

Preface and acknowledgments

Every book has its origins. The origins of this book go back to an initiative in 2012 by one of us, Karl Magnus Johansson, who ultimately became the lead coordinator of the project, to conduct a cross-disciplinary and cross-national research project. Gunnar Nygren then led another project that proved to be a crucial starting point for this project and book. Gunnar's project brought together two participants – Elena Degtereva (Johansson since 2013), Södertörn, and Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, Wrocław – who were drawn into early talks about the project. Gunnar's project resulted in the collection edited by Nygren & Dobek-Ostrowska, *Journalism in Change: Journalistic Culture in Poland, Russia and Sweden* (Peter Lang, 2015). The new project proposal then expanded to also include Professors Auksė Balčytienė, Kaunas, Tom Moring, Helsinki and Tapio Raunio, Tampere. The project is funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen). We gratefully acknowledge this funding, as well as the support from the Publications Committee at Södertörn University.

Once research funding was secured, we proceeded to recruit a project PhD candidate, Milda Malling, née Celiešiūtė, followed by two project assistants, Risto Niemikari, Tampere and Jacek Nożewski, Wrocław, who have since become PhD candidates at their home universities. All three have made significant contributions to the project, and we are following their ongoing work with great interest.

This project began on 1 July 2014. The team met for the first time in early September 2014 to hold the first of what would altogether be seven project workshops. Five were held at Södertörn University, Stockholm, the sixth in Ljubljana in June 2017, the day before the CEECOM conference where, in a panel, we presented versions of the chapters on the national case studies, and the seventh in Prague in May 2018, two days before the International Communication Association (ICA) conference panel, where we presented versions of the cross-national thematic chapters. In Prague, Professor Svetlana Bodrunova, Saint Petersburg State University, and Professor Arjen van Dalen, University of Southern Denmark, served as our discussants at the workshop; Svetlana was also a discussant at our ICA panel. We were fortunate to have them as

discussants and to get to know them. We thank them for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Likewise, we wish to thank two other scholars, Aeron Davis and Zvi Reich, whom we invited on two different occasions to present their research and comment on ours.

In addition to fellow project participants, seminar participants and other colleagues also read and commented on earlier versions of the chapters. Milda wishes to thank Lars Nord, Mid Sweden University, and Risto wishes to thank the political science research seminar at the University of Tampere. We, for our part, presented drafts at the research seminars of journalism and political science, respectively, at Södertörn University. Particular thanks to our discussants Jenny Madestam, Johan Eriksson and Peter Strandbrink.

For their time and help in editing the manuscript, we are grateful to our Nordicom editors, Johannes Bjerling, Karin Zelano and Josefine Bové. We also wish to thank Maxim Johansson for developing our project website, www.polexmedia.com, which provides information about the project and its participants, publications, and events.

We are also indebted to all the interviewees for their time and insights. Whilst some specifically asked to remain anonymous, the anonymity of all is preserved.

We are particularly grateful to our project colleagues, the contributors to this book. Their commitment throughout this project has been outstanding.

Finally, we thank each other, for a rewarding cooperation and for finalising this volume together as editors.

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Karl Magnus Johansson *Gunnar Nygren*