MUNI
FSS

TYPOLOGIES OF THE MEDIA SYSTEMS I.

Political and Media systems, Klára Smejkal

Refreshing knowledge from the last lectures

Normative theory of journalism

How the media should work, what is expected of them

In relation to:

o **Structure** – freedom from the state, number of independent channels

o **Performance** – manner in which media carry out their tasks/roles

Media systems are thus subject of different normative expectations (depends on the cultural, political and economic conditions)

Four theories of the press

- Normative theory from 1956
- created by sociologists and media theorists Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm
- Show us that each part of the world had different expectations (different normative theory) of how media should operate

Four theories of the press

- **Libertarian** (Siebert): media as an environment where everyone is free
to express their opinion, opinions are balanced, freedom of speech and press are the most effective tools for society to get the truth and expose errors;

- **Social responsibility theory** (Peterson): the media are economic entities, the secondary manifestation of which is their position in a free market; the media are responsible for socially beneficial actions, they have a social obligation to truthfulness and objectivity (public service media); media freedom is desirable to the extent that it is supported by socially responsible media behaviour ('the watchdog of democracy')

- **Authoritarian** (Siebert): exists in societies where there is no freedom of the press, media as a means of communicating the views of authority (state) + creating consensus in society, censorship for breaking rules, application in dictatorships and military regimes;

- **The Soviet theory** of the media (Schramm): the media are here to serve the people; it seeks to achieve a classless society; it has an educational and socialising function; it is here to serve the working class.

- + Other theories of the press – *development theory; democratic participant theory* (participation and interaction) (McQuail, 1983)

Exercise

- Divide yourself into groups of 4
- Try to classify the country you live in into one of the theories mentioned
- If you encounter any obstacles in the classification, make a note of them – we will discuss them later
  - On which aspects are the theories outdated?
  - What do they fail to take into account in current media environment?

https://bit.ly/4_theories

Limits of these normative theories

Linked to the press

Do not take in the account:

- High-choice media environment and different channels
- Convergence
- Globalization and transnationalization

Social theory of media (McQuail, 1986)

Still based on serving the "public interest„

- Media are not just a business but often carry out some tasks which contributes to wider or long-term benefit of the society

- Freedom, equality, diversity, objectivity, social and cultural order

Media system research: an overview

- **McQuail:** summarizes how thinking about normative theories of journalism evolved and argues that the development was influenced by the obstacles that the society of the time faced in relation to the media (commercialization, tabloidization, ...)
- **Jakubowicz:** he is more comparative, he goes for specific typologies of media systems and the political conditions in which these systems operate - it is not so normative and at the same time takes into account the existing reality
- **Media system typologies** – normative X empirically based; differ in number of categories; intensified view of the political system; relatively static, don't describe change; new trends; "comparative media system analysis is a key approach to understanding globalization

Media system research: an overview

- Normative theories – four theories of the press, McQuail and others, inductive approach
  - **McQuail (1994)** – based on basic communication values – freedom, equality, diversity, information quality (objectivity), solidarity, cultural order
- Empirical theories
  - **Hallin and Mancini (2004)** – but just political dimension
- Transitional media approach (Huang) – be non-normative (dynamic); view media change as a historical process through both revolution and evolution; be culturally open-minded
- "Beyond" Hallin and Mancini

Main take aways?

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