Polish media 22 years after socio-political breakthrough - the road to professionalisation and democratisation

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Introduction

• Poland after WW II under soviet regime and communists subordination (PZPR – political monopoly)
  – media as a tool of propaganda (not free and economically driven)
  – RSW (Publishing Working-Class Cooperative) + censorship
  – Structure of party – structure of publishing (socialist model of the press)
    • A, B, C – type of dailies
  – Electronic media developed in due course (till 1970 only TVP1); Committee for Radio and Television, political servant of ruling party
  – First licence process (1994), establishing commercial sector
Socio-political breakthrough

- First time from soviet bloc to democracy (avalanche effect)
  - Strong opposition (Solidarity, 10 mil. members), US support, JPII
  - Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria
  - Public opinion showed no interest in politics

- Transformation of the media system
  - Crucial acts:
    - March 22, 1990 – liquidation of RSW; (105 titles sold, 72 taken over by journalists’ cooperatives)
    - April 11, 1990 – liquidation of censorship
    - December 29, 1992 – Act of Radio and TV Broadcasting, new order, licence process (3+1,2,156)
    - Electronic and press sector – foreign capital limitations
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Catching up the lost distance

- After 44 years of communism Poland economy was a wreck (inflation 249.3%), weak currency, no public sphere and independent media – still visible remnants – negotiated transformation
- May 8, 1990 – ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ (two in one)
- First privatisation, unclear rules (not to the leftists) – journalists as a management – selling shares – foreigners
- Readership of dailies collapsed, expansion of cheap magazines, mainly German (G+J, Bauer, Burda, Axel Springer) - viewership
- Late 90s – time of specialisation and looking for niche

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1989</th>
<th>1997</th>
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<td>Dailies</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.5 mil.</td>
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<td>Weeklies</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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<td>Monthlies</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>13.8</td>
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Regional dailies and foreign investors’ activities

- Looking for investors: political affiliations, nationality, experience
- Examples: Maxwell, Hersant, Passauer (disguise)
  - It was done on purpose to avoid public and media hype
- Verlagsgruppe Passau (6 regions, 320 th. copies daily)
  - No trade unions, fierce expansion in local sector
- Orkla/Mecom (8 regions, 275 th. copies) + nationwide broadsheet
  - No special care, centralised decisions, strange transaction with Mecom
- From competition to duopoly
- Adv.: new technology, know-how, better management
- Disadv.: Polish capital marginalisation, mercenary attitude, threat to pluralism
Electronic media development

- Dec. 29, 1992 – National Broadcasting Council, licence process (3+1, 2, 156/19)
- NBC should stand on guard of freedom of speech and members are not allowed to belong to parties; however, nominations are done by Seym, Senat, President – politicization
- 1997 – second private nationwide TV (TVN), local TV did not develop, instead regional departments of public TV
- Digital platforms and cable TV
- Networking in radio, evaporating of single local stations
- Commercial stations beat public broadcaster
New age – new challenges

- Economic crisis, debuts and short revival
  - Orkla withdrew from one region (Passauer taken over) and from Poland
  - Axel Springer debuts: 2001 ‘Newsweek’, 2003 ‘Fakt’ (no. 1)
  - Free press expansion and withdrawal
  - Polskapresse launched new project (unsuccessful)
  - 47 dailies in 2003, 58 in 2004, and 43 in 2007 (4 mil., 7,8; 5,1)

- Radio unification and commercialisation
  - Jeff Holland (Australia) – Eska (140 stations in 1998, ten years later 50)
  - Public broadcaster lost its leading position in private stations favour (3 times more adv. and four income); overemployment, bad habits
  - EU accession, two main private stations taken over by German/French investors
  - No big changes in content, better used for cross-media activities, convergence
Specialisation and digitalisation

- TV became very popular (4h a day), threat to the press
- Specialisation: thematic channels (news, weather, sport…)
- Catholic TV Trwam (part of extravagant priest realm)
- Cable TV: 600 operators in 2009 (triple play service)
- Digital platforms (three – ab. 6 mil. recipients)
- As a result of this abundance: VoD, PVR, HDTV, 3D
- TVP still predominant but finally will lose its privileged position to private ones advantage
- Public TV – 4000 workers, high salary and politicization, especially during campaigns
New medium – old problems

- 1995 – first portal in Poland
- 2000 – 7,8 % people have an access
- 2003 – 21,7 %
- 2007 – 41,5 %
- 2009 – 50 %
- Late 90s – fast development, new branches of the web businesses, closed or weakened at the beginning of new age
- Big media companies established their online products of standard media in late 90s, smaller in due course
- Nowadays the questions is not whether to be present online but rather ‘how to be on the Web’ or even the most important: ‘how to earn money being online’
- Significant progress in adv. revenues
Conclusions

- Long way from socialist, dependent, non-citizenship tool of political indoctrination towards democratic and free market model
- Mature transition stage was not reached because ‘mass media turned out to be too weak to face political actors on one side and the market on the other’
- Remnants of previous system still present (Press Law from 1984)
- Press sector mainly privatised and it meant huge progress in journalism professionalisation (for the biggest media, not necessarily for regional and local)
- Electronic media were divided into public and private sectors. Public broadcasters use adverts and licence fees
- TV is on the verge of digitalisation (July 2013)
- Internet did not change the market upside down but is a useful complement of existing media businesses. In the future the traditional media will be the supplement of the online content
- Media system is still shaping, closest to polarised pluralism
Thank you for your attention

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