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Internet Media Shaking Russian and Chinese Media Systems

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Russia and China: In the same terms

- *Authoritarian corporatist media model* (Sparks 2010)
- *Instrumentalization of media* (Zhao 2012, Vartanova 2012)
- *Statist commercialized model* (Vartanova 2012)

World Audit Democracy: BRICS

www.worldaudit.org

- Out of 150 countries in January 2013:
- 37 countries – fully democratic
- 33 countries – partly democratic
- 80 countries – non-democratic
- *Russia (128) and Chine (124) –non-democratic*
- Brazil (50), India (50) and South Africa (44)- partly democratic
- Finland (1), North Korea (150)

Chinese and Russian Systems

Components

- 1. Purely official traditional media:** Russia (); China (*People's Daily*), (Rossiiskaya gazeta)
- 2. Purely private traditional media:** Russia (Komsomol'skaya Pravda); China (0)
- 3. Mixed practices in traditional media** (state-owned but market-oriented, etc): Russia (NTV); China (*Southern Weekly*)
- 4. Purely private Internet companies:** Russia (RBK); China (Sina, Tencent)
- 5. Grassroots media** (with an personal accounts or ownership): Russia (Navaljniy blog); China (Sina Weibo)

Two main trends of Russian media system

- *Etatization* – increase state capital and mixed capital (state and private) in the media market
- *Commercialization* – in the media development, professional conduct and thinking (profit orientation)
- Etatization does not conflict with commercialization
- Journalism finds itself in the privileged position being with the state and market
- Typical journalist is a happy journalist with two identities: loyal staff employee and market freelancer

Protest growing in both countries

- Communist Party rule is challenged by widespread discontent amongst workers and peasants, often spilling over into savage anti-authority riots (Sparks 2010)
- In China 450 riots in year have been suppressed
- In Russia social networks (Facebook, vkontakte) had played the important role in rise of protest movements on winter 2011-2012
- They forced to change agenda of independent internet media (Kobrin 2012)

A new trend:

Alternative journalism online

- In Russia it is together with social networks (*Vkontakte*, *Facebook*) using digital media and feeding protest movements
- Civil society together with online media contributes to politically independent journalism

St Petersburg and Shanghai studies, 2012-13

- A part of the academic project *Media Systems in Flux: The Challenge from the BRICS countries, 2012-2016*
- Similar studies in all BRICS countries: Four cities in each country
- Main focus on online media in comparison with the conventional media

<http://uta.fi/cmt/tutkimus/BRICS.html>

St Petersburg – Shanghai

- St Petersburg: 49 in-depth interviews in 12 conventional media and 12 online media, December 2012
- Shanghai: 30 in-depth interviews in 5 conventional media and 4 online media, January-March 2013

Hypotheses

- H1: Online media consist mostly from non-professionals
- H2: Online media have higher level of freedom than traditional media. Journalists stands close to the western idea to be independent
- H3: Online media are more integrated with civil society and protests than old media

Findings: Online media: 3 types

- Independent initiatives by journalists: *Bumaga, Karpovka, Politgramota, OK, V kurse*
- Part of independent media holdings (Azhur, MediaSPb, RBC): *Fontanka, Lenizdat, Zaks.ru, RBC.ru*
- City government: *Peterburgsky dairy*

Online media: Young, healthy, multi-

- All young: Established during the 2000s
- Healthy media economy
- Small-scale organizations in comparison with the conventional media (on average 6-7 journalists)
- Most successful with multi-platform strategy:

Fontanka, first internet daily in the city established:
Fontanka.Fi, *Voditel Peterburga*, *Doktor Piter*, *Kvadrat.Ru*,
radio Fontanka FM

- Specialization and expertize, target audiences
- Interactivity with audience and interactive advertising

Online journalist profile

- Young under 30, from middle class
- Gender balanced: male and female
- Mostly, university journalism degree
- Previous experience in press, radio and television (leading media)
- Having a second job (in other media)
- Multifunctional
- Income (net)– on average, 1000 euro month
- Non member of journalist union, party, NGO

Political values

- Do you agree that 'journalists should not cover subjects that play into the hands of our country's enemies?

Online media journalists				Traditional media journalists			
Yes	No	Y&N	No reply	Yes	No	Y&N	No reply
2	11	4	1	3	19	8	1
11%	61%	22%	6%	10%	61%	26%	3%

Political values

- It is sometimes necessary to block access to the Internet. For example, to prevent the spread of pornography. But control of the Internet may also be necessary in other cases - since the Internet is a source not only of political information but also of disinformation. Do you agree with this statement?

Online media journalists				Traditional media journalists			
Yes	No	Y&N	No reply	Yes	No	Y&N	No reply
1	14	3		3	21	5	
6%	76%	18%		10%	72%	17%	

Political values: China

Is it sometimes necessary to block access to the Internet?

- All respondents agree that it is reasonable to do that to combat **pornography**.
- When this is associated with **political reasons**, 28 of 30 disagree on a blockage, and **two** agree citing foreign interference.
- **Difference between traditional media journalists and Internet editors:** Most of the Internet editors, after expressing their disagreement with the Great Fire Wall as it is widely known, would move forward to explain why they disagree by listing state malpractices; most of the traditional media journalists, after expressing similar disagreement, would proceed, however, to reverse their position by justifying blocking. One: “if Great Wall is acceptable, why not the Great Fire Wall?” Another: “But the result is that the Chinese know more about the outside world than they know about us.”

Political values

- Is there a need to control the content of political materials in media?

Online media journalists				Traditional media journalists			
Yes	No	Y&N	No reply	Yes	No	Y&N	No reply
0	11	7	0	6	20	4	0
0%	65%	35%		20%	67%	13%	

Political values

- Online journalists in general are sharing liberal ideas and values of civil society to a greater extent than the journalists from traditional media.
- Online journalistic community is radically opposing the very idea of the state control of the political media content. While journalist from the old media split when answering this question – reasonable quote of them admit political control in that or those way.
- They have different opinions about the Internet control. Some of them for different reasons support the idea of such control. On the contrary, online media journalists are unanimously against any kind of political or state control of the Internet.

Online journalists and protests

- Regular coverage of protests (differed from official)
- Protest is emotional expression of opinion
- Following blogosphere: Dissatisfaction growing up
- Tiredness: “No protests in weekend”, journalists are more than picketers
- Opposition separated, no leader, no program
- Weak faith in effectiveness of protests: Street protests led to nothing

Journalists and protests

- Protests provoked interest in politics:
- “From the student newspaper we developed into a youth online newspaper, which represents the views of 20-year-old generation, who were born in 1990, 1991 and 1989 respectively” (from interview)
- December 2011 like student’s revolution, age: 20-22
- Some kept a distance to protests not identifying themselves with picketers, performing in the status of a detached reporter, some were involved

Conclusion

- Hypothesis 1: Not validated. Professionals works
- Hypothesis 2: Validated. Journalists move to online media having the desire for greater freedom and creativity
- Hypothesis 3: Validated. Online media are more integrated with civil society and protests than the old media

Thank for your attention!