

Chapter VIII

Information economics as a tool of economics and development policy

8.1. The role of the media in popularizing economics in Poland

Izabela Janicka | DOI 10.56091/psde2.10

The aim of the study was to define the importance of the state of media communication in the dissemination of economy and development policy. Indicating the threats and changes taking place in the perception of economic knowledge is a contribution to the discussion on the forms of media communication in the long run. Tolerating the worsening economic situation in developing countries carries the risk of disrupting the democratic order in the world. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center skyscrapers in New York and the Pentagon building in Washington showed that such a real threat could actually exist. If only for this reason, the international community, also in its own best interest, should be interested in overcoming the tragic economic situation of most developing countries. However, for order and security to be established in international relations, the problems faced by developing countries must be resolved, or at least substantially mitigated. It is not an easy task due to the fact that they belong to the group of global problems. Moreover, they had not been resolved for years, which resulted in their aggregation. Success in overcoming them

depends, in turn, on many factors of internal and external nature, the change or modification of which each time requires violating the interests of political and economic elites, not only in highly developed countries, but also in developing countries. The latter have not been a single block for a long time and over the past decades have undergone further great differentiation, which additionally forces a selective approach in solving their problems (Deszczyński, 2011a, p. 148).

Media are part of the knowledge-based economy and as such must adapt to market changes, focused on the individual needs of the recipient, including product personalization. The closest alternative to broadcasting is narrowcasting, which allows the content to be broadcast in accordance with the preferences and attributes of the recipients, a specific place and time. It is worth asking fundamental questions about the further role of traditional media, whether new media can fill the information gap and whether, from the perspective of economy 4.0, it is worth promoting economic knowledge at all, and even more so promoting economic development in times of uncertainty, economic fluctuations, economic and climate crises.

8.1.1. Media in the 21st century

The media is an essential component in the process of public communication, in which they play the role of an intermediary between the institutions of the political system and the citizens. By taking over the position of a secondary sender, it controls the information addressed to the public, and in connection with various interest groups, it selects, interprets and shapes views on controversial social and political issues (Jędrzejewski, 2010, p. 22). As the key gatekeeper subjected to media-tisation, it has long ceased to be a forum for debate. The revolution in communication between the sender and the recipient was the introduction not only of a new medium, which was the Internet, but of its new incarnation of Web 2.0. Various digital platforms offer great opportunities for participation and involvement in the communication process. The digitization and development of the Internet enabled the flourishing of multimedia: interactive information, educational and entertainment

services, computer games, new literary forms, such as blogs and hyper-literature. They are a big competition to old forms of culture. Domestic TV producers have to compete both with domestic multimedia producers and, due to globalization, with foreign producers. The lack of barriers to distribution means that “everyone competes with everyone on many levels: production, distribution, technology” (Benedyk, 2007). From the beginning of its development, the Internet has been a place where presumption develops the fastest, and discussions take place within virtual communities in social networks and on discussion forums (Strzelecki, 2015, p. 166). The Australian philosopher-prophetist David Tow predicts the decline of large media corporations in favor of independent creative groups by 2050 (Dąbala, 2014, p. 38). The apogee of media progression will be Web 5.0 technology, in which connecting the brain directly to the network will enable the immediate exchange of knowledge and experiences. “The challenge for managers will be to truly adjust interactions to create rich, emotionally resonant experiences for users. This is now noticeable in online gaming environments. E-commerce will need to adapt even more to personalized, real-time communication with users. (...) the emotional-sensory network can transform the World Wide Web from a noisy environment into a richer place for thoughtful and friendly interactions. It can also become a manipulative and destructive space for individuals” (Kambil, 2008, p. 58).

An actual merging of computers, the Internet and television into an all-in-one medium is awaited with particular concern. Compuvision or a teleputer, interactive television (ITV), which delivers content on any end device under the conditions chosen by the user, are only a matter of time. Recipient identification enables interaction and creates a new return channel.

The press from the beginning of the 16th century, and the radio and television from the beginning of the 20th century, were the exclusive suppliers of information in the media markets, and it was between them that the struggle for the audience took place. The current process of media convergence, i.e. gradual blurring of the boundaries between the press, radio, television and the Internet (Jenkins, 2007), has forced a technological transformation. The editorial offices of the traditional paper press

set up their own portals on the web and sell magazines in an electronic version. The Internet competes with traditional media and poses a threat to the continued functioning of the paper press, TV and radio sets. In the future, we will be the recipients of only internet press, internet radio and internet television.

8.1.2. Media communication

In a contemporary society, metaphorically called “instant culture”, the homogeneity of the message, its infantilization and fragmentation prevails. Platonic dialogue has been replaced by mass communication, the essence of which is a multitude of information filtered through the media. The recipient includes some information into his existing knowledge, and rejects some, because, as Bachelard claimed, “mind prefers that which confirms its knowledge rather than that which contradicts it” (Bachelard, 2002, p. 20). As a result, the sender remains uncertain as to the reception of his own message. Media heuristics does not pursue the truth, but satisfactory cognitive results. Thus, celebrity journalism in combination with the privatization of the media leads to polarization of recipients and citizen journalism, important from the point of view of democracy, remains in the sphere of an experiment (Kołodziej, 2007, pp. 40–42).

The functions of the media distinguished by H.D. Lasswell and Ch.R. Wright from the point of view of social development remain unchanged in the three roles assigned to them (informers, interpreters, socializers) (Kozłowska, 2006, p. 74). On the other hand, it is the recipients who exercise real control over the media, choosing a given TV channel or another press title. The prospect of losing advertising income forces commercialization, convergence and tabloidization, which blur the program differences, thematic profiles and lower the overall content level. An important mission of public radio and television, in accordance with Art. 21 of the act regarding broadcasting (*Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji* – “Act on radio and television”), is, inter alia, fostering the free shaping of citizens’ views, the formation of public opinion, and a reliable presentation of the entire variety of events and phenomena in the country and abroad (*Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji*). According to CBOS survey,

for the largest group of respondents, the main source of information about events in the country and in the world is television (58%), and the Internet is second (27%). For relatively few, the most important source of information is radio (9%), and for an even smaller group – the press (2%). Compared to the data obtained two years earlier, it can be noticed that television and the press have lost their importance and that the Internet has become more important (Wiarygodność mediów, 2019, p. 1). In view of the waning importance of traditional media, attempts to “resuscitate” them are questionable. Even the amount of PLN 1.26 billion in subsidies (of which PLN 1.12 billion went to TVP) that the public media in Poland received in 2019 will not change the downward trend in their reception.

The development of information and communication technologies also has its negative sides. The profit-hungry global market uses a variety of manipulations to attract the attention of the consumer. The phenomenon of fake news and post-truth “immerses” the recipient in a huge number of unverified sources, the content of which is trusted by the recipient, and the networked society potentially gives everyone – be it an individual or an organization – tools to spread their own truth. In traditional media, as a result of hierarchy and the presence of gatekeepers, selected information appeared, the credibility of which was the responsibility of the editorial office. Therefore, it is hard to find fake news in the New York Times, BBC or the Washington Post. But the regulation of information on the Internet “is based on algorithms oriented not necessarily on their substantive content, but above all on promoting the most popular content, able to attract the attention of the largest number of recipients and generate the greatest profit from advertising” (Iwasiński, 2018, p. 2).

8.1.3. Misconceptions in the media

In the state policy, environmental education of the society is regarded one of the most important ways of implementing the strategy of sustainable social and economic development. The mass media are not talking sufficiently about the worst climate crisis in centuries. Climate denialists

are welcomed to the studios. According to Media Matters, 71% of the time devoted to climate change in the U.S. in 2017 contained actions or statements by the Trump administration that it intended to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement (Svoboda, 2020). The lack of substantive information leads to the situation that six out of ten people do not distinguish the problem of smog from climate change. Journalists do not connect the burning Biebrza National Park, heat wave, drought and flooding with the effects of climate change. They ignore the difference between smog components and greenhouse gases, while writing about recycling of municipal waste, they ignore the most important cause of air pollution, i.e. the dependence of the Polish economy on coal. And some media question the existence of the greenhouse effect (e.g. an article posted on the website www.pch24.pl) There is no media information that today the losses related to weather anomalies amount to approx. PLN 9 billion annually (approx. 0.6% of GDP) and that Poland is the 18th largest emitter of CO₂ in the world, emitting three times more greenhouse gases in relation to GDP and 18% more per capita than the EU average (Report, 2019).

As biologists have rightly pointed out, “the ecological discussion (in the sense of science) should be of a scientific nature, based on evidence obtained by making hypotheses that are subject to constant testing and falsification. The common media confusion of the two meanings of ecology (the field of biology that studies organisms in their environment and activities promoting environmental protection) not only hinders social debate and taking rational actions, but also leads to doubts about the credibility of ecology understood as a science” (Jaszczuk, 2018, p. 16). In the Polish media, the discussion on nature protection is conducted mainly by four social groups: (1) biologists with ecological specialization – ecologists, (2) participants of the social ecological movement, (3) foresters, (4) hunters, which narrows down the field for argumentation. An analysis of Polish opinion-forming weekly magazines has identified four frameworks relating to environmental degradation, its protection (methods used), energy sources (both renewable and conventional) and an ecological lifestyle (in relation to leisure activities and consumption), which is low (2,5%) share of ecological content in the total message. Phrases

and comparisons evoking a sense of danger are used, making the reader feel threatened. War conflicts are equated with climate change, and the great drought has been linked to the war in Syria. The possible impact of such phenomena as heat, water shortage, desertification and hunger on population migration is considered. The author of this analysis believes that “such a phenomenon may have a negative impact on the uniform perception of environmental threats by society, and thus – on ensuring safety” (Chodyński, 2017, p. 183).

The reasons for the lack of a critical reference to the facts can be seen in the journalists’ focusing only on publicistic materials and avoiding other genres of expression (Dąbała, 2014, p. 75). This leads to homogenization of the content offered, as well as reproduction of unproven data and superficial discourse, as the American media analyst Brendan Hennessy aptly summarized: “You don’t become a good cook by reading cookbooks” (Hennessy, 2008, p. 16). The statement of P. Deszczyński from two decades ago that “the readiness of governments and societies of highly developed countries to abandon protectionist policies, introduce economic concessions to developing countries and bear the costs of financing the modernization of their economic, political and social structures will be directly proportional to the threats that economic, political and social instability in these countries (related mainly to armed conflicts and problems of political refugees and economic immigrations on a large scale) poses and inversely proportional to the low level of knowledge and awareness of governments, and especially societies of highly developed countries in relation to the existing global threats, the common denominator of which is the catastrophic economic situation of developing countries”, unfortunately still remains valid (Deszczyński, 2001c, p. 222).

8.1.4. Development policy in Polish media

Article 2 of the Act of 6 December on the principles of development policy defines it as “a set of interrelated activities undertaken and implemented in order to ensure lasting and sustainable development of the country, socio-economic, regional and spatial cohesion, increasing the competitiveness of the economy and creating new jobs. on a national,

regional or local scale” (Ustawa, 2006). It points to many aspects of social life in which the fourth estate has an essential role to play.

Almost all media deal with economics, economy and business, but only the specialized ones deal with niche topics that reach an educated and knowledgeable recipient in business matters. It is difficult to focus the attention of thousands of viewers on the economic issues of the world or the country and to create a clear and communicative message, devoid of industry newspeak, so that, as the director of TVN CNBC advises, not to explain economic phenomena in a manner defined by lawyers as *ignotum per ignotum* (Młodkowski, 2010, p. 161).

On the Polish media market, “Rzeczpospolita”, “Dziennik Gazeta Prawna”, “Puls Biznesu”¹ and “Gazeta Wyborcza” as well as forsal.pl, money.pl and businessinsider.com.pl have extensive sections devoted to the economy and often – excluding “Gazeta Wyborcza” – they present themselves on the outside as publications addressed to the circles of entrepreneurs and decision-makers at various levels. When analyzing the content on the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on Polish labor market, there is a lack of reliability in the selection of data sources that were unrepresentative, e.g. the data of consulting companies did not indicate the source of the selection of the surveyed companies, and the information was random, of an intervention nature and aimed at increasing readability. The same was true for data from the public sector. Such an example was the reported issue of increased retirement of teachers due to the pandemic. While focusing on this professional group, many years of financial negligence, the lack of investment in infrastructure and the depreciation of the profession were not taken into account (Szukalski, 2020, p. 13).

¹ According to the Institute of Media Monitoring, “Rzeczpospolita” took the first place in the ranking of “The most opinion-forming media in Poland” for September 2020 in the category of the most opinion-forming press titles with an economic and business profile, with over 3.2 thousand quotations in July. “Dziennik Gazeta Prawna” (1.4 thousand) came second, and the podium was closed by “Puls Biznesu”, which was quoted 864 times. In the ranking of media with a business and economic profile including internet portals, Money.pl took first place, quoted 669 times in July. The second most cited medium in this category turned out to be Businessinsider.pl, while the podium closes Bankier.pl, with a score of 216 mentions (*Najbardziej...*, imm.com.pl).

Economic journalists are the elite among journalists of all specialties, because their products “concern real money, the largest corporations, stock exchange investors, banks and other companies based on public trust. Inconsiderate, unprepared, and insufficiently argued messages in the media have specific and measurable effects: they can increase or decrease the sale of products, affect the share price of listed companies, encourage or discourage the services of a specific company” (Kobosko, 2010, p. 147). Business influencers, such as Maciej Wieczorek on YT (Biznes 2.0 channel) or Ewelina Dulega and her blog about accounting, are starting to play an increasingly important role. In social media, industry knowledge is deepened and financial intelligence is developed, and access to professional podcasts broadens the spectrum of economic perception. Poland based its news services for domestic media on services provided by global agencies such as AP, DPA, and Reuters. As a result, Polish financial institutions learn about the exchange rates on the Warsaw Stock Exchange or the zloty exchange rates from Reuters (Oleński, 2001, p. 30). The domination of English-language websites not only cuts public opinion off from linguistically and culturally different views, but also polarizes social groups. Reading the economic press around the world, one can conclude that the West is headed for an economic abyss, and China is becoming the leader of the global political and economic scene. The Wall Street Journal expressed views on the unrestrained economic development of the United States and predicted many years of prosperity related to the technological marvel. It was in 1998, i.e. less than two years before bursting of the so-called Internet speculative bubble (Czetwertyński, 2013, p. 199).

In the development of the modern economy, the passivity of the state in monitoring information in the sphere of global and local finances deprives it of the possibility of fulfilling its obligation towards society. Democratic societies are not aware that they are subject to uncontrolled steering of information under the banner of freedom of expression, and thus influencing their knowledge, understanding of the world and perpetuated value systems.

The multitude of intellectual goods, information, the possibility of using big data and social media are part of the culture of the information

society, defined in the technological category (Nowak, 2014). Infinite access to an inexhaustible amount of consumer goods, the purchase of new services from an inexhaustible offer has become common in the *homo consumens* world, but informing about it is slowly transforming. The COVID-19 pandemic has become a modeling factor for the development policy paradigm. In the pages of "Polityka", Tokarczuk calls for ex-centric reflection on the world of the future, and warns against the fatal life in the panopticon. Sesameism, as she called the multiplication of wealth, a wide range of goods and services, as well as the constant reproduction of information and catatonia in front of the screen (Tokarczuk, 2020, pp. 24–30) leads to a redefinition of the concept of economic growth in the spirit of the social philosopher Andre Gorz. The economic collapse between 2030 and 2100, prophesized by the Club of Rome in the publication *The Limits to Growth*, may perpetuate the post-growth economy model, which, despite reducing consumption growth, will lead to social justice, sustainable development and individual well-being.

The importance of the media's responsibility for the word should be emphasized. "The truthfulness of the content of the message should become synonymous with an honestly informed public" (Megier, 2011, p. 73). The importance of the truthfulness of the message increases when information of an unknown origin becomes an authoritative source. In the knowledge-based economy, the media user is forced to be critical of the message and able to navigate in the thicket of information, which, given the decline in daily press readership and the development of visual communication, calls into question the correct shaping of social attitudes. The media, although still playing an important role in maintaining the information order and preventing information crises, are no longer perceived as the only and reliable source of knowledge. Apart from hate, pathostreaming and child grooming, the Internet has created new types of communication channels and a different structure of recipients. One-way narrative activity of the media, without the possibility of commenting in real time, is a thing of the past.