Summer School with Journalists

22. - 25. September 2019

Populism in European Societies – Repercussion in the Media

This year's Summer School (22-25 September 2019) started with a lecture on "Growing populist tendencies in Eastern Europe" by Professor Gert Pickel, sociologist at the theological faculty at the University of Leipzig and EEGA steering committee member. He pointed out that populism was not an Eastern European phenomenon but rather a global development, as US-president Donald Trump or Brazil´s president Jair Bolsonaro's election demonstrated. Pickel said that finding the right words to describe them was difficult. "Populists" could sound just too mild. Using the terms "radicals" or "extremists" could be another option. "They avoid being characterised as extremists," stated Pickel. Pickel himself prefers the German word *Rechtsradikalismus* (right-wing radicalism). The media, on the other hand, tends to use the terms "authoritarian populism", "national populism," or "far right." One of the main ideas of right-wing populists, according to the professor, was that they spoke about a fight of the "people against the elite." When it comes to ideology, he said, they were quite poorly equipped.

Right-wing populism was more prevailing than left-wing populism, Pickel stated, especially in Eastern Europe. In this region, the concept of good and evil was still prevalent. The US-American businessman George Soros, for instance, was perceived as the typical enemy. Moreover, right-wing populists rallied continuously against pluralism, even though they did not come to power through a coup, but rather elections, Pickel said. They saw growing success in an increasing number of countries. Many had become unsatisfied with the democratic systems in their countries and voted out of protest. Migration and globalisation caused fear in many societies. "Right-wing populists are successful in mobilising people who have certain fears," Pickel said. He went on quoting a survey which showed that half the German population was afraid of Islam. Populists won because of these feelings. "There is the paradox situation that you have more fear where you have less Muslims" the professor said. The media played a crucial role as an important instrument for populists. They wanted to gain control over the media, as we had already seen in Hungary and Poland.

The second lecture by Dr. Jan-Hinrik Schmidt, sociologist at the Hans Bredow-Institute in Hamburg and expert on online-communication, dealt with the question as to how digital media affects public opinion. The term online "platform" implied these services were neutral, nothing more than an open arena for others to publish content. Therefore, providers claim they did not want to assume responsibility for content. "In reality this is not true, because they have tremendous influence on how information is presented and how content is filtered by algorithms," Schmidt said. For instance, the platforms could earn more with advertisement when personalising their content. The expert mentioned several scenarios, for instance the filter-bubble or hate-speech. Schmidt went on saying that user participation online was paradoxical. On the one hand, there were loads of opportunities to participate in debates, while at the same time they could not earn money with their content because they were integrated into commercial structures set up by the big platforms. Schmidt demanded more transparency and alternatives to the existing business models.

Panel I: "Science Perspectives – Best practise" – Communicating Science

Svetluša Surova, senior researcher at Gnarum, a consultancy company in Bratislava, spoke about "The quest for greater transparency and ethics in communicating science to the public." She referred to the argument of Swiss media academic Stephan Russ-Mohl, who argued that in times of "fake news" and disinformation an "alliance of enlightenment" of journalists and academia was needed. "This alliance is neither possible nor needed," said Surova, and argued that work of journalists and academics differed too much. "We need greater transparency and ethics in doing and communicating science to the greater public," she suggested instead.

Chief editor Tamina Kutscher presented her online project "Dekoder," founded in 2015, a cooperation project for journalists and academics. The online platform publishes Russian articles and videos from independent Russian media translated into German, together with expert explanations, called "Gnosen." The idea was born in 2014, in the aftermath of the heated German debate about Russian reports during the so-called "Ukraine crisis." Dekoder wanted to eschew the war of propaganda and offer a broad insight into the Russian discourse, Kutscher said. "We want to overcome the language barrier and cultural differences." The project is funded by several foundations and founder Martin Krohs. It won the prestigious Grimme Online Award in 2016. Kutscher said that the audience consisted mainly of experts or journalists on Russia, but also those who were just interested in the country.

She stated that Dekoder was an example of successful "knowledge transfer" because academics and journalists wanting to inform the public worked together in a constructive way. "Everybody is doing their job," the journalist said. "Until now there has been a lack in online strategies and formats in academia." Dekoder created several multimedia special editions, for example on the Crimea or protests in Russia in 2019. In another case students from Hamburg University were involved in a special edition about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Germany. They worked on the project in a seminar and the result was a multimedia dossier, which included a historical press-roundup, maps, videos and photographs. The whole edition was published by Meduza as well, a prominent exiled Russian Online platform based in Riga. Dekoder will start a second project with German articles translated into Russian in November 2019.

Commentator Ivo Mijnssen, foreign correspondent for Swiss newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung, said he found it difficult to say whether both presentations had a common ground. "How can journalists and academics do their share and develop strategies to overcome distrust?" Mijnssen asked. Professional standards could help to stop the erosion of trust. There were positive examples. Since the election of president Trump, for instance, quality newspapers such as the New York Times had seen an increase in subscriptions. According to Mijnssen, readers were looking for trustworthy information and willing to pay for it, even though "greater readiness remains as a challenge." On the other hand, news audiences were becoming more fragmented, a challenge for the media. For niche products such as Dekoder this could also open up opportunities, the journalist said.

In the following discussion, differences between academic and journalistic work were debated. Kutscher brought up the importance of article length. Academics did not often understand why it would be better to be brief. A spokesperson at Leipzig University then complained that academics often eschewed being interviewed and communicating with the public. Most participants agreed that academics should be more active when it comes to knowledge transfer. Surova remarked that a lot of

academic work was payed for by taxpayers. Therefore, academics were obliged to communicate with the public. Taxpayers were entitled to know what was done with their money.

PANEL II: "Science Perspectives – Best Practise" – Reaching Diverse Audiences

Ukrainian freelance journalist Kostiantyn Yanchenko presented his in-depth study of "Populism on Television Political Talk Shows: A case Study of Ukrainian Presidential Elections 2019." The MA student at Hamburg University closely followed the presidential campaign of Volodymyr Zelensky, who would come into power thanks to an social media and television campaign. "With 80 % market share, television is the main source of information in Ukraine," Yanchenko stated. In his opinion, populism was a precondition during the organisation of the campaign. It was interesting to see how Zelensky's communication style was so different from former president Petro Poroshenko's. Zelensky had been more unifying than polarising in the first round of the presidential campaign.

After this presentation, literary scholar Christine Gölz of the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) spoke about new formats of science communication. She has a hands-on approach when it comes to knowledge transfer, reaching out to the public through publications, radio-podcasts, at festivals and through exchanges with younger academics. For instance, they had aired a series of Hungarian and Romanian movies at cinemas in Leipzig. Academics at GWZO had also been involved as curators in several exhibitions, *Erfurt in the middle age*, shown in Erfurt and Prague.

For two years now, GWZO had been cooperating on podcasts with radio station Detektor.fm. GWZO identifies interesting material for engaging academic debates about issues such as separatism, football in Eastern Europe or climate change. Their eight to twelve-minutes podcasts reach 5000 listeners per show. Gölz found out that younger academics are more readily involved then their more experienced colleagues. She would like to see better technical support and an intensification of similar activities.

The next speaker, journalist Dennis Grollmann, moderator and editor at private station Antenne Düsseldorf for ten years, shared his experience as a radio presenter and his take on "balanced reporting." As a private enterprise, his station had to focus on entertaining. Therefore, the duration of radio broadcasts was limited to maximum 2 min and 30 sec, sometimes even a minute less. This required multitasking and quick workflows. Social media was very important in communication with the audience. Academics were sometimes invited for short interviews.

In her comment, Lena Dallywater asked how academics could be helpful to the media and a similarly helpful cooperation partner. Which formats would be successful in the public? In the following debate, Sebastian Lentz, Director of the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, noted that academics often forgot to include budget for communication in their research proposals, missing out on an important opportunity. Many funders were ready to invest into knowledge transfer if it were already included in the proposal. He mentioned a series of YouTube videos successfully funded with 150,000 Euros as an example. E-learning was a very successful project at "Zeit-Academy" in Hamburg, not only for natural sciences. He critically remarked that "communication is not part of our reputation system." This ought to be changing in the near future.

Marius Dragomir, Director of the Center for Media, Data and Society (CEU) in Budapest spoke in the following interactive workshop about his experience with combining research and practise at his former job with Open Society Foundations OSF and CEU. A native Romanian, he worked as a journalist

for different media outlets for many years. During his work at OSF he saw a lack of academic concern, because his job was mainly about financing media outlets through grants, studying local markets and trying to improve media legislation and media ownership. "The difficulty lies always with the question as to how we can measure impact," Dragomir said. For three years he had been working for CEU, a company planning with long term strategies, and closely with universities in different countries. "The mission is that bringing research into media matters." As an interesting example of collaboration, he mentioned the project "reading the riot" which dealt with the London riots and their beginning. The newspaper Guardian and the London School of Economics worked together on this issue, publishing articles and a report. "This model was interesting," Dragomir said.

In the following debate, Yanchenko criticised that western grants were sometimes problematic for Ukraine. Independent media like "Hromadske" or the public broadcasters relied mainly on grants. In this vein, topics would be selected that fitted Western perspectives. One of the key trends in media would be government funding. "A grant is not a business model," the Ukrainian journalist said. Dragomir agreed, saying: "A grant is not a business model, but only a present." Pakistani journalist Farhan Janjua said that in many countries, for instance in his home country, the media was not allowed to accept from foreign donors. It was seen as foreign propaganda.

Panel III: "Science Perspectives – Best practise" – Freedom of the Media

Hungarian journalist Krisztian Simon presented results of his dissertation on "The use of foreign grants in the independent newsrooms of Russia and Hungary". As the Raking of Freedom House shows there is a disturbing decline of media freedom all over Eastern and Central Europe, Simon said. "All media-outlets are struggling." A lot of foreign donors decided to directly support the newsrooms, but grants are less than one percent of the media markets. "There is almost no research done about this topic", Simon said.

In the following presentation, Pakistani journalist Farhan Janjua talked about his work experience as a journalist covering human rights and topics like digital rights, privacy and intersectional queer topics. Janjua is currently a fellow with Reporters without Borders Germany and a certified digital security trainer. "The new technologies offer opportunities of doing something which has an impact on society," said Junjua, who started the first queer media project in 2013 in Pakistan, an Islamic country that had not seen queer movements yet. "My project was a voice in the Internet." The problem started when the media got more and more interested in his work. "The Arabic broadcasting network Al Jazeera did a positive article and interviewed me." Because of this publicity, more and more negative articles and reactions started coming in, even death threats. Janjua was blamed of "blasphemy" and Pakistan banned his website. He was also pushed out of job in a prominent newspaper later. After many ups and downs the blogger ended up working in the PR-section of a supermarket. He then left the country and now lives in Germany.

In her comment, Tamina Kutscher said that the Russian media scene still had an impressive range of independent media outlets. In many cases, the line between journalists could not be drawn easily, as the example of Junjua's queer media project showed. "I'm a gay man," the Pakistani journalist said. "This is part of my identity, but I do not compromise on my journalistic work." The following debate revolved around the question on how to define a journalist today, because new technologies gave a lot of new opportunities to "citizen journalists" or bloggers to publish, i.e. journalists who were not trained professionals, the latter being the traditional gate-keepers of the trade.

Round Table Discussion: "Comparative Perspectives on Repercussions of Populism in the Media"

High time for populists came especially before elections, Yanchenko said, talking about the Ukrainian media landscape. "Audiences are vulnerable to populism." In his opinion direct communication between politicians and the public served the interests of populists. Zelensky tried not to talk to the media a lot during his election campaign. "He does not need them anymore," Yanchenko said. Journalists were unable to contact with him.

For the case of Hungary, Simon pointed out that many media outlets were bought up by oligarchs after foreign companies had left the market. Today, 80 percent of Hungarian media reports featured the same stories and in alignment with government positions. "The media does not play a big role anymore," he said. The influence of Facebook and Instagram has grown. The political scientist Alexander Yendell spoke about the variety of German media, ranging from tabloids such as Bild-Zeitung to quality newspapers and public broadcasting. Some journalists and media outlets found it difficult to deal with politicians of the AfD, a German right-wing party on the rise, and gave them too much attention, he criticised. "A general problem is that the media reduces complexity," Yendell said. Simon pointed out that populists in Europe educated each other on how to use the media for their purposes. "People get the media they deserve," Yendell said.

"Understanding Right-Wing Populism and Islamophobia in the East and West"

Despite a relatively scarce population of Muslims in Eastern Europe, many Eastern Europeans were to be qualified as islamophobic, said Yendell, as one of the authors of a conference-report on "Understanding and Explaining Islamophobia in Eastern Europe," published in 2018. He described the phenomenon as "Islamophobia without Muslims." He was very convinced that stereotypes and prejudice could be reduced if people had more contact with the respective other in their everyday life. Emotional factors played an important role, he said. There was fear of "Islamisation" and of a loss of one's traditional culture. Susanne Kailitz, freelance journalist in Dresden, said that sometimes the way journalists and the media report about Islam incited "Islamophobia" and stereotypes. She spoke about a lack of knowledge and understanding. Junjua reminded the audience of the fact that there were two billion Muslims worldwide with very diverse cultures and traditions. The main problem was rather "political Islam" or "Islamic extremists."

Lecture: "The strong longing for submission"

Psychologist Oliver Decker is a member of the Faculty of Medicine at Leipzig University since 1997 and Head of the Research Unit Societal Change and Modern Medicine. Since 2013 he is also the Director of the Centre for the Study of Right-Wing Extremism and Democracy and since 2002 responsible for a longitudinal research project monitoring the authoritarian and right-wing extremism attitudes in Germany. His presentation explained how their research activities were executed, showing as one of their results the rise of anti-Semitism in the Eastern German population since 2014 and the polarisation of society. In his comment, radio-journalist Grollmann said that experts like Decker were extremely important for the media, providing the background and interpretation necessary to understand the relevant trends. But it is extremely difficult to explain complex subjects in only a minute or two on private radio. Decker also warned not to underestimate how professional the AfD was working. As a

journalist, one needed to be well prepared and informed to handle an interview with their politicians successfully.

PANEL IV New Perspectives

Media-Training: "Science needs the public – press-releases and press-conferences on academic topics"

The speaker Insa van den Berg is a Leipzig based freelance journalist and coach. "There are problems between academia and media" she said, speaking of her personal experience. Academics were very often disappointed about how the press works, because they found it too sensational, misleading and restricting for important topics. "Journalists and academics speak different languages and have a different concepts of pace." Journalists would like to get everything done immediately, while academics rather prefer taking more time, sometimes spending years on their research. Academic work relied on falsification, but journalists' work on verification, the trainer said. Academics worked for a specialised readership or conference audience in a distinguished setting. Journalists inform a mostly broader, very heterogeneous public. "Despite all these differences, we need each other," van den Berg said. We have a lot in common. Journalists and academics want to find out something new and transfer information and knowledge.

When it comes to writing a press release it is important to write them as if they were news items. The most important information should be stated at the beginning and the text should be easy to follow. The ideal length would be between 20 to 30 lines. It should be send six weeks ahead of the event with a reminder two days before. If you send photographic material, do not include more than two or three pictures. If you publish a study, want to announce a change of personnel, a prominent guest or upcoming events, you might want to prepare a press-release.

A press-conference should last no longer than 45 to 60 minutes. Speakers should open the press-conference with interesting quotes, while leaving enough time for Q&A (15 minutes). After the press-conference, there should remain time for individual interviews. Tuesday to Thursday, 10 am to 2 pm are ideal time frames for press-conferences. The invitations should be sent out 10 to 30 days ahead of the press-conference.

PANEL V Summary and Outlook:

The participants positively remarked that the lectures and debates were fruitful and interesting. It was suggested that more participants be attracted to the event. A two-day event would possibly be better than a four-day event. It was suggested that the upcoming Summer School includes discussions about ways to increase public interest in Eastern Europe.

(Gemma Pörzgen)