



International Communication Association



## CALL for PAPERS

### International Conference

Marking the closure of the COST A30 “East of West” Action (2005–2009)

In cooperation with the International Communication Association

# BEYOND EAST AND WEST TWO DECADES OF MEDIA TRANSFORMATION AFTER THE FALL OF COMMUNISM

*Dates*

25–27 June 2009

*Venue*

Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

*Organizers*

COST A30 “East of West”  
Center for Media and Communication Studies, Central European University  
International Communication Association (ICA)  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania



## Background

Since 1989, a new media landscape has emerged in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Fundamental changes in the media and communications system included ownership patterns; forms of media organization; emergence of media markets; journalistic practices; relationships between politics and the media; regulation processes, stakeholders and institutions; and modalities of media use. A new system has been established, predominantly designed according to Western models and with heavy influence of Western players.

A core goal of the post-1989 transformation was a “return to Europe”. Twenty years later, it is time to ask whether this goal has been achieved and which particular challenges the media in the region have encountered and are likely to face in the future. Looking at the results of the transformation process, critics point out that public service broadcasting is in crisis, political pressure on the media persists, journalism performance is often weak, ownership concentration is increasing, media pluralism is at risk, minority access to the media remains scarce, nationalist and hate speech is spreading, technological change in communications is slow, and commercialization and tabloidization dominate the media landscape. Yet others maintain that media change has been a success (of sorts), with the media in post-Communist countries being as good (or as bad) as those elsewhere.

CEE media research has largely oriented itself along the lines of Western European and American conceptualizations, and yet those concepts have not always reflected the issues and trends of transition. Media studies in the region have had to struggle with a discrepancy between (idealized) Western concepts and Eastern realities. Today, one must ask: Were Western *models*, as described to the new democracies in glowing terms, appropriate for the post-1989 social, political, economic and cultural realities of CEE? How do institutions perform when transplanted into a disabling rather than enabling environment? If the strategy of imitating Western models was wrong, what other choices exist? Is the disillusionment that many feel justified? Could more have been achieved in this period? What should media systems and media policy aim for during the next five years?

The conference “Beyond East and West” will trace post-1989 development and indicate where communication research in the CEE region is after 20 years of transformation. The conference provides an opportunity for critically re-examining the social, technological and policy changes in the Central and Eastern European media landscape, for exploring future trajectories of media development in the region, and for addressing those elements that seek to align regional media systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Conference presentations and discussions will address the questions: What can we learn from these changes? What are the differences between media systems in older and newer democracies, and what are the particular challenges for the latter? The conference will consider the pan-European developments reflected in a variety of EU initiatives and compare the findings from CEE to those from other regions in transition. Participants will re-examine the usefulness of standard Western media and communication research to study the media and society in regions undergoing systemic transformations. The attendees will discuss new concepts for media analysis and develop new ways to understand media use, impact and performance. To build future research for communication in transition, this conference will explore the necessary building-blocks for a research agenda.

## Conference Themes

### **CEE Media Systems 20 Years On: An Enhanced Framework of Analysis**

Conference sessions around the media systems theme will review the applicability of existing models of media systems analysis, including the model proposed by Hallin and Mancini, and discuss options for enhancing such frameworks to reflect conditions in Central/Eastern Europe.

### **Media Policy and Democratic Legitimacy: Risks and Options in the Enlarged Europe**

Sessions on the policy theme will address the effectiveness of current regulatory policies and instruments; the risks to normative expectations such as freedom of expression, media pluralism, equal communication rights; intellectual property rights; structural aspects of regulation (such as media ownership and concentration, media subsidy schemes, public service media); and aspects related to content (protection of minors, shielding of national and independent production, minority provision).

### **New Media Developments and Online Research Innovations**

Sessions on the new media theme concern communication in online environments and methodological issues for conducting diverse forms of empirical study in online venues. Questions that illustrate relevant concerns include: How does Web 2.0 and social networking incorporate into forms of political expression? How do citizens use mobile phones during political actions? What are the challenges and innovations of e-Research and e-Science?

### **Popular Culture: Media Uses, Media Literacy, Socialism(s) and Nostalgia**

The popular culture theme will consist of two strands. The first one, entitled 'Popular Culture, Media Uses and Media Literacy', will focus on the potential impact of audiences on media programs, in the light of changing media technologies, the blurring of boundaries between producers and consumers, and intense regulatory attempts to foster participation and media pluralism. The second one, entitled 'Popular Culture, Socialism(s) and Nostalgia', will explore the history of popular culture in socialist Eastern Europe.

### **Political Communication between Commercialization and Political Influence**

Sessions on political communication will examine how the transition to democracy in CEE countries has been accompanied by, on the one hand, a hasty introduction of market perspectives and, on the other hand, ongoing control over the media by political forces and institutions. What are the results and implications for establishing a media democracy? What is the role of Western media industries? How has journalism developed? What scientific evidence exists of the media impact on public opinions?

### **Alternative and Community Media**

The CEE region has a well-documented history of alternative media practices (Samizdat). Sessions on the alternative/community media theme will ask: What new forms of underground, tactical, citizen-based media expressions have emerged since 1989? How do they relate to previous experiences? How are 'new' and 'old' technologies used? Have media laws and policies recognized community media? What is the role of alternative media in a context of persisting political influence and new commercial pressures on the media?

### **Global Communications, Development and Transition**

Two decades of media development and media research in the CEE region have generated lessons for an analysis of communication in transition. Sessions on the global communications theme will ask: How do the CEE developments compare with other regions in the world that are undergoing in social, economic and political transformations? Which connections can research on media and development draw?

### **Reviewing International Media Assistance Programs**

Since 1989, governments and foundations have invested heavily in media assistance in emerging democracies. Sessions on this theme will ask: What has been the impact of these programs? How have they affected the work of journalists, their media organizations, the field of mass communication and the society? How valuable have assessments of those programs been?

## Paper and Panel Proposal Submissions

We encourage paper and panel proposals on issues that will contribute to a critical dialogue, relate to the above-mentioned sub-themes and aim at producing an agenda for research on the CEE region. Proposals should focus on how social, political and economic change coupled with technological innovation, emerging media laws and communications policies affect media systems in the process of democratization and transformation.

**Deadline for abstracts (maximum 500 words) and panel proposals:** 15 November 2008

Deadline for paper submission: 15 April 2009

**Please submit abstracts to:** [beyondeastandwest@ceu.hu](mailto:beyondeastandwest@ceu.hu)

Abstracts must relate to the above themes and include keywords.

### Contact

Please direct queries to the Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS) at Central European University (CEU).

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Further information will be posted to the conference Website at <http://www.costa30.eu>

## Conference Organizers

The conference “Beyond East and West” marks the closure of the COST A30 Action “East of West: Setting a New Central and Eastern European Media Research Agenda” (2005–2009). It is an official regional conference of the International Communication Association (ICA).

**European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST)** aims to strengthen Europe in scientific and technical research through the support of European cooperation and interaction between European Researchers. <http://www.cost.esf.org>

**Action “East of West: Setting a New Central and Eastern European Media Research Agenda” (COST A30)** is a four-year research project (2005–2009) that has brought together more than 60 media and communications researchers from 27 European countries. Its mission has been to conduct research on the transformation of the media landscapes in Eastern and Central Europe. <http://www.costa30.eu>

**International Communication Association (ICA)** advances the scholarly study of human communication by encouraging and facilitating excellence in academic research worldwide. ICA divisions that participate in this conference include Communication Law and Policy, Communication History, Global Communication and Social Change, Philosophy of Communication, and Political Communication. <http://www.icaheadq.org>

**Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS)** is a center of excellence for promoting media and communication studies throughout the Central and Eastern European region. Based at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, it conducts communications research and provides expertise valuable to academia, NGOs, policy-makers and regulators. <http://cmcs.ceu.hu>

**Annenberg School for Communication (ASC)** at the University of Pennsylvania is a prestigious communication school that offers students firm grounding in approaches to the study of communication and its methods drawn from the humanities and the social sciences. <http://www.asc.upenn.edu>