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# POST-DEMOCRATIC AND POST-JOURNALISTIC TENDENCIES IN POST-MILLENNIUM ERA

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## Abstract

The author deals in her study with the activity crisis of current media companies conditioned by the transformation of media logic and crisis of democratic systems. She specifies the definition frame of basic terms – post-journalism, post-democracy, post-millennium era and analyses them on the background of mental atmosphere of the late modernism. She points out the social, political and media contexts leading to much more evident demonstrations of phenomena reflected by the social and scientific researchers in the second half of the last century. She sees the main cause of crisis phenomena in the growing processes of co-modification of media production, in formalization and stereotypization of approaches to media production, in the change of value hierarchy, growing secularization process and, at the same time, in the change of rules when gaining political power and dealing with it. The author formulates the main thesis according to which witness the legitimization and strengthening of post-journalism and post-democracy phenomena in current mental and cultural environment of Euro-Atlantic civilization radius. Based on facts, arguments and analyses, she was able to confirm it in the closing part of the study.

*Keywords:* late modernism, media logic, media paradigm, democracy, co-modification

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## 1. Introduction - controversial tendencies in post-millennium era

Fortunately, up to now the second decade of the new millennium has not confirmed the catastrophic prognosis of various environmental and religious fundamental groups about mythological, even mythical end of human civilization. J. Naisbitt and P. Aburden disprove these catastrophic visions by outlining new possibilities of a man freed from negative phenomena and tendencies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the beginning of the nineties. They predict a change which according to them will influence the future decades of the new millennium. They claim the humankind is getting rid of the darkness experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – consequences of industrialization, totalitarian regimes and penetration of technology into an individual's life. According to them, the era of renaissance and spirituality arrives with the new millennium.

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“The most exciting changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will come into existence due to wider idea what it means to be a man” [1] However, the second decade of the new millennium urgently pointed out the dangerous tendencies that began to represent a serious problem also in the last two decades of the last century. These are: increasing ecological load resulting from the effects of economic mechanisms supporting the growth of consumption and their consequences – climate changes, deformation of economic and political systems, deepening social inequality among social classes or the loss of spirituality and growing process of materialization and secularization of society. In this context I. Dubnička offers the logic of an equation which guides current events. According to it, “the bigger modernization and production are, the more natural resources and energy is needed. The result of it is more and more overproduction which needs to be consumed.” [2]

Contrary to optimistic futuristic perspective of J. Naisbitt and P. Aburden we ask the question whether the planet Earth and societies existing on it do not find themselves tied up by consequences of technical, technological, economical, political and cultural auto-destruction more than in an atmosphere of elimination of harmful consequences of technical and technological penetration or beginning renaissance era of art and human spirit. According to several significant authors, in the area of social-scientific research the economic mechanisms in last two decades do propel the whirl of overproduction consumption much more and eventually destruct political culture, socio-culture, symbolic culture and human spirit (e.g. Z. Bauman, P. Bourdieu, I. Dubnička, U. Eco, J. Gray, S. P. Huntington, N. Chomsky, D. Barsamian, J. Keller, D. Korten, N. Klein, Ch. Lasch, L. Leach, G. Lipovetsky, M. Maffesoli, V. Šabík, V. Bělohradský, S. Gálik, Z. Slušná, etc.).

After the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008 and its consequences, the reflections of J. Naisbitt and P. Aburden may be understood more in the context of overexposed illusion of optimists enthusiastically defending the politics of expansion of multinational financial and business subjects and the idea of barrier-free market. According to this paradigm a new globalized planet must be inevitable economically interlocked and culturally and ideologically transformed into conditions of a universal civilization. At the end of the last century, analyzing the conditions for establishment of a universal civilization, S.P. Huntington points out an important tendency in the development of relations and arrangement of new order in global measure. It is the will to enforce in other civilizations the set of values, opinions, doctrines and political democracy of Western civilization which he marked as ‘Davos culture’ [3]. The denotation originated on the basis of activities and ideology references of the World Economic Forum which takes place annually in the Swiss Davos. It is a meeting of bankers, businessmen, politicians, journalists and English-speaking intellectuals. They have international contacts and spend most of time of their travels abroad. They are labelled as the elite and share common values and political and economical views. The sources of universal civilization and culture might be according to S.P. Huntington found also in the creation and

global dissemination of Western consumption patterns and culture across the planet [3].

The development of situation since the '90s up to present days shows that even though the millennium world destruction did not become reality, the development tendencies in plural democracies point out serious pathological demonstrations not only in economic sphere but also in respecting democratic rules, when gaining, maintaining or executing political power. The facts speak about a deep crisis in politics and social relationships in modern states which are defined by the constitutions and parliamentarianism as democratic. They point out a serious crisis caused by deforming traditional democratic institutions and mechanisms and destruction of traditional values and ideals. In professional and scientific circles one discusses about a new phenomenon – post-democracy. The term was coined in professional terminology by C. Crouch [4] on the basis of symptomatic tendencies in the development of democratic systems in globalizing societies. R. Holton mentions three tendencies in defining the consequences of globalizing processes. They are determinative for current cultural processes including media production: a) the process of homogenization and rational standardization, b) growing resistance to global culture in its standardized cultural forms, c) development of various intercultural fusions or trans-cultural hybrids [5].

The transformation of media logic is also significant for post-millennium years. D. Altheide and P.R. Snow [6] were the first ones to point it out. It leads to post-journalism, i.e. change in traditional mission of journalism. The question of democratization function of media is closely connected to the question of media logic - mainly the mutual relation between politics and media. There are diverse opinion platforms of authors evident in the question of more dominant influence upon shaping voters' attitudes to political subjects. There are authors who stress the possibilities and influence which political parties have on the behaviour of media companies (N. Chomsky, E. S. Herman, T. Gittlin, R. W. McChesney, J. Kean, D. Prokop, etc.). Then there are authors who stress the power and possibilities in the influence which media companies have upon political affairs (G. Mazzoleni, P. Patterson, T. Meyer, L. Hinchman, J. B. Thomson, J. Meyrowitz, etc.). Finally, there are authors dealing with the consequences of relations transformation of media and politics in the sense of new media logic or sophisticated approach of political parties to media communication. (D. Altheide, P. R. Snow, R. Negrine, P. Mancini, D. C. Hallin, Ch. Holtz-Bacha and S. Papathanassopoulos, J. Ftorek, etc.).

It is indisputable that the stated tendencies are neither a product, nor a mythic phenomenon or symbolic signal of millennium turn and post-millennium age. It is the consequence of paradigmatic changes in the areas of economy, politics and culture driven by rigorous even dogmatically urged neoliberal ideas and practices in all spheres of social practice in the last three decades. D. Korten defines three key powers creating a political alliance: economic rationalists, market liberals and representatives of business corporations. The goal of the alliance is to dogmatically advance a common ideological programme. The

economists assume that individuals' motivation is profit-seeking and in case they are provided sufficient freedom, their profit-seeking behaviour will be socially beneficial in the end. Market liberals prefer the philosophy of moral based on individual rights. The representatives of business corporations agree with intellectual tradition reasoning the liberation of market institutions from restricting power of the state as well as with the philosophy divesting business corporations from responsibility for many social and ecological consequences of their activity [7].

We think the mentioned paradigmatic changes and activities of political alliance shaped the mental atmosphere of late modernism, definition frame of which is appositely formulated by M. Petrušek [8]. Among its typical features he includes formation of new forms and pluralism of lifestyles, development of new models of social behaviour, growing secularization process of society, influence of media world, replacement of direct repression by methods of media seduction, significant change of value models pointing out low level of respecting ethical norms, formation of new collective mentality, rapid growth of globalization processes including accompanying global risks such as new forms of social differentiation, new stratification organization of a society, new social movements, etc. However, we remark that the above mentioned features and tendencies grew significantly stronger in post-millennium era.

In the study we define and analyze facts and phenomena we believe to be achieving transformation of relation between both media companies and political subjects, democratic systems and media logic in post-millennium era and in the period of late modernism. We proceed from the thesis according to which the examined facts and phenomena strengthen to large extent the established status and legitimization of post-journalism and post-democracy phenomena in the environment of the Euro-Atlantic civilization radius.

## **2. Embezzlement of political power control by media companies**

The above mentioned base indicates that the criticism of current condition of democracies results from the reflection of change in running their individual mechanisms and institutions. The questions of public interest in confrontation with private interest, the absence of control of political power, deformation of democratic postulates by the role of money, topics derived from high corruption rate and political clientelism and influence of mass media upon thinking and voters' decision-making come to the fore. The questions regarding the state of current democracies would not be alarming if they were not pointing out two moments: not weakening authority of media and embezzlement of political power by media companies. In this context J. Jiráček and B. Köpplová point out the constant media authority in public mainly due to the awareness of their activities in historic context. They claim: "...media are attributed a significant influence upon the form of current political processes in modern democracies because they represent public and thus political life and they are interlocked by historic development" [9].

The authority of media in voters' decision-making is emphasized also by the former Czech, president V. Klaus, who states: "the president is chosen by the media and voters approve him afterwards" [<http://www.sme.sk/c/6630565/klaus-priama-volba-prezidenta-sa-vypomsti.html>]. The statement presents a question about the influence of financial capital in relation to commercial behaviour of media companies; it forces us to search for logic causes in the activities of media producers in relation to interest groups including political parties and to audience [10]. V. Klaus indirectly addressed with his statement the neuralgic point of current democracies – dealing with the factual power of the fourth estate. It was dethroned from the pedestal of control power by J. Kean at the beginning of the 1990s in his pioneer work *The Media and Democracy* by provoking considerations whether its features are not rather identical with the practices of mediocracy [11]. At the same time, he initiated thoughts about the methods of gaining political and symbolic power which is by N. Chomsky denoted as the process 'gaining assent' among voters, citizens [12].

Similarly, T. Meyer and L. Hichman deal with the issue of media and democracy relation in their study *Media Democracy. How the Media Colonize Politics* [13] and attribute huge power to them. They influenced thinking about media as hegemony subjects as they set new social order – media democracy in the custody of mediocracy.

Based on the results of description and analysis of current media systems effects we may – according to D.C. Hallin and P. Mancini – state that the previous monopolies of broadcasting public service in the 80s and 90s have been substituted by massive wave of commercial media and their dominant position is being constantly strengthened [14]. Even more dominant position of commercial media and the loss of balance of dual media system is the precondition for thinking about deformation of democracy and media environment. It is mainly the privileged groups including private media companies which benefit from it. In this context, D. Prokop points out the privileged approach to media mainly in case of important political parties and strong interest groups from business circles. They apply elaborated approaches, marketing strategies including goal-oriented effects of media relations to get the attention of viewer using the owners, media managements, anchormen and editors, various types of events, press conferences and TV programmes and formats [15].

However, it is obvious that the behaviour of media companies and the way of interpreting politics is influenced by the effort to survive in competition. According to E.S. Herman and N. Chomsky, this is the precondition for running the so-called media filters which they described in the well-known study *Manufacturing Consent* [16]. They deal with process of running five basic filters: ownership of media, advertising and advertisements, selection of sources, negative feedback and methods of promoting dominant ideology. The filter of media ownership is the consequence of fact that mainstream media are controlled by more than solvent individuals and corporations. That is the reason why media owned by them present agenda in their favour or favour of the social elite. The filter of advertising and advertisements is given by the existence

dependence on paying subjects. Commercial media – rely on the sale of advertising time and space to potential advertisers, advertising clients. Advertising and advertisement filter seen from the economic point of view confirm the power of important advertisers. With their decisions about purchasing advertising time they influence the media agenda to a large extent. They decide which medium will survive the competition and which one will not depending on demonstrated loyalty to their interests. The filter of negative feedback is tightly interconnected with the advertising and advertisements filter. Editorial boards of media are by the reasons of existence forced to take into consideration the interests of advertising clients and monitor whether they inform about them in accordance with expected or required ways. Filter of sources selection is given by the dependence of media on information sources. Editorial boards of media depend mainly on sources which regularly supply them with information; are trustworthy and their acquisition is comfortable, easy and mainly cheap. It is these facts which decisively contribute to the complex tone of published news. Filter of sources selection is connected to the filter of dominant ideology which influences the perspective, analysis, perception and evaluation of various social, economic and mainly political processes.

On the basis of the mentioned ground it is possible to assume that the embezzlement of political power control by media companies is also the cause of embezzlement of gaining and executing political power by strong political subjects. R. Scurton thinks similarly. He sees discrepancies in gaining power and its execution resulting from real practiced steps of political class and between interests of people who gave them the mandate to make decisions about public matters [17]. The result of applying the machinery of assent through media broadcasted campaigns might be the fact that democratically elected government asserts such a political line in its electoral term which is in apparent opposition to interest of people who elected it. However, the logic of media effects, the result of which is specific media agenda, either prevents them from reflecting obvious discrepancy between promises and reality or creates consensual atmosphere and evokes assent with the decision of the governmental power among the citizens. Communicating vessels of interests including the interests of media companies present also another – according to our opinion – principal question: To what extent does the logic of media effects influence the character of democracy effects? We think W. Wimmer from the right wing of the German CSU precisely named the mechanisms of gaining and applying political power when he imprudently said: “Money and media can achieve more than a tank division” [18].

### **3. Post-journalism in the perspective of transformed media logic**

In the 90s, D. Altheide introduced the term ‘media logic’ into professional terminology referring to the focus of research he defines and denotes as ecology of communication [19]. Similarly to the representatives of technological determinism – H.A. Innis [20] and later M. McLuhan [21] - also D. Altheide

derives his mediological concept from the presumption that there is a mutual interaction between determinants of communication process - information technologies, ways of communication, thinking and acting of a society. He proceeds from the knowledge according to which two basic factors – technologies and communication processes - mainly in the television production influence the final interpretation of socio-cultural reality. He believes media logic represents processes “by which media present and broadcast information” [19].

At the same time, media logic leads to the change of journalists’ approaches to processing and interpretation of topics or problems. In the last two decades, we witnessed a quiet radical change in the hierarchy of report ordering in news or documentaries as well as transformation and dynamization of composition procedures and overall processing of individual news/journalistic compositions. The first places in the script are for topics which are more entertaining or shocking for the viewers, i.e. they have more tabloid than serious character. The authors of contributions do not have the ambition to offer to their viewers traditional journalistic ‘bonus’ (clarify causes, consequences, point out relation and connections) but they tend to production and interpretation basis of acquired information based on specific type of information entertainment. In this way, do the media producers define the preference frame of topics, i.e. they decide which questions, in which form and in which responses and evaluations are more important and which ones less. In this context, D. Altheide points out common manipulative practice of current journalists when making a journalistic interview which we consider a significant demonstration of media logic transformation. On the contrary to the practice of traditional journalism, journalists ask questions by bringing to the fore the problem they want to emphasize disregarding the higher relevance of other questions [19].

Communication situation indicates the huge influence of new media logic applying non-traditional procedures in journalism. New media do not practice depersonalization, critical distance, objectivity, i.e. traditional criteria of journalistic procedures when producing media contents. It points out the process of extinction of traditional journalism and origination of post-journalistic procedures. The reasons might be found in journalists focusing on form not on the problem in given affair and in media content transformation into commercial media products. Media have to consider rigorously (apart from public service media) the profitability of production expenses and economic success to which they submit all their efforts. This is reflected in the quality of informing. Creative motto which emphasizes the aspects of attractiveness, emotionality, story-telling, drama, etc. submits to it. The transformation of media logic and currently discussed phenomenon of post-journalism point to a serious problem that sharply contrasts with the traditional idea of the democratizing function of media.

#### **4. Conclusions - post-democratic and post-journalistic tendencies in post-millennium era**

When formulating the conclusions, it is possible to start with the statement of S. Gálik who says media mediate and construct reality and in this way significantly determine the learning process of the recipients (as audience) [22]. In this context, Z. Hudíková stresses that: “media offer a wide range of products with which they present various positive and negative values and models. A man is their recipient either consciously or the presented products influence him subconsciously, i.e. he rejects them on conscious level but the messages of media products reach him on unconscious level and change his mental view of the world and the limits of sensitivity in various areas.” [23] It is necessary to add that the process is typical not only for the era of current post-journalism and post-democracy but also for the era of traditional journalism and democracy. From the above stated context it is apparent that post-millennium era has much more strongly emphasized the tendencies and phenomena which were reflected in the second half of the last century. Current critical analysis of the majority of researchers in the social sciences area analyzes their features or characteristics in much larger extent and by critical approach. On one hand, we point out the deficit of critical thinking in the post-millennium era as there is absence of the ability “to think carefully about information a man acquires in various ways” what is stressed mainly by D. Petranová [24]. On the other hand, the critics point out a significant change of the whole cultural topos, transformation of mentality of late modern society and its deformed reflection in the areas of cultural and media production. This is where the unilateral trend of co-modification is strengthened as Z. Slušná states [25]. Collective mentality creates depersonalized individualities without deeper social ties, which according to E. Habiňáková, leads to the absence of empathy and tolerance [26] and eventually, according to M. Solík, conditions gradual corrosion of understanding among people [27]. Globalization trends paradoxically underline a multicoloured ambience of cultures. On the other hand, they contribute to mainstream standardization of media production. J. Višňovský and J. Radošinská believe we have to learn to live with it. However, it is necessary to reflect and critically assess both global and local cultural elements to much larger degree [28].

The researched issue of post-millennium post-journalism and post-millennium post-democracy has several layers although individual layers are connected by an umbilical cord of mental atmosphere of modern society for which a growing secularization process of homo medialis and radical change of value hierarchy is typical [29]. The listed phenomena relate not only to the process of media reception but also to current media logic and change of cultural topos of globalized cultures. They predetermine unilateral, schematic interpretations of events, topic selection and their ordering in scripts of news and publicistic programmes or on periodical press pages based on an inverted importance hierarchy of individual events. The question of journalistic quality of mediated content becomes so relevant that the issue of critical re-evaluation of



information by recipients becomes less important. It is apparent that media logic plays an important role in the process of creating the public assent with the agenda of political parties. The authors of political campaigns perfectly understand its transformation which started to be evident mainly in the last two decades of the last century and very flexibly subordinate their media strategies and creating media relations to it. Nowadays, it might be revealed in the methods of processing topics, schemes and stereotypes of work procedures of media producers which determine certain categories of events, their standardization, form and interpretation in advance. Media logic is also influenced by profitability of expenses for production and economic success to which they subordinate all their efforts. It is reflected in the quality of information in regard to aspects of attractiveness, story-telling, drama, etc. We witness the consequences of media logic transformation leading to the origination of post-journalism, i.e. radical change of traditional mission and democratization function of media on the background of establishing post-democracy. Its fertile ground is the transformed mental and spiritual atmosphere of late modern society with its inverted value hierarchy.

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