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Normative media theories: the media in the new democracies

Abstract: The political changes which occurred in Central and Eastern Europe in the last decade of the 20th century resulted in introducing democratic systems to replace authoritarian regimes. The political transformation in the region affected also freedom of speech and leeway for the media. The transformation was of an evolutionary nature, preceded by discussions and disputes over the future form of the media. At the initial stage of the changes, strict state control was required, as the government was responsible for the success of the democratic changes. Following the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes, a need emerged for sorting out the legal and institutional basis of a free media intended to be established on the basis of state-owned media, fully controlled by the political authorities and in fact assuming a single role, namely that of a propaganda machine.

Normative theories of the media have become the starting point, as a collection of ideas and postulates stating that the media's mode of operation should facilitate socially desirable values. Discussions of the legal, institutional, functional as well as personal solutions related to the mass media in the new democracies referred to observations and agreements among researchers who came from systems with long democratic traditions. This paper revolves around the relation between the media and democracy, and argues that the theory of the media's social responsibility and the democratic-participant theory were the major source of inspiration for the participants of the debates about the future form of the mass media in the emerging democracies. It is worth noticing that these theories represent not only slightly different opinions on the role of the media in a democracy but they also reflect the differences in understanding the essence of democracy.

Key words: new democracies, normative theories of the mass media, the role of mass media in a democracy, theory of social responsibility

The political changes which occurred in Central and Eastern Europe in the last decade of the 20th century resulted in introducing democratic systems to replace authoritarian regimes. The political transformation in the region affected also freedom of speech and leeway for the media. The transformation was of an evolutionary nature, preceded by discussions and disputes over the future form of the media. At the initial stage of the changes, strict state control was required, as the government was responsible for the success of the democratic changes. Following the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes, a need emerged for sorting out the legal and institutional basis of a free media intended to be established on the basis of state-owned media, fully controlled by the political authorities and in fact assuming a single role, namely that of a propaganda machine.

The relations between media and politics are vital to democracy, a political system which is expected to fulfill expectations and satisfy the needs of all members of society in a way superior to all other political systems. In this context, the question about the rules on which the new media should rely is key in the new democracies. Normative theories of the media have become the starting point, as a collection of ideas and postulates stating that the media's mode of operation should facilitate socially desirable values. In particular, an analysis of normative theories of the media should make it possible to

provide answers to some of the most significant questions. The first question pertains to the rules to be observed by the media in creating and distributing content, and whether the media should be treated like market entities and generate the biggest possible profits, or if they should go beyond the purely commercial goals of media organizations. In the time of authoritarian systems, the media were treated as an instrument of propaganda and indoctrination, hence the temptation to thoroughly deregulate the media. On the other hand, the awareness of the media's propaganda power and the imperative to ensure the success of the democratic changes led to an opinion that some form of state control had to be exercised over the media.

Another important dilemma that had to be resolved referred to the question of whether there were any public functions that the media should have assumed irrespective of the result of their profit and loss accounts. If so, what were these functions and which entities created these respective needs (Baran, Davies, 2007)? Another issue corresponded with this, namely if the mass media should be involved in defining, identifying and solving social problems. If so, whose interests should they represent? Finally, is it necessary or advisable for the media to warn people against irregularities, deceit, immoral and reprehensible behavior on the part of social institutions and their representatives: politicians, businessmen and so on? The positive answer to this question triggered off another one: what criteria could be used to negatively assess the operations of institutions and public figures, to what extent should the media enjoy autonomy in deciding what is an irregularity, deceit or disapproved behavior? Another important issue is the role which the media should play in a time of crisis, and to what extent they would define a crisis. This list of questions was not closed, especially as the period of political transformation coincided with a technological revolution which soon redefined the traditional relations in mass communications.

Normative theories play an important role in the process of various social entities expressing their expectations of the media, and inspire employers who represent the legal framework for media institutions and their operations. Quite obviously, the adoption of a normative theory of the media has been related to the media operating in specific social and political systems as well as forms of governance. These theories have been a reflection of the ideological assumptions laying the foundations for the rules, laws and constitutional solutions related to the mass media which emerged in specific historical and social contexts. While the political, economic and social conditions were different in the specific systems, there were a number of general rules which made it possible to classify various solutions in media development. Discussions of the legal, institutional, functional as well as personal solutions related to the mass media in the new democracies referred to observations and agreements among researchers who came from systems with long democratic traditions.

The first attempt at such a classification was made in 1956 by Siebert, Petterson and Schramm, who differentiated between the authoritarian theory identifying media operations in authoritarian systems; the liberal theory (free press) constructed in opposition to the authoritarian theory; the theory of the media's social responsibility, which is a version of the liberal theory modified as a result of disappointment with the social effects of the market economy with respect to the media; the Soviet media theory (Marxist-Leninist) which was a reflection of the expectations for the media in the new variety of

authoritarianism referred to as a people's democracy (Siebert et al., 1956). This classic catalogue was later supplemented with the theory of growth, which stipulated the functions to be assumed by the media in developing countries, and the democratic-participant theory, yet another version of the liberal concept, and the Catholic media doctrine, which largely affected mass communication in the period of system transformation, especially in Central and Eastern Europe with Poland in the lead.

Another classification of normative theories of the media was suggested in 1984 by J. H. Altschull. He identified three fundamental forms of press systems related to WWI (the liberal-capitalist or market type), to WWII (the Soviet-socialist or Marxist type) and to the Third World (the development or acceleration type). The first type is a combination of elements of free press theory and the media's social responsibility; type two corresponds with Siebert's Soviet theory and the last one refers to the theory of growth (Altschull, 1984). These theories are different with respect to the concepts of freedom of the press and the media's responsibility to the authorities and society. However, these types have an element in common, namely in all press systems, the mass media represent political and economic power: "...the content of the press is directly correlated with the interest of those who finance the press" (ibid., p. 261).

Therefore, the media are not independent participants of social life, although they do have the potential to be. Media content always reflects the interests of those who finance the media. Altschull indicates "seven laws of journalism", among them freedom of speech which is the major value of each of the models although differently defined (ibid.). In each model (with the exception of the authoritarian one as presented by Siebert et al.) emphasis is placed on the idea of social responsibility and declarations that the media serve the people and are close to them. In each normative model, there is also an assumption that the system of educating journalists mirrors the ideology and values of the society in which the media operate and helps to exercise control of information media. In each of the three models, the remaining two are perceived as deviant media models. However, in practice each system operates differently than the normative assumptions would suggest. According to McQuail, those "seven laws of journalism" are in fact a reminder of the limitations of normative theories; this, however, does not make them uninteresting subjects for reflection. After all, they reflect views on the media's social functions which depend on their time and place (McQuail, 2010).

The increasingly complicated social, economic and technological environment in which the media operate is conducive to redefining the normative models. For example, McQuail suggests identification of the following models: liberal pluralist (market model), social responsibility (public interest model), professional and alternative. In his opinion, the latter presents a range of media from outside the mainstream with different goals and origins. However, what they have in common are certain values, especially placing an emphasis on small scale, bottom-up organization, participation and community, as well as the shared goals of producers and users, and (sometimes) opposition to the power of the state and industry. This model rejects universal rationality, and the ideals of bureaucratic competence and vocational efficiency. The emphasis is placed on the rights of subcultures with their particular values; the model also promotes inter-subjective understanding and an honest sense of community (McQuail, 2010). The latter model would be helpful if an assumption were made that on top of the traditional public area, dating

back to the 17th century, and the press pursuing independence from the authorities, over time an alternative variant emerged, inspired, stimulated and supported by media alternative to the mainstream. Quite frequently, tabloids are included in this group. While they are not organized bottom-up (on the contrary, they emerged as truly market-oriented ventures) their anti-elitist attitude and the claimed right to represent nearly all socially deprived groups in debate (the poorly educated, those with low incomes, women, the elderly, ethnic minorities etc.) typically excluded from mainstream discussions makes tabloids a good example of alternative media in the understanding of the content they publish. Another result of this representation is the fact that some researchers abstain from stinging criticism and indicate their positive role in public communication (Turner, 1999; Örnebring, Jänsson, 2004). In the discussions about the media model operating in the new democracies, tabloids were not taken into consideration.

As this paper revolves around the relation between the media and democracy, a brief description should be provided of the liberal theory, the theory of the media's social responsibility and the democratic-participant theory, as they were the major source of inspiration for the participants of the debates about the future form of the mass media in the emerging democracies. It is worth noticing that these theories represent not only slightly different opinions on the role of the media in a democracy but they also reflect the differences in understanding the essence of democracy. This concept will recur in this paper.

The liberal theory of the media, also referred to as the free press or free media theory, emerged in opposition to the authoritarian theory. Its origin is related to the liberation of the printed press from official state control back in the 17th century. At present, this theory is deemed a major principle behind the press mandate in liberal democracies. J. Milton was the forerunner of the liberal theory of the media; in his "Areopagitica" of 1644, he addressed free speech, in his conviction that individuals were capable of discovering the truth if they were offered such an opportunity. J. Milton promoted a market of ideas (in its symbolic meaning) where people could exchange ideas and values and propagate them, popularize and make choices. All the ideas and values, including also false ones defying generally defended truths, posing a threat to the existing system of knowledge and values, should have the same right of being held and preached. False ideas or those alternative to generally accepted ones, submitted for discussion on the market of ideas, may only contribute to pursuing the truth rather than denying it. As J. Milton wrote: "… so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; whoever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?" The truth is so strong that "…She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensing to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power" (Milton, 1644).

In its most fundamental form, the liberal theory says that an individual is free in publishing what he/she sees fit. This is an extension of other individuals' rights from a liberal point of view, that is the right to holding and expressing opinions, freedom of assembly and of association. Free media are perceived as an important, indeed an altogether basic element of a free and rational society, because they are the best tool for pursuing the truth and exposing evil and deceit, owing to the ability of presenting competitive or alternative viewpoints. Free media are diverse, reflecting the pluralism of opinions in a society,

and therefore ensure that there will be room for presenting each opinion or viewpoint, as well as defending it. People are capable of differentiating lies from the truth; owing to independent media, individuals on the lookout for the truth exchange ideas in a free market, abiding by the same rules as other markets. Free access of all citizens to the media is a prerequisite for substantiating the free media theory, both in the process of collecting information and publishing one's opinions. This theory appeals for total freedom of all publications from any forms of preventive censorship exercised by a third party; for publishing and disseminating information by anyone, without applying for a permit; no penalties for authors of publications attacking the government, public officials or political parties, unlike in the case of attacking individuals or endangering public safety; for equal protection of all publications, irrespective of the degree of truth in them, because they are a matter of opinions and convictions to which everyone is entitled; for no limitations whatsoever of gleaning information in legal ways, or limitations of the information flow across national borders; for a wide range of journalists' professional autonomy as part of media institutions (Piontek, 2011).

Historically, the liberal theory was a demonstration of opposition to authoritarianism and colonialism; it was an argument in favor of religious freedom and respecting diversity. It was intended to protect against poor governance, as a tool of the truth, and to secure the freedom of individuals. However, it did not avoid some inconsistency in the approach to freedom of the press as a fundamental right. One should be aware that seizing this right completely may significantly curtail other, equally important rights of individuals, such as the right to reputation of individuals who are not public officials but maintain personal relations with such officials (like politicians' families), the right to defending one's property, privacy, safety or the rights of minority groups. The liberal theory in its classical form was not the main source of inspiration for the solutions offered in the new democracies where, since the very beginning, the concept of public media was favored. In this concept, the media have important statutory obligations to the society, oftentimes necessitating limitations to the freedom of publication, or (to some extent) enforcing publication of content which was not the editors' autonomous choice. What is more, the media completely independent of the government do not create equal opportunities for all users to freely express their opinions, chiefly favoring the media owners. There is a concern that this may result in undesired phenomena like red tape, commercialization, lowering the standards of all media operations, a lack of balance between entertainment and information, which fail to cement a rational society or pursuing the truth.

The experiences from the American media market (relatively the most liberal in its approach) have resulted in the emergence of the theory of the social responsibility of the media which was to oppose the aforementioned negative trends. Following this theory, because of their social importance, the media should combine three basic rules resulting from the assumptions of liberalism, observed in the process of mass communication: the right of the media to independence and autonomy from the authorities, people's right to individual freedom and choice and the media's obligations to the society and its institutions (e.g. political institutions). According to the theory, this can be achieved in two ways: by developing public, yet independent institutions managing electronic media, or by further developing professionalism as a way of maintaining higher standards of operations, and the development of media self-regulation in the form, for example, of

ethical associations. The goal of the media should be balancing information and pure entertainment, the latter being the foundation of the media's commercial success. The media is meant provide content, taking into consideration the needs and interests of all social groups, including minorities. The major assumption behind the theory of the media's social responsibility is that the mass media should accept and shoulder certain responsibilities to society, by raising the standards of information, the truth, precision, objectivity and balance; the media should accept and fulfill their responsibilities mainly by means of self-regulation as part of the body of the law and established institutions (for example inventing and following codes of ethics); the media should avoid publishing content which could incite/lead to crime, violence or upsetting social order, or attacking minorities; they should be pluralistic and reflect the society's diversity, creating the conditions for presenting various viewpoints and ensuring the right to response. The theory of the media's social responsibility assumes that in certain circumstances a state may introduce instruments controlling the mass media to protect the society's interests (censorship). According to this theory, journalists need to face the social consequences of their actions, as well as the expectations of the audiences and owners of media institutions. It is worth emphasizing that the freedom of the media may only be limited by act of law when there is a consensus of all the political forces. Therefore, the act of law protects against the arbitrary decisions of those who are ruling the country and who could promote their own interests (Nerone, 1995; Yun, 2008).

The theory of the media's social responsibility goes back to the American initiative of establishing the Commission on the Freedom of the Press (1947); it was an act of growing awareness that the technological and commercial development of the press had resulted in limiting access to mass media and lowering of their standards as juxtaposed with the society's information, social and moral needs. On the other hand, the emergence of new and powerful media (the radio and cinema) showed the need to exercise some social control over them. The Commission's report confirmed the value that consists in the freedom of the media in a democratic society, at the same time introducing the notion of social responsibility, acknowledging the cardinal importance of mass media in social and political processes. In the report, the major standards of media operations were identified: providing full and true information, serving as a forum for exchanging comments and criticism, expressing public opinion, demonstrating a representative image of the society's important groups, and presenting and explaining social goals and values (McQuail, 2010). Putting the assumptions of the media's social responsibility into practice has been frequently, and rightly, criticized, especially with reference to institutional solutions and the actual independence of public institutions exercising control over electronic media. Political culture also determines the relations between political institutions and the media, while the social, organizational and market contexts impact the media's willingness and ability to self-regulate.

Bearing in mind the experiences of Central and Eastern European countries, as well as the pressure to use mass media as an agent of political change, it is the normative concept that seemed the optimal source of inspiration for establishing a new media order. To a large extent, this concept affected the legislations in the new democracies. However, as practice showed later on, the introduction of institutional and legal solutions as a result of the postulates of the media's social responsibility did not serve as a shield against the

aberrations accompanying inferior political culture. This was particularly visible in the relations between politicians and the public media, and the commercial expectations of the media owners, following the service-based model of the relations between broadcaster and audience.

The democratic-participant media theory is a variation of the previously discussed theory; it was developed as a result of criticism of the increasing commercialization and monopolization of private media, accompanied by the centralization and bureaucracy of public media. The democratic-participant media theory revolves around the needs, interests and aspirations of the active recipient-cum-citizen in a political society. They are related to the right to accurate information, the right to reply, the right to use the media for interaction in small communities, groups of interest and sub-cultures. The theory rejects the need for uniformed, centralized, costly, highly professional media controlled by the government, which do not express properly the society's needs, but only the needs of their owners and political institutions. The theory favors diversity, small scale, local range, de-institutionalization of mass media, the interchangeability of the roles between broadcaster and audience, the horizontal nature of the communication relations on all levels of the society, interactivity and consensus (Enzensberger, 1970; McQuail, 2010). In the theory, an assumption is made that in a liberal democracy, the media should get involved in social life more than before and provide audiences with better access and participation in media activity. The detailed postulates of the democratic-participant media theory include asserting the right of individual recipients and social groups (especially minorities) to a mass media which should serve the society in accordance with its needs. Another postulate is the need for a so-called small media, operating within groups, organizations and local communities, for example subversive press, local press, illegal radio stations, community cable TV, micro-media in rural areas, street or neighborhood newsletters (McQuail, 2010).

As has been mentioned numerous times, normative theories tend to be postulates, and refer to specific social and political systems. However, the democratic systems discussed in this paper are not a homogenous set; rather they follow different models of democracy. Just like diverse political systems, various models of the same system form non-identical catalogues of postulates faced by the media and journalists. After the 1989 breakthrough, in Central and Eastern Europe decisions were made to set up democratic systems. The models of democracy were, however, less obvious. While the election model was the starting point as the simplest possible model to adopt at the beginning of the journey, it fueled ambitions to proceed with the participatory model (Koperek, 2001). Those two models, together with the deliberative model, are most frequently discussed in studies on the theory of democracy. The essence of the election model is the institution of the general election, whose result indicates the winning authority (cf. Sartori, 1987; Putnam, 1993). A question arises about the reasons behind the electorate's decisions. Irrespective of the fact whether votes are cast because of the content of the political agenda, or of identification with a party, it is assumed that the voters' knowledge (or lack thereof) plays an important role in the process. That knowledge is aggregated in the form of autonomous public opinion. In this model (typical of industrial society), the citizens play a key role, as they are (or may be) not fully informed and/or guided by emotions during elections. The participant model is based on a broad interpretation of participation, not only as par-

ticipating in elections. As G. Sartori put it, the participation is for citizens "to take part in person, in a voluntary way, self-activating" (ibid., p. 148) in various activities going beyond the personal. This should refer both to the greatest possible number of citizens, rather than only the elites, and the most frequent involvement in various forms of social activity. A "Participant Society" is conducive for a sense of influencing politics, triggers off concern for common welfare and helps to shape informed citizens who can maintain their interest in the process of ruling and to understand its mechanisms. A prerequisite for such a society is an open information system ensuring informed decision-making and limiting the bureaucratic authorities' impact on public and private lives (Held, 2010). A deliberative democracy stands for increasing the citizens' participation in the process of making political decisions by organizing institutionalized debates (Bessette, 1980; Cohen, 1989; Juchacz, 2002; Putnam, 2002). Therefore, it is about creating a space for public debate reminiscent of the 17th century bourgeois public sphere. This model assumes pluralism of values, emphasis placed on civil education, support and financing deliberation practices and institutions with public funds. These deliberations should take place on various levels of public life, from micro-forums to supra-national institutions (Held, 2010, p. 17). According to Strömbäck, these models should be supplemented with procedural democracy whose key idea for a political community to become democratic is to fulfill not only descriptive but also normative conditions (Strömbäck, 2005). The author therefore compares four models of democracy: procedural, competitive, participatory and deliberative, and their implications for journalism (Table 1).

Table 1

Four models of democracy – a comparison

	Procedural democracy	Competitive democracy	Participatory democracy	Deliberative democracy
Central mechanism for securing the primacy of the common good	Free and fair elections	Competitive elections	Citizen participation in public life, both outside and within political parties	Deliberative discussions among all sections of the public and their representatives
Distinguishing and core normative expectations of citizens	Respect democratic procedures	Clear opinions of societal problems; knowledge of who has had power; knowledge about the record of the office holders; knowledge about party platforms and promises	Politically interested; engaged in associations and in public life; knowledge about how to influence public life; knowledge about relevant factual conditions; clear opinions of societal problems; trustful, cooperative	Politically interested; participate in discussions; trustful, cooperative, listening; knowledge about relevant factual conditions and moral values; readiness to change opinions; strive for consensus; committed to the values of impartiality and rationality; make sociotropic evaluations

Source: Strömbäck, 2005, p. 341.

Each of the models of democracy has implications in the form of expectations of the media nursed by political entities and citizens alike. In the procedural model of democracy, the biggest responsibility of the media and journalists is respecting the rules and procedures of democracy. The decisions about the ways of ensuring freedom of speech

need to be made by the owners of mass media, publishers and journalists. The existence of a free market of ideas is to be a guarantee that freedom itself will be preserved and that it will also lead to the truth coming out (if it exists). Therefore there are no reasons to harbor any special expectations of the media (Strömbäck, 2005). If there are issues that should be communicated to the citizens, the mass media have a responsibility to provide the information. The free market which controls the media, is not perceived as a threat to democracy. In a procedural democracy, the citizens have the right to look for alternative sources of information, which actually exist and are protected by the law (Dahl, 1995, p. 324). However, no prejudgment has been made as to which of them are of special importance to the voters' decisions.

In the competitive (election) model of democracy, the citizens are to make a choice between competing political entities, adopting retrospective as well as prospective views. For the choice to be reasonable, people need information and knowledge of important social problems, the functioning of the society, the government's activities and the differences between the political alternatives. This gives rise to some implications for the expectations of the media. The first implication is an assumption that the role of the mass media is providing the audience with trustworthy information. Therefore, the differences between fiction and facts cannot be smoothed away; this, in turn, makes the media responsible for the clear-cut demarcation of various types of content, especially information and entertainment. The media also assume the responsibility for double-checking the sources of information and adopting a critical approach to them. Information should be unbiased and should focus on the activities of the political elites, who are to be monitored and their promises and activities checked. Finally, the mass media are expected to provide fundamental information about the way the society and the political system operate, carrying out the functions of education and political socialization (ibid.).

The participatory model of democracy assumes the citizens' activity, their involvement in public life and the decision-making process. The media should make it possible for citizens to gain the knowledge they need, to follow the latest developments, to adopt attitudes of tolerance, cooperation and trust. The media's task is to provide information about significant social problems and decision-making processes. Politics should be presented as an open space of problem solving rather than a strategic game played by those who are already involved in it which may contribute to arousing the citizens' interest and participation in politics. The essence of the mass media is showing and propagating active attitudes and making the society aware that individuals can actually impact the operations of political elites rather than see themselves as their victims (ibid., p. 339).

To some extent, the deliberative model is an extension of the participatory model. Here, the citizens' political interest and involvement is of importance and it requires the media's stimulation of such attitudes. Politics should be presented as an area available to anyone as a continuous process of looking for solutions to shared problems as a result of consensus or acceptance. In this model, the mass media are to provide facts and knowledge of important things, as well as to encourage participation in a discussion that is rational, intellectually honest and available to everyone on equal terms. It goes without saying that the media's most important responsibility is to provide infor-

mation about the latest developments, yet it should serve as a solid basis for discussion (Table 2).

Four models of democracy and their implications for journalism

	Procedural democracy	Competitive democracy	Participatory democracy	Deliberative democracy
Distinguishing and core normative demands upon news journalism	Respect democratic procedures; act as a watchdog or as a Burglar Alarm* exposing wrongdoings	Act as a watchdog or a Burglar Alarm; focus on the record of office – holders and the platforms of the political candidates and parties; focus on the political actors	Let the citizens set the agenda; mobilize the citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public life; focus on problem solving as well as problems; frame politics as a process open for principally everyone and citizens as active subjects; link active citizens together	Act for inclusive discussions; mobilize citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public discussions; link discussants to each other; foster public discussions characterized by rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality

* "The standard of news coverage I advocate can now be expressed as follows: Journalists should routinely seek to cover non-emergency but important issues by means of coverage that is intensely focused, dramatic, and entertaining and that affords the parties and responsible interest groups, especially political parties, ample opportunity for expression of opposing views. Reporters may use simulated drama to engage public attention when the real thing is absent. The name for the standard is the Burglar Alarm standard. As with a real burglar alarm, the idea is to call attention to matters requiring urgent attention, and to do so in excited and noisy tones" (Zaller, 2003, p. 122).

Source: Strömbäck, 2005, p. 341.

What is striking in Strömbäck's interesting analysis is the clearly traditional division of the media into those which are informative, which, irrespective of the model, are highly important, if not key to the operations of democracy, and other media, which are practically of no importance. Such a division and disregard for the role of the non-informative mass media in shaping political attitudes and voter involvement does not seem justified. The evidence is provided by the theories of the social sciences and the new phenomena of convergence of media genres which have resulted from the progressing mediatization of politics (Piontek, 2011, p. 57). However, in the course of the political transformation, when the legal and institutional frameworks were established to define the operations of mass media, the division between the media/information content and the media/entertaining content was still distinct, and the discussions did not relate to entertaining content. It so happens that in the political process the traditional models of the roles, tasks and functions of the media result from the general concepts of the media's functions in the social system. As has been mentioned, these functions are always related to specific types of political regimes. Most generally speaking, in the public discourse on the subject two approaches prevail, namely the liberal and the radical (cf. Curran, 1997; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2004). If we were to decide which of the values is more important: freedom or the equality of citizens, the former places more emphasis on liberty, and the latter on the social and economic equality of the citizens, even at the price of limiting their leeway. Table 3 presents the differences between these approaches.

Table 3

**The differences between the liberal and radical approaches to the role of mass media
in a democracy**

Types of approaches	The liberal approach	The radical approach
Society	A community of individuals	Groups of social interests
The public sphere	The public space	The public space of competition
Media as a communication channel	Vertical between the rulers and the ruled	Multi-directional, between individuals, groups, institutions
Journalist practice	Objectivity, professionalism, no involvement, separating the facts from opinions, balancing opinions	Investigative journalism, involved journalism, media activity
Journalism standards	Lack of interest	Contradictory nature – offering everyone an opportunity to speak
The media's political role	The relations with the authorities; the government's control	Relations with the ruling groups, the impact on the social norms and interpersonal relations; representation, balancing
Entertainment	Disruption/gratification	Social functions including promotion of fundamentally democratic values; the society's communication
Organization of the media	Private property, free market	Criticism of the free market – privileged interests of the establishment; a controlled market

Source: Own work based on Curran, 1997, p. 28; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2004, p. 125–128.

Of importance in the above table is not only the informative aspect of the media's operations but also the attitude towards entertainment. More and more frequently, studies into contemporary political communication indicate that it is not feasible to separate the information content delivered by the mass media from its entertainment functions (Franklin, 1999; Corner, 2000; Corner, Pels, 2003; Delli Caarpini, Williams, 2001; Street, 2004; Stanyer, 2007; Thussu, 2008; Piontek, 2011).

The liberal approach criticizes entertainment in the mass media, accusing it of diverting attention from important social problems and taking away from the rational and critical debates which should prevail in the public sphere. Entertainment does not contribute to the flow of information between the rulers and the ruled. The liberal concept handles this problem in three ways: by criticizing the development of entertainment media as failing to achieve the main goal and functions of the mass media in a democracy; by ignoring the existence of entertainment and discussing the media as if their main content were related to politics; by discussing the mass media in such a way that entertainment is a separate category, devoid of any relation to their role, providing consumers with gratification (Curran, 1997).

On the other hand, the radical approach refers to cultural concepts and goes beyond a narrow understanding of politics. Entertainment is perceived as a discipline facilitating a conversation about the nature of social relations, offering an opportunity to better understand others and what is going on, owing to the functions of integration and social interactions which allow the social limits of affiliation to be crossed. Entertainment makes it easier to define oneself, to build a personal identity, which has serious social and

political implications. On the other hand, media entertainment can reinforce misunderstanding and antagonisms by recreating stereotypes. This approach is much more interesting when an assumption is made that the contemporary mass media tend to converge genres as a result of the changes to the media system as described before. This is because this approach does not eliminate entertainment from the discussion about political communication, and does not assume an unambiguous critical approach to the impact of entertainment on the way politics is described and, consequently, the way it is perceived by the citizens. On the contrary, it is an interesting and potentially fertile analysis offered in a period of mediatization of politics.

The normative approach to the role of the media in a democratic system was important from the point of view of the legislative process and institutional change. During the period when the media order was being established in the new democracies, reference to the theories regarded as classics was inspiring, although, as time showed, in the subsequent years the practice of building up media systems seriously modified these theories. While in the so-called traditional media the legal regulations followed the adopted normative concepts, these are of limited use to the new media.

A re-definition of the classical normative theories seems essential, which may end in offering concepts of new theories taking into account the current thinking about mass media in a democracy on the one hand and the expectations of the new media on the other. Their potential has been synthetically defined by Dahlgren, who reckons that they offer an opportunity for interaction between representatives of the government and the citizens (e-government), strengthen the area of activity of the ombudsman within traditional political institutions (e.g. parties, pressure groups, social movements), establish civic forums, create pre-political or para-political areas where common interests and collective identities are articulated (though not directly related to politics, they are of importance to politics), impact the area of journalism independent from the major information institutions (blogs, independent information portals) (Dahlgren, 2005). However, the experience stemming from observing the practical development and operations of all mass media require caution in putting forward postulates towards the new media, although the responsibility remains unchanged.

The practice of mass media operations in post-communist countries is not homogenous, and in many cases it strays from the normative assumptions on which it is based (Ociepka, 2003; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Zielonka, 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska, Głowacki, 2015). Limited experience in media operations in a democratic system, the formal adoption of solutions applied in old democracies devoid of their political culture, and the required context and the social instability of accepting the values of a liberal democracy, as well as a distinct longing for some form of semi-authoritarian rule (Hungary, Slovakia, Poland) have resulted in a situation where the political debate on the imponderables within which the media operate needs to give way to temporary political interests. The idea of establishing national media, propagated in Poland by Law and Justice (PiS), a party ruling since 2015, has little in common with the theory of the media's social responsibility that alongside the Catholic doctrine has impacted the regulations introduced after 1989. The national media are an element of the authoritarian theory of the media, a concept which has much more in common with a regime which, perhaps wrongly, has been believed a thing of the past.

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Normatywne teorie mediów: media w nowych demokracjach

Streszczenie

Zmiany polityczne, które zaszły w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w ostatniej dekadzie XX wieku zaowocowały odejściem od reżimów autorytarnych i wprowadzaniem demokratycznych rozwiązań ustrojowych. Transformacja ustrojowa w krajach regionu dotyczyła także sfery wolności słowa i swobody działania mediów. Przemiany odbywały się w sposób ewolucyjny, poprzedzały je dyskusje i spory o przyszły kształt mediów. W początkowym etapie przekształceń niezbędna była silna kontrola państwa, to jego struktury odpowiedzialne były za powodzenie demokratycznych przemian. Po upadku reżimów autorytarnych należało uporządkować prawne i instytucjonalne podstawy istnienia wolnych mediów, które powstać miały na fundamencie mediów państwowych, w pełni kontrolowanych przez władzę polityczną i pełniących w istocie jedną rolę – tuby propagandowej.

Punktem wyjścia stały się normatywne teorie mediów, które stanowią zbiór idei i postulatów dotyczących tego, jak media powinny działać, aby implementować społecznie pożądane wartości. Dyskusje nad prawnymi, instytucjonalnymi, funkcjonalnymi, a także personalnymi rozwiązaniami dotyczącymi mediów masowych w nowych demokracjach odwoływały się do obserwacji i ustaleń poczynionych przez badaczy wywodzących się z systemów o długiej tradycji demokratycznej.

Przedmiotem prezentowanego artykułu jest relacja między mediami i demokracją. Autorka prezentuje pogląd, że teoria społecznej odpowiedzialności mediów, wspomagana założeniami teorii demokratyczno-uczestniczącej, była głównym źródłem inspiracji dla uczestników debat dotyczących przyszłego kształtu mediów komunikowania masowego w rodzących się demokracjach. Warto zauważyć, że teorie te reprezentują nie tylko nieco odmienne poglądy na miejsce mediów w demokracji, ale odzwierciedlają także różnice w pojmowaniu istoty demokracji.

Słowa kluczowe: nowe demokracje, normatywne teorie mediów, rola mediów masowych w demokracji, teoria społecznej odpowiedzialności mediów