Introduction to From media systems to media cultures: Understanding socialist television

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.


Additional Information:

- This material has been published in From Media Systems to Media Cultures: Understanding Socialist Television by / edited by Mihelj, S. and Huxtable, S.. This version is free to view and download for personal use only. Not for re-distribution, re-sale or use in derivative works. © the editors. The published version can be found here https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108525039.001.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/28407

Version: Accepted for publication

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Please cite the published version.
From Media Systems to Media Cultures

Understanding State Socialist Television

Sabina Mihelj

Loughborough University

Simon Huxtable

Loughborough University
Contents

List of Tables and Figures
Abbreviations of Sources
Acknowledgments

1 Introduction

PART ONE: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS
2 Comparing Media Cultures
3 State Socialist Television in Historical Context
4 Television and Varieties of Modernity

PART TWO: THE SPACES OF STATE SOCIALIST TELEVISION
5 Publicness
6 Privacy
7 Transnationalism

PART THREE: THE TIMES OF STATE SOCIALIST TELEVISION
8 Everyday Time
9 History
10 Extraordinary Time

11 Conclusions

Methodological Appendix
List of References
Index
List of Tables and Figures

Tables

3.1 Diffusion of TV Sets: Trends in the Number of Inhabitants per TV set, 1960-1990
3.2 State Socialist Television Systems in Eastern Europe: Three Models
6.1 Plots and Settings of Serial Fiction
7.1 Estimated Share of Imported Programming and Imported Serial Fiction
7.2 Origin of Imported Programming and Serial Fiction
9.1 Key Events and Periods Represented in Historical Serial Fiction
10.1 Major Public Holidays in State Socialist Countries
10.2 Five Cases of Media Disruptions: An Overview
12.1 Life-Story Interviews: Sample Structure

Figures

3.2 Passers-by Watching the Early TV Broadcasts on the Streets of Belgrade, 23 August 1958. Source: RTS-PATVB
3.3 Growth of Broadcast Hours in a Sample Week, 1960-1990
4.1 The Berlin TV Tower, 1970. Source: Fortepan / LHM
5.2 Programme Structures in Five State Socialist Countries
5.3 Trends in the Proportion of Entertainment in Five State Socialist Countries, 1960-1990
6.1 Interviewees from Serbia in Front of the TV Set in Their Kitchen. Source: Aleksandra Milovanović, private collection.
6.3 Members of the Petrović Family from the Yugoslav Series *Theatre in the House*. Source: RTS-PATVB

6.4 Stefan Karwowiski with his Wife Magda, from the Polish Series *The Forty-Year-Old Man*. Source: FFN.

7.1 Trends in the Share of Imported Programming in Total Broadcast Content, 1961-1990

7.2 Trends in the Share of Foreign Serial Fiction Imported from Western Countries, 1961-1990

7.3 Trends in the Share of Foreign Programming Imported from Western countries, 1960-1990

8.1 Sample Weekday Schedules from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Sources: *TV Novosti* and *Govorit i pokazyvaet Moskva*

9.1 Scene from the Yugoslav serial *The Outcasts*. Source: RTS-PATVB.

9.2 Share of Historical Drama in Domestically Produced Serial Fiction

9.3 Tankmen Olgierd and Gustlik with their dog Szarik, from the Polish Serial *The Four Tankmen and a Dog*. Source: FFN.

10.1 Labour Day Parade Followed by TV Cameras in Budapest, Hungary, 1974. Source: Fortepan/ Angyalföldi Helytörténeti Gyűjtemény

10.2 Sample Festive Schedules, Romania and Yugoslavia. Sources: *Tele Radio* (Romania) and *TV Novosti* (Yugoslavia)

10.3 Sample Media Disruption Schedule: Brezhnev's Death, Soviet Union. Source: *Govorit i pokazyvaet Moskva*
Abbreviations of Sources

ANR – Arhivele Naționale ale României / The National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania
AJ – Arhiv Jugoslavije / Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia
DRA – Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv / German Broadcasting Archive, Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany
FFN – Fototeka Filmoteki Narodowej / Photo Collection of the National Film Archive, Warsaw, Poland
Fortepan – Fortepan Online Photo Archive, Hungary
GARF – Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rosiiskoi Federatsii / State Archive of the Russian Federation
HDA – Hrvatski državni arhiv / Croatian State Archives, Zagreb, Croatia
NARA – National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, USA
RGALI – Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstvo / Russian State Archive of Literature and Art
RGANI – Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii / Russian State Archive of Contemporary History
RTS-CIJMPA – Radio televizija Srbija, Centar za istraživanje javnog mnenja, programa i auditorijuma / Radio Television of Serbia, Centre for Public Opinion, Programme and Audience Research, Belgrade, Serbia
RTS-PATVB – Radio televizija Srbije, Programski arhiv Televizije Beograd / Radio Television of Serbia, Programme Archives of Television Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
SAMPO – Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv / Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives, xxx, Germany
TsAOPIM – Tsentr khraneniia dokumentov obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvy—Fondy byvshego Tsentral'nogo arkhiva obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvy / Center for Preservation of Records of Socio-Political History of Moscow—Holdings from the former Central Archive of Social-Political History of Moscow, Moscow, Russia
From Media Systems to Media Cultures

13/10/2017

TNS OBOP – Dział Dokumentacji Aktowej, Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej / Archive of Reports, Centre for Public Opinion and Broadcasting Research, Warsaw, Poland.
Acknowledgments

While working on this book we have accrued many debts. First of all, a comparative project of this kind would not have happened without substantial institutional support. This book represents the culmination of a research project entitled *Screening Socialism: Popular Television and Everyday Life in Socialist Eastern Europe* (2013-2016), which was generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Despite frequent expressions of commitment to interdisciplinarity and blue skies research in the contemporary academia, funding bodies that consistently and systematically fund interdisciplinary research are few and far between. The distinct mission of the Leverhulme Trust sets it apart from many other funding bodies in this respect, and we are immensely grateful that the reviewers and the panel found it worthwhile to invest in what must have seemed, at the time, a rather risky project on a relatively obscure topic. From the very start, Loughborough University and the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture have provided an inspiring and supportive home for our research, and we are indebted to many colleagues, old and new, who have supported us with criticisms, suggestions, and encouragement.

We are especially indebted to the many colleagues who participated in the *Screening Socialism* project and helped us make it a success. These include first of all Alice Bardan and Sylwia Szostak, who have played a major role in acquiring the materials for two of the five countries we investigate in the book. Many other researchers have assisted us with acquiring some of the materials, transcribing and translating interview data, or supporting the project in other ways: Alex Boican, Magdalena Bugajska, Marijana Grbeša, Emily Harmer, Polina Kliuchnikova, Ivan Kozachenko, Antonios Kyriopoulos, Aleksandra Milovanović, Cristina Preutu, David Smith, and Mila Turaljić. Finally, Advisory Board members Anne Gorsuch, Ann Grey, Thomas Lindenberger and Michael Pickering offered invaluable advice on different aspects of our research as well as provided comments on our publication plans and drafts.

The launch of the *Screening Socialism* project happily coincided with the formation of the European (Post) Socialist Television History Network, led by Dana Mustata, which
helped us establish and sustain an ongoing conversation with several colleagues with expertise in state socialist television history, including Cristine Evans, Anikó Imre, Lars Lundgren, Alexandru Matei, Mari Pajala, Cristina Preutu, Irena Reifova, and Ferenc Hammer. We would also like to express our gratitude to the following, who have, with their valuable criticism, suggestions, and encouragement, supported the development of the Screening Socialism project and this book in a variety of ways: Catherine Baker, Jérôme Bourdon, Paulina Bren, Deborah Chambers, Christoph Classen, Nevena Daković, David Deacon, John Downey, Kirsten Drotner, Igor Duda, Astrid Erll, Andreas Fickers, Heather Gumbert, Karol Jakubowicz, Nadia Kaneva, Emily Keightley, Judith Keilbach, Gholam Khiabany, Yuliya Komska, Stephen Lovell, Kati Lustyik, Julia Obertreis, Susan Reid, José Ricardo Carvalheiro, Ann Rigney, Kristin Roth-Ey, Petr Szczepanik, James Schwoch, Joes Segal, Marsha Siefert, James Stanyer, Liz Stokoe, Ana Tominc, Ekaterina Vikulina, Rolf Werenskjord, Odd Arne Westad, Liesbet Van Zoonen, and Barbie Zelizer.

As any book reliant on historical sources, ours would not have been possible without the support of numerous archivists working in both national and local archives and libraries as well as broadcast archives across Eastern Europe and beyond. Many of them have gone well beyond their call of duty to accommodate our many requests. We are also indebted to the 171 interviewees who have agreed to share their memories of television with us, and thereby enabled us to reconstruct the experience of life with the small screen from the perspective of audiences. In particular, we would like to acknowledge those individuals who helped facilitate interviews with friends and family members, and extended hospitality to the book’s authors and other researchers.

Many of the arguments presented in this book were previously aired at conferences and symposia organised by national and international associations, and we have benefited greatly from the comments received and questions asked by the participants. These include the European Communication Research and Education Association conferences in Istanbul in 2012, in Lisbon in 2014, and in Prague in 2016, the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies conferences in Prague in 2013, in Milan in 2014, and in Łódź in 2015, the International Communication Association Communication History pre-conferences in Seattle in 2014 and in San Diego in 2017, the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies conventions in San Antonio in 2014 and in Washington DC in 2016, and the British Association for
Slavonic and East European Studies conference in Cambridge in 2015. We have also had the fortune of receiving many join thematically more focused international conferences and workshops, including the workshop \textit{Radio – das Medium der Ideologie} in Konstanz in 2013, the conference \textit{Television in Europe beyond the Iron Curtain} in Erlangen-Nürnberg in 2013, the \textit{Third Annual Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference} in Olomouc in 2013, the inaugural meeting of the European (Post)Socialist Television History Network in Stockholm in 2013, the conference \textit{Cold War and Entertainment Television} in Paris in 2014, the conference \textit{Media and the Cold War, 1975-1991} in Volda in 2014, the workshop \textit{Transnational Media Relationships during the Cold War} in Potsdam in 2014, the conference \textit{The Pleasures of Backwardness} in Berkeley in 2015, the \textit{Symposium on Late Socialism} in Tallinn in 2015, the COST Action ISTME workshop \textit{The Audiovisual Production of Transcultural Memory in Europe} in Dubrovnik in 2015, the workshop \textit{Comparative Studies of Communism} in Sofia in 2015, the conference \textit{Material Cultures of Television} in Hull in 2016, and the workshop \textit{Cold War Mobilities and Immobilities} in Budapest in 2017. Finally, we have also presented our work at departmental seminars and similar events organised in the UK, including at Cambridge University, Loughborough University and the University of London.

The support of Cambridge University Press has been impressive throughout, particularly the assistance of Sara Doskow and her team, and the editors of the Communication, Society and Politics series, Lance Bennett and Robert Entman. We are also grateful to the three anonymous reviewers who commented on the book project at various stages of its evolution.

Finally, we owe special thanks to our partners and children who have gracefully endured all the side effects of our passion for state socialist television: Clara, Emma, Jovan and Chrysi.

Sabina Mihelj and Simon Huxtable

October, 2017
1

Introduction

The advent of the Cold War coincided with the rise of a new mass medium that came to occupy a central place in the everyday lives of citizens on both sides of the Iron Curtain. While the historical growth and social impact of television in the West has long attracted substantial and sustained scholarly attention; the medium’s trajectories elsewhere in the world took longer to reach the academic radar.\(^1\) The development of television in countries under communist rule, in particular, has been of marginal relevance to mainstream media and communication research – an object of interest to media historians and area specialist perhaps, but of limited significance to central debates in the field.\(^2\) At first glance, the lack of interest in state socialist television may seem warranted. State socialist television, so the story goes, was a grey vehicle of propaganda which viewers ignored as much as possible, tuning into signals from their glamorous capitalist neighbors wherever and whenever they could. Yet this story is challenged by the sizeable audiences that state socialist television attracted throughout its existence and the fondness with which viewers remember many socialist-era television programs. To be sure, many viewers complained and even joked about the content of television programs. Even so, television’s presence in viewers’ living rooms ensured a constant means of contact between Party and citizen, and acted as an important source of shared sociality, aligned with communist values and goals. Yet, as shown in this book, television achieved all this while largely failing to engender a sense of unqualified adherence to communism. Thus, the history of state socialist television has much to tell us about the complex relationship between state and society during state socialism, and, in doing so, has the capacity to challenge long-standing convictions about mass communication under totalitarian rule.

\(^1\) Research on television beyond the West started gaining momentum only around the turn of the century, with volumes such as Lughod (2003); Mankekar (1999); Rajagopal (2001).

\(^2\) The majority of recent book-length studies of state socialist television came from historians or area specialists rather than media or cultural studies experts. The first major exception to this in English language is Imre (2016). See also notes 25 and 26.
The experience of state socialist television we discuss in this book is not only of historical relevance. Rather, we use this foray into the long-dead era of Cold War broadcasting to advance a number of general arguments of relevance to communication and media research. First and foremost, we seek to reorient the focus of comparative media research from media systems to media cultures. The comparative study of media systems and their relationships with political systems has received a substantial amount of attention in recent years, and made significant strides in understanding the diversity of mass communication around the world, along with its causes. Yet, while this systemic approach is important, it offers only a partial insight into the social implications of mass communication and, more generally, into the diversity of global media landscapes. To gain a fuller grasp of this diversity, we need to acknowledge that socially significant communication extends well beyond the traditional domains of politics, and encompasses the mediation of basic cultural ideals and narratives, as well as the structuring of everyday practices and routines. These include the perceptions of private and public life, the understanding of the nation and its position in the world, the modes of organizing daily routines and everyday spaces, and historical events remembered and celebrated on a mass scale. To investigate these dimensions, we develop an analytical framework that conceives of media cultures as patterns of ideas and practices that enable mass mediated meaning formation, and that have distinct spatial and temporal characteristics. These media cultures, we argue, can vary on a number of dimensions, from the extent to which they seek to serve public or private goals, the degree to which they are open to transnational exchanges, to their modes of engaging with the past, present and future. This framework can be applied to different media and cultural forms, and in diverse political and cultural contexts.

Secondly, we use the historical experience of socialist television to unsettle some of the key concepts in contemporary communication and media research, and question their global relevance. For instance, although talking of a socialist public sphere may seem a contradiction in terms, there is no doubt that socialist policy makers and television professionals had a clear sense of public mission, and explicitly sought to use television as a means of stimulating public engagement and even social critique.
What does this mean for our established ways of conceptualising television’s involvement in the public sphere, or for our understanding of public service broadcasting? Or, to take another example: how are we to interpret the transnational ambitions of socialist television, and how do they relate to the much-debated processes of Americanization, cultural imperialism, and cultural globalisation? To make sense of socialist television’s trajectory, and situate it vis-à-vis its counterparts elsewhere in the world, we suggest a number of revisions to established concepts and arguments. Drawing on recent debates in sociology and history, as well as in media and cultural studies, we also propose a new theoretical agenda for comparative media research, anchored in the notion of entangled modernities. Following this approach, the different trajectories of media development around the world can be seen as resulting from multiple, yet connected visions of modernity and modern society. The different modern visions evident in Cold War TV in many instances engaged with and responded to each other. This created a discourse that both reinforced the distinctions between varieties of modernity, and also created the conditions for their mutual entanglement. This understanding of modernity and television chimes with proposals put forward by several other authors examining media cultures beyond the Western world, and offers a particularly suitable frame for conceptualizations that are sensitive to the diversity of media trajectories globally.

Thirdly, this book enhances our understanding of the specificities of mass communication in non-democratic settings. This is not of marginal importance to our discipline. When we began to think about this project, over a decade ago, it was still possible to think that the liberal media world was here to stay, and that its historical competitors, the state socialist media systems included, had been consigned to the dustbin of history. Even then, of course, we felt that the study of state socialist television was important and relevant: it served as a reminder that the liberal media world that seemed so entrenched at that point was not the only one possible, but had historically evolved in competition with very different arrangements of mass communication. Today such a reminder is no longer needed. As the “illiberal turn” sweeping through democracies both old and new attests, it would be wrong to think that the liberal democratic approach to media governance possesses a universal and lasting appeal, or that it is inseparable from the global advance of commercial media
ownership. Studying the bygone era of state socialist television in Eastern Europe is therefore not merely of historical relevance, but helps address some of the key questions that face media researchers in the present. How do media systems and cultures emerging in non-democratic contexts differ from those familiar in democratic environments? In what ways do the media in such contexts seek to affect audiences, and how effective are they in their endeavour? What is the role of new communication technologies in cementing the status quo, but potentially also in disrupting prevailing beliefs, routines, and existing relationships of power? The contemporary onslaught on the liberal media order is of course taking place in a political and media landscape that is rather different from the one that prevailed during the Cold War. Nonetheless, it is only through a better understanding of the differences and similarities between various media systems and cultures, both old and new, near and far, that we will be in a better position to appreciate where the current developments are heading. Understanding the historical experiences of socialist television is an important prerequisite for this endeavour.

The remainder of this introduction first provides a brief outline of the methodological and theoretical framework adopted in the book and explains how it departs from existing practices in comparative media research. The second part of the chapter looks more closely at the reasons that make the historical formation of state socialist television a particularly attractive object of comparative media cultures research. Central to this is the importance of understanding television’s relationship with the communist political project: did communist authorities manage to harness the potential of television to advance their revolutionary ideas, or did television set in motion a revolution of its own, contributing to developments that proved detrimental to the communist project in the long run? As we shall see, the answer lies somewhere in the middle: television was immensely successful at weaving communist ideals into the very texture of everyday life, provided a basis of shared rituals and other forms of sociality, but did so without necessarily inspiring a commitment to the communist agenda. As such, television had an ambiguous relationship with the communist project: it served as an anchor of normality and thereby contributed to the stability and longevity of communist rule, while at the same time allowing its ideological message to become ever more blurred.
From Media Systems to Media Cultures

Comparative media research has advanced considerably over the previous two decades, evolving from a marginal preoccupation to a well-established subfield of media and communication research. As Sonia Livingstone notes, the conduct of research within a single country can no longer be taken for granted, and has to be accompanied, at the very minimum, by asking whether the findings are limited to that country or part of a wider transnational trend. In the process of achieving greater recognition in the field, comparative research has also reached a considerable level of methodological and theoretical sophistication, and enlarged its substantive and geographical scope. As a result, it is now possible to identify a significant body of comparative work across all the major sub-fields of communication and media research, ranging from political communication to social interaction, and from media policy and regulation to audience reception.

Yet if we look more closely at which kinds of substantive questions, geographical areas and units of analysis have received the most attention, it is clear that existing research focuses primarily on Western media, is marked by a preference for national media systems as the sole units of analysis, and is heavily biased in favour of political communication and news genres. These tendencies are clearly evident in what is presently the most influential study in the field, namely Hallin and Mancini’s *Comparing Media Systems*. In this landmark book, the authors examine eighteen countries in Western Europe and Northern America, focus on news media and regulation, and conceive these aspects as parts of national media systems. It is also worth noting that, although the choice of the term “system” implies comprehensiveness, the focus on news media and regulation effectively means that what are being compared are, for the most part, political communication systems, rather than media systems in general. The authors readily acknowledge that their analysis could be expanded to encompass

---

4 For an overview see Esser and Hanitzsch (2012).
5 Hallin and Mancini (2004).
other cultural industries, including television, but admit that this would “involve other literatures and require very different sets of concepts”.

The shortcomings of existing comparative work are often noted in literature, but the various critiques and suggestions for improvements have not yet coalesced into a substantive new framework. For instance, several scholars have sought to expand and amend existing media typologies and comparative frameworks by looking at cases beyond Western Europe and Northern America. Yet, despite some notable theoretical and methodological advances, this body of work typically consists of country-by-country compilations or comparative treatments that zoom in on more narrowly defined aspects of media systems. Likewise, some authors have pointed to the need to reorient the attention of comparative research from systemic to cultural aspects of mediated communication, yet these discussions have neither given rise to a shared approach, nor provided a firm understanding of what comparing media cultures actually involves. Finally, many scholars have highlighted the inherent methodological nationalism of existing research, and also proposed methodological solutions designed to make comparative work more sensitive to transnational exchanges and influences. However, these solutions are yet to be tried and tested on a substantive body of empirical materials.

The subject matter examined in this book required us to make methodological choices that were very different from those adopted by Hallin and Mancini. It also offered us the opportunity to take on board diverse suggestions for improvements developed since the publication of *Comparing Media Systems*, integrate them into a new analytical framework, and test their usefulness empirically. The framework we propose differs from the one prevailing in existing work in a number of ways. Apart from the obvious shift in geographical focus, and the fact that we examine a set of communist-ruled countries rather than liberal democracies, our concern with television required

---

6 Ibid., p. 7.
7 E.g., Dobek-Ostrowska *et al.* (2010); Downey and Mihelj (2012); Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez (2014); Hallin and Mancini (2012a); Voltmer (2013).
8 E.g., Couldry and Hepp (2012); Hanitzsch (2007). A more comprehensive survey of existing research that deals comparatively with cultural aspects of communication is provided in Chapter 1.
9 E.g., Esser (2013); Hardy (2012); Livingstone (2003).
us to move beyond news and encompass a considerably more varied range of genres and modes of communication, including fiction and entertainment. At the same time, our intention to combine institutional and programme analysis with audience history also meant that the focus of analytical attention moved from the vertical relationships between media systems and political systems to the horizontal processes of meaning-formation that tie together producers, programmes and audiences.

This reorientation can best be conceived in terms of a shift in focus from comparing media systems to comparing media cultures. Systemic aspects are of course not absent from our investigation; in fact, we argue that a comparative inquiry into media cultures cannot proceed without a parallel consideration of media systems, which constitute one of the major contextual factors that help explain why media cultures are the way they are. The vast majority of the analysis presented in the empirical sections of this book, however, focuses on media cultures themselves, the specific patterns of practices and meanings that constitute them, and the ways in which these patterns are negotiated in processes that tie together the circuits of media production, texts, reception and use.

The emphasis on culture may leave the impression that our intention is to link the diversity of media cultures to ethno-cultural or civilizational differences, and distinguish between “French”, “Polish”, “British” and “Russian” media cultures, or between “European”, “Asian”, “African”, or “Latin American” media cultures. This is not how the relationship between media cultures and global contexts is conceptualized in this book. Reducing the media cultures to cultural differences runs the risk of adopting an essentialist understanding of culture, and cannot explain the diversity of media cultures fully. Instead, our analytical move from media systems to media cultures is coupled with a novel theoretical approach to comparative media research, which is anchored in the notion of entangled varieties of modernity.10 This approach helps us situate socialist television trajectories vis-à-vis their counterparts around the globe, as well as understand intra-regional variation in the socialist world itself. As such, the entangled varieties of modernity approach also serves to advance the agenda of “de-

10 E.g., Arnason (2000); Dirlik (2003); Eisenstadt (1974); Schmidt (2006); Therborn (2003).
Westernizing” or “internationalizing” communication and media research. However, this “de-westernization” is achieved in a manner that steers away from culture-centricity that is often advocated as an alternative to West-centred approaches – namely, the tendency to explain the differences between Western and non-Western media cultures as a result of ethno-cultural or civilizational diversity.

This is not to say that cultural differences should be ignored. As shown in our analysis, state socialist television cultures differed depending, among other factors, on the character of gender relations, the level of acceptance of religious traditions, and the nature of national historical narratives in a particular context. Yet, such cultural differences are not all that mattered; they constituted only one piece of a much larger puzzle. State socialist television cultures also differed depending on the foreign policies of the country and the transnational orientations of broadcast infrastructure, on the relative core-periphery position of the country and its television system, on the extent and forms of party-state control over the media, and on the timing of infrastructural developments they were tied to. To unpack these multiple factors, we approach different media cultures as rooted in different visions of modern society, all stemming from similar core assumptions about the nature of human beings and their relationship to the world, and sharing a tendency towards structural differentiation, but articulated through different constellations of modern institutions, including different models of media systems. By foregrounding the shared traits of the different varieties of modernity, this approach avoids reducing the diversity of global media landscapes to cultural differences, and enables us to theorize both the shared traits and distinctive qualities of media cultures within a common conceptual framework.

**Why State Socialist Television?**

State socialist television provides a particularly apposite testing ground for a comparative framework centred on media cultures and anchored in the notion of

---

12 E.g., Chen (2007); Miike (2007).
13 In this book, we chose to use the epithet “state socialist” rather than “communist” when referring to television, as well as when talking of societies and countries. In contrast, we use the label “communist” when referring to the form of rule, the party elite, and values and visions of progress. This decision to talk about “socialist” television was in part influenced by the fact that this is the
entangled varieties of modernity. As part of the communist propaganda apparatus, socialist television formed an integral part of a political, economic and cultural system that self-consciously set out to develop an alternative form of modernity, one premised on communist rule and the planned economy, and designed to give rise to a classless society. It should also be noted that culture – including media culture – formed an essential part of this revolutionary endeavour. The good life anticipated by communist rulers not only promised education, health and social security for all, but also envisaged a genuinely common “mass culture”, one that would extend its appeal beyond the educated elites, erase differences of taste between classes, and involve individuals of all backgrounds not only as audiences, but also as cultural producers. In such a context, culture in all its manifestations, including those embodied in the mass media, was endowed with a tremendous burden of responsibility, but also with a sense of prestige and authority. As Stephen Lovell points out in his plea for a “media-centred” approach to Soviet history, culture was “not simply the handmaiden of politics; it was more akin to a valued senior employee”. As we shall show further on in the book, this elevated status meant that the state socialist media and cultural industries enjoyed a modicum of independence, and could on occasion offer its own interpretation of the Party line.

While endeavouring to foster an alternative form of modern society and culture, state socialist television was not entirely different from its relative in the West nor completely isolated from it. Television in the state socialist world in many ways shared the trajectory of its Western cousin, and became involved in some of the central processes of transformation that marked the post-World War Two era. Television offered tangible proof of a country’s ability to master modernity, as well as promising access to education, culture and information for all, and thereby acted as a means by which post-war welfare regimes could deliver the dream of a good life to all of their citizens. It represented a powerful means of both national integration and globalization, and also responded to the thirst for cheap entertainment among the fast growing urban population.

preferred label in most of existing literature on the topic (but see Bren, 2010, for a notable exception). We also felt that this terminological choice reflected the dual nature of our object of investigation, and more generally the tension between the communist vision and politics on the one hand, and the reality of historically existing societies and cultures on the other.

populations which enjoyed increasing amounts of leisure time and income. As Christine Evans rightly points out, these shared traits of television both East and West were in no small part generated by the nature of the Cold War contest in which the Soviet Union and the United States, along with their allies, competed over the inheritance of the Enlightenment, and more specifically over the best ways of delivering a good life to all.\textsuperscript{16} To put it differently, the similarities between television trajectories on both sides of the Iron Curtain testify to their shared participation in the project of modernity, and act as a reminder that “the story of modernity is not just the story of liberal capitalism; it is the story of liberalism and socialism and their relationship to one another”.\textsuperscript{17}

Understanding state socialist television, then, requires us to approach it as a specific subtype of modern television, which was in many ways similar to its Western cousin, but also designed to promote an alternative vision of progress and belonging – one premised on a teleological vision of history centred on the revolution and culminating in a socially equal, worker-led society. A central question of this book concerns the extent to which communist authorities and TV professionals managed to use the medium to further their revolutionary goals. How exactly, and to what extent, did the alternative vision of progress advanced by the Party translate into actual patterns of television production, forms of programming and audience use? Were these patterns successful in promoting the communist cause?

At first sight, television technology offered a uniquely powerful means of furthering the revolution. Much like radio, its social reach was not tied to the advance of literacy, and its gradual institutionalization as a domestic medium meant that messages produced centrally could reach citizens in the comfort of their homes, removing the need for an intricate network of local propagandists. In addition, its ability to offer an instantaneous, “live” connection with unfolding events also held the promise of engendering shared participation in the onward march of revolutionary progress. But television went even further than radio. Its ability to couple sound with moving image had the potential to make messages both more accessible and appealing to a wider range of audiences,

\textsuperscript{17} Gumbert (2014), p. 4.
and also significantly broadened the range of forms and genres that could be transmitted. This included not only the possibility of broadcasting propaganda films or the latest theatre performance of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, but also the opportunity to capture popular participation in the communist project in its full splendor, transmitting live images of mass rallies and showcasing the achievements of model workers. Finally, the combination of the visual nature with the liveness and the domesticity of the medium seemed to provide television with an ability to create a uniquely intimate, authentic and truthful insight into the inner world of individuals not otherwise available to the naked eye. This “new vision” [*novoe zrenie*], as the “prophet” of Soviet television Vladimir Sappak called it, could generate a “revolution in perception […] through which man might be jolted out of his quotidian routine and caused to see the world in a new, more authentic way”.18 Television, then, was an inherently revolutionary medium, seemingly perfectly suited to advance the communist project.

This was the theory, but the practice of socialist television suggests a more complicated picture. As recent research indicates, every advantage brought by television also harboured a disadvantage. It quickly became obvious that the addition of the moving image did little to increase the appeal of political speeches, not least because professional propagandists were often reluctant to embrace the new medium, and preferred to stick to traditional methods of direct oral agitation.19 By contrast, cultural industry professionals were quicker to realize the potential of the new medium, and used the addition of the visual to expand the roster of entertainment genres, both through arranging live broadcasts and through creating programs expressly made for television. As a result, socialist television was, paradoxically, better at entertaining than at propagandising. Surveys conducted in Yugoslavia in the 1960s repeatedly found that the popularity of entertainment genres and transmissions of football matches exceeded the appeal of news programs, and also showed that Yugoslav audiences viewed television primarily as a means of relaxation and entertainment.20 This was not simply a Yugoslav peculiarity: a survey conducted among employees in Moscow in 1967 likewise revealed that the top three programs watched by

---

18 Quoted in Evans (2016), pp. 236-238.
respondents were soccer, boxing and the variety show *Little Blue Flame*, while programs with more explicit political messages ranked further down.21

The promise of television as a means of staging live events involving ordinary people also proved far trickier in practice than on paper for it unsettled the precarious balance between participation and control. The most striking example of this is provided by Ceaușescu’s speech on 21 December 1989, broadcast live and delivered in front of a large crowd gathered in front of the Presidential Palace in Bucharest. As usual, many spectators were bussed in from across the city, yet rather than following the usual protocols of participation, complete with applause and pro-communist chants, they began to shout and scream, demanding Ceaușescu to step down. This uncontrolled behavior led to the broadcast being cut short, and marks the beginning of the “live Romanian revolution” that we examine more fully in Chapter 9. Similar examples of live broadcasts derailed by disruptive participants can be found in earlier decades of communist rule. In 1957, during the live transmission of a Soviet quiz entitled *Evening of Merry Questions* [*Vecher veselykh voprosov*] over 600 viewers turned up in the studio, some of them drunk, and many of them poorly dressed and unruly, one even carrying a live chicken. The show was thrown into disarray, the host lost his bearings and soon disappeared from the stage, and after some delay the director of the show finally decided to cut the transmission.22 Paradoxically, the very traits that promised to make television the ideal medium of the communist revolution – namely its liveness and its capacity to showcase popular participation – also embodied a potential threat to the communist order.

The establishment of television as a domestic medium was another stumbling block for the communist project. While it had the ability to deliver political messages to socialist citizens in the comfort of their homes, television also restricted the ability of communist authorities to control how these messages were received – if they were received at all. As Roth-Ey notes in her study of Soviet television, broadcast media enabled audiences “to interact with mass culture on their own terms” rather than in a collectively organized fashion, and allowed them to make choices that were not

21 Evans (2016), p. 84.
necessarily the ones envisioned by the elites. A related challenge posed by domestic consumption was its potential to lure citizens away from collective forms of leisure and public life, ultimately diminishing the ability of the medium to promote mass mobilization. As such, the rise of domestic media was strangely at odds with Soviet cultural and political ideals: “Where Soviet tradition was geared to mass political and cultural mobilization, TV looked like immobilization; where Soviet tradition privileged collective, public settings, TV broadcasting reached individual and anonymous viewers in their homes”. If the essence of the communist ideal of mass communication lay in marrying authority with participation, the domesticity of television appeared to undermine both.

Yet, we should be wary of assuming that these negative examples rendered television inimical to the communist project. Communist elites and television professionals across Eastern Europe were well aware of both the opportunities and the dangers ingrained in the new medium, and worked hard to embed television technology in an alternative cultural form, one that capitalized on the potential of sound and vision broadcasting while adapting it to communist goals. For instance, although audience preferences for entertainment over education and information often prompted consternation among elites, they also gradually led to a range of successful attempts to mobilize entertainment for political goals. An important aim of this book is precisely to map out the different points of contact and tension between, on the one hand, the cultural forms of television as developed in the West, and, on the other hand, the nature and goals of the communist project. To do so, the book performs a balancing act between media-centrism and social determinism, or between what Raymond Williams has termed “technological determinism” and “determined technology”. In line with this, television is treated both as a set of technological solutions with their own possibilities, and as a distinct cultural form, complete with particular public functions, conventions of representation, and personal uses. The same – or closely similar – set of technological solutions we now recognize as “television” could therefore give rise to a host of different cultural forms of the medium depending on the context in which it was embedded.

24 Ibid., p. 181.
Existing research on socialist television offers much that is of relevance to the discussion developed in this book, yet this body of work largely consists of single-country studies. In the few cases where a more transnational perspective is adopted, the focus remains either on transnational cooperation and exchanges, selected policy aspects, or programme analysis, without developing a more systematic comparative overview of shared traits, cross-country differences, or changes over time. Existing literature is also largely concerned with the analysis of institutional infrastructures, elite views, professional practices, and TV programmes, while having relatively little to say about audience practices and perspectives. This raises the question of whether trends noted in individual countries appeared elsewhere, and whether the intended social impact of particular programming was born out by audience response. The comparative approach adopted in this book helps overcome these weaknesses. Applied to five countries that embody the main dimensions of variation in socialist television, it enables us to identify both the shared traits and distinct trajectories of socialist television in the region. The weaving together of institutional and programme analysis with audience history, on the other hand, makes it possible to ascertain how the hopes and anxieties surrounding television played out on the ground, and to answer the question whether, ultimately, socialist television managed to advance the communist cause.

As we show over the course of the book, the state socialist context did give rise to a cultural form of television that was in many ways distinct from its Western cousin, and

26 The most important contributions include book-length studies focusing on a single country, and a handful of edited volumes comprising single-country studies from different parts of Eastern Europe. For a selection of studies of Soviet TV see Evans (2016); Prokhorova (2003); Prokhorova and Prokhorov (2017); Roth-Ey (2011). Studies of East German television include Dittmar (2010); Gumbert (2014); Meyen (2003); Plau et al. (2010); Steinmetz and Viehoff (2008). Finally, for a sample of literature on Czechoslovak TV see Bren (2010) and Štoll (2018) and for Romanian TV, Mustata (2011) and Matei (2013). The most important edited volumes include Goddard 2013; Imre et al. 2013; Bönkers et al. 2016.

27 For some examples of research focusing on transnational cooperation and exchanges within and beyond the socialist world see Badenoch et al. (2013); Bönkers et al. (2016); Lundgren (2012). The only comprehensive book-length treatment of socialist television covering more than one country is Anikó Imre’s (2016) TV Socialism, which offers an insightful and in many ways groundbreaking analysis of shared traits across a wide range of television programmes and genres, but does not seek to develop systematic cross-country comparisons nor investigates the broader context of TV production, reception and use. Some of the early research on East European television, most notably Burton Paulu’s (1974) work, also provides valuable information from a range of countries, but is mostly descriptive rather than analytical in its approach.
clearly aligned with communist ideals not only at the level of elite discourse and editorial policies but also at the level of programme output and audience use. Yet at the same time, television largely failed at engendering the kind of active adherence to communist ideals it aspired to: it gave rise to new practices attuned to communist agendas, but did not necessarily create new loyalties. In this sense, television helped sustain the paradoxical duality of communist ideology as theorized by Alexei Yurchak, contributing to its “hegemony of form” while leaving much of its content indeterminate. According to Yurchak, Soviet public life after Stalin’s death in 1953 was characterised by a disjunction between form and content, or more precisely between the significance of official speeches, parades and public events as performances, and their literal meanings. People thus participated in such acts and events not because they endorsed their ideological content, but because participation allowed them to partake in various forms of sociality, creativity and self-fulfilment that were not necessarily determined by the literal meaning of these acts and events. At the same time, the disjunction between performance and literal meanings did not mean that people were opposed to the communist project. Rather, it allowed them to develop a differentiated relationship with it, selectively adopting or rejecting particular meanings, norms and values depending on context, and even creating new meanings. As a result, argues Yurchak, this duality of Soviet public life paradoxically contributed both to the perception of the stability and immutability of the Soviet system, as well as to its creative and unpredictable possibilities.

State socialist television, we argue, was a key institution that helped embed this interplay of form and content, stability and creativity, into the daily life of millions. It aligned everyday lives of state socialist citizens with the communist agenda, served daily reminders of communist ideals and goals, but also generated modes of viewing, shared habits and rituals that were not necessarily determined by the content of programming, let alone by the intentions of policymakers or television producers. Through that, communist ideology became a part of the taken-for-granted texture of everyday life, as well as provided a basis for common reference points and shared experiences for both families and communities. In tandem with the repetitive, predictable structures of television scheduling and viewing, these shared experiences imbued the revolutionary project with a sense of comforting normality and stability,
regardless of whether or not one actually endorsed the ideological messages. At the same time, television also injected the communist project with a new sense of vibrancy: as a new medium, it instituted new habits, offered new ways of retelling the story of the communist revolution, and brought the excitement of new experiences. Ultimately, however, the disjunction between performance and meaning took its toll: a political project geared for revolutionary change could not survive on normality and stability alone, and the novelty brought by television did not always work to the advantage of the communist agenda.

Outline of the Book

The rest of the book is divided into three main parts. Part One opens with a chapter that lays out the analytical framework implemented in the book in greater detail. It develops a definition of media culture, and introduces time and space as its two key dimensions, building on a long tradition of theorising the distinguishing characteristics of mediated communication with regard to the temporal and spatial qualities of communication technologies. The majority of the chapter is taken up by a discussion of the key dimensions of variation among media cultures, with a focus on television. Seven such dimensions are introduced: publicness, privacy, gendering, transnationalism, temporal orientation, extraordinary temporality, and secularization. The last part of the chapter turns to methodological issues. It considers the sources and methods that can be used for the purpose of comparative media culture analysis, and presents the specific materials and techniques used in the book. The chapter concludes by discussing two major methodological obstacles facing comparative media culture research: the danger of methodological nationalism and the challenge of researching change over time.

To help understand how and why television cultures in state socialist Eastern Europe differed along the seven dimensions introduced in Chapter 2, the third chapter offers a broad overview of the historical conditions in which they arose. Particular attention is paid to the five countries that are at the forefront of analysis – the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, East Germany, Poland and Romania – and to the four main characteristics of their broadcasting systems: the timing of infrastructural developments, the
transnational orientation of broadcast infrastructures, their relative core-periphery position, and television’s relationship with the Party and the state. The last section of Chapter 3 builds on these characteristics to develop a typology of state socialist television systems. Three major types are identified: market state socialist, reformist state socialist and hard-line state socialist TV systems. To conclude, the chapter considers how these three types of systems relate to the cultural dimensions of variation introduced in Chapter 2, and discusses further contextual factors that need to be taken into account when explaining state socialist television cultures.

Building on the historical overview and the typology developed in the previous chapter, Chapter 4 seeks to situate socialist television cultures vis-à-vis trajectories of television development elsewhere in the world. To this end, this chapter lays out a framework for thinking of the diversity of media trajectories as rooted in varieties of modernity, building on three strands of existing literature: general debates about multiple modernities, existing discussions of alternative modernities in the context of mass communication, and comparative media systems research. The first part of the chapter summarizes general arguments about multiple modernities and explains how and why state socialism should be approached as a variety of modernity. The second part applies this framework to the media, and uses it to situate state socialist television trajectories examined in Chapter 3 vis-à-vis models of broadcasting elsewhere in the world, with a particular focus on those that evolved in Western Europe and Northern America after World War Two. In this context, the chapter also revisits Hallin and Mancini’s three Western models of media systems – the Polarised Pluralist, the Democratic Corporatist and the Liberal Model – and suggests how their analytical framework can be modified and extended to account for the specificities of state socialist television.

Parts Two and Three of the book turn to the empirical investigation of socialist television cultures, and thereby offer an example of how the analytical and theoretical framework for comparing media cultures can be applied in practice. Following the conceptualization of media culture introduced in Part One of the book, television is conceived as a medium with distinct spatial and temporal characteristics that

---

participate in shaping the basic assumptions about the world. In line with this, the
temporal perspective. Each chapter focuses on one of the dimensions of variation introduced in Chapter 2, identifies the
shared features and main differences between the countries and, where relevant, outlines some of the key developments over time. Each chapter also reflects on how these patterns of difference and similarity relate to the systemic and contextual features discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Part Two starts with an investigation of the medium’s involvement in the public realm. To capture the different aspects of this involvement, Chapter 5 distinguishes between two dimensions of television’s publicness: the public sphere and the public mission. The first section considers how state socialist television acted as a provider of public goods, and compares its public mission with that of public broadcasting in Western Europe at the time. The second section zooms in on entertainment programming and the disjunction between audience preferences and elite views on the matter, as well as highlighting the key cross-country differences and changes over time in this area. The third and final section considers the specificities of public life under communism, and discusses whether and to what extent something resembling a public sphere could emerge in such a context. While it is argued that the direct application of the Habermasian model to the state socialist world is misguided, the analysis presented also suggests that the state socialist mass media, television included, helped establish a truncated, semi-public sphere.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus towards the other side of the “grand dichotomy”, and explores television’s involvement with the private sphere. Two dimensions of television’s engagement with privacy are considered. In the first part of the chapter, the focus is on the domestication of television, namely the gradual adoption of television as a domestic medium. The chapter examines how television as a material object gradually entered domestic life and became an essential part of a modern home, as well as how it came to be integrated into family life. In the second part of the chapter

29 The designation of the public-private distinction as one of the “grand dichotomies” is borrowed from Bobbio (1992).
the analysis turns to privatization as visible in television programming. The chapter examines a range of fictional serial programmes that dealt with personal relationships or were set within the domestic living spaces of ordinary citizens. In examining these issues, the chapter also asks whether and to what extent the processes of domestication and privatization of state socialist television resembled those familiar in the West at the time, as well as how they varied within the region. Particular attention is paid to the distinctly hybrid, semi-public character of privacy in the state socialist context, and to the ways in which this “public privacy” became articulated through television cultures in the region. While discussing television’s engagement with the private realm, Chapter 6 also examines how the processes of domestication and privatization of television in state socialist countries interacted with gendered practices and assumptions specific to the region.

The final chapter in Part Two looks at another key dimension of variation between television cultures, namely its involvement with transnational exchanges and ties. As we show in this chapter, state socialist television cultures shared a commitment to transnationalism: as elsewhere in the world, television schedules included substantial proportions of imported material, and audiences often thought of the small screen as a means of connecting with distant corners of the globe. Yet, the exact forms of transnationalism varied considerably across countries and over time, both within the region itself and with regard to television cultures elsewhere in the world. To investigate this variation, the chapter examines the relative openness of state socialist television cultures to transnational exchanges and ties, and the origins of these cross-border interactions and links. Did television succeeded in establishing a cross-border television culture that was specifically pan-socialist and focused on other state socialist countries? Or did it rather give rise to a form of transnationalism that was oriented primarily to the West? To answer these questions, the chapter first analyses the balance of domestically produced and imported TV materials and the origin of foreign programming across the five countries, outlining key differences and similarities and considering explanatory factors that can account for this variation. In the second part, the analysis turns to audiences, and uses oral history interview materials to examine what foreign television programmes meant for state socialist audiences and their perceptions of their country and the world.
Part Three of the book shifts attention to temporal aspects of television cultures, focusing primarily on their temporal orientation. The key question addressed across all the three chapters in this part concerns the relationship between the present-centeredness of television, arising from its ability to establish an instantaneous, live connection with the unfolding present, and the distinctly teleological, future-oriented understanding of the passage of time characteristic of the communist vision of modern progress. Chapter 8 tackles this question from the perspective of everyday television programming and viewing. To this end, the chapter first examines how TV elites in Eastern Europe sought to organise schedules in order to capture and transform viewers, and ensure that audiences remained attuned to the rhythms of revolutionary progress. In the second part, the analysis draws on oral history interviews to investigate how and whether these scheduling techniques shaped viewers' everyday practices, thus seeking to reconstruct the lived experience of daily television viewing and the extent to which it instilled a sense of participation in revolutionary movement. Throughout the analysis, attention is also paid to cross-country differences, and to how the patterns of everyday temporal organisation found in state socialist television cultures resembled or departed from those seen in the West. In doing so, the chapter also highlights further aspects of the gendered structures of state socialist television culture, and shows how the distinct organisation of everyday television functioned as a means of secularisation. As shown in the chapter, gendering and secularization are two aspects in which the temporal logic of everyday television in state socialist countries differed from patterns found in the West.

Chapter 9 studies yet another aspect of television culture where the link with temporal orientation becomes apparent – namely, its engagement with history. As shown in the chapter, socialist television cultures were inherently bound up with history: many of the most popular TV programmes from the state socialist era revolved around historical events, and television was often singled out as a particularly effective means of shaping historical awareness, and was even explicitly tasked with history education by the authorities. The chapter first investigates how and why state socialist television became so steeped in history. On the one hand, it considers the distinct teleological, future-oriented understanding of time underpinning the communist project, and shows
that this understanding demanded a contestant engagement with revolutionary achievements of the past. On the other hand, the chapter points out that the prominence of televised history in the state socialist world needs to be interpreted also as an integral part of transnational trends, especially the coming of age of the first post-World War Two generation, and the rise of new forms of expression tied to the medium of television. The second part of the chapter examines the depictions of history on screen themselves, paying particular attention to serial fiction. It identifies the shared elements of historical narratives found in the region, as well as some of the key points of variation across countries, and considers the factors that can explain this variation.

The last chapter in Part Three asks how the distinct teleological, future-oriented vision of time became articulated on extraordinary occasions, when television abandoned the routines of everyday programming and viewing. In doing so, the chapter also considers the differences and similarities in ways of engendering a sense of special occasion, both within and across different television cultures. The first part of the chapter examines state socialist television holidays, paying particular attention to major festive occasions such as Labour Day and New Year’s celebrations. The chapter first outlines key characteristics of the festive media schedules across the five countries, noting relevant intra-regional differences as well as considering how they differed from festive schedules in the West. This is followed by a comparative analysis of two major types of media holidays that appear across all countries: those linked to a distinctly communist vision of modern progress and society, and those without a marked communist identity. The second part of the chapter turns to a different category of television’s involvement with extraordinary time, namely media disruptions. The analysis tackles some of the most dramatic events from the state socialist era: the deaths of major communist leaders such as Yugoslavia’s Josip Broz Tito in 1980 and Soviet Union’s Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, the proclamation of Martial Law in Poland in 1982, the ousting of Ceausescu in Romania, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Unlike the festive occasions examined in the first part of the chapter, these disruptive events were at odds with the teleological temporality of the communist project, and raised anxiety over the ability of communist-led societies to master the future, or simply stopped revolutionary progress in its tracks. As shown in the chapter, the five
examples of media disruptions also offer a suitable basis for reflecting on the involvement of television cultures in the gradual disintegration of the communist order.

The concluding chapter takes stock of the arguments and analysis developed over the course of the book, and reflects on their significance both from the perspective of the role of the media under communist rule, and from the perspective of comparative media research more generally. It starts by laying out the key characteristics of state socialist television cultures as revealed in the book, and considers whether they amount to a distinct form of modern television culture, rooted in communist modernity and geared to advance the communist revolutionary agenda. It then moves on to examine developments in Eastern Europe after 1989, and discussed some of the continuities and discontinuities between socialist and post-socialist television cultures in the region. Finally, it reflects on the relevance of the comparative framework developed in the book for understanding media landscapes beyond Eastern Europe: it emphasizes the importance of cultural and comparative analysis for advancing the understanding of mass communication in non-democratic settings, discusses the applicability of key findings to the surviving communist states such as China, and considers the applicability of analytical tools developed in the book to communication and media developments globally. To avoid burdening the body of the text with a detailed explication of methodological procedures and sources used, this information is provided in the Methodological Appendix.