

MEDIA MARKET IN POLAND – CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS. 18.10.2024. PANEL DISCUSSION REPORT

October 18th, 2024 was the second day of the annual conference “Knowledge – Communication – Action” hosted by the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication at the Jagiellonian University. The day started with a debate entitled ‘Media Market in Poland – contemporary challenges and dilemmas’. In the first part of the debate held in a TV studio, Professor Tomasz Goban-Klas, Professor Stanisław Jędrzejewski and Professor Katarzyna Konarska, participated in a discussion chaired by Professor Weronika Świerczyńska-Głównia. The concept of the Risk Society – i.e. challenges of modern times – was the topic that dominated the beginning of the discussion.

Professor Tomasz Goban-Klas pointed out that we should consider media practices in the digitalized world, which was the main theme of this year’s conference, bearing in mind that traditional media, such as radio and television have always been a part of a wider socio-civilisational context. Prof. Tomasz Goban-Klas referred to the concept of the risk society, described by Ulrich Beck and Jakob Arnoldi, which, according to the speaker, is a part of everyone’s experience. ‘Not directly because we are not involved in any of the major wars in the world. Poles are not dying on the frontlines but there are many global conflicts that could escalate. Apart from that, there are many more risks, even on personal levels’, stated Prof. Tomasz Goban-Klas, reminding the audience that the media have two functions: to magnify and to diminish risks. ‘Some risks are treated marginally by the media, reduced or even ignored, while others are exaggerated beyond all reasonable limits’. With that being said, the panelists started discussing the current and future challenges of public media, looking for an answer to the main question, that is: what should the media be like?

What should public media be like today, and in the near future? In which direction should public media evolve so that they can still function in ten years’ time? – These were the questions professor Weronika Świerczyńska-Głównia asked. The first to address this issue was Professor Stanisław Jędrzejewski who called the current state of the Polish public media a ‘breakthrough moment’, a turning point in its history. In October 2024, Polish Television and its employees, who continue to work despite the fact that the company is officially in liquidation, are impatiently waiting for the introduction of a new media law and the transition to normal

functioning. ‘We are at a critical point and in fact at the crossroads’, emphasized Professor Jędrzejewski, pointing out at the same time important aspects of the functioning of public media that should maintain political independence, which is ‘a sine qua non condition for their functioning’, stressed professor Jędrzejewski, drawing attention to the fact that public media should be properly financed. At this point the problem of financing the public media directly from the state budget was discussed. Prof. Jędrzejewski stated that the media financed directly from the state budget ‘inevitably become actors in the political game. In this case, the game of getting the best possible economic situation’.

Professor Stanisław Jędrzejewski also drew the audience’s attention to the use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, by public media organizations, raising the question of the content and what the media can offer to the public. ‘For me, public media are first and foremost a system of values and it is these values that determine what they should be or what they are. The risks that they face are related both to technology and to political aspects’, said Professor Katarzyna Konarska, from the University of Wrocław, adding that despite many differences in the functioning of private and public media, the issue of their ability to adapt to the changing technological reality remains the same.

The second part of the panel was a continuation of the previous debate, but with a focus on the development of new technologies in the media. This time, Prof. Maria Nowina Konopka from Jagiellonian University chaired the debate, while Professor Weronika Świerczyńska-Głównia joined the discussion of Professor Stanisław Jędrzejewski, affiliated with the Leon Koźmiński Academy in Warsaw, Professor Katarzyna Konarska, from the University of Wrocław and Marcin Jakóbczyk, a reporter for the TVN television station and a supervisor of the student TV station UJOT TV. The members of the panel discussed how the structure of the media market is changing and how these changes relate to new technologies and the advancements of AI.

The changes in the media market due to the new technologies, as well as the direction in which this market will evolve remain the biggest questions posed by researchers and practitioners. According to Professor Weronika Świerczyńska-Głównia, the contemporary media market is heading towards a fluid network, but it will be different than the one we knew before. Now we have a leader who builds a network of static connections around himself. In the future, however, it will be a dynamic network of peers. ‘The partner for creating a specific media project will be able to change and the structure will adapt to the momentary needs and the momentary process of creating a new dynamic media value chain’. However, Professor Weronika Świerczyńska-Głównia raised the question of whether media institutions will be able to plug into such a dynamic network. ‘In technological terms, one can say whether they will have interactive and compatible plug-ins at the end of that chain to connect with other actors in the network’.

These business models must also take into account the fact that we consume different media at the same time, emphasized Professor Maria Nowina-Konopka.

In times of Multiscreening, we can share our screens, but we cannot share our attention.

In this regard, how do broadcasters deal with this problem, by constructing their business models to use ‘multiple screens’, how do they manage the media system to attract the user? Perhaps a good direction would be the one taken by the BBC in the UK, which developed a year-long programme to test how AI could be used. ‘Then, after three months, it was decided that there was no point in testing it any longer, it’s better to put it in use. And it is indeed being implemented. Of course, there are a lot of questions about how to do this? How to communicate, how to inform the public that AI is being used’ added Professor Katarzyna Konarska.

A practical approach to the use of artificial intelligence in journalism was also highlighted by TV reporter Marcin Jakóbczyk, who uses the latest AI solutions to speed up editing, text transcription or automate camera work. However, he pointed out during the panel that there are fields in journalism where artificial intelligence is still a long way off. ‘If it’s a matter of providing information, digging in, doing research, that’s fine, AI helps. But a computer will not go that extra mile for me, it will not talk to someone, it won’t get to know the essence of the matter, it won’t learn their story and, most importantly, it won’t evoke emotion. So, when it comes to news journalism, yes, AI can help. When it comes to reports and documentaries, it’s a human thing and it’s going to stay this way’, said Marcin Jakóbczyk.

‘What one may find in these new tools, AI among other thing, is a great temptation to distort reality and the media love crises and are very keen to get involved in this way’, added Professor Stanisław Jędrzejewski added. Hence the need for media education, the issue of which was raised by Professor Iwona Hofman, President of the Polish Media Communication Association, who joined the discussion.

‘Research shows how unprepared media audiences are to receive the media content, how much they are subject to manipulation, how much they believe in a world distorted by the media. This has a number of psychological, sociological or cultural consequences. We have all been diagnosing these problems for some time now, by analyzing the fragmented media audience’, said Professor Iwona Hofman, adding that this problem resonates socially, is multifaceted and is shaping new generations. Therefore, steps have been taken to make the next year the ‘Year of Media Education’. In addition, the representatives of the Polish Media Communication Association and the Committee on Social Communication and Media Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences have submitted a project to the Ministry of National Education concerning the introduction of media education to Polish schools.

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First View