A reviewer's comment

to the Master thesis

by Darina Gribova

**'PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF COVERING RUSSIA BY CITIZEN JOURNALISTS: THE CASE OF GLOBAL VOICES'**

The Master thesis by D. Gribova is concerned with the topic which is challenging and under-investigated indeed: professional standards implemented in a particular citizen media called Global Voices. The notion of journalistic standard per se, inseparable from the theory of journalism cultures developed by Thomas Hanitzsch, has been studied a lot by communication scholars but mostly in regard to professional journalism. The emergence and transformation of citizen journalism as a new wave of profession also were (and still are) common topic for academia. At the same time, there are very few researches at the moment where these two notions – citizen journalism and professional norms – are combined.

For such investigation methodology is something that is extremely crucial, and D. Gribova gives a significant amount of attention to the research design and the methods chosen: the choice is always justified in the work, the methods are explicitly presented with the help of relevant literature, and the advantages along with limitations of each method are articulated. Moreover, the in-depth interviews taken by the author do provide an interesting and unique material within the framework of the study. The choice of object, subject, purpose and focuses of the work deem appropriate.

The structure of the study is determined by the focuses traced by the author in the introduction. The thesis starts with the theoretical research premises where three fundamental issues are addressed: general transformation of the journalistic profession and world media landscape due to the development of internet in the last twenty years; research around blogging and citizen journalism; an introduction into professional journalistic cultures in the connection to established professional standards. The next chapter provides relevant background for the case of Global Voices (and its spin-off project on Russian internet, RuNet Echo) and gives an insight into the phenomenon of foreign coverage of Russia. This knowledge is a basis for the quantitative analysis results and discussion in the second logical part of the study. As units for analysis within the case research method, author choses individuals (investigated with the help of semi-structured interviews) and editorial documents – in doing so, trying to avoid biased estimation of the construct of interest.

As a result, the student comes to the following important conclusion: the ties between citizen and professional journalism are stronger than it is supposed to think; there are indeed slight dissimilarities between them both, like the perception of journalistic roles within cultures, or the process of news selection, but the hypothesis about strong mutual influence of citizen and traditional journalism is proved to be right.

The high level of academic writing should also come under notice considering that English is not a native language for a researcher. The findings of the study are justified by the abundant bibliography with latest books and articles from every field of scientific interest mentioned in the work, including the methodological approaches in communication science. It is also necessary to highlight the student's good skills of analyzing huge body of textual information – which undoubtedly demonstrates advanced professional expertise of D. Gribova not only in the academic field, but in the field of journalism as a profession, too.

As for the drawbacks of the work, the interpretation of the textual data and the very findings themselves seem, to some extent, too subjective. However, that can be explained, first, with the nature of qualitative methods used to answer the research questions (in-depth interviews and document analysis); second, with the barely described additional method of “participant observation” which implicates the fact that the author of the thesis is a part of RuNet Echo (Global Voices) editorial team at the time of writing.

In general, the study satisfies all the requirements imposed on the Master theses at Saint Petersburg State University and can be evaluated positively.

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**25.05.2016.**