chapters (Chapters 2. and 3.), clearly brings out the fact that the analytical emphasis in research has been very much on politics and the political dimension of the media system. For most researchers and observers, interest in the Russian media seems to be motivated by the political role of the media, especially from the viewpoint of media's relationship with the political élite. In this respect much of the research continues the *Kremlinology*-tradition from the Cold War era. Western media researchers seem to be interested to a much lesser degree in the sociological, economic and cultural aspects of Russian media.

Main analytical orientations

In addition to the distinctions among different research strategies and approaches analysed in the previous articles, a more general one can be proposed here. We can separate two wider orientations, the *similarities* school and the *exceptionalism* school.¹⁹ The similarities school emphasises historical and social parallels between Western democracies and former European socialist countries and attempts to measure the development of the latter against the Western criteria of liberal democracy. The exceptionalism school takes as its vantage point the historical developments that have originally led the countries – or some of them – to adopt different socio-political and cultural paths.

At least in the case of Russia, if not in all new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe this distinction seems apt. Some Western scholars appear more prone to use the arguments of liberal-democratic or even libertarian criticism (an external or normative mode of critique), while others measure Russian developments against the self-proclaimed promises and policies of the power holders (the immanent mode of critique).

The distinction between the two schools can also be applied when analysing the expert interviews (Chapter 3.) Minna-Mari Salminen has established two kinds of divisions: first, there is a distinction between the “Anglo-American” experts and the “Finnish experts”;²⁰ secondly, there is a division between the “economic-administrative clique” and the “journalist-political clique”.²¹

From her characterisation, it can be concluded that the similarities school is joined both by the Anglo-American experts and the economic-administrative clique, while the exceptionalism school has the Finnish experts and the journalist-political clique as its members (see Table 1).

¹⁹ See Jakubowicz 2008.

²⁰ See above.

²¹ See above.

Similarities school	Anglo-American experts	economic-administrative clique
Exceptionalism school	Finnish experts	journalistic-political clique

The basic assumption behind the similarities school is that it is possible to establish valid criteria for comparison between different national media systems, and further, that these criteria are based on some shared understanding of what norms and values are preferred above others. One such set of criteria is applied by Hallin and Mancini (see Chapter 3.), who differentiate among three Western “models” of media systems: the North Atlantic/liberal model; the Northern European/democratic corporatist model; and the Mediterranean/polarised pluralist model.²² Obviously, on top of the normative hierarchy is the Northern European/democratic corporatism and on the bottom, the Mediterranean/polarised pluralism. Later attempts have been made to expand the comparison to the Central and Eastern European countries.²³ In this comparison the Russian media system has been classified as closer to the Mediterranean media system than to other Western-type systems,²⁴ although no systematic analysis of the Russian media system has yet been conducted.²⁵

Based on the reviews in the previous chapters (Chapters 2 and 3), it appears that the exceptionalism school has perhaps a better grasp of the multi-dimensionality of the Russian media system. It does not so much try to force Russian media developments into pre-ordained Western normative categories, but rather analyses the system and its functions from the inside, with interest not only in politics but also in the sociological, cultural and economic dimensions of the Russia media system.

However, despite the differences in orientations, both schools still seem to apply kindred methods in their analyses. Both interpret the development of the Russian media by using rather one-dimensional indicators that aim to define the dependence or independence of the media from the power elites. Both are united in their basic assumption that the media in Russia are basically an instrument in the political struggle for power.²⁶

The difference is perhaps in the normative implications of the approaches. While the similarities school applies more or less openly pronounced Western criteria of democracy and freedom of speech when analysing the Russia media, the approach of the exceptionalism school is more neutral and realistic.

Challenges

²² See Chapter 3; Hallin & Mancini 2004.

²³ Terzis 2008.

²⁴ Jakubowicz 2008; also Splichal 1994.

²⁵ A major country-based comparison of European media systems is presented in Terzis 2008, but Russia is not included. Jakubowicz’s review article in this book discusses the former socialist countries, but Russia is mentioned only in passing.

²⁶ In this sense, both schools can also be analysed from the viewpoint of the “propaganda model” of media, originally presented by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (see <http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/199607--.htm>, retrieved 22 August 2008).

It is perhaps the legacy of the *Kremlinology*-tradition and the domination of political approach that explains why many areas of recent media developments have been given less consideration in research than others. To obtain a clearer picture of the challenges to research into Russia media, we can divide the analysis of media systems into three wide areas: production and distribution, economy and technology, and legal-regulatory framework. What is the state of research in each of these areas?

1. Production and distribution

Most Western research seems to concern this area, especially the issues connected with the political conditions for production and distribution of media contents. For instance, most studies of press freedom belong to this category. This is also the case with many research projects concerning media ownership, as they are more interested in political motives and less in the economic or wider cultural aspects of media concentration.

On the other hand, there are several areas that still await further analysis. The Internet in Russia has clearly been seriously understudied, especially from the viewpoint of independent public spheres of Russian civil society. The same goes for developments in local and regional media, whose independence from the direct control of the Moscow power elites would offer an alternative view of the political analysis of Russian media. Another emergent area of studies is created by the expansion of mobile communication and the different uses of mobile telephony and wireless Internet that in Russian circumstances – the vast geographic area and the widely dispersed population – might develop into a dimension of the media system unknown to Western models.

2. Economic and technological conditions

The second area includes, on one hand, such issues as media markets, media management and advertising, and, on the other, application of ICT and media convergence. It should be obvious that a number of Western media and communication companies must have clear analyses of their own of the Russian media market and its dynamics. This is shown, for example, in the number of Western glossy magazines, whose colourful Russian editions have arrived on the market in the 2000s. From the point of view of academic research, the problem is that these analyses are usually directly linked with business interests, and thus they are not normally available at all for academic purposes.

Simultaneously, what is striking is that there are so few Western media companies in Russian markets. Why? This should also rouse the interest of media researchers: is it because of political obstacles? Are Russian markets closed to foreign competition? Or are the business opportunities too unattractive for Western entrepreneurs?

However, there seems to be very little academic interest in the empirical study of Russian media markets, except for some examples introduced in the previous chapters (see Chapter 3). This void concerns both the similarities and the exceptionalism schools.

This situation is all the more difficult to explain as it very much concerns the political dimension of the media system. Several chapters in this book report on the emphasis in the Russian government's economic policy on enhancing the rise of new, entrepreneurial and liberal-minded middle classes. The experiences both in Russia and elsewhere show that the consumption patterns of these new middle classes are characterised by increasing acquisition of diverse media products – audio-visual equipment, mobile communication devices, multiplicity of content services and so on.

From the viewpoint of Western expectations, this development is supposed to bring about many kinds of positive consequences, both political and cultural, as well as economic:

- politically, as the consumption patterns of new middle classes support the advertisement-financed media, the development offers the media more independence from politics and the pressure of power-élites,
- culturally, the development enhances the emergence of independent and entertainment-oriented media cultures,
- economically, the development creates possibilities for a diversity of new media-related business opportunities (content production, media distribution, technological solution).

Another strand of research concerns media convergence in Russia in its different dimensions. There are different experiences in Western countries. The process has been quite different in the US and in Europe, and within Europe there are major differences among EU member countries, for example. How is media convergence taking place in Russia? What are the main trends and the major economic-technological applications in, for example, digitalisation of television and broadband Internet?

3. Legal-regulatory framework

The third area concerns media legislation and regulation. In the last instance, legislation should set clear limits on the external interference of the media. From a Western viewpoint, legislation concerning media and communication should guarantee independence, both from political power holders and from private economic interests. Again, it is difficult to explain why the development of the regulatory framework has attracted so little attention from Western media researchers.²⁷

From the point of view of the similarities school, the development of the legal system could provide evidence of how the Western “rule of law”-way of thinking is adopted in the field of media regulation. From this viewpoint you could ask:

- how the regulatory framework guarantees in practice the integrity of media and journalists,
- how citizens' freedom of speech is guaranteed in practice,
- how secure the market is for media companies,
- how open the market is for international competition, etc.

²⁷ The best comparison between Russian media and communication legislation and the regulatory systems in other former European socialist countries is Richter 2007.

For the exceptionalism school, regulatory principles could offer the means for historical-political explanation of the development of the Russian media system. You could ask, for example:

- what are the differences and what are the similarities in the regulatory system compared to that of the Soviet system,
- how does the regulatory framework treat social and cultural differences in Russian society,
- what new economic and other opportunities does the legislation offer compared to the previous situation and so on.

Academic research

Finally, one strand that stands out clearly as a conclusion from the reviews in this book is the need to activate research cooperation and academic exchange between Russian and Western institutions. Although there is a long history of cooperation and institutional exchange, both at the level of universities and within the frameworks of international organisations (especially IAMCR), it seems that very few serious joint research projects in the fields of media and communication have been conducted.²⁸ Even then, there has been no major-scale comparative research, combining the different aspects of media developments that have been mapped in this book. Perhaps that time has now come.

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²⁸ One of the few is the project “Media in a Changing Russia” (2006–2008), led by professor Kaarle Nordenstreng, University of Tampere, financed by the Academy of Finland.

Elena Vartanova

Russian Media: Market and Technology as Driving Forces of Change

Scholars of contemporary Russian media widely accept the fact that as a result of political and socio-economic transformations, Russian media have passed through a long period of change that has led to the formation of new mass media systems. There are certainly many disagreements between foreign and Russian scholars on the nature, scope, and quality of post-Soviet media change (see, for instance, Jakubowicz 2007²⁹), but no one doubts that post-Socialism media systems have been re-established in an essentially different way than before. The contemporary Russian media system encompasses a variety of old and new features, and today the market-driven mass media, increasingly dependent on new information technologies, take into account interests of advertisers and audiences more than ever. The structure of national and regional/local media markets is being increasingly shaped by wants and needs of these players in the media market, and this process seems to minimise the traditional impact of politics on Russian media performance and activities.

However, it is still difficult to comprehend the complexity of change in the Russian media system. Certainly, one of the reasons is certainly the lack into systematic and holistic research of the structural transformation of mass media and journalism inspired and paralleled by post-Soviet socio-economic and technological developments, the rise of commercially driven media markets and the emergence of new trends in audience lifestyles and media policy. The crucial point is also that Russian media scholars have not yet seriously studies the complexity of effects upon the Russian media system wrought by two comparatively new factors—market competition and technological convergence.

1. Russian media from the 1990s to 2008 and the process of change

The process of structural change in the Russian media system has been was initiated by the crash of the old socio-economic system in 1991, although changes in cultural and professional norms and activities of Soviet journalists were introduced by Gorbachev's glasnost policy already in the mid-1990s. In less than 20 years Russia transformed its political system, economy, socio-political agenda and foreign policy giving rise to dramatic cultural shifts. This has involved a remarkable restructuring of all social institutions, and the media system has become central to this process (Downing 1996, Zassoursky and Vartanova 1998, 1999). A new social and economic environment has significantly affected Russian media, and the traditional driving forces of media policy have been replaced by new ones. At the same time factors that played a crucial role in the process of media change in Western Europe, e.g. the commercial logic of the market and the rapid progress in information technologies, became fairly influential in the post-Soviet region, thus making the transformation of media in Russia a complicated and internally contradictory process (McQuail 2005).

²⁹ The recent book by Jakubowicz describes media change mostly in Central and Eastern Europe with less attention to Russia and post-Soviet countries, but nevertheless descriptions and analysis of media systems' transformation as a process of substantial change made in his book are relevant for Russia as well.

The introduction of new structures and professional practices in the Russian media began after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Soviet media, based as it was on Marxist ideology, was expected to fulfil hegemonic functions of dominance, ideological homogenisation of the audience and reproduction of the existing social order (Jakubowicz 1995, 127). After the introduction of the glasnost media policy (1985), media-society and media-audiences relationships began to change, although general patterns of media-politics relations kept quite a number of features from the past (Paasilinna 1995). Within this framework new conditions for openness and freedom of speech started to be established (McNair 1991, 1994).

Today, the Russian Federation which was created as an independent state in 1991, is the largest country in the world in terms of territory (17,075,200 sq km). Its unevenly populated territory (146,100,000 people) shares borders with 14 countries in Europe (the longest is with Finland) and Asia. Russia is a federal republic comprised of 88 federal administrative units subordinate to the central government. Russia is divided into seven federal regions headed by plenipotentiaries appointed by the President. According to its Constitution, Russia is a parliamentary democracy. Major political parties in the Parliament are currently “Yedinaya Rossiya” (Unified Russia), the Communist Party, the left-center “Spravedlivaya Rossiya” (Fair Russia) and the nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party. The dynamics of Russia’s development as a federal state is obviously driven by contradictory centripetal and centrifugal trends. This is true not only of the present economic situation but also of the cultural, linguistic and religious situation. The size of its territory and the numerous sparsely populated areas are additional circumstances to make the play of these trends even more sophisticated.

Development of the present Russian media model has been complicated by numerous factors of a political and economic character. Perhaps, the most notorious were attempts by the Russian political élite, although dissimilar, to re-establish its influence upon the media in mid-1990s and early 2000s. At the first period problems have been caused by the rapid rise of Russian capitalism characterised by an integration of state bureaucracy, the political élite and new resource and industrial ‘oligarchs’, the part of the new financial élite ‘awarded’ its own media and other types of former Soviet property in exchange for unlimited support for new Russian politicians (Mickiewicz 1997; I. Zassoursky 2004). In the second period the Russian state demonstrated a strong desire to re-establish control over news and content flows, especially on major TV channels, in order to support the construction of a new Russian political system and national identity (Becker 2000, Mickiewicz 2008, Oates 2006).

Old economic structures of the Soviet media – integrated Communist Party–state ownership of media companies, complete financing of information flow by the ideological apparatus, strict control over information technologies and the population’s limited access to new technologies in particular, FM radio, telephone lines and fax machines all of which had previously established foundations for the instrumental use of the media began to erode with the privatization of media companies in 1992 and especially by the growth of the advertising market in the mid-1990s. Russia in this respect was like elsewhere in the world, where increased interdependence of advertising and media resulted in the emergence of new business models in the media industry, thereby promoting greater choices, albeit commercially motivated, in the content market (McNair 2000). Russia has become one of the four most rapidly growing advertising markets in the world and the most attractive for the

world advertising industry group of countries known as BRIC—Brazil, Russia, India and China. In terms of statistics, the annual growth of Russian advertising market in the decade 1990 to 2008 was about 30 per cent, quite atypical for more mature media markets (AKAR 2006).

Although recent trends have pointed to a growing dependence of Russian media on commercial motives and market-based philosophy, they have also produced new challenges for instrumental use of media by politicians and greater competition in the content market. Audiences enjoyed a growing variety of media channels and new content offerings from print and audiovisual media, while the potential for manipulation and abuse of public opinion has begun to decline. A particular role in reshaping the Russian media system has been played by the progress of information and communication technologies and the information revolution. Not only have they created new content products and channels for their distribution, but also they in turn began to transform and innovate the whole media environment, the communication culture of Russian audiences and professional norms and the consciousness of Russian journalists. The growth of the internet considered by Russians to symbolise individualisation and liberation from the old political culture and lifestyle became a key point in media-politics-audience relations (Vartanova 2004 B). The mixture of old and new in the Russian media system together with the rather contradictory media performance on national and regional levels and in different segments of the media industry still complicate understanding of the general picture of the Russian media system.

One way to analyse the present state of Russian media and their role in social life might be to construct a model based on comparative perspectives. Even if contemporary Russian mass media and journalism resemble media of the 'West' in a number of ways, many concepts recognised in Western media studies still seem insufficient for examining the transformation of the Russian media. The dissimilarities look rather substantial; therefore, scholars who approach Russian media with traditional methodological instruments and academic concepts fail to explain recent processes in all their complexity. To a great degree this paradox might be understood by pitfalls that remain in the theoretical approaches to Russian media studies.

2. Russian media research: a need for new perspectives

Paradoxically, recent research on Russian media produced in the Russian language might still be considered firmly based on the old tradition of Soviet media studies. In the 1990s, didactic studies mostly concerned issues of press freedom and journalistic creativity, while academic studies and textbooks continued to promote normative ideas of journalism that primarily served general political goals. Although many young scholars have joined the rapidly growing field of Russian media studies in the post-Soviet period, they have used basic claims of the old normative research extensively (see, for instance, Prokhorov 2004, Svitich 2000, Korkonosenko 2004). On the other hand, in the last decade Russian media researchers, mostly having only poor English-language skills obviously lacked the financial resources to purchase new foreign academic journals and monographs and conducting applied research. Isolated from foreign academia, they were not ready to change their research agenda, theoretical paradigms or methodology.

The problems became especially severe at the end of 1990s when the need for applied research by Russian advertising and media industries stimulated by the financial crises of 1998 began to emerge. Not only did the demand for new approaches to educating media professionals become obvious, so too did the need for comprehensive examination of the media system become obvious. The gap between media research and media practice grew, and theoretical approaches started to lose connections with the evolving media industry. The expanding media market started to offer new services and content products, resulting in the emergence of new audience behaviours and new patterns of media uses by the majority of the Russian audience, making audiences more independent in the search for content. Nevertheless, Russian media studies remained centred around old topics, exploring Western academic concepts that also were poorly conceived for the Russian media (see the Russian translation of Siebert, Schramm and Petersen's *Four Theories of the Press*).

The discrepancy between academic research and new practices in the media industry became highly visible with the progress of the new media, which significantly changed users' attitudes to traditional media. Supported by the growth of the advertising market, the Russian TV industry, especially its satellite and cable TV segments, Internet and entertainment media significantly changed the performance and activities of the Russian media, while research in the field continued to be normatively and politically concerned. Media studies in Russia are still in their infancy, and they have to embrace a vast array of theories and approaches from existing media studies abroad and create new schools of thinking about the media. To a large degree Russian media research is still dominated by traditional normative approaches and is concerned with media-politics relations (Lozovsky 2006), thus leaving aside current trends in media and entertainment industries, mass popular culture, media in the information society and alternative new media.

3. "Western" approaches to Russian media: comparative perspectives

In searching for up-to-date approaches with which to study modern Russian media, it is absolutely necessary to review briefly those approaches that have been used by Western scholars. Although there are many works that provide a chronological and historical description of media change in a Russian national context, some researchers prefer to integrate Russian media into a broader international picture and conduct comparative research. The relevant "entity" to compare is often the "Western media". Although one could agree that there is no "unified" Western media model (Curran, Park 2000), doubtless media systems in many mature market democracies of North America and Western Europe possess similar structural features and professional norms and try to fulfil similar political, economic and cultural goals, understood through the prism of similar academic concepts (Hallin and Mancini 2004).

3.1 Are Russian media different?

One of the most widespread concepts holds that the Russian media system substantially differs from Western Europe in a number of features (de Smaele 1999, Bekker 2002). Influences of politics and professional traditions of Soviet journalism, on the one hand, and of classical literature and philosophy, on the other, differentiated practices of Russian media from European media. The rationale for this might be the

unique Russian geo-political position, complexity of Russia's historical heritage and the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic character of Russian society. Political and cultural pressures of the authoritarian traditions of Imperial and Soviet Russia definitely played a role. The Russian media, by representing a synergy of Western, mostly European and North American and Oriental, or "Asian" elements, might be regarded as an "in-between" Eurasian system. Several features distinguish the Russian media from those that exist in European and Asian countries. First, Russian media are subject to a different combination of pressures from the same agents of influence over the media system than European or Asian media. For instance, the financing of Russian media companies represents a mixture of formal and informal means, since many companies are still using "grey" investments from politicians or local businesses, especially during election campaigns. Yet at the same time media rely upon increasing their advertising revenues and are subject to taxation and market regulations. However, the level of transparency remains very low, and Russian media economy retains many features of informal economics.

Second, in the "Eurasian" media there exists a strong belief in the regulatory role of the state shared by almost all players on the media scene. It explains the traditional ignorance of market-driven logic and "grassroot" societal initiatives. 'Top-down' media policy is another consequence of this attitude. This gives a firm basis for the "étatist" (statist) mentality as an essential part of a 'Eurasian' media model (de Smaele 1999). Third, a 'Eurasian' media model is affected by conflicting multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multi-cultural interests in which values of modernisation and knowledge confront the paternalistic mentality of politicians, the perquisites of business élite ('red' directors – old-generation managers of previously State-owned enterprises), old-generation journalists and some audiences. The unevenness of economic wealth reflected in unequal access to ICTs is another indicator of the "Eurasian" media.

In sum it may be said that some Russian media scholars still do not take into account trends that make Russian media look similar to other media systems in market economies, in particular in Eastern and Central Europe. Russian media are also viewed by many researchers as being different in comparison to European or South American media. However, some crucial research questions have not yet been asked. Are the factors that make Russian media look non-Western culturally, historically or economically determined? Will the media market lead to greater similarity with other media systems, more resistance from political pressures and more predictability in terms of market operations? What is the role of the ICTs in changing the specifics of the Russian media model?

3.2 Are Russian media similar?

Nowadays more scholars argue that, although Russia does not easily fit into any straightforward media model, there are many similarities between Russian and foreign media, "Western media" in particular. It might be stated that both continuity and change play a role (Rantanen 2002). For instance, the biggest change undoubtedly is the introduction of commercial media along with the dominance of entertainment-based television both of which go hand-in-hand with the growth of the advertising market and the rise of commercialism as a major feature of market performance. At the same time, continuity is present in the still-existing instrumental use of

information and media channels. A few of the most widespread channels remain predominantly in the hands of state- or government-controlled holdings, while private print media (scandalous tabloids, glossy magazines) and television are tolerated on the apolitical entertainment market. On the other hand, Russian media are increasingly dependent on the progress of new information technologies, which make them look more globalised.

Although for years the Russian political élite was a major player in shaping media policy and political communication, with both processes resulting in the revival of instrumental uses of the media by both players, the Russian media gradually began to experience new pressures from the growing economy, the advertising market and also, indirectly, from audiences. Not surprisingly, new pressures revealed themselves in well-known strategies of tabloidization and infotainment, an increase in the number of popular entertainment formats addressed to a mass audience (Fomicheva 2005). New values of commercialising Russian media go hand-in-hand with expectations of the global advertising industry to stimulate consumption and the wishes of the Russian political élite to safeguard political stability and the loyalty of the electorate. Searching for viable economic models, the Russian media have come a long way from the Soviet past, though not in the direction expected in the early years of glasnost (Downing 1996, Sparks 1998).

The rapid growth of the Russian business media might be seen as a particularly interesting case of globalisation. Analysing business information markets in the Nordic countries of Europe and Russia, Koikkalainen argues that “business publications are among the first media enterprises when introducing international models, styles of practices. They have the role of lighthouse, promoting a market economy, and this role also includes adopting and testing imported journalistic practices” (Koikkalainen 2007, 188). Thus, one could conclude that not only the market as such, but also a special segment of the media system that serves the needs of the economy should be considered important vehicles to promote new media structures and professional practices.

The process of maturity of the Russian media industry creates new dimensions of similarity between media systems and media performance inside and outside Russia. Obviously, common denominators for these processes are market-based operations and information technologies, although the effects they produce are different. Thus, the importance of the traditional factors of development in the “Western” media is impossible to overestimate, while the role of specifically national driving forces is decreasing.

3.3 Russian media change: imitation or modernisation?

In recent years, the concept of modernisation has become increasingly popular for assessing the change in Russian society and media in 1990–2000s (*Modernization in Russia since 1900*, 2006). However, understanding of this concept by Russian scholars resembles only superficially that widely used in the media studies approach by Lerner (1958), mostly due to the use of the same terminology. For many Russian scholars, modernisation means updating and making improvements in various areas of social life, including politics and economics with special attention on the experience of Western European countries and the US. However, the crucial difference in the

process of modernisation in ‘Third World’ countries was the reality of the Soviet modernisation that had already been accomplished and had encompassed a number of features from the “Western” modernisation process. As Vishnevsky puts it, the Soviet modification of “conservative modernization” “permitted the USSR to accept and even implement many instrumental achievements of the Western societies (modern technologies, some forms of lifestyles, science, education, etc.), but it could not create adequate social mechanisms for their self-developments (such as a market economy, modern social structures, civil society institutions, political democracy, etc.)” (Vishnevsky, 1998).

Therefore, the process of the Soviet modernisation failed because it lacked instruments of self-development mostly in the societal field. The introduction of the free press model in the form of glasnost media policy in the mid-1980s might be seen in fact as an attempt to bring about some forms of modernising self-development. However, as in other aspects of the incomplete introduction/adoption of modernisation in Russia, the reforms in the mass media could not result in a complete reform of the whole socio-economic system. So the achievements of the partial Soviet modernisation have brought more complexity to the understanding of the nature and peculiarities of post-Soviet media change.

In fact, a negation of the “conservative Soviet modernisation” by media scholars also explains why the comparison to the “Western” media systems has been so limited. Even now, when contemporary Russian media have been studied by foreign scholars from many standpoints, research correlation to the dynamics of media systems in Western Europe or America is still lacking. This is also true for most post-Socialism countries that started the process of transformation in the early 1990s or thereafter. Jakubowicz correctly points to the lack of this link in research before the changes started, explaining it by the different nature of media systems: “While the process of fundamental design of media systems in Central and Eastern Europe remained largely frozen up until the early 1990s in a model imposed for political reasons... those in Western countries underwent tumultuous change”. Among the most important processes characteristic of the media in the “West”, but missing in “post-Socialism” Jakubowicz lists: ‘media differentiation’ (or separation from government and/or political structures), media decentralisation and diversification, democratisation, deregulation, commercialisation of public service broadcasting, concentration of ownership on national and international scales, digitalisation and convergence, globalisation (Jakubowicz 2006, 8-9).

However, it is surprising that scholars of the post-Socialist media transformation have not referred to these trends in their research. Moreover, the desire to use “Western media” uncritically as ideal models often led to naive conclusions. Criticising this approach, Splichal has defined revolutions in Eastern European media systems as imitations (Splichal 2001). Gross has used the notion of resemblance, which implies only superficial (or façade) similarity (Gross 2004, 112, 119). All this in fact means that the nature of media systems and their driving forces in the “West” and “post-Socialism” were considered to be different, while current trends point increasingly to their similarities. The dynamics of mass media in Russia and Eastern Europe proved to include a great deal from “Western” media systems.

4. Why new focus is needed

Russian media are certainly at the core of social and economic change, but they also play a crucial role in keeping the centripetal trends in society. One of the reason for this is the provision of global and national advertisers with efficient communication channels such as federal TV channels, nationally distributed magazines, and online media. This trend is supported by the fact that major national TV channels are transmitted from Moscow via a terrestrial network and by satellites carrying mostly global and national advertising. Although Russian TV is a mixture of two models, the state-controlled and the strictly commercial, Russian TV is financed primarily by advertising and sponsorship.

At the same time, other media clearly benefit from centrifugal trends. This is especially clear in the print media. Although newspapers lost their central position in the national media system, they still play an important role in local markets. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the number of titles increased significantly from 4,863 (1991) to 5,758 (2000), but the total newspaper circulation radically dropped—from 160.2 million to 108.8 million (decrease of 67.9%) with the share of nationally distributed newspapers falling by 36%, (Vartanova 2002). The Russian newspaper system is comprised of national, republic, regional, city, rural district, lower-level (lower than city or district) and other (mostly free, non-daily sheets) newspapers. The growth of local commercial radio or local newspapers including free papers contributes to the development of local markets in the Russian media (Rantanen, Vartanova 2004). Traditionally used in economic development theory, the *centre/periphery approach* might be a useful concept for mapping Russian media in their relationships to national and regional/local markets and audiences. It might also be a useful concept for geographic media markets (Picard, 1989, Albarran 1997) related through different hierarchies – vertical, horizontal and their mixture. It is furthermore an important tool for describing the structure of given media systems at various levels and for identifying the effects produced by agents of influence, wherever they are hidden, as in the case of national and local politicians.

Research into the market is closely associated with media economics studies, which put more attention on audience research. The needs and wants of audiences stimulated by the market and by consumption are considered through the *uses and gratification theory* (Severin and Tancard 2001) which minimises the importance of such macro-economic factors as politics, regulatory frameworks, and social systems. Although in the case of Russia one cannot minimise the importance of these factors, the role of the audience in shaping its media “menu” is obviously growing. In conditions of a clear deficiency of quality political and analytical media content, Russian audiences demonstrate their preferences by relying on market-driven and new media.

Finally, *policy analysis* would also be a relevant analytical tool for better understanding the economic realities of the Russian media system. The media industry is quite distinct from other industries for a number of reasons, and interrelated concepts of public interest and freedom of speech stand at the core of this dissimilarity (Napoli 2006; Cherry 2006). Economic goals for policymakers at every media market go far beyond profit maximisation, and media policy has to embrace various political and cultural considerations. However, the case of Russian media is rather contradictory, because decisions in media policy have been taken not only on the basis of market-oriented or socially determined philosophy, but also with the view

of political or business élite group interests in mind (Vartanova 2006). The deconstruction of media policy decision-making process in Russia may provide media researchers and experts with more powerful and clearer tools for market analysis.

5. Trends and conclusions

Viewed through the lens of the current research, analysis of the processes of competition and convergence has led us to several important and interesting conclusions concerning the developments in Russian mass media and journalism from the year 2000 up to the year 2007.

1. The structure of the Russian media system has changed significantly. In their respective chapters Fomicheva, Resnyanskaya and Smirnov have identified this change by pointing to growing diversification in titles of print and audiovisual media, differentiating profiles of newly established radio and TV channels, new ownership patterns of media companies and an increase in the number of production companies that supply programmes to a growing quantity of media companies. One of the most influential driving forces for the expansion of the Russian media market is undoubtedly advertising. In conditions of economic growth, especially in 2006-2007, the Russian advertising market promoting global and Russian consumer brands looked for better targeting, namely, the numerous niche audiences. This explains the rapid diversification of media products – the process of a greater than ever provision of media channels, content products and formats in contemporary Russian media. This has actually become a truly visible consequence of established competition in the Russian mass media system: advertisers struggle for Russian consumers, and the best channels to reach them are through the media, especially TV broadcasting. As a result, competition for audiences is becoming stiffer, and quantitative diversity of content media products is still increasing (see Chukseyeva's analysis of the Yekaterinburg print media market). Dependence on advertising provides Russian media with an additional source of revenue and this lessens dependence on state structures and regional authoritarian regimes. This situation has finally put an end to a total monopoly of political influence on media content and introduced a demand for quality media outlets, especially in the niche of business journalism (see Resnyanskaya's chapter).

However, media companies competing for audiences and consequently for advertising revenues do not fully satisfy the whole spectrum of audiences' information needs. Dissatisfaction in general-interest traditional media has stimulated audiences' interest in specialised (business-oriented) press, B-2-B media and the Internet. Well-known to Western, highly commercialised competitive media markets, "diversity paradox" (van Kuilenburg 1999) has become a reality for the Russian media as well. In the context of the increase in supply of media products, the qualitative diversity of media content is decreasing, because competition in the media market is limited to commercially profitable content strategies and formats. Thus, social and cultural goals of media companies are left unfulfilled (see Anikina's article on TV formats).

2. Media consumption has clearly increased in the post-Soviet years, and the last decade has shown many new trends. Fomicheva and Smirnov's articles demonstrate shifts in the structure of media use and prove that many changes have been inspired by the introduction of market competition and the increase in Internet penetration

around the country. The Internet has become a real challenge and a substitute for the old print media in Russia because of the collapse of the national newspaper distribution system and the distrust in political dailies. Resnyanskaya has shown the importance of new technologies for surviving strategies of regional and even local press. At the same time uneven Internet penetration and the low quality of communication lines prevent the a more universal spread of new media in Russia and do not permit the Internet to become an equal player in the media market.

Nevertheless, the role played by the Internet in the media consumption of young Russians is tremendous (see the articles by Fomicheva, Anikina and Stechkine). Existing economic, residential, generation and gender gaps in the use of the internet resemble well-known problems with a “digital divide” many in other national contexts, but Internet usage by highly motivated Russian youth and other active audiences brings rather positive perspectives to new media in the country. The importance of the Internet for the Russian media landscape is also illustrated by the emergence of new types of relationships between audiences and journalists (see Stechkin’s article). The demand for new professional roles of journalists such as agent of influence, marketing specialist, but mostly as a moderator underlines an evolving active “stand” for audiences in the process of social communication, although often Internet use is subordinate to communication and leisure needs rather than social and cultural needs.

3. Experts’ assessments of the specifics of Russian media and journalism demonstrate that they accept the low level of media responsibility and accountability in Russian society, which believes in its own exclusivity and messianic mission. Such traditional for the Russian media features as a replacement of information with opinions, self-censorship and the large role of the state in the public space increase the peculiarities of the Russian media, while they draw heavily criticism from experts commercialisation strategies on the contrary produce more similarities with the “Western” media. The only positive factor in the new development is the progress of the new media.

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