

Paulina Olechowska*

TRANSBOUNDARY MEDIA AND JOURNALISM – AN OVERVIEW OF THEORIES, CONCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICE IN EUROPE

MEDIA I DZIENNIKARSTWO TRANSGRANICZNE – PRZEGLĄD TEORII, KONCEPCJI I PRAKTYKI W EUROPIE

Abstrakt

Istotną rolę w procesach integracyjnych odgrywają inicjatywy w rejonach przygranicznych. Jedną z płaszczyzn współpracy transgranicznej jest kooperacja w obszarze społeczno-kulturalnym, która przejawia się we współpracy podmiotów (wydawcy) i ludzi (redaktorzy) przynależących do różnych krajów – w ich lokalnym wymiarze (europejskie regiony pogranicza). Istnieją różne teorie poświęcone internacjonalizacji procesów komunikowania. Artykuł jest przeglądem koncepcji oraz próbą osadzenia w nich mediów transgranicznych, które ze względu na swoją różnorodność form współpracy (m.in. formalna/niefORMALNA, merytoryczna, finansowa, strukturalna) oraz odmienność realizowanych funkcji (przekraczanie i przewyżczanie granic – *Grenzüberschreitung* i *Grenzüberwindung*) nie poddają się uproszczonym modelom kategoryzacyjnym. Na podstawie wyników badań wybranych przykładów europejskich mediów transgranicznych podjęto próbę ustalenia ich cech dystyngtywnych, wskazując jednocześnie na rolę, jaką odgrywają transgraniczne przekazy w europejskiej sferze publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: media i dziennikarstwo transgraniczne, komunikacja transgraniczna, europejska sfera publiczna, europejskie pogranicza

Introduction

Scientific reflection on media structures and information flows has long been focused on their globalisation and internationalisation, or – in other words – the crossing of the framework designated by national borders. Although the global and international mass media have been theoretically conceptualized, the many forms of transboundary communica-

* Instytut Literaturoznawstwa i Nowych Mediów, Wydział Humanistyczny, Uniwersytet Szczeciński, al. Piastów 40 B, 71-065 Szczecin, e-mail: paulina.olechowska@usz.edu.pl, numer ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6110-6656

tion – despite being set in the context of globalised media structures, offers, and patterns of use (Wessler, Averbek-Lietz 2012: 5) – have remained marginalized in media studies, rather being treated as complementary to national mass media / journalism (which is also a result of their peripheral location within the given country). The article is a review of mainly German-language theories on media and journalistic forms of crossing and overstepping borders, the aim of this article is to contribute to Polish research concerned with describing transboundary mass media / journalism, while the particular objectives of this paper are to: 1) review the theoretical conceptions of transboundary communication; 2) explain the existing theories dealing with various forms of cooperation using the examples of radio and television broadcasters from selected European borderlands (case studies); 3) attempt at classifying the factors determining the development of transboundary mass media / journalism; 4) describe the role and importance of transnational mass media in creating European public spheres.

Theoretical issues – a review of concepts

Studies of transboundary mass media / journalism, i.e. referring to media coverage contributed to by journalists coming from different countries, have become widespread mainly in the United States (“cross-border journalism”) and Northern Europe (“grenzüberschreitender Journalismus”) (e.g. Alfter 2017: 11). Therefore, its transboundary nature is related to such media coverage crossing the physical borders of the country and thus becoming an element of **international communication**, characterized by the participation of both entities (publishers / broadcasters) and people (editors / journalists) from different countries (Mikułowski Pomorski 2012: 67–75). However, Zbigniew Oniszczyk emphasizes that after an analysis of the transformations in international communication it became necessary to create a new concept – one that is being propagated primarily among German media experts – of **transnational communication** (Oniszczyk 2017: 7). According to other authors, in order to distinguish between these two types of communication, attention should be paid to the differences between the different forms of media coverage that is either crossing (“Grenzüberschreitung”) or overcoming the boundaries (“Grenzüberwindung”) (Wessler, Averbek-Lietz 2012: 10). It is characteristic of transnational communication that it both crosses and overcomes the borders between countries and the cultural borders between nations, thus reducing the effect of social significance that these boundaries would otherwise have on communication processes

(Oniszczyk 2017: 8). Consequently, any theoretical consideration of transboundary mass media should be preceded by the categorization of supranational mass media as authored by Michael Brüggemann and Hagen Schulz-Forberg, who distinguish between: 1) national media with a transnational mission – the aim of which is to bring information about their country to the fellow countrymen living abroad; 2) international media – which are the product of cooperation between media outlets from two or more countries; 3) pan-regional media – which are international media conveying communication in a specific part of the world; and 4) global media – aimed at a wide international audience (Brüggemann, Schulz-Forberg 1998: 81–83). As the authors add, “types one and two are preoccupied with the idea of the nation – unlike the two following types of media which are clearly post-national and characterized by a target audience spanning across national borders, while the content production and organizational structure does not emanate from cooperation between individual countries” (e.g. Brüggemann, Schulz-Forberg 1998: 82; e.g. Brüggemann, Schulz-Forberg 2009: 699–700). When the so-categorized mass media are superimposed with another mass media differentiating matrix that takes into account such features as: 1. target group; 2. reception range; 3. method of production; 4. scope of content (topics); 5. scope of form (multiple languages), and others – it turns out that the proposed model does not exhaust the conception of transboundary media in terms of their definition. At this point, it appears advisable to introduce the concept of a scale which would show the degree of “trans-boundariness” of the mass media measured against the following criteria. Based on this assumption, I have attempted to arrive at my own definition of transboundary mass media that – to make a reference to Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg’s typology – should be construed as a variety of international media. In my opinion, mass media outlets are transboundary if they satisfy the following criteria divided into several areas: 1) in terms of editorial teams’ organization – they are the result of formal or informal cooperation between journalists from two (or more) countries; 2) territorial scope / target group – they are published within the borderland region (construed as a nearby area, one that lies near the border, on both sides of it), and are thus directed to the binational audience; 3) in terms of their form – they are bilingual; 4) in terms of the content conveyed – they are focused on the problems of a borderland in a country inhabited by communities demonstrating different cultures (Olechowska 2014a: 262).

Summing up the foregoing considerations, it must be found that the media studies on these topics are still in their infancy, and the literary

sources concerned with the above-described mass media lack definition-based conceptions and clear methods for analysing transboundary media communication. An argument for this claim is to be found in the multitude of existing proposals for studying transboundary communication. Hartmut Wessler and Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz indicate four different methods: 1) a comparative analysis of the media systems in the countries from which the collaborating publishers/broadcasters come [comparative studies (Kleinstauber 2003: 78–79)]; 2) a direct or indirect transfer or expansion of fixed concepts regarding the national mass media and communication theory framework on to the transboundary dimension of mass media and communication phenomena; 3) the creation of a new theory in this respect, taking into account the legacy of the theories of culture developed by such sciences as sociology, cultural studies and philosophy; 4) the setting of transboundary communication research within the context of wide regional studies (Wessler, Averbeck-Lietz 2012: 6–8).

The diversity of cooperation forms – theoretical considerations

The transnationalization and deterritorialization aspects of the mass media concerned emphasized in the theoretical considerations add a heterogeneous nature to cross-border media coverage, which stems from the diversity of the forms adopted by the cooperating media outlets. When discussing one of the models of “cooperation between publishers from different countries” in his research into the internationalization of press publishers, Jürgen Wilke distinguishes two planes that it can assume: 1) economic: a financial share in the other entity and cooperation with regard to printing, distribution and advertising; 2) editorial (or more precisely – journalistic), denoting cooperation with regard to the content conveyed (Wilke 1999: 52). Another categorization of journalistic forms that cross borders is proposed by Robert H. Schmidt, who in the late 1970s studied mass media models for cross-border cooperation in the “Greater Region” of Saar-Lor-Lux (Goulet, Vatter 2013: 2), and who pointed to the existence of the following forms: 1) exchanging or distributing material from one country to the neighbouring country; 2) informing about the events taking place in the neighbouring country; 3) jointly producing programmes by editorial teams from the neighbouring countries (Schmidt 1978: 11–12). The most extensive typology of the forms of cooperation between publishers / broadcasters from different countries is proposed by Bernd Blöbaum, who interviewed cooperating publishers

from the German-Dutch and German-Belgian borderlands and was able to single out the following types of such cooperation: 1) substantive – which is based on developing joint journalistic content and exchanging information; 2) structural – which is reflected in the establishment of a coordinating body (a contact office), based on a partnership contract; 3) personnel related – which entails cooperation between and exchange of journalists, volunteers or interns; 4) financial – which is based on a common budget (usually with EU funds used) and agreed cost accounting rules; 5) related to public relations and advertising (Blöbaum 1999: 42). Blöbaum's cooperation in the field of advertising and public relations is the least common; it is the result of language differences and advertising markets divided by country borders of the borderlands (Sauerland 1994: 188).

The above-described classifications complement one another. Structural cooperation (based on a bilateral agreement between media outlets and entailing the establishment of a body that coordinates the international team's work) usually leads to financial cooperation (that sets out every participant's financial contribution to the project's budget). However, the examples provided above show that the boundaries between the particular forms are blurred. It must be added, as well, that financial cooperation is usually a derivative of structural cooperation, and that it happens as a result of EU funds being used to finance transboundary media communication. This type of support for transboundary media coverage as part of cross-border programmes is a frequent occurrence, because supranational production is considered to be an expensive undertaking, and one that does not promise much return on investment (e.g. Toullec, Goulet 2013: 86).

The diversity of cooperation forms – cases from European borderlands (electronic mass media)

This section of the article describes selected examples of bi- or multilateral cooperation between electronic broadcasters from different European borderlands, with a depiction of the forms they adopt.

I. Editorial/substantive cooperation

One of Europe's longest-standing transboundary television broadcasts is *Alpen-Adria-Donau*¹ – made non-stop since 1982, currently by regional stations of public service broadcasters from seven states: Austria (ORF, until 2010), Italy (RAI Bozen and Trieste), Hungary (MTV

¹ The programme's website: www.br.de/br-fernsehen/sendungen/alpen-donau-adria/index.html (last accessed: 29 November 2019).

Pécs), Slovenia (RTV SLO), Croatia (HRT), Switzerland (RSI Lugano), and Germany (BR)². Günther Ziesel is the founder and a “good spirit of this undertaking” (e.g. Ziesel 2006), who over 35 years ago set the still-applying rules for cooperation between broadcasters from different countries at a time when (which needs to be stressed) Europe was politically divided into Western democracies and Eastern communist regimes. According to Ziesel, the success of any international project mainly depends on the journalists’ commitment, which is why he has been always personally involved in coordinating the work of the international office. What is interesting, this large-scale transboundary coproduction has never been actually formalized by way of any written contract. Each of the broadcasters is responsible for financing their own contribution to the project, the editorial teams meet every two months, and every broadcaster is obliged to broadcast the content produced in this way (the individual episodes vary both in style and language). The programme is broadcast by 17 regional and national television stations from seven countries, in five languages.

Eurosud, a programme that was aired from 1988 to 1994, is another example of a wide non-formalized editorial cooperation between three entities: France 3 from Aquitaine, TVE Bilbao from the Basque region of Spain, and RTP Porto from northern Portugal (not a regional TV station). The important thing is that “the project was not a co-production in the full sense. There were no pooled finances and no written contract. Rather, it was [a] collaboration, financed internally within each organization and based on verbal agreements reached at regular joint editorial meetings” (Laborde, Perrot 2000: 63). Although this collaboration did not have a formal coproduction status, the partners were obliged to carry out monthly editorial meetings (in each of the cooperating countries, consecutively) and exchange material for the purposes of producing their broadcasts free of charge (Laborde, Perrot 2000: 95).

II. Economic / financial / structural cooperation

There is no theoretical basis for any analysis of transboundary mass media markets and coverage. As Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen, Matthias Karmasin and Bjørn von Rimscha emphasize, there are three objects of central importance to the sustainable development of transboundary mass media communication: markets, enterprises, and products (Alt-

² Initially, the programme was titled *Alpen-Adria*, and made by outlets from: Bavaria (then in West Germany), the Italian Trento, Bolzano and Milan, and the Hungarian Pécs; later, Switzerland and Austria joined the project.

meppen, Karmasin, Bjørn von Rimscha 2012: 40–41). The above-described examples of transboundary cooperation pertain to the product, namely the radio and television programmes of European public service broadcasters.

The strengthening of cooperation between broadcasters from different countries and the expanding of its dimension from merely substantive to economic / financial are exemplified by the cooperation of public service broadcasters from Germany (WDR Aachen) and Belgium (BRF Eupen, BRTN Hasselt and RTBF Liege). In the 1990s, these centres only cooperated on a sporadic basis, mainly exchanging German-language material. Then, thanks to the trilateral Belgian-Dutch-German support from the Meuse–Rhine Euroregion, a new concept to institutionalize this cooperation emerged in 1996, which led to the establishment of the *Euregio-Media* radio news agency in 1997. The agreement signed by the broadcasters the previous year specified as follows: 1) funding sources (50% – EU funds; 30% – the Euroregion’s funds; 20% – the partners’ own contribution); 2) organizational aspects (e.g. the agency is situated in Eupen; the partners are obliged to exchange information on a daily basis, and provide three full-time jobs for journalists and translators); 3) material distribution methods (the jointly-produced weekly radio shows are broadcast by each of the broadcasting centres) (BRF-DLF, 2017). The experience gained in the course of the project later resulted in continuation and expansion of the cooperation between the German and Belgian media outlets: in 2001 BRF engaged in wider collaboration with Deutschland-funk Köln by creating the 24-h *BRF-DLF* station (Krickel 2017).

Another example of formalized cooperation based on transparent financing principles is *Radio Pomerania* created by radio broadcasters from Poland (Polish Radio Szczecin) and Germany (NDR1 Radio MV), which aired from 1998 to 2006, and was broadcast from studios in Greifswald and Szczecin. The idea to start a periodic programme was conceived as a result of personal contacts between journalists Angelika Stangneth and Zbigniew Plesner (Olechowska, 2017: 246). The 1997 agreement set out each of the partners’ responsibilities, in particular with regard to finance management: the Polish side provided a studio for the purposes of producing the shows, while the German side covered the costs of the German and Polish workload and financed the travel costs borne by the cooperating journalists (the German partner, as an EU Member State, received subsidies under the INTERREG IIA) programme (e.g. Olechowska 2016).

Radio Euregio, formed by Dutch (Radio & TV Oost and Omroep Gelderland) and German (WDR Münster and NDR Osnabrück) public

service broadcasters, is another example of cooperation between media outlets from neighbouring countries. Developed since 1993 (initially thanks to financial support under the INTERREG I programme), the cooperation between the four editorial teams originally only consisted in exchanging information and producing a biweekly radio news service, later to expand to the coproduction of a bilingual (with German and Dutch transcription) television programme. Their partnership also developed to include personnel-related collaboration, with internships offered to students exploring EU-related topics (Sauerland 1994: 150; *Promotion 2000*: 16).

EU regional policy instruments, among them principally the Interreg Cooperation Programmes (Toullec, Goulet 2013: 87), are presently some of the more essential incentives to the development of transboundary mass media coverage. Some of such communication is of an ephemeral nature, and the cooperation is improvised to meet the current needs related to keeping the borderland inhabitants updated on cross-border projects being implemented in their regions³.

The selected examples of the cooperation forms adopted by broadcasters from neighbouring countries show that their nature is diverse. From my research, I can conclude that one clearly dominant form is that of editorial cooperation, which is based on: informing the general public about the events taking place in the neighbouring country, exchanging or distributing material from one country to the neighbouring country, and eventually jointly producing programmes by editorial teams from the neighbouring countries. Evidence of this dominance of non-formalized forms of editorial cooperation could be found in the Grand Prix awarded between 1997 and 2005 by CIRCOM Regional (European Association of Regional Television) in the “Cross-Border Programmes” category. Originally⁴, the main criterion qualifying the given programme to this category focused on the transboundary nature of the topics discussed (problems on the border between two or more countries), rather than on the adopted form (such as the manner in which the programme was produced). In subsequent editions of the competition, more qualification criteria were added for this category, namely that it should be 1) a programme pro-

³ An example of which is the project titled “Cross Border Patient Mobility. Grenzenlose. Gesundheit im deutsch-niederländischen Grenzgebiet” (Interreg III A), with Dutch (RTV Oost) and German (WDR Münster) public service broadcasters cooperating by exchanging material to make a series of TV features in May 2008 on the health care services in the borderland region (A) (Abschlussbericht, 2008, pp. 25–26).

⁴ In 2006, the European Committee of the Regions stopped sponsoring the award, after which the category changed to “Television Across Europe”, and the next year to “News and Cross-Border”.

duced by one station but covering an issue or issues on either side of a national border or strong cultural divide, and (2) a programme produced as a co-operative venture by two or more regional stations in different states (Prix 2006: 7). A definite majority of the awards went to programmes whose transboundary nature was reflected in the content and not in the method of production. Among the typically multilateral co-productions were, apart from the already mentioned *Alpen-Donau-Adria* (1997), also *Hier – Her* (TV Syd [Denmark] and NDR Kiel [Germany], 1998⁵) and *Kowalski & Schmidt* (TVP Wrocław [Poland] and ORBB [Germany], 2002) – which were the results of close substantive, structural and financial cooperation between public service media outlets from these neighbouring countries.

The prospects for the development of transboundary mass media and journalism

Considering the prospects for the development of transboundary mass media, one must assume that the more spaces for tight cross-border cooperation are seen to (understood as a series of structural factors such as migration and movement of persons, or cross-border campaigns launched by social organizations), the better the conditions for the establishment and development of transboundary mass media / journalism that are provided.

When attempting to categorize the factors contributing to and hindering the development of the mass media described herein, it might be advisable to begin by adopting their simplest classification into **internal** factors (defined as elements shaping the cooperating journalists and publishers/broadcasters, of an organizational and professional nature) and **external** factors (environmental element, affecting the functioning of the journalists). As this basic division is insufficient, it should be expanded by further categories. In his studies on the internationalization of press media, Wilke postulated that their development was encouraged by technical, political, legal or economic factors (Wilke 1999: 48). If we want to apply this categorization to the cooperation between the electronic mass media of a borderland, we must expand it by additional groups of factors that together make up a system – a collection of non-mutually exclusive elements, characterized by linkages and interactions. Their comprehen-

⁵ A bilingual TV programme subsidised under the Interreg IIA programme and broadcast biweekly since 1994 by local Danish and German broadcasters [the Schleswig / Sønderjylland borderland].

sive analysis will allow for the determination of the degree with which particular factors contribute to or hinder the development of transboundary mass media / journalism. I choose to categorize such factors as:

- **cultural** – of an internal nature (e.g. the selectivity of the content received and produced; the choice of the journalistic form – information versus commentary versus entertainment) and an external nature (e.g. the language barrier or the homogeneity / heterogeneity of the recipients' preferences) (Gerhards 1993: 102);
- **political and legal** – of an internal nature (e.g. similarities and dissimilarities between the content licensing and regulatory systems) and an external nature (e.g. interstate agreements supporting bilateral mass media cooperation);
- **economic and technological** – of an internal nature (e.g. the symmetric / asymmetric potential demonstrated by the cooperating publishers / broadcasters) and an external nature (e.g. calculation of the content determined by the potential recipients' demand);
- **social and personnel-related** – of an internal nature (e.g. intercultural or transboundary competences demonstrated by the borderland journalists), and an external nature (e.g. institutional support from centres that monitor and study the borderland region).

In this categorization, the **cultural** factors are stated as first, although this does not mean they are the most important. Among the main obstacles to the development of transboundary programmes, such issues as language barriers and different journalist cultures (first of all pertaining to the organizational structure and the professional customs) are named. This category is complemented by the group of **social and personnel-related** factors. Possession of language competences (the command of the neighbours' language) is a *sine qua non* condition for producing transboundary mass media communication. Such competences are important, yet insufficient to ensure success, as they should be complemented by the journalistic technique and experience (such as foreign contacts that help expand the pool of information sources by non-institutional sources). I refer to these factors as intercultural / transboundary competences. They are essential, as they make transboundary journalism more inclusive (the experience gained by cross-border journalists is not always institutionally integrated within the journalism culture of the given country).

Another group is that of **political and legal factors**, because – as underlined by Beata Ociepka – every form of international communication is political (Ociepka 2002: 15). In that sense, any form of transboundary cooperation [good neighbourhood relations are the main prerequisite for peaceful coexistence in the borderland (Brie 2009: 81)] is

one of the elements with which interstate relations are built (e.g. Bujdosó 2003: 193–195). That political conditions have a significant effect on the development of transboundary mass media / journalism is proven by the fact that after World War II the mass media have been assigned the role of a reconciliation tool in such countries as France and Germany, and at present – despite the emergence of new technologies making the crossing of borders easier (mass media convergence and digitization) – no new cooperation models have appeared that could be adopted by publishers / broadcasters from neighbouring countries (e.g. Grieves 2012: 40). As an example, the French-Spanish-Portuguese programme *Eurosud* stemmed from the optimism accompanying the Iberian countries' accession to the European Community. Also, the forms of cooperation between journalists and media outlets that were developing mainly in the 1990s in the Polish and German borderland (such as *Radio Pomerania*) were a consequence of the “Polish–German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation” signed in 1991. As for *Radio Euregio* or the programme *Hier-Her*, they are evidence to the key role played by the Euroregions and the local government authorities in assisting in receiving subsidies for this type of mass media. And – as emphasized by Agnieszka Szymańska – various forms of cooperation between media outlets from neighbouring countries can be treated as a sort of barometer of the given state's strategic external communication aimed at the improvement of the image of the country and at strengthening its economic and political position on the international scene (Szymańska 2014: 273–292). One of the elements describing the quality of transboundary cooperation of neighbouring countries is the presence of transboundary programmes in the programme offer of public service broadcasters, whose status (peripheral location) and public tasks (e.g. promotion of cultural diversity with a simultaneous insistence on the significance of national cultures) oblige them to develop transboundary programmes⁶.

The last group of factors is that of **economic and technological** ones. As the examples of *Radio Pomerania* and *Euregio* show, external financial support – particularly if provided in the initial stages of the

⁶ Here, the case of the aforementioned Polish-German TV programme *Kowalski & Schmidt* appears worth mentioning. It has been co-produced by TVP Wrocław and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB – a German regional public service broadcaster airing in Berlin and Brandenburg) since 1993. After 24 years, the Polish broadcaster withdrew from the cooperation citing financial factors (in September 2017, TVP Wrocław was replaced by the *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily newspaper). The state-owned broadcaster's withdrawal from producing (personnel potential) and distributing (regularity of the communication) this typically transboundary programme seems to lack any reasonable justification.

given project – has an important role to play in securing continuity in the years to come. In turn, the development of digital technologies favours supranational exchange of material between electronic broadcasters. The printed mass media are worse off in this respect, as most companies involved in distributing the press focus on the domestic market.

Transboundary mass media in the European public sphere

As mentioned before, the historical, social, cultural, economic and political factors determining the national media systems affect the frequency with which transboundary mass media come to existence. The heterogeneity of the latter does not allow us to talk of a single European structure of transboundary mass media demonstrating the same distinctive features. Still, though, transboundary mass media and journalism can play an important role in creating the European public sphere.

As for contemporary research into the public sphere, Winfried Schulz has distinguished three models of such a space: 1) an ideal one, where it is the citizens that are attributed with a particular role in the deliberation, thus being the driving force of communication; 2) a representative one, where it is the political elite that is responsible for the political discourse, and the citizens are a passive entity; 3) a media one, where it is the mass media that ensure communication processes and determine which important topics are discussed in public (Schulz 2006: 61–75). The role and significance of the mass media in creating and shaping the public sphere has also been noted by Francis Fukuyama, according to whom the media outlets that are responsible for the dissemination of information are guarantors of the public sphere's development (Fukuyama 2000: 80). Barbara Pfetsch, Silke Adam, and Barbara Berkel take it further. In their jointly written paper entitled “The Voice of the Media in the European Public Sphere”, they point to the following roles played by different types of mass media outlets in the Europeanisation processes: 1) they create the European agenda of topics; 2) they shape the dimensions triggering conflict; 3) they are a channel for the flow of transboundary communication (Pfetsch, Adam, Berkel, 2006: 3–4).

Transboundary mass media are an example of the mass media that have grown from local or regional sources of information, and by acquiring a transboundary content and form have entered the international system of communication. Transnational communication taking place in borderland regions helps European matters, problems, and perspectives to spread to the nationally presented and discussed media content (e.g. Nowak 2010: 183). Thereby, transboundary coverage is a miniature mir-

ror of the main European problems relating to the lives of individual people (borderland inhabitants) or the functioning of the institutions (formal and informal structures) in diverse areas of social, political, economic and cultural life. In this case, we can speak of a horizontal transboundary communication (or horizontal Europeanisation of the public sphere), which takes place on level of contacts between difference entities of the EU Member States (Koopmans, Erbe 2003: 6). Therefore, as long as the borderland space mirrors some the main European problems, observing and analysing transboundary journalism is capable of shedding some light on the problems faced by the entire European community (Blöbaum 1999: 41–42).

Looking at Winfried Schulz's media model of the public sphere, it can be found to be devoid of open normative assumptions, and that the public sphere is tantamount to the public opinion as shaped by the mass media and understood as a set of opinions on the topics discussed by the media (Pawliszak 2013: 108). Thus, it must be found that transboundary journalism should be protected from normativization of its content, or the formation of excessively idealized theoretical structures that would fail if confronted with the reality of the borderland (understood as a point of contact, a living tissue, a conflict venue, a place where different views clash thus leading to crises) (Kaczmarek 1998: 138; Sadowski 1995: 12). Therefore, transboundary media play an important role in describing and commenting on those tensions and contradictions (Grzybowski 2008: 38), without being indifferent to them, which could otherwise be considered as a form of disengaged tolerance. By this, transboundary mass media and journalism – apart from their classic catalogue of tasks – also pursue a deliberative function taking the form of revealing and analyzing social problems. They have an integratory role to play, as well, which involves the shaping of collective identities (Michalczyk 2010: 169). This Europeanisation of the public sphere, consisting in the shaping of the collective European identity (“We, the Europeans”) (e.g. Stępińska 2014: 176), is visible in the coverage presented by transboundary media outlets (e.g. Olechowska 2014b: 9–26), because these mass media describe the reality of the borderland by introducing a certain selective element (arising from, say, the journalist's place of residence) (Riedel 2009, p. 43) of the European commonality, or even social solidarity (Ittrich-Drabarek 2009: 82). By selecting the events they describe (the subjects they discuss) and the form in which their findings are presented (either informing or commenting), they may have a considerable impact on the shaping of the European public sphere. In that case we can assume that the development of transboundary mass media and journalism is one of the formation symptoms of a common communication space for

European values. It is so, because the narrative offered jointly by the publishers / broadcasters is seen as departing from a one-sided national identification in favor of receiving the European element. This is why some researchers, among them Jürgen Habermas – who claims that European integration will develop and be strengthened if such structures are supported that cross the former barriers of merely national public spheres (Habermas 2009: 159–164) – are optimistic in pointing to the cosmopolitan potential of transboundary mass media, or their potential to contribute to the building of the European public sphere. Other researchers, among them Philip Schlesinger, are skeptical about this view, and warn that media coverage Europeanization does not translate directly into an improved European identity that would otherwise bring about community spirit (Schlesinger 2007: 423).

Conclusions

Transboundary mass media and journalism make use of two- or multi-way communication between specific senders and recipients from neighbouring countries. The strong impact of geographical proximity (transnationalization / deterritorialization) among the cooperating senders is the reason why such communication can have a diverse character – from the simplest forms (where you merely inform about the events in the other country), to formalized (based on structural cooperation) and economic (fixed rules for who pays for what) organizations. The ultimate form of such a cooperation is influenced by the interlinked internal and external factors classified as cultural, political and legal, economic and technological, and social and personnel-related. Because of the heterogeneity and the many aspects carried by these factors, some researchers question the existence of a common transboundary media space, denying the possibility of its theorization (the French authors Vincent Goulet and Bénédicte Toullec propose that the term “transboundary” should be replaced by “interregional” and suggest that the national borders have not been eliminated and that any common media space can only be established through cooperation), and claiming that no methods and tools for analysing this area of communication can be developed (Toullec, Goulet 2013: 87, 106).

In this article I have proposed a hypothesis that transboundary mass media projects can play an important role in creating the European public sphere. There is no clear answer to how specifically transboundary mass media contribute to the international discourse. Should such media promote an intercultural dialog? Or perhaps rather act as an impartial

observer of the social and political debate and – as far as possible – describe its complexity? This does not change the fact that apart from the above-mentioned benefits derived from the pluralism and democracy of European societies, and apart from supporting European integration through cross-border cooperation, transboundary mass media communication also brings such notable economic benefits as new jobs, an ability to compare the effectiveness of the content production methods, reduction in the costs of producing domestic programmes, development of human resources (through acquiring new journalistic skills and methods), promotion of domestic programmes abroad, and creation of common advertising markets.

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