



REVIEW

from Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - TV Journalism)

with a dissertation on the topic: "Regional Television in Bulgaria - Specifics of Media Transformation",

presented by Blagovest Ganchev Iliev, full-time doctoral student in the Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

with supervisor: Prof. Dr. Theodora Petrova

I. Presentation of the doctoral (PhD) student on the basis of the submitted documentation

On the basis of the submitted documents, PhD student Blagovest Ganchev Iliev holds a Bachelor's degree from Sofia University, major in Journalism. He holds a Master's degree in Production and Creative Industry from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication and a Master's degree in Economics and Finance from the Faculty of Economics, Sofia University. He has a degree in Economics and Finance from the Faculty of Economics and Finance of the University St. Kliment Ohridski. Blagovest Iliev has practical experience as an assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Audiovisual Production and conducts practical exercises in the disciplines "Communication Skills (TV)", "New Media", "Cultural and Historical Connections and Media Content", "Media Ecosystem", "Organizing Events and PR Campaigns". He is also a working reporter and producer of "News" at Bulgaria On Air TV. He has been a presenter of news and programs in TV Stara Zagora. He has considerable experience as a public relations expert (All Channels Communication, Stara Zagora Metropolitanate, Bulgarian Farmers Union, World without Borders Association, etc.).



II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation

Blagovest Iliev's dissertation "Regional Television in Bulgaria - Specifics of Media Transformation" is a successful attempt to systematize and reflect on the state of regional media and television journalism, subjected to the powerful influence of media transformation and its economic, social and political consequences. The relevance of the topic stems from the dynamics of the media and communication process, and especially from the impact of processes such as globalization, convergence, digitalization, mediatization, regionalization and commercialization. I would also highlight the parallel processes of deglobalization and divergence, which are increasing their influence due to the strong defragmentation of the audience following the invasion of social networks and artificial intelligence in media communication in general. The research topic is undoubtedly an academic necessity for all those involved in research in the field of television because of the highly changed media conditions and communication circumstances in the creation, funding, distribution and reception of regional television programming, whether it is public or commercial in nature. In this sense, the proposed dissertation and its research theses are timely. A very important reason for the relevance and topicality of the topic proposed in the dissertation is the impact of television as the most powerful traditional media on the public sphere, public opinion, civil society and the democratic process. The author himself aptly notes as significant the challenges posed by the media transformation, namely the requirements for information credibility, for diversity of opinion, for the need for intercultural dialogue, for compliance with journalistic standards, and for the media culture of the regional audience. In this sense, the topicality of the topic also stems from the exceptional need for a comparative analysis of the development of regional media in Europe and those in Bulgaria with all the specificities arising from political, historical, social and psychological reasons. The topic is also gaining relevance because of the academic debate that is taking place due to the ever increasing needs of the authors of journalistic content, and especially of the audience, for theoretical analysis in making sense of regional journalism involved in the dynamics of media processes. The dissertation provides a



compelling picture of media transformation in the field of regional television and regional journalism.

The structure of the dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendices. The volume of 240 classic pages is quite sufficient for a dissertation. The abstract accurately and as much as possible reproduces the content of the doctoral dissertation.

The dissertation sets out a clear aim and the resulting research objectives. The main objective is to bring out the changing characteristics of regional television and the creation of useful media practices. Among the set tasks are the analysis of the genre characteristics of regional television programming, the systematization of experiences in some European countries and the interpretation of specific themes as an argument for the specificity of each regional television. As a very important task, I would define conducting a production experiment and audience analysis based on in-depth interviews and a survey. Solving this task gives originality to the research of the dissertation. The object (regional television) and the subject of the research (the trends in the development of regional television in the country and specifically in the Stara Zagora region) are correctly formulated.

The first chapter presents the theoretical perspectives on the television industry, regional television programming, the principles of programming and the role of the producer.

Chapter two provides a historical perspective of regional television in Bulgaria. The development of television centres and programs with regional and local scope is analyzed. The genre features of newscasts in regional television and the presence of specific themes such as religion and the church in regional television programs are presented.

The third chapter focuses on the TV stations in Stara Zagora – TV STZ, Zagora TV, Stoychev TV and Phoenix TV. Particularly valuable for the research is the production experiment made with the television program "(On)meeting" on the air of TV "Stara Zagora".

Chapter four includes research on the transformation of regional television and audience perception of its programming. Based on media content analysis, in-depth interviews and a



survey, an interesting author's thesis on regional identity and the reasons for the declining audience interest in regional television programs is presented.

The main findings of the study are presented in the Conclusion. The dissertation has a rich bibliographic resource. Authoritative sources on the subject in Bulgarian and English are used and correctly cited.

III. Contributions to the dissertation research

Blagovest Iliev's dissertation is based on a serious theoretical foundation and historical perspective, the author's capacity for theoretical analysis and extensive practical experience. The proposed analytical and critical review and theoretical analysis of processes, practices and examples have scientific and applied value.

As the main contribution I can note the theoretical analysis of the impact of media transformation on regional media, as well as the comparative analysis of regional television in the media systems of Germany, Italy and France, which is necessary for a more accurate determination of the state of regional television in Bulgaria. I accept as an important contribution the analysis of the relationship "regional television - regional identity" and the relationship "regional media - national media", "regional media - regional politics". The analysis of these and other interrelationships supports practical production and management decisions in the creation, distribution and financing of regional television. I would also note that the research carried out in the thesis. It provides a strong scholarly motivation to consider regional television in cultural, economic, political, social, and especially technological contexts. The research makes a serious scientific forecast of the future of regional television and its role in the public sphere of democratic society.

IV. Notes and recommendations

The PhD student has deepened in the process of work and according to the recommendations the scientific analysis of the interrelations and relationships "regional television - regional identity", "regional media - national media", "regional media - regional politics", "regional media - regional culture". The analysis of these and other socio-cultural interrelationships provides important justification for the author's theses and supports production and



management decisions in the creation, distribution and financing of regional television. These are particularly important questions whose answers concretize the public character of regional media, its dynamic present, and its function as a respectable expression of public opinion and a strong barrier to its distortion.

The dissertation shows the serious professional growth of PhD student Blagovest Ganchev Iliev. My main recommendation is that after some editing this scientific work be published. I am convinced that it will be of interest to a wide range of readers - students, researchers, practicing producers and television journalists.

I have the following questions for the author of this dissertation:

1. Is the regional public television model viable?
2. What expectations does the dissertator have from a new Law on Radio and Television in Bulgaria, and what should be included in it regarding regional media?

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The scientific publications of Blagovest Iliev on the topic of the dissertation are five and have been published in reputable scientific collections and scientific journals. Their content represents very well his publication activity. The PhD student Blagovest Ganchev Iliev fulfils the requirements of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and occupation of academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for approbation and disclosure of the research results according to Art. 5, item 5 and the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, par. 1, point 4 and Art. 69, par. 3.

VI. Conclusion

The presented doctoral dissertation is an original scientific study that shows systematized theoretical knowledge, original reasoning and conclusions combined with extensive practical and teaching experience. The dissertation impresses with the analysis and research results obtained. Taking into account the in-depth knowledge of Blagovest Ganchev Iliev in the field



of electronic media, media science and communication management, as well as his teaching activities, I fully confidently recommend the distinguished members of the scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Blagovest Ganchev Iliev for his dissertation on the topic.

Reviewer:

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