

„U.S. journals can afford to remain regional, but we can not.” Author distribution-based internationality of Eastern European communication journals.

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The interest of various players in the academic field is directed towards high prestige items. As publishers, we want to develop or acquire high prestige journals to earn more subscribers and to attract more high profile authors (or authors willing to pay a publication fee). As authors, we want to publish our results at the best possible outlets, where our invested work has the best potential to produce additional prestige and networking opportunities necessary for our academic carrier. Serving as an editor often requires financially uncompensated expenditures from our part. We are only compensated by the increase in our visibility and prestige, which are connected with the journal itself. Journal owners, with a very few exceptions, are not paying us for our time and expertise, nor for using our social capital for the benefit of their product. This leaves us with no incentive to invest work in a journal that is invisible and cannot attract good quality research.

Journals published in Eastern European countries in the field of Communication Studies are struggling with attaining high visibility and prestige—here, “high” is a euphemism if we look at them from North America, Western Europe, and other economically advanced regions of the Global North. In the eyes of hiring and grant selection committees in the abovementioned regions, even the mere recognition of these journals is contested. On our own regional level, however, we have a different sense of prestige in at least one respect: After the post-socialist transition, a compulsory mimesis of the West—discussed by the Alatas (S.H. Alatas, 2000; S.F. Alatas, 2000) in postcolonial settings, and even earlier as problems of Eurocentrism in the social sciences (Joseph et al., 1990; Wallerstein, 1997)—have emerged inside Eastern European academia as well.

This desire of peripheral scientific communities to emulate the functioning of central scientific communities led to various internationalization strategies in science. Their impetus was partially explicable with mimesis as a psychological (on the individual level) and institutional (on the structural level) reaction to something that is perceived as foreign yet superior. But their aims were, and are, manifold: to be recognized as peers, to be able to enlarge existing networks, to open paths for international exchange and cooperation, to compete for grants provided by central countries; and with Bourdieu, to build up West-compatible social and academic capital. One of these capital-building strategies, of which I would like to talk about in this editorial, is the attempt to create internationally recognized journals.

A minimum criteria for international recognition is arguably to be indexed in Elsevier’s SCOPUS and/or Clarivate Analytics’s (CA) Web of Science, though regions and institutions may differ in their value perceptions of indexation; i.e., US-based institutions and authors are

more familiar with Web of Science and less with SCOPUS. But regardless of their extra-regional perception, in Eastern Europe we tend to evaluate higher the domestic journals that share these characteristics of their recognized Western counterparts. There is virtually no national science evaluation system in Eastern Europe without evaluation policies built on data available from Thomson Reuters' and Elsevier's databases, and does discriminate between indexed and non-indexed journals (see Pajić 2015).

If we look at the number of internationally recognized communication journals in our region, we can see that according to the 2017 SCIMAGO data,¹ there are only 13 indexed journals in Social Sciences → Communication from Eastern Europe. Out of these 13 journals, there is only one in Q1 (99-75th percentiles of CiteScore values of the respective field), one in Q2 (74-50th percentiles), three in Q3, and five in Q4, while the remaining three are newly indexed journals with insufficient history for computing CiteScore values. We have chosen to start with Scopus data here because it is recognized that Scopus has better coverage of both European and Social Science journals among the two indices (Bergman 2012, Montgeon and Paul-Hus 2016). By comparison, if we look at Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science, we find that only eight of the 13 journals are indexed there; two of them (*Cyberpsychology*, ISSN: 1802-7962 and *Informacios Tarsadalom* ISSN: 1587-8694) are in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), while the rest are in the much lower-prestige Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

This information is relevant and must be taken into account when assessing these journals' prestige and visibility. In the western world, as well as in developed and developing nations in Asia, there is increasing pressure on academics in the social sciences to publish only in journals that are listed in the "old" or traditional indices of Web of Science. Countries with relatively low scientific output are also prone to look at Web of Science as the main gatekeeper of scientific excellence (Pajić 2015). Being indexed in Emerging Sources Citation Index does not count much in itself prestige-wise, however, as the selection criteria for ESCI journals do not seem to be consistent with those of other traditional citation indices. To be concrete, they are more "forgiving" with regard to received citation count from other already indexed journals, and Clarivate Analytics does not deem them worthy enough to compute an Impact Factor for them. In addition, as the first comprehensive coverage analysis of ESCI has shown, the visibility of ESCI journals is much lower than those in the traditional Web of Science and Scopus indices. The representation of top science-producing regions among the journals' country of origin is also relatively thin: U.K. and U.S. journals represent only 34.76% of the journals included in ESCI, as compared to 49.19% of Scopus and 72.81% of SSCI. (Somoza-Fernández et al., 2018)

The question then becomes: How can these indexed Eastern European journals be compared to other indexed communication journals? In this case, we could also easily substitute "other indexed" with "western." The table below shows all ranked Social Sciences → Communication journals in SCIMAGO, which makes it perfectly clear that the ratio of western countries (North American and Western European) never goes below 83% in any quartile, and their share in all indexed Communication journals is more than 88% [Table 1]. The "elite" is quasi-exclusively reserved for these countries as well: among the 73 Communication journals ranked in Q1, 35 are from the U.S., 28 from the U.K., four from Germany, three from The Netherlands, two from Spain, and one from the Czech Republic—this means the U.S. and the U.K. possess a ~86% share, while ~99% of share of the very top journals in the field remains among traditional western countries.

¹ <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?category=3315&area=3300&country=Eastern%20Europe>

Table 1
*Regional diversity of Q1-Q4 journals (SCIMAGO 2017)**

Quartile	NA	WE	EE	Asia	SA	OC	CA	Africa	TOTAL
Q1	48%	50.7%	1.4%	0	0	0	0	0	73
Q2	20.5%	67.1%	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	73
Q3	13.9%	69.4%	4.2%	6.9%	4.2%	1.4%	0	0	72
Q4	25.7%	57.1%	7.1%	4.3%	2.9%	2.9%	0	0	70
TOTAL	27.1%	61.1%	3.5%	3.5%	2.8%	1.4%	0.3%	0.3%	288

Note. * Abbreviations used in tables and figures are as follows: NA (North America), WE (Western Europe), EE (Eastern Europe), SA (South America) CA (Central America) OC (Oceania, including Australia and New Zealand)

Among the many possible ways to approach the question above, I have chosen to look at the national diversity of the authors.² My reason for this is the long known and recently reconfirmed fact that the national diversity of most of the top journals in Communication and Media Studies is very low. Not only are they published mainly in the U.S. and the U.K., but their author pool is also dominated by native English-speaking countries, most prominently by the U.S. Previous research has shown that the cumulated contribution of authors from native English-speaking countries, Western Europe, and developed Asia is approximately 94% in Web of Science-indexed Communication journals, with a 66% U.S. share between 1998 and 2002 (Lauf 2005) and 50% between 2013 and 2017 (Demeter 2018). A recent study also draws attention to the problem that the already low international orientation of Eastern European journals registered in CA's SCIE and SSCI should be interpreted by taking into account that the "international" authors of these journals are mostly from neighboring countries of the same region (Bucher 2018). Therefore, what I call a successful Eastern European imitation of already established high-prestige journals should include a significant share of western authors, preferably from U.S. institutions, in an attempt to approximate their author structure.

Let's start with the two EE journals indexed both in WoS SSCI and Scopus. We can immediately see the huge difference between their author pool: while the Hungarian *Informacios Tarsadalom* publishes articles in Hungarian almost exclusively from Hungarian authors, *Cyberpsychology's* authors are mainly from Western Europe and North America, and the journal publishes full-text English language articles. Looking at the values of Simpson's Dominance for country and for region, we can see that the author-level international diversity of *Informacios Tarsadalom* (or rather the lack thereof) is much closer to that of top-tier Communication journals than the respective numbers shown by *Cyberpsychology* (see Table 2).

² All data presented below was gathered from SCOPUS on 4 December, 2018, for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. Article data was adjusted based on the journal's individual web pages to include the content of the last issues published in 2018, but yet to be uploaded to SCOPUS. Only original articles were included in the sample; editorials, book reviews, etc., were deselected.

Table 2

Dominant countries and regions in EE Communication journals' author base

Journal name/SCOPUS quartile	Simpson's Dominance for country	Dominant country/ratio	Simpson's Dominance for region	Dominant Region/ratio	Published in/language
Cyberpsychology(Q1)	9.2%	US, 19.4%	30.8%	WE (47%)	Czech Republic/ENG
Informatics in Education(Q2)	11.1%	Brazil, 26.1%	20.5%	EE (28%)	Lithuania/ENG
KOME(Q3)	10.9%	US, 20.1%	21.3%	NA (29%)	Hungary/ENG
Medijska Istrazivanja(Q3)	34.5%	Croatia, 55%	60.5%	EE (75%)	Croatia/ENG&CR
Informacios Tarsadalom(Q3)	75.1%	Hungary, 86.3%	91.3%	EE (95%)	Hungary/HUN
Psychology of Language and Communication(Q4)	19.1%	Poland, 40%	31.2%	EE (44%)	Poland/ENG
Medijske Studije (Q4)	24.4%	Croatia, 46.3%	43.3%	EE (56%)	Croatia/ENG&CR
Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations (Q4)	36%	Romania, 50%	48.4%	EE (69%)	Romania/ENG
Voprosy Onomastiki (Q4)	39.4%	Russia, 62%	60.6%	EE (76%)	Russia/RU/ENG/GER/FR
Central European Journal of Communication (Q4)	12.5%	Poland, 27.6%	46.7%	EE (62%)	Poland/ENG
Communication Today (-)	24.3%	Slovakia, 41.7%	78.1%	EE (87%)	Slovakia/ENG
Druzboslovne Razprave (-)	62.1%	Slovenia, 77%	62.1%	EE (77%)	Slovenia/ENG/SLO
European Journal of Humour Research (-)	6.8%	Poland, 12.8%	26.1%	EE (38%)	Poland/ENG

While *Cyberpsychology* is published in the Czech Republic, they only had four authors from their home country in the last three years, during which time they published 62 articles: 29 from Western Europe, 16 from North America, six from Eastern Europe, five from Australia and Oceania, five from Asia, and one from Africa. This composition equals a 30.8% Simpson's Dominance for the Western European region, with close to three quarters of their articles published from North American and Western European authors. There is a sharp contrast here with *Informacios Tarsadalom*, with 86% of the last three years' content coming from Hungarian authors, with a 91.3% dominance of the Eastern European region.

In addition, the data shows that no indexed Eastern European journal except *Informacios Tarsadalom* relies on publishing only in their regional language; they are either English-only, like *Cyberpsychology*, or at least include the option to publish in English, effectively leaving open the opportunity for submission from western authors. It is not uncommon that regional journals allow submissions and publish articles in the language of their

local country—*Medijska Istrazivanja*, *Medijske Studije*, *Voprosy Onomastiki* and *Druzboslovne Razprave* all have this option, while *Voprosy Onomastiki* is open to publishing in other major European languages (German and French) as well. It is probably this difference in the language of publication that accounts for *Informacios Tarsadalom*'s low received citation count: for the three years examined, SCOPUS shows only four received citations on 44 published articles, each of them being journal self-cites (received from a different article published in the same journal). For comparison, *Cyberpsychology* received 109 citations (14 journal self-cites) to 54 Scopus-indexed articles, and the other two EE journals in Q3 also performed better: *KOME* received 19 citations (including four journal self-cites) to 31 articles, and while *Medijska Istrazivanja* received only three citations, none of them were journal self-cites and they published only 20 articles in the past three years. The citation-based metrics in WoS show similar distances, e.g., *Cyberpsychology* has a 2017 Impact Factor of 1.4, while *Informacios Tarsadalom* has IF 0.023.

It is also obvious that only some of the EE Communication journals present in SCOPUS have managed to succeed in internationalizing their author base (see Figure 1, 2 and 3). *Cyberpsychology*, *Informatics in Education*, and *KOME* publish more articles from authors of a country other than their own. While the author pool of *Informatics in Education* is still dominated by Eastern European authors, Simpson's Dominance for the region has the lowest value here among all journals, and Figure 2 show that there is indeed enough diversity in author distribution at the regional level.

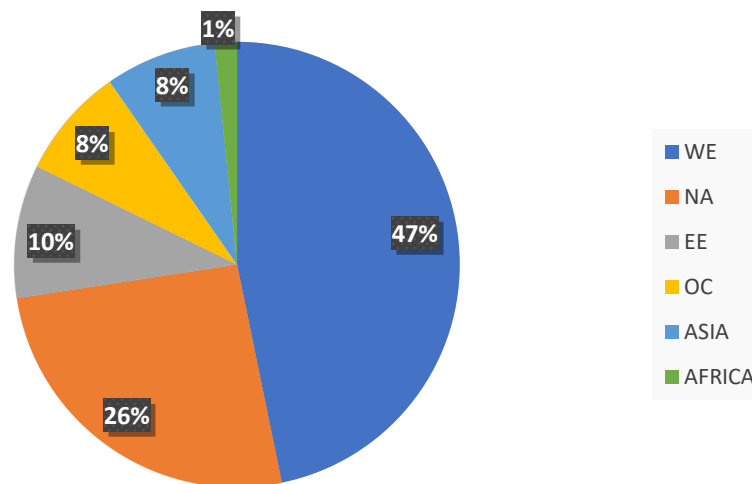


Figure 1: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: *Cyberpsychology* (n=62)

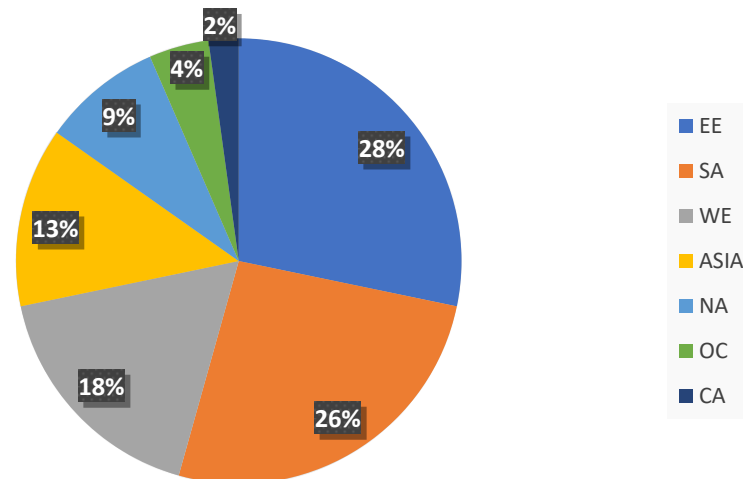


Figure 2: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Informatics in Education (n=46)

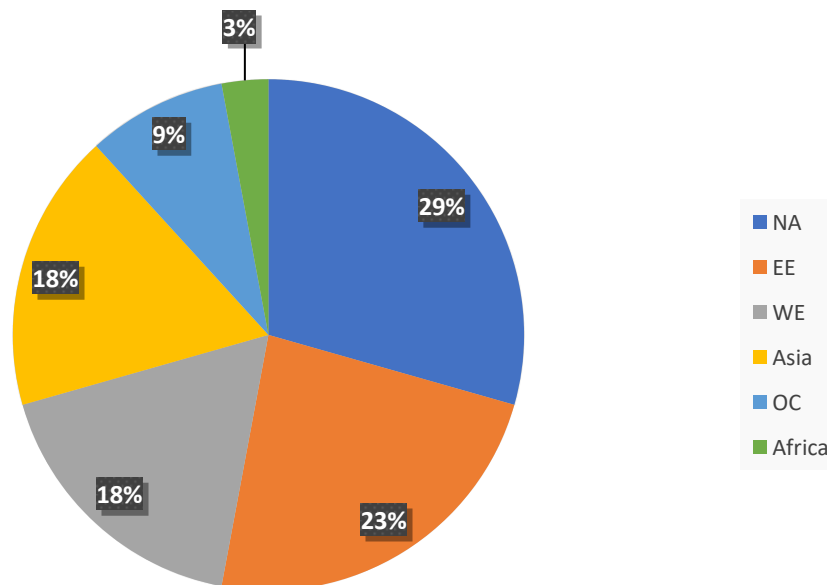


Figure 3: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: KOMÉ (n=34)

By looking at SCIMAGO's Journal and Country Rank (restricted to Communication journals from Eastern Europe, and based on 2017 SJR values), we can see that the above three journals, successful in attracting western authors and able to be independent from domestic author flow, occupy the top three places on the list. However, by looking at the journals ranked from four to 13 (as well as Figures 4-13 below), it becomes apparent that lower-ranked EE journals are, in general, less successful in internationalizing their author base and more dependent upon domestic submissions.

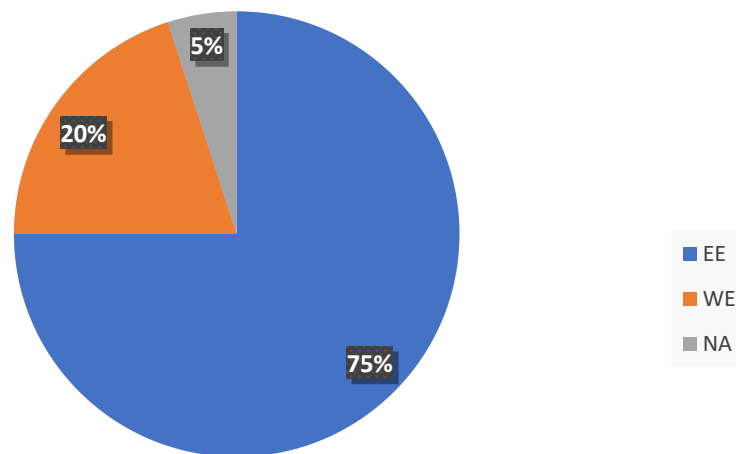


Figure 4: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Medijska Istrazivanja (n=20)

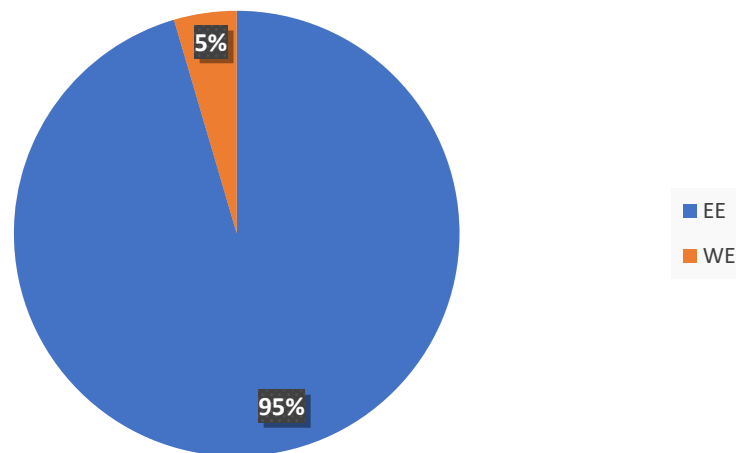


Figure 5: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Informacios Tarsadalom (n=44)

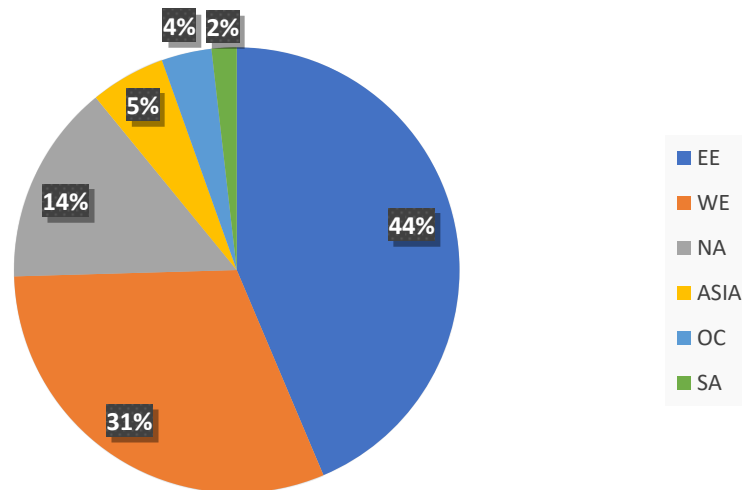


Figure 6: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Psychology of Language and Communication (n=55)

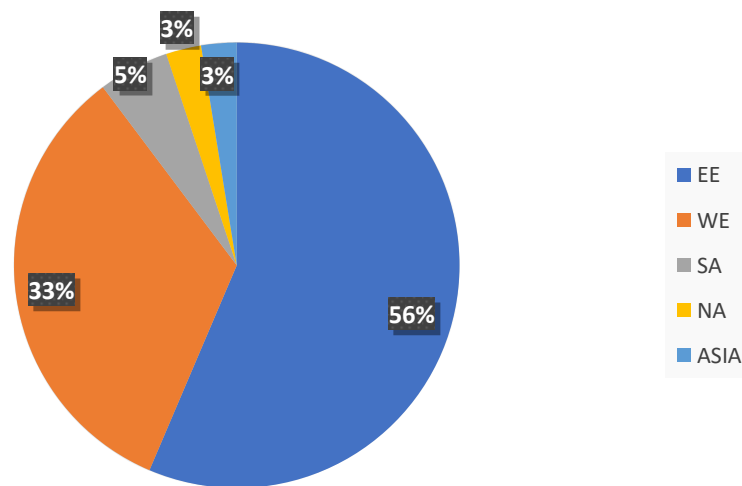


Figure 7: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Medijske Studije (n=41)

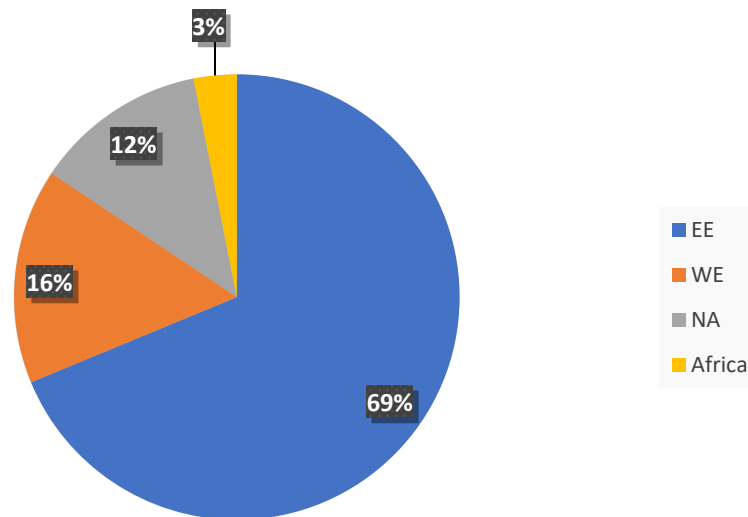


Figure 8: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations (n=32)

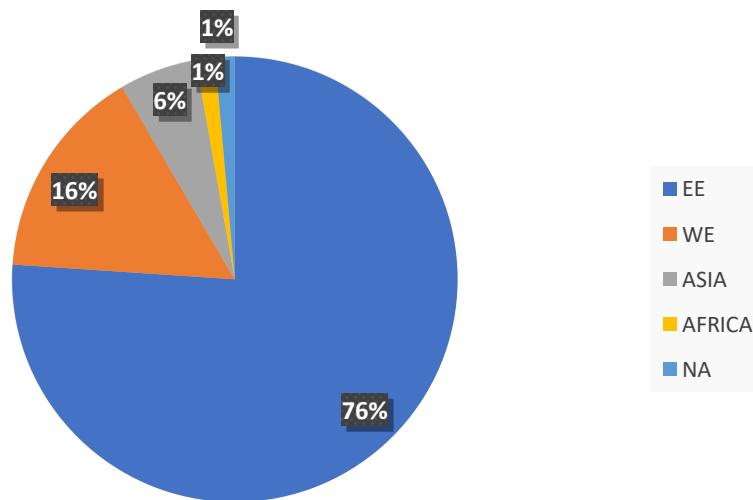


Figure 9: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Voprosy Onomastiki (n=71)

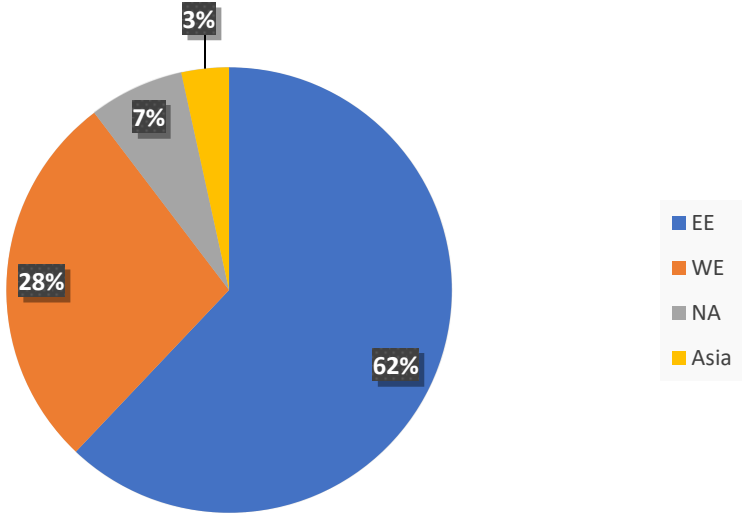


Figure 10: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Central European Journal of Communication (n=29)

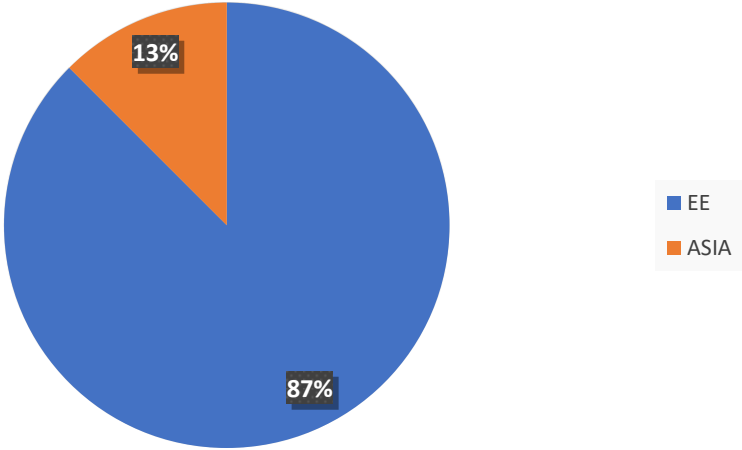


Figure 11: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Communication Today (n=24)

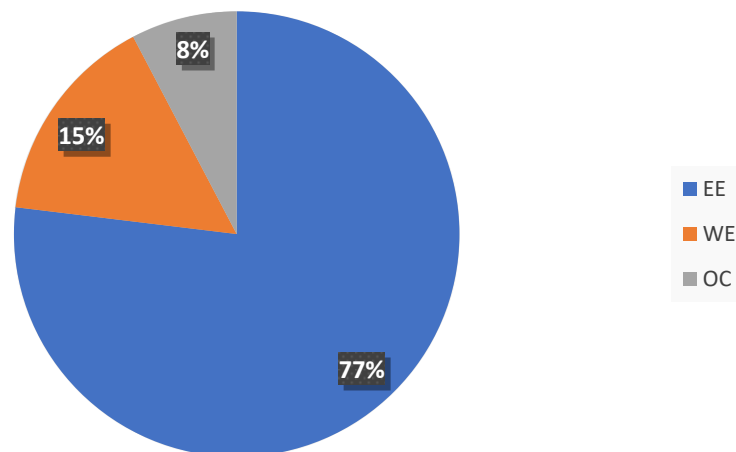


Figure 12: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: Druzboslovne Razprave (n=13)

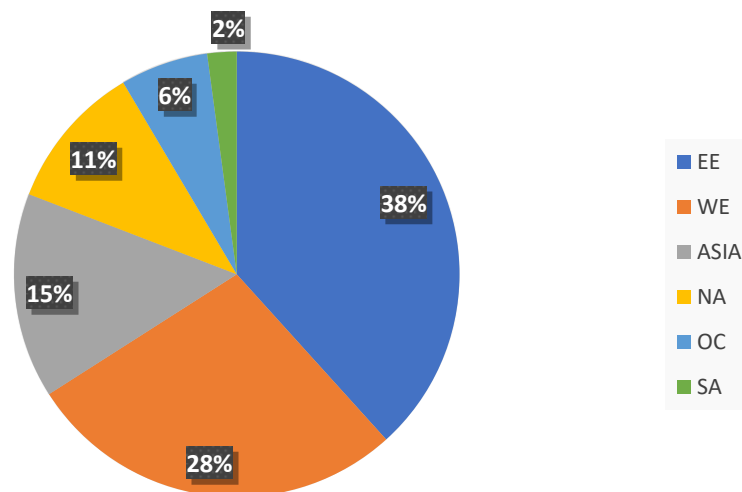


Figure 13: Regional distribution of authors 2016-2018: European Journal of Humour Research (n=47)

I also calculated Pearson's r to check linearities between journal ranking and authors' regional affiliations. There is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.63$) between SCIMAGO journal rank and EE author ratio [see Figure 14], and a moderate negative correlation between rank and the share of western (NA+WE) authors ($r=-0.43$) [Figure 15]. The ratio is stronger if we focus only on North American authors ($r=-0.56$) [Figure 16].

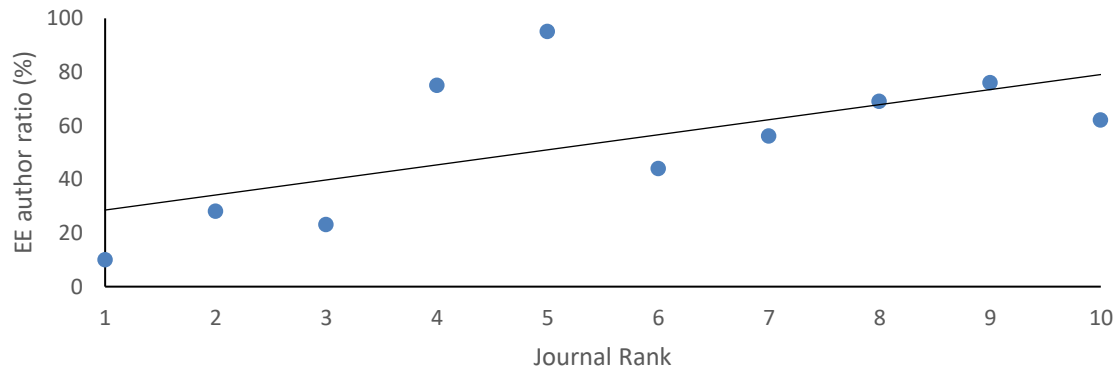


Figure 14: Correlation between Journal Rank and EE authors ratio

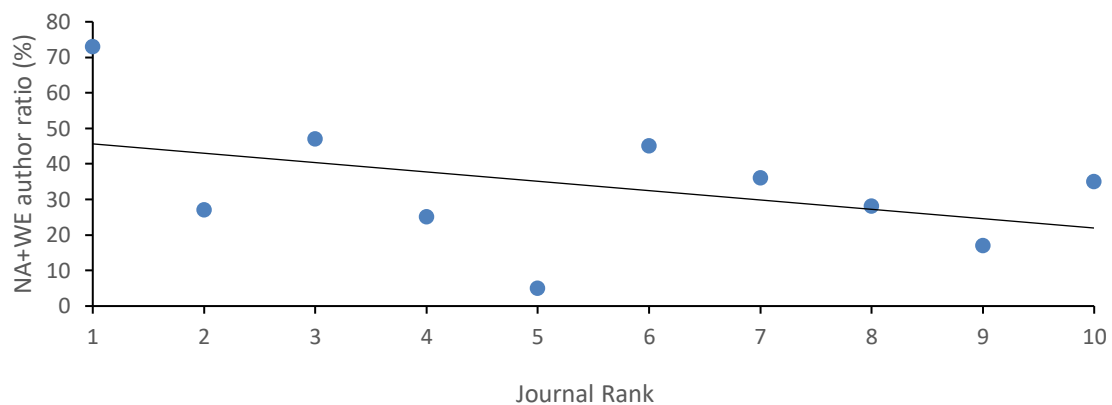


Figure 15: Correlation between Journal Rank and Western (NA+WE) authors ratio

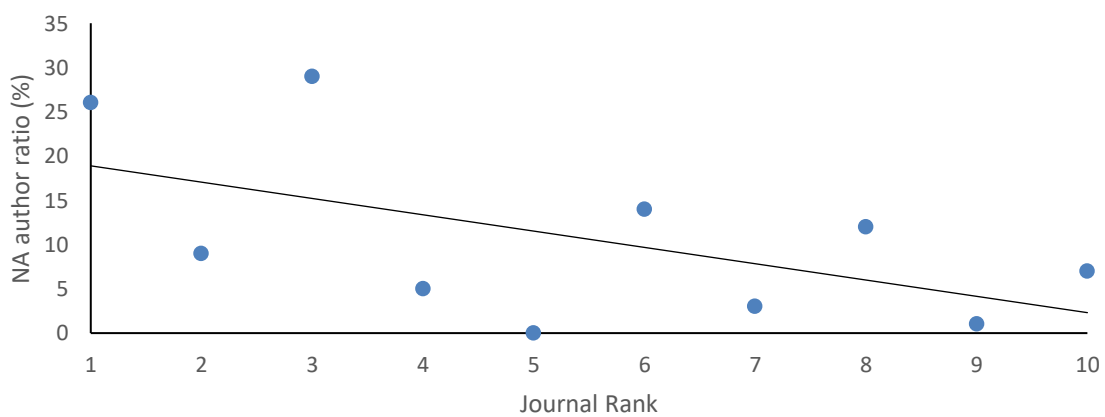


Figure 16: Correlation between Journal Rank and NA authors ratio

Looking at Figure 6 and 13, however, one could wonder why some journals with a truly international author base are not better ranked. In the case of No.13, *European Journal of Humour Research*, the answer is relatively simple as they are only covered in SCOPUS from 2017, so there was not enough data to compute 2017 SJR values. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, however, has a relatively good level of internationalization, but by looking at its level of similarity with regard to regional author distribution with other journals in the sample, we can see that it is still closer to the structure of other Q4 journals, which, respectively,

have more than 50% EE content from the past three years. On the heatmap below [Table 6], which is a visualized matrix of Sørensen's similarity coefficients between each EE Communication journal ranked Q1-Q4 in Scopus [Table 7], there is also a clear pattern showing that the two SSCI-indexed journals are distinct from the rest. *Cyberpsychology* demonstrates low levels of similarity with every other journal except *KOME* and *PoLaC*, while *Informacios Tarsadalom* demonstrates very low levels of similarity with the top three but average or better-than-average similarity with lower-ranked journals. It is also noticeable that the regional author distribution of Q4 journals more closely resembles itself rather than other higher-ranked journals from the same EE region.

Table 6

Regional author diversity-based similarity heatmap of Q1-Q4 EE Communication journals

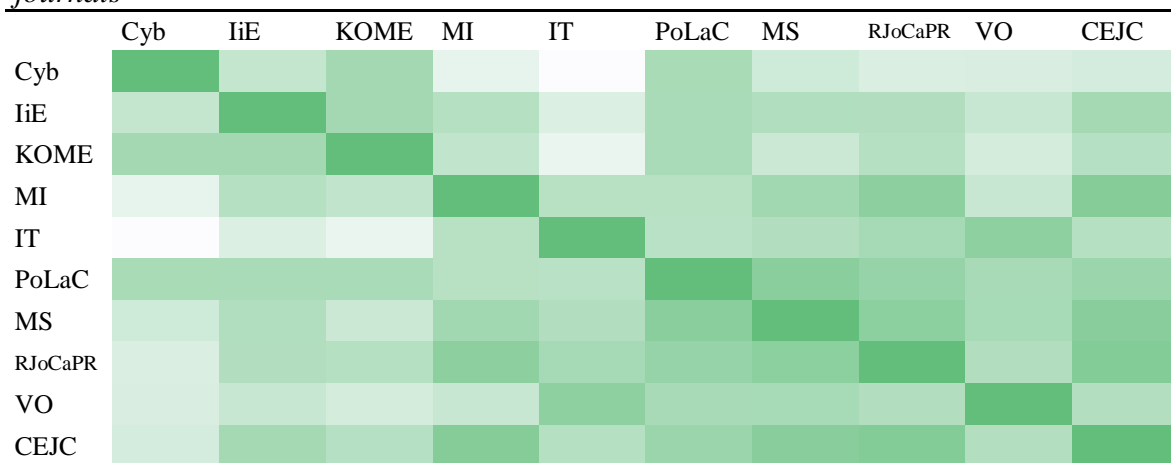


Table 7

Sørensen's similarity coefficients for Q1-Q4 EE Communication journal pairs

	Cyb	IiE	KOME	MI	IT	PoLaC	MS	RJoCaPR	VO	CEJC
Cyb	1	0.463	0.646	0.268	0.151	0.615	0.408	0.340	0.346	0.374
IiE	0.463	1	0.65	0.545	0.333	0.614	0.575	0.564	0.444	0.64
KOME	0.646	0.65	1	0.481	0.256	0.607	0.427	0.545	0.381	0.540
MI	0.268	0.545	0.481	1	0.531	0.533	0.656	0.769	0.44	0.816
IT	0.151	0.333	0.256	0.531	1	0.525	0.565	0.632	0.765	0.548
PoLaC	0.615	0.614	0.607	0.533	0.525	1	0.792	0.713	0.619	0.69
MS	0.408	0.575	0.427	0.656	0.565	0.792	1	0.767	0.625	0.8
RJoCaPR	0.340	0.564	0.545	0.769	0.632	0.713	0.767	1	0.563	0.820
VO	0.346	0.444	0.381	0.44	0.765	0.619	0.625	0.563	1	0.56
CEJC	0.374	0.64	0.540	0.816	0.548	0.69	0.8	0.820	0.56	1

Considering these data, one could wonder if there are indeed different viable strategies for regional journals to become indexed in SCOPUS and Web of Science. *Informacios Tarsadalom* has managed to do that without complying with many of the recommendations for the literature, even those that SCOPUS and the former Thomson Reuters Journal Selection Process have put forward. With Hungarian language-only articles, no international diversity of authors, (virtually) no external citations received from articles published in other indexed journals, it is an unlikely candidate at first sight. However, it is also important to stress that

Informacios Tarsadalom earned its place in SSCI during the period when Thomson Reuters (owner of Web of Science before Clarivate Analytics) realigned its journal coverage in SSCI and other major indices to be more in line with the increasingly global nature of scientific research. Between 2007 and 2009, Thomson Reuters scrutinized more than 10,000 “regional” journals (in their taxa, that equated to journals NOT from the U.S. or the U.K.) that published results from authors affiliated with institutions of a particular region or country, and covered regional perspectives and/or topics. That had a positive effect on the coverage of Eastern European contributions (Leydesdorff and Wagner, 2009), but was made possible by Thomson Reuter’s tolerance to accept journals regardless of their impact (Aman, 2015). In comparison, the first SSCI-indexed issue of *Cyberpsychology* is from 2015, and the journal went through the normal journal selection process, in which such tolerance was nonexistent. SCOPUS indexation, too, seems to be possible for EE journals with major domestic author share and low interest from western authors.

To sum up, it seems that an international author pool is desirable for Eastern European Communication journals if they intend to crawl up the ranks in the main scientific indices. Current data suggest that EE journals that are able to attract western, especially U.S., authors tend to rank better in SCOPUS, while those whose author base is mainly from their home country or region tend to rank lower. Accomplishing SCOPUS indexation, however, is possible without getting much attention from western or other core country authors, and if Clarivate Analytics will launch a regional coverage expansion program in the future, there can be a chance for such journals to get into SSCI as well. It is debatable whether this creates a favorable environment for channeling regional knowledge into the global science ecosystem, or whether this softens inequalities in science production between a peripheral region and the center. In general, knowledgescapes of Eastern European and other peripheral countries have been, and will continue to be, overlooked unless channelled through key media wherein the core scientific communities actually engage. There is, arguably, little to no prestige or benefit to participate in this channeling for a journal already having a dominant U.S. author base, but there is substantial benefit for a journal with a heavy Eastern European author base: The former can remain regional, not mixing their already high-prestige region authors with authors from lower prestige regions, while for the latter, targeted internationalization is a must, and is most effective when they can convince authors affiliated with institutions from high scientific output regions to submit and publish.

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