DIGITALNE MEDIJSKE TEHNOLOGIJE I DRUŠTVENO-OBRAZOVNE PROMENE

11

FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET · NOVI SAD

MEDIA ON/IN CRISIS

This volume in the collection *Digital media technologies, social and educational changes* contains nine papers that have been presented at the 13th International Conference "Bridges of Media Education", and after the double-blind peer review accepted for publication. Held on 26-27th May 2023 at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, the conference gathered 30 scholars from 12 countries.

The main theme to which the papers respond is "Media on/in crises". Three years into the global pandemic of COVID-19, more than a year after the start of the war in Ukraine, and with the environmental risks posing more imminent threat, the crisis coverage is dominating the news. All these events prompted governments to communicate more strategically, limiting in some cases the freedom of expressions. Journalists are attempting to cope with the work in a digitally saturated environment, in which disinformation spreads at ever growing pace. In some countries, political and media polarization is further deepening and the crisis events serve as accelerators for the social divisions. News reporting about crises events that would bring accurate and trustworthy accounts is ever more needed, and at the same time harder to achieve.

In parallel, the economic crisis is hitting media organizations worldwide. After the short period of rising consumption and rising trust in news, the media are now faced with declining audience numbers. Media organizations are testing different sustainability models aware of decreasing purchasing power of citizens, and growing costs of production. Closing of outlets, withdrawal of correspondents, shrinking of newsrooms are becoming more frequent. High inflation, rising costs of living and small salaries are putting journalists in a precarious position, uncertain if their media will manage to survive.

News avoidance seems to be the main response from the side of audiences. Exhausted by the sheer volume of news, especially the ones related to crises, the citizens find that the news negatively affects their mood. In general, the public thinks that news is unreliable and biased, and that they do not know how to act upon it.

Including the contributions of the authors from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Serbia, the papers presented in this volume illustrate the many faces of the crises. Some of them are observing media

representations, some examine changes in the journalistic practice, with additional ones looking into audiences and technology. From the portrayal of European solidarity to the Russo-Ukrainian war, from post-pandemic newsrooms to solution journalism, the selected papers offer a snapshot of media realities in Central and Eastern Europe (and beyond).

Novi Sad, December 2023

Volume Editors

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MEDIJI U/O KRIZI

Ovaj tom u seriji *Digitalne medijske tehnologije, društvene i obrazovne promene* sadrži devet radova koji su predstavljeni na 13. Međunarodnoj konferenciji „Mostovi medijskog obrazovanja" i, nakon dvostruko slepe recenzije, prihvaćeni za objavljivanje. Konferencija je održana 26-27. maja 2023. godine na Filozofskom fakultetu u Novom Sadu i okupila je 30 naučnika i naučnica iz 12 zemalja.

Glavna tema na koju radovi odgovaraju je „Mediji u/o krizi". Tri godine nakon globalne pandemije COVID-19, više od godinu dana nakon početka rata u Ukrajini i s rizicima za životnu sredinu koji postaju preteći, izveštavanje o krizama dominira vestima. Svi ovi događaji podstakli su vlade da komuniciraju strategijski, ograničavajući u nekim slučajevima slobodu izražavanja. Novinari pokušavaju da se nose s radom u digitalno zasićenom okruženju u kojem se dezinformacije šire sve bržim tempom. U nekim zemljama politička i medijska polarizacija sve više se produbljuje, a događaji u krizi služe kao akceleratori za društvene podele. Izveštavanje o kriznim događajima koje bi pružilo tačne i pouzdane informacije sve je potrebnije, a istovremeno je i sve teže.

Uporedo sa time, ekonomska kriza pogađa medijske organizacije širom sveta. Nakon kratkog perioda rasta praćenja i povećanja poverenja u vesti, mediji se sada suočavaju s opadanjem broja publike. Medijske organizacije testiraju različite modele održivosti, svesne smanjenja kupovne moći građana i rastućih troškova proizvodnje. Zatvaranje medija, povlačenje dopisnika, smanjenje redakcija postaju sve češći. Visoka inflacija, rastući životni troškovi i male plate stavljaju novinare u neizvesan položaj, nesigurni da li će njihovi mediji uspeti da prežive.

Izgleda da je glavni odgovor publike izbegavanje vesti. Iscrpljeni ogromnim obimom vesti, posebno onih vezanih za krize, građani smatraju da vesti negativno utiču na njihovo raspoloženje. Generalno, javnost smatra da su vesti nepouzdane i pristrasne, i da ne znaju kako da na njih reaguju.

Obuhvatajući priloge autora i autorki iz Hrvatske, Bosne i Hercegovine, Finske, Mađarske, Poljske i Srbije, radovi predstavljeni u ovom tomu ilustruju mnoge aspekte kriza. Neki od njih posmatraju medijske reprezentacije, neki proučavaju promene u novinarskoj praksi, dok se drugi bave publikom i

tehnologijom. Od prikaza evropske solidarnosti do rusko-ukrajinskog rata, od redakcija posle pandemije do novinarstva zasnovanog na rešenjima, odabrani radovi nude savremeni isečak medijske stvarnosti u Centralnoj i Istočnoj Evropi (i šire).

Novi Sad, decembar 2023.

Urednici
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SADRŽAJ

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN POST-PANDEMIC NEWSROOMS: INTERVIEWS WITH MEDIA WORKERS IN CROATIA[2]

Abstract: Organization of work in newsrooms as well as journalistic routines and practices are major factors in news production. Therefore, these issues have been the subject of many studies which conclude that modern media challenges, such as the rapid development of the digital media environment and changing habits of the audience, are leading to significant organizational changes in newsrooms (Tameling & Broersma, 2013; Linden, 2017; Bunce et al., 2018). This has been even more emphasized since 2020, when journalism experienced a thorough transformation due to the COVID-19 pandemic – from working environment to access to the audience – while striving to preserve the basic premise of credibility. It should be emphasized that the Croatian media environment was additionally challenged by a series of earthquakes, which deepened the social crisis and required additional efforts in transmitting fast, relevant and credible information to the broad public. Therefore, the author's goal was to define organizational changes in the post-pandemic newsroom. For this purpose, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists and editors from the three Croatian daily newspapers with the highest circulation – *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *24sata*. Analysis of their answers showed that, after facing radical changes during the pandemic, organization of work in newsrooms never went back to old ways. However, it turned out that respondents see neither the pandemic nor the earthquakes, as the main catalyst for change, but an accelerated digital transformation. Furthermore, when it comes to the question as to whether these are positive or negative changes, there is wide disagreement in the respondents' answers.

Keywords: newsroom, news routines, organizational changes, post-pandemic, interviews, Croatian daily newspapers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A clearly defined organizational structure in the newsroom is recognized as one of the key elements in news production, as well as journalistic routines, which are an inseparable part of the whole process. The relationship between journalists and organizations was vividly described by Becker and Vlad, in their review of journalistic organizations and routines, with these words: "journalists and the organizations for which they work produce news. In other words, news is both an individual product and an organizational product" (2009, p. 59). Furthermore, Kanižaj (2010, p. 181) states that the media amount to a social and political institution that is largely determined by internal rules, organizational culture and news routines.

Considering the fact that these very rules, organization and routines are defined in the literature as one of the main factors for preserving media credibility and trust, the values which have been in constant decline over the past years (Newman et al., 2023), the importance of their systematic scientific study is recognized, especially in a context of constant change. News organization and journalistic routines are not immutable categories, but quite the opposite – they are constantly changing and are dependent on a number of factors, such as technological innovations, business models, economic and financial environment, social and political circumstances and many others (García-Avilés, 2021, pp. 1241-1242).

Some of these factors had greater impact, while others had lesser impact on newsroom organization and journalistic routines, yet the changes have always been more or less gradual, many of them being noticeable only after a certain period of time. However, the same cannot be said for the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which "can be described as the first global issue to cause massive disruption in news practices because it forced professionals worldwide to abruptly abandon their physical newsrooms and change their working procedures" (García-Avilés, 2021, p. 1239). It was at the outset of the pandemic, namely at the end of 2019, that a period of increased public interest in the disease began and, accordingly, a period of intensive media coverage of the pandemic was also commenced. The first days of the pandemic had already had great consequences for journalism and the media, especially when it comes to changes in content, communication with sources and the impossibility of going to the field (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). Furthermore, when the fast spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus led to the first lockdowns in Europe at the end of February and at the beginning of March 2020, newsrooms were also closed.

The first lockdown in Croatia began on March 19, and here it should be emphasized that Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia was struck by a 5.5 magnitude

earthquake only three days later. Therefore, this research, following the tradition of previous studies, brings new insights on organization of newsrooms and news routines in a post-pandemic environment. Author is focused on the organizational changes in Croatian newsrooms caused by these two crisis events, considering that this knowledge can contribute to a broader understanding of disruptive elements in journalism and journalistic practices. The paper aims to determine the main organizational changes in the post-pandemic newsroom, that is, to determine which changes in the three largest Croatian newspapers were short-lived, and which ones, on the other hand, were established as the permanent modus operandi. Also, the goal is to see whether journalists and editors find these changes positive or negative. For this purpose, a total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists and editors from the three Croatian daily newspapers with the highest circulation – *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *24sata*. Through the analysis of the answers, the main organizational changes were defined. Moreover, the significance of these changes for journalists and editors, for the scope of their work and for their adherence to journalistic standards was also identified. However, before presenting the results, it is necessary to look into the previous research on newsroom organization, journalistic routines, and journalism both in pandemic and post-pandemic times.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Structures and organization of newsrooms, news routines and constant change

The tradition of researching organization of work in newsrooms and journalistic routines can be traced back to the 1950s. However, in that time journalists worked in a completely different working environment from what is typical of today's journalistic working routine. David White and his work on gatekeeping published in 1950 and Warren Breed's 1955 study on the coordination and socialization of news workers are usually cited as pioneers. Since then, a wealth of studies has been published, which David Ryfe (2016) divides into "three waves of scholarship on news production". With regard to the topic and focus, the studies can be classified into those that research the organization of work in newsrooms and tend to understand routines as organizational features and those which study journalistic practices and routines in the narrow sense (Westlund & Ekström, 2020). Considering the topic of this paper, the literature review will focus on research of structures and organization of newsrooms:

> "The first studies of newsrooms in the 1960s and the 1970s focused on news processes and found that journalists shared similar and consistent ways in which they were deciding what news was and how to make it, and what each role in the newsroom entailed; and interpreted this as the profession's 'unified' response to different economic and organizational pressures." (Kovačević & Perišin, 2022, p. 68)

However, Kovačević and Perišin (2022, p. 68), in their work on models of newsroom organization and news routines in three Croatian television newsrooms, state that later studies find that news work is by far more complex so their approach is based on the fact that journalists are continuously adapting their work processes in a constantly changing environment. Famous sociological ethnographic research in newsrooms, conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s by respected experts such as Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979) and Fishman (1980), are included in the most significant studies. These are the times from which the roots of the study of journalistic practices originate. "Researchers have struggled to identify elements of the routines that vary across time, across settings, among media organizations and among journalists" (Becker & Vlad, 2009, p. 59), and considering the complexity of the very concept of 'journalistic routines', even when it comes to terminology, there is no complete agreement. However, most researchers have reached a consensus that "the whole process – from choosing to publishing a story – is carried out through established routines in each newsroom, with some old routines persisting, and new routines emerging" (Kovačević & Perišin, 2022, p. 68). These changes, i.e., the transition from old to new routines, are at the focus of recent research, in which digitization and financial conditions are mostly identified as the main driver of change:

> "With tremendous changes in the technological and financial conditions surrounding journalism and news production, news media and journalists have adapted as well as developed new routines. During the 2010s there has been a revival of newsroom ethnographies and research into news production." (Westlund & Ekström, 2020, p. 76)

Back in 2004, Peter J. Gade published a study on management and journalist perceptions of changes in newsrooms. He conducted a survey with a total of 525 journalists and editors from 17 American newsrooms in order to understand the process of change in the newspaper industry and to research how organizations evolve, learn, and adapt based on the personal experiences of journalists and editors. He noticed that reorganization of newsrooms, redefinition of news values and changing journalistic work led to journalists and editors having to rethink their basic principles. The author also concluded that journalists generally reacted

negatively to the changes and that they were in the role of "victims" in that process (Gade, 2004).

Picard also writes about the process of change in the newsroom and concludes that "it is a normal part of on-going news enterprises and that organizations must adapt to survive changes in their environments and markets" (2015, p. 1). Furthermore, in their study titled "Making Change: Diffusion of Technological, Relational, and Cultural Innovation in the Newsroom", Ekdale et al. (2015) examined changes in newsrooms at several levels and concluded that media workers do not perceive all changes the same:

"Findings suggest technological change faces the fewest hurdles, as journalists recognize the need to adapt their practices to newer capabilities. Changes to audience relationships face greater resistance, while responses to changes to the professional culture of journalism remain the most tepid." (Ekdale et al., 2015, p. 938)

In another study, Cohen (2019) focused specifically on digitization and work in the digital newsroom. In his research conducted among Canadian and USA journalists, he concluded that they face control issues, increased speed of work processes, intensification, commodification and resistance. Carl-Gustav Linden (2016) also discusses digitization, i.e., decades of automation in the newsroom. He interviewed 31 media workers, computer scientists, academics and industry experts on that topic. Furthermore, Kosterich and Weber conducted a case study in New York with more than 3500 journalists on transformation of a modern newsroom workforce and their inference is that "digital transformation continues to impact the news industry and news organizations are adapting accordingly through shifts in required skills and prescribed job positions of journalists" (2019, p. 431).

However, it should be emphasized that all the aforementioned studies were conducted before 2020, i.e., prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which fundamentally altered work organization in newsrooms and journalistic practices. The change was so intense and rapid that it cannot be compared with any type of previous disruption. It is precisely for this reason that an overview of research on journalism during the pandemic is provided in the following chapter.

2.2. Journalism in Time of a Pandemic

As claimed by Eldridge and Broersma, who analyze disruption in journalism, "if you choose to look at news and journalism at any particular moment in time, these always appear to be in a state of transition" (2018, p. 469). However, of all the catalysts of change, most of which were mentioned in the previous chapter, none

is such a powerful and disruptive element as – a crisis. Therefore, there are numerous studies on journalism in times of crisis, some of which are focused on crisis in general and some of them study the organizational changes, source selection, gatekeeping and other relevant issues in a crisis environment (Olsson, 2009; Bruns, 2013; Allan, 2013; Van der Meer et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, health crises, especially pandemics, are very specific situations primarily due to their widespreadness. Klemm et al. (2017), in their paper "Changed priorities ahead: Journalists' shifting role perceptions when covering public health crises", debate how journalists understand their roles in this kind of situation. The authors conducted 22 in-depth interviews with reporters in Germany and Finland, and they concluded "that journalists experience role conflicts between remaining independent and feeling responsible for supporting public interest" (Klemm et al., 2017, p. 1236). They even claim that the journalists' stance towards the authorities is also changing when they are covering public health crises – "from a watchdog to a more co-operative role" (Klemm et al., 2017, p. 1232).

When it comes to major global health crises, one of the most dangerous before COVID-19 was the SARS outbreak, which peaked from 2002 to 2004. "Media, Crisis and SARS" is a paper written by Ringo Ma (2005) in which he argues precisely about the key role of the media during that epidemic. However, no health crisis in the modern age can be compared to the COVID-19 pandemic, "global outbreak of coronavirus, an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) virus" (WHO, n.d.). According to the World Health Organization, after the first cases had been detected in China in December 2019, the virus spread rapidly across the world. WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Subsequently "since the COVID-19 pandemic started, over 2 million people in the European Region have died from the disease" (WHO, n.d.).

The pandemic directly affected the media as well, not only in terms of the published content, but also in terms of work organization in newsrooms and changing journalistic practices. It can also be noticed that studies published from 2020 until today can be roughly divided into these two groups – those focused on media covering of the pandemic and those focused on the work of journalists and structures of newsrooms during the pandemic. Thorsten Quandt and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2021) wrote an introduction to a special issue of *Digital Journalism (Covering Covid-19)* titled "The Coronavirus Pandemic as a Critical Moment for Digital Journalism". They state that journalists were "compelled to dramatically change the content of their reporting – the stories they tell and the way they are framed" (2021, p. 1199). Studies from all over the world have been based on a same premise – the USA (Basch et al., 2020; Finneman & Thomas, 2022), China

(Zhou et al., 2020), Europe (Tejedor et al., 2020; Trninić, 2021; Benzinović, 2021), Africa (Apuke & Omar, 2020; Chibuwe et al., 2022; Santos & Mare, 2021). Regarding research in Croatia, Kanižaj et al. (2022) analyzed the front pages of daily newspapers and defined a completely new editorial and journalistic approach. However, another important researchers' focus, which is also the topic of this paper, is organization of work in newsrooms and change of journalistic practices during the pandemic:

> "From the outset of the pandemic, media organizations had to quickly restructure their work processes, as staff had to stay at home during times of lockdown or work restrictions. Online video conferences replaced team meetings, and journalists used business work platforms in dispersed networks instead of direct cooperation in the newsroom. Video interviews were often done via Zoom instead of sending out teams or getting interviewees to a studio. Further, it became more difficult for journalists to access their sources, as the freedom of movement and the ability to meet was restricted in many countries." (Quandt & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021, p. 1200)

Extensive research on disruption in newsrooms carried out by Jose A. Garcıa-Avilés (2021), discusses the importance of journalism in such extraordinary circumstances. The author conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with news managers in Spain with a goal to examine institutional change and professional strategy. Based on the results, it is evident that, on the one hand, work in the virtual newsroom gave rise to a series of good practices, such as the improvement of collaboration. However, on the other hand, numerous problems arose among journalists, such as work overload, increased stress level, psychological distress and job insecurity. (Garcıa-Avilés, 2021, p. 1239). When it comes to organization of work in newsrooms, it was concluded that:

> "News managers usually followed a conservative approach of 'doing journalism as usual.' In short, management's strategies in virtual newsrooms focused on the reorganization of journalistic work while maintaining standard practices from the physical newsroom and overseeing power relationships." (Garcıa-Avilés, 2021, p. 1256)

A year later, the same author published a study focused on the long-term consequences of the pandemic on newsrooms and the implementation of innovations in newsrooms caused or encouraged by the COVID-19. This time, he conducted 40 interviews with media practitioners and experts on journalism innovation and concluded that evolution of newsroom practices through telework and digital transformation was accelerated in the pandemic environment (Garcıa-Avilés et al., 2022). Espinel-Rubio et al. conducted a similar survey, also in Spain,

yet they researched "routines and tensions of women journalists in times of Covid-19" (2021), while Olsen et al. (2020) studied the financial aspect of the COVID-19 crisis in media outlets.

In this study, 15 journalists and editors in Croatia were interviewed about the change in the organizational structure of the newsroom, journalistic practices and working methods in time of the pandemic, but also about the financial aspect of these changes. Research methodology and results will be explained in detail and analyzed in the following chapters.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this research, a total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted, and this qualitative method was chosen to obtain detailed answers from the interviewees in an "active, open-ended dialogue" (Deacon et al., 2014, p. 67). This means that, although the questions and the topics were defined in advance, the examination process was flexible – questions and their order were adapted to each of the respondents. As stated by Bryman, "in qualitative interviewing, interviewers can depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask new questions that follow up interviewees' replies and can vary the order and even the wording of questions" (2012, p. 470). The interviewees are journalists and editors from three Croatian daily newspapers – *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *24sata* - and their exact distribution is: nine editors (including three editors-in-chief), and six journalists (three of whom also have editorial experience)

Those newspapers were chosen since they have the highest circulation in Croatia, but also the largest newsrooms. All three are daily national newspapers, and only *24sata* is declared as a tabloid. Journalist and editors were selected by a non-probability sampling method, more precisely by purposive sampling, "the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2) and the key factor in selection was their working experience and their expertise. This means that the respondents are not anonymous when it comes to their selection, but they are guaranteed anonymity in all further steps of the process. Therefore, in the analysis of the results only tags will be attached to their answers (E1-E9, J1-J6).

It should be noted that, since the interviews were carried out as part of the scientific project *Journalism Research Lab: Innovative Storytelling Practices to Engage New Audiences* (IP-2019-04-6331), funded by the Croatian Science Foundation and led by professor Tena Perišin at the Faculty of Political Science of

the University of Zagreb, the interviews covered multiple topics, one of which is newsrooms during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic era. As part of the thematic block on the pandemic, all respondents were asked questions about changing structures and organization of newsrooms, news routines and journalistic practices. Furthermore, they were asked about the duration of changes, and whether they resulted in an increased scope of work and/or in changing adherence to journalistic standards.

The interviews were conducted in February 2023, which is exactly three years after the outbreak of the disease in Croatia. Therefore, journalists and editors were able to view all the organizational changes in the newsrooms with the benefit of hindsight. After the interviews were conducted, following the steps outlined by Griffee (2005), the interviews were first transcribed and read in detail, and then the answers were coded. The codes, i.e., recurring themes labeled as one word or short phrases, were defined after multiple readings of the interviews and then they were highlighted across all the interviews. "It entails reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels (names) to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bryman, 2012, p. 568). Results are interpreted and analyzed in next chapter and the goal was to answer following research questions:

RQ1: What are the main changes in organization of newsrooms and news routines caused by the pandemic and the earthquake?

RQ2: Which are the long-term changes and which are the short-term changes?

RQ3: What do the changes mean for the scope of work in newsrooms?

RQ4: What do the changes mean for adherence to journalistic standards?

RQ5: Are the changes rather positive or rather negative?

4. RESULTS

It was February 25, 2020, when the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Croatia. Before long, anti-epidemic measures were introduced and as early as three weeks later a more radical closure started. The first lockdown thus began on March 19. When it comes to organization of work in general, including work in newsrooms, which is the subject of this paper, employers were obliged to enable work from home. As for *Večernji list* and *24sata*, the respondents point out that such a model was very quickly introduced for the majority of journalists, editors and other employees, and only certain editorial board members worked from the newsroom. The respondents from *Jutarnji list*, on the other hand, point out that

their newspaper "was among the first three in the world" to hit newsstands without a single employee being present in the newsroom - "journalists, editors, graphic editors, proofreaders and all other employees worked from home, and this worked well".

And then, just three days later, at 6:24 a.m. on Sunday, March 22, Croatia's capital of Zagreb was struck by an earthquake measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, followed by a series of weaker earthquakes and tremors in the following hours, days and weeks. These two events together – the beginning of the lockdown and the earthquake – shook all aspects of life, including the functioning of newsrooms. In this research, the respondents' answers are the basis on which the changes that followed can be thoroughly described and their consequences identified. By analyzing the answers, the questions can be divided into five thematic units:

1. The organizational changes faced by the newsrooms were radical
2. There is no going back to the previous organization of work in the newsrooms
3. Positive sides of organizational changes in newsrooms
4. Negative sides of organizational changes in newsrooms
5. The important role of digital transformation

4.1. Radical changes

When asked to describe the changes that their newsrooms faced as a result of the pandemic and the earthquake, all the respondents agree that these are radical changes that they had never encountered before, and at the same time, they single out the speed with which they happened as well as their intensity. One of the editors points out that "it was something that journalism in Croatia has not yet encountered" (E3), while another describes the situation with the following words: "overnight everything was completely turned upside down because the work had to be adjusted in a completely different way" (E2).

Five main changes can be detected by analyzing respondents' answers: (1) leaving the newsroom and working from home, (2) technical changes in the production process, (3) changes in communication between journalists and editors, (4) changes in communication with sources, and (5) changes in business operations. It should be emphasized that all the mentioned changes are organizational, while the respondents note that the core of the job persisted. One of the journalists says that "everything that is done journalistically has remained the same" (N6), and one of the editors concludes that "working conditions, techniques and production have changed due to the pandemic, yet not the essence of the work" (E7).

(1) Working from home is the most obvious change that has occurred, which is emphasized by all respondents, and which agrees with the results of the studies mentioned in the previous chapter (Espinel-Rubio et al., 2021; Garcıa-Avilés, 2021; Garcıa-Avilés et al., 2022). Almost all journalists changed their place of work, with the exception of only a few editors who remained in the newsroom. This was a fundamental change. One of the editors thus describes that there was no longer their well-known working environment, "the newsroom that was a beehive" (E8). From the journalists' perspective, the fact that they did not work physically from the newsroom changed their working schedule completely:

> *Journalists are no longer tied to their workplace in the newsroom, to a desk and a computer. Before, we used to come to work in the morning, then went to the editorial meeting, worked in the newsroom until we had to go to the field. From 2020, we have no longer been tied to our workplace at all. If we need to go to the field, we go there directly from home.* (J3)

The change in the place of work also brought some **(2) technical changes**. Therefore, in one of the newsrooms, they point out that they switched to new software for work exactly at the time of the pandemic, which was an additional challenge, but it also made the transition easier. It should be added here that the software was changed by the other two newsrooms too, but shortly before the pandemic[3]. However, the respondents point out that this technical adjustment was much simpler than getting used to the new work organization and journalistic routine. "The newspaper production process was very quickly adapted to work from home, that is, within five days, but the journalists and editors had a hard time adapting, considering that they had to change their way of communication completely" (E3).

Completely different **(3) communication between journalists and editors** is another big change singled out by the respondents, as well as **(4) a change in communication with sources** that also moved to the virtual world, which almost completely replaced field work in one period. When it comes to communication in the newsroom, respondents in all three newsrooms point out the abolition of editorial meetings, i.e., their relocation to online platforms, as the biggest change. It is also recognized in the literature that "central daily events in all newsrooms is the daily editorial" (Kovačević & Perišin, 2022, p. 78), and our respondents say that holding several editorial meetings a day was a common practice before the pandemic. It was a central place for exchanging ideas, defining topics, agreements, and so forth.

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[3] The newsrooms of *Jutarnji list*, *Večernji list* and *24sata* started using the Content Management System "Story Editor" in the mentioned period.

Just one investigative article requires so many people – one or more journalists, editors, proofreaders, graphic editors and the whole team needs to work together, and if they are not in the same place as they are used to, then the process is much more complicated. We were used to having editorial meetings three or four times a day, and since that was not possible, we experimented with Skype, Zoom, Facebook ... (E9)

However, in addition to organizational changes, part of the respondents also mentioned **(5) changes in business operations**. The pandemic and the earthquake proved to be not only a catalyst for change and a threat to health and safety, but also to business. On the one hand, the editors point out that the distribution of newspapers was difficult, and on the other hand, the pandemic directly affected the market and thus advertising revenues:

The pandemic threatened us for two reasons. First, at the very beginning of the pandemic, we lost ads because the market practically stopped. Second, some part of our readers consumed our newspaper in cafes, which were closed. Therefore, we could not distribute part of our subscription edition, and we did not receive support from the Government, and we were damaged financially in this respect. Regardless of the fact that the Government intervened in some professions when it comes to salaries, including ours, the print media were damaged. (E1)

4.2. There is no turning back to the old ways

After the main changes were defined, the goal of this paper was to determine short-term changes and identify the ones that have become entrenched in newsrooms as long-term changes. Although at the time of conducting the interview three years had already passed since the beginning of the pandemic, most of the respondents concluded that the final consequences could not still be fully understood. "Actually, we are still in the transition phase of organization" (E7), states one of the editors. The same is confirmed by the answers of other respondents. When it comes to returning to newsrooms, journalists and editors started to return to work in all newsrooms, but in none of them completely. In this regard, the dynamics of return differs from newsroom to newsroom and the conditions of work have not yet been definitively defined in any of them.

Most of the employees returned to the *Jutarnji list* newsroom, where the respondents stated that those who work from home are now only an exception. On the other hand, the editors of *Večernji list* returned to the newsroom, yet only a relatively small number of journalists. The respondents from this newsroom say that a "hybrid model of work" has been defined, which includes occasional visits

of journalists to the newsroom, which has proven to be the most productive. Also, a similar model is in effect in the *24sata* newsroom, with editors and graphic editors working in person. More experienced journalists come to the newsroom at least once every week or two. On the other hand, *24sata* points out that it is important that young journalists are constantly present in the newsroom, as they are beginners who need to be mentored.

The term emphasized by almost all respondents, regardless of the newsroom, is – flexibility. The rules regarding coming to the newsroom are no longer strictly set, but depend on employee to employee, from situation to situation. This is noticed by both journalists and editors:

> *It doesn't matter to me if you write from Tokyo or from Zagreb, it's important that I get the text. It is one of the changes that crystallized in the pandemic and now functions most normally.* (E1)

> *Before the pandemic, we hardly even knew about working from home as such, we were always in the newsroom. It is a lot more flexible now.* (E9)

> *How we organize work at night has permanently changed because it is more flexible. It is natural that we work night shifts from home.* (J6)

Due to the new circumstances, even the workspace has changed permanently, so respondents from *Večernji list* state that the newsroom has been physically reduced because "we know that all employees will never be in the newsroom at the same time". Also, it has permanently changed the way of communication. Editorial meetings have not fully revived in any newsroom, although respondents state that there have been attempts to do so, and communication has permanently intensified on virtual channels.

> *In terms of organization, the level of communication via email, Slack, WhatsApp has increased... The share of live interaction has decreased, we no longer have in-person editorial meetings as we have always used to have, or at least since I have been in journalism.* (E5)

The consequences of the pandemic are still strongly felt in the newsrooms, but there is no consensus on whether the changes are positive or negative, which is noticed by the respondents themselves:

> *We don't have fully agreed positions on this issue. It seems to me that we did not lose too much by the fact that people are not obliged to come and by the fact that communication moved to an electronic form. On the other hand, a part of the editors believe that live contact is irreplaceable.* (E5)

4.3. Positive sides of changes

If all the positive aspects of working from home mentioned by the respondents are put under a common denominator, it is, first of all, greater organizational freedom for journalists, but also increased productivity due to better working conditions, which is noted by almost all interviewed journalists and part of the interviewed editors. "We see that people prefer to stay at home rather than to travel to work. All things are done as before, I don't notice that we have lost anything" (E6), concludes one of the editors, and one of the interviewed journalists describes her experience with the words that she is the type of person who works from home more often than from the newsroom. She specifies: "I simply prefer the intimacy and solitude I can achieve at home. Then I am a better and more efficient author" (J1). And when asked whether working from home allows avoiding work, she answers that "whoever works - works anywhere. And who doesn't work - doesn't work. The place is completely irrelevant. A person can sit in the newsroom for eight hours a day without working; and vice versa - those who work, work equally from home and in the newsroom" (J1).

Also, one of the interviewed journalists concludes that this way of working is actually much more desirable in the world of journalism. "Now we work the way every journalist should, we are more in the field, not at the desk in the newsroom" (J3), she says. Furthermore, better organization of work of journalists is also noticed by some editors, although the editors in general showed much more skepticism towards remote work than journalists did:

> I think there will never be a complete return to the old ways. Some things turned out to be an advantage, primarily for journalists in the field. There is no problem if they go somewhere, if they know what their task is and if they can communicate it well with the editors. Therefore, why make that person come to the newsroom and waste time that could be used for work? (E3)

It is interesting to note that some editors say that it was during the pandemic that they completely changed their opinion about working from home, so one of them states the following: "I have to admit that some people who I thought would react worse, reacted very well and even improved quality and productivity of work" (E8). Another admits that when he became editor ten years ago, he personally forbade journalists to work from home, but now he has changed his mind:

> That was unimaginable to me at the time. They only worked from home on weekends, and even that was too much for my standards back then. (...) But the process of adapting to working from home exceeded all my expectations and today the way we perceive journalism has completely changed (...)

Now it has been shown that it is possible to work online and that there is a digital version of all the tools we use as journalists and that we can communicate successfully even when we do not see each other in person. (E6)

When it comes to adhering to journalistic standards, all respondents, regardless of the newsroom and their position, believe that all the changes mentioned did not have a negative impact, and some respondents even say that the situation is better than before. "It was during the pandemic period that we wanted to prove to ourselves and others that our high professional standards must be fully expressed" (E2), points out one of the editors, and another adds that he believes that the reason for this is that they became "ethically and morally even more profiled in the pandemic because of the fact that, as someone who transmits information, we had to be additionally engaged to transmit maximally relevant information" (E7). Furthermore, one of the editors says that professional standards were openly discussed in the newsroom because it was recognized as an important topic:

We made sure that at no point did professionalism suffer. As a newsroom, we immediately agreed that, although we know it will slow us down, we do not want the credibility of the news to suffer. We did not want something false to be marketed due to rashness or noise in communication. (E9)

Journalists share the same opinion as editors, so one of them notes that "professional standards are professional standards, wherever you do your work" (J3), while another confirms the increased level of scrutiny during the pandemic because of the fact that "in those first months there was an awful lot of information and you had to check everything and approach everything much more carefully" (J6). The same respondent adds that the information had to be checked additionally because there was often noise in communication due to conversations via online platforms. Nevertheless, some respondents consider the transition to virtual platforms for communication a positive change because it is a step forward. "In the end, it turned out that it was good and that maybe we needed to modernize a bit" (E9), claims one of the respondents, but not everyone shares this opinion. The respondents' answers provided in the next section show what the negative sides of these changes are.

4.4. Negative sides of changes

Some of the respondents note that these changes, on the one hand, bring about higher productivity and more checks, but on the other hand, they imply a larger scope of work. However, some editors warn that this does not apply to everyone

and that the changes have increased inequalities in the newsroom. While the workload increased significantly for some journalists, other journalists have more opportunity to go unnoticed with less work. "I think that the amount of work for many people decreased because people were only interested in the pandemic, there were several authors who wrote extensively about it, and a good part of them could slip through the eye of a needle" (E4), explains one of the editors who does not agree that working conditions are better at home, so he adds:

> *We all know from practice that working from home cannot be as intense or focused as it is in the newsroom, because at home you have a lot of distractions, from the fact that you will cook something, to the fact that someone will come to visit you...* (E4).

Also, some editors believe that the transition to virtual channels only delayed the communication between journalists and editors due to the fact that "as much as the various chat groups helped to make communication easier, it is certainly not at the same level of quality as it would be if everyone worked together in the office" (E3). This greatly complicates the work of editors:

> *Working from home puts editors on edge. Why? Due to the fact that the work of any media newsroom, especially a newspaper one, is a matter of interaction and constant conversation and sharpening of thoughts and topics. (...) When you're at home, you have technology, but you can't have a quality conversation with several people – one sends you a message on WhatsApp, another sends emails, a third would use Viber and a fourth would use Teams, the fifth would just talk on the phone. This requires more mental engagement from the editor.* (E7)

Increased engagement can lead to burnout, which has already been recognized as a major problem in journalism (MacDonald et al., 2016). The respondents find that the main cause of this in the new environment is the oversaturation with online communication. "You have to be active on dozens of communication channels where thousands of messages are exchanged throughout the day. It's a lot of typing and sometimes you want to talk to someone instead of receiving endless messages (...) Because of this, I personally feel that I have much more work to do, and I am much more burdened" (E6), says one of the editors. It should be added here that some of the respondents point out that the problem is not only in official communication, such as in (editorial) meetings, but the other side suffers as well:

> *We really miss the informal newsroom atmosphere, people who walk around, talk, discuss, make casual remarks, go for a drink after work, and an idea comes to mind. That part can hardly be replaced. Some people like being alone at home, but some openly say after a couple of weeks that they*

would like to come to the newsroom, socialize a bit and mingle, because they miss it in their life. (E3)

Taking into account all the negative aspects of the new changes, from distancing caused by working from home, through the increase in the scope of work to difficult communication, some of the respondents are extremely negative when it comes to new organization of work in the newsroom and journalistic routines:

> *During the pandemic, the environment and work process in the newsroom deteriorated terribly. Although a large part of the employees contributed from home, it seemed to me then, later even more, and now the most, that this is not a job that can be done from remote locations and that in this job, if you want to work seriously, credibly, with quality and competitively, communication between people is necessary, brainstorming is necessary, so that people can see each other and feel disagreements... Without that, in my opinion, there is no work in the newsroom.* (E4)

4.5. The role of digital transformation

All respondents, regardless of the newspaper they come from and whether they consider the changes positive or negative, point out the earthquake as the factor that had the least impact on long-term changes in newsrooms, even though the event itself was very intense and dramatic. "The earthquake did not have that much impact on the change in the way of working in newsrooms because it did not threaten us that much, fortunately. But the pandemic somehow helped us to understand" (E1) says one of the interviewed editors, which shows that the earthquake was a short-term disruptor, but also that the pandemic played a specific role in terms of long-term organizational changes in newsrooms. According to the respondents, it definitely accelerated their implementation, but it was not their only cause. It could be said that the pandemic initiated and accelerated the changes, but they were primarily caused by digital transformation, and they would have definitely happened, yet not at this pace. This especially applies to the scope of work, "because in parallel with the pandemic, there is an increasing emphasis on the website and digital editions, which increases the scope of work, especially for journalists" (E5). This is what one of the editors says, and these answers match in all three newsrooms. The pandemic has moved work from newsrooms to homes and communication from the real world to the virtual, and this has only accelerated the digital transformation that was already occurring naturally. All these factors together led to permanent and deep changes in the newsrooms:

> *Several things have overlapped, pandemics and earthquakes are one of them, but digital transformation should be highlighted. Finally, we all*

agreed in the newsroom that we have to start strongly turning our print paradigm towards the digital one. Because of this, our workload has increased. (...) Because the time has come when we are fully concentrated on the fact that we are looking for an audience on another medium, which is our website, and this work is painstaking. (E4)

The surveyed journalists also notice the same, so one of the respondents says that the increase in work can be attributed to digitization, that is, "due to the growth of the platforms on which the newsroom works, which, admittedly, accelerated further during the period of the pandemic and remote work" (J4). She explains how journalism has changed:

Our texts were published online before, but now it has intensified, and it is different and faster content that must be published immediately. Texts written for the websites are different, which means that those of us who write for print must write more. Some colleagues started working on five or six platforms. So, in addition to working in the press, they work on the website, report live, host shows... The demands are much higher, and salaries have remained nominally the same, which means lower in real terms due to inflation. (J4)

5. CONCLUSION

When the pandemic closed down – among other things – newsrooms, more changes took place than just moving work from newsrooms to homes. Remote work has significantly changed journalistic routines and communication, which was moved to the virtual world, and the pandemic directly affected media operations. This study answers the question exactly how, and its significance lies in the fact that the interviews with 15 journalists and editors in three Croatian daily newspapers were conducted three years after the outbreak. With the benefit of hindsight, respondents' answers provide a new perspective on change processes in (post)pandemic newsrooms, previously described in earlier studies. Similar changes were detected, as teleworking, new communication protocols, task flexibility, fostering of innovations (Espinel-Rubio et al., 2021; Garcıa-Avilés, 2021; Garcıa-Avilés et al., 2022), and it was concluded that most of them had lasting effects, although all three newsrooms are still looking for a final model of functioning after the pandemic.

For now, it is certain that work in newsrooms has become much more flexible. The agreement regarding the place of work varies from journalist to journalist. Editorial meetings, which used to be the central place for defining topics

and exchanging ideas, as it appears from the present standpoint, were permanently abandoned, and left in the time before the pandemic. Today's work is characterized by a reduction of physical space of newsrooms and communication via virtual platforms, which corresponds to the results obtained in similar research in other countries.

However, there is no consensus on whether these changes are positive or negative, but it should be noted that most journalists consider it a change for the better, while the editors' views are divided in this respect. This is a significant result, given that previous studies have shown that journalists react more negatively to changes (Gade, 2004; Ekdale et al., 2015, García-Avilés, 2021) and it shows that over time primarily journalists have accepted remote work with all its advantages and disadvantages, while editors are still struggling. Nevertheless, everyone agrees that there has been a significant leap in terms of the scope of work. However, the respondents conclude that this was only accelerated by the pandemic, while it was essentially caused by digital transformation, which García-Avilés et al. (2022) also write about.

According to journalists and editors, the positive side of change is the fact that while organization of work in newsrooms and journalistic routines are being thoroughly changed, the essence of journalistic work remains the same and adherence to journalistic professional standards is not abandoned. Nonetheless, only by conducting other comparative interviews and by exploring the way newspaper newsrooms will be functioning in the future it will be possible to find answers to the questions as to whether these changes are permanent, what the post-pandemic newsrooms will ultimately look like and whether they will even survive in the physical world or will be completely moved to the virtual world.

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JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTION OF CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM IN UNITED STATES AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract: Communication studies scholars mostly agree about one thing: the media have to change and they need a more balanced approach towards reporting about important topics. As a result of these thoughts, a new idea about media reporting has emerged and it is called a constructive journalism approach, which represents a journalism form that is focused on perspectives and solutions of social and natural problems rather than just stating them. This paper investigates how journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina understand constructive journalism in relation to their colleagues in the United States of America. These two countries were chosen because of their different journalistic practices. While the USA is characterized by a long tradition of free journalism, B&H has only been a multi-party state since the 90s. While the American media is characterized by a more positive interpretive frame when reporting on socially relevant topics from the country (Harcup & O'Neill, 2016), in B&H media interpretations are mostly negatively intoned (Delić, 2022; Hrnjić Kuduzović & Čičkušić, 2018). Through ten in-depth interviews with journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United States, we discovered that US journalists understand the concept of constructive journalism better than Bosnian journalists. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a lack of research on the journalistic perception of constructive journalism, and the situation is similar in the USA, even though a large number of works are available on constructive journalism as a concept or representation of constructive stories in the media. With this research, we will try to contribute to understanding of constructive journalism from the perspective of professional journalists. Journalists from two countries believe that journalism needs to change regarding its core values, but they are not equally prepared to change them.

Keywords: constructive journalism, journalist perception, United States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, news values, objectivity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The media needs a more balanced approach in: 1. selection of topics for reporting, which should take into account a wide range of events from negative to positive, and 2. selection of an approach to the interpretation of the event itself, which should include, in addition to the problem itself, possible solutions or perspectives (Rasmussen, 2020; Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019; McIntyre, 2019; McIntyre, 2020; Powers & Curry, 2019; Their et al., 2021). The most important reason for that is shrinking media audience from news media and the lack of trust in news media (Liedke & Gottfried, 2022; UNESCO, 2020; Rasmussen, 2020; Delić, 2021, Newman et al., 2022; Zelizer et al., 2022). In their book titled *The Journalism Manifesto*, Barbie Zelizer, Pablo J. Boczkowski and C. W. Anderson pointed out that journalism has to change its core functions if it wants to survive. Either journalists have to change their profession in its core (revolutionary path), or it has to change step by step (reformist path). The concepts of so-called objectivity, elite sources and news values have to be changed (Zelizer et al., 2022; Delić, 2021). To reform its relationship with audience, journalists have to:

> "engage their contemporary rituals around the news instead of pretending they will abandon them to merely absorb information. It has to stretch to accommodate audiences that may fit few of the contours most prized in now inert assumptions of public engagement. It has to tell the stories that appeal to interpretations from the heart as much as from the mind, instead of continuing to provide dispassionate accounts of events because that is what objectivity in the news is supposed to be about" (Zelizer et al., 2022, p. 98–99).

One of possible solutions for contemporary problems in journalism profession, can be constructive journalism, "a form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive and engaging coverage, while holding true to journalism's core functions" (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017, p. 23). It is an umbrella term for four different constructive journalism forms – solutions journalism, restorative journalism, prospective journalism and peace journalism. Constructive journalism should not be identified as one of its forms, and scholars usually use constructive and solutions journalism as synonyms. The difference between these terms blurs even more when we talk with journalists. Constructive journalism is not, as its main proponent, Ulrik Haagerup pointed out "uncritical, superficial, naïve, irrelevant, unsensational, blind to the world's problems, the sweet story, politics and activism", but rather, it offers "a way out, hope, inspiration, call to action, education, perspective" (Haagerup, 2017, p. 123). Rather than being "naïve or

good news journalism", constructive journalism can offer us the "worlds' portrayal of 360°" (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019, p. 536).

> "A constructive journalism approach carefully considers the role of emotions in journalism. Through the lens of a constructive journalism approach to news coverage, the editorial focus of news agencies is on both critical-positive and critical-negative news items. Constructive news story framing thus provides a more accurate portrayal of the world while still adhering to journalism's core functions" (Rossbach, 2017, p. 3).

Steinke and Belair-Gagon observe that emotions are more present as a value in journalistic reporting and that their inclusion affects the understanding of journalistic objectivity and the role of journalists in society (2020). However, the fear of losing objectivity is present towards journalists because "emphasizing emotion as the key redefines the classic idea of journalistic objectivity—indeed, it is reshaping the idea of news itself" (Becket & Deuze, 2016, cited in Parks, 2021, p. 825).

2. JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTION ON CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM

Studies in United States and Europe countries show scholarly interest in constructive journalism stories' elements (Baden, McIntyre & Homberg, 2019; Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019; McIntyre, 2020; Meier, 2018; Thier et al., 2021), and also students' interest in more constructive stories (Poort, 2018, p. 41–45). However, there is a lack of research on the journalistic perception of constructive journalism. In B&H, researches about public attitudes about constructive journalism are available, but nobody researched the opinions of journalists, academics or students about constructive journalism. The only research from the Balkan region on journalists' perception of constructive journalism showed that journalists are wary of accepting a different perspective in reporting, especially when it, in their opinion, includes emotions (Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018). While not explained as constructive journalism elements, emotions, however, are "integral part" of reporting of US journalists who are writing about social justice (Steinke & Belair-Gagnon, 2020, p. 617).

Researchers in different countries have discovered that a lot of journalists confused term constructive journalism with solutions journalism, and sometimes with features, investigative or other journalism forms (Rasmussen, 2020; Van Antwerpen et al., 2022; Krüger et al., 2022; Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018). Journalists from Croatia connect the term constructive journalism with "serious journalism", "good journalism", an "ideal concept of journalism" that cannot be

reached and an "old concept of professional journalism" (Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018). Research about understanding of constructive journalism among Russian journalists from the two biggest news agencies in Russia, privately held Interfax, and government owned TASS, has shown that only one of six interviewed journalists have heard about the concept constructive journalism before, but wrongly confused the term with "positive journalism" (Rossbach, 2017). The best results were in study from Germany where Krüger and his associates polled 79 journalists who consider themselves constructive-oriented journalists. Their research has shown that "constructive journalists are as diverse in age as the total of all journalists in Germany, but tend to be more women journalists, freelancers, formally higher educated, and politically leaning toward green and left-wing positions" (Krüger et al., 2022, p. 64). But as mentioned in this study, it was a questionnaire for journalists who already practiced constructive journalism.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is only one research about audience reactions to constructive journalism, and it showed that "citizens, especially younger ones, prefer news that contain elements of constructiveness" (Delić, 2021, p. 77). There is a lack of research on the journalistic perception of constructive journalism. It is also important to point out the complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political environment, which makes journalists particularly sensitive when it comes to reporting on problematic issues. Reporting that would be constructive probably has political connotations in the sense of biased reporting and the practice of reporting focused on solutions is not all common in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where investigative journalism can still be understood as the highest quality journalism. Numerous media survive thanks to the projects of international organizations, which largely determines their agenda, and is more focused on noticing anomalies, corruption and abuses than on constructive journalism. On the other hand, politically biased media mostly report negatively on competing political parties, and mostly write uncritical articles about their own.

In neighboring Croatia, which shares a similar political past, there is research that points to journalistic skepticism when it comes to constructive journalism, and even the term "constructive" itself.

The main obstacle to the use of the term constructive in Croatia is its negative connotation. Kovacevic and Perisin found out that linguists consider the term constructive as too negatively connected with ideology:

> "For example, in some authoritarian regimes it could be understood as less critical. In Croatia and other countries of ex-Yugoslavia, we can find some analogies. During the socialist rule in Yugoslavia, a special term was coined: constructive criticism. It implied commenting and contributing within the frames of the same mind-set, the permitted space of communist ideology" (Rašić cited in Kovacevic and Perisin, 2018, p. 6–7).

There are also several obstacles for implementing constructive journalism in practice such as: the lack of support from editors, institutional news culture focused on negativity, inability to apply the concept to political news (Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018; Rasmussen, 2020; Rossbach, 2017). "Change of the mindset of journalists and editors, criticisms of newsroom routines, fear that reporting on solutions may be a trap that leads to a new ideology were the main obstacles pinpointed by the interviewees" (Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018, p. 10). In the UK journalists' perception of their role influenced "largely" on their "perceptions of constructive journalism techniques", explains Rasmussen.

> "In this context, it became clear that news was often perceived as being negative in its very nature, which was closely connected to journalists' idea of holding power to account and serving the public. Perceptions of journalists' professional roles, in turn, also revealed that some saw it important to remain more passive conveyors of information, whereas others acknowledged that they had an influence over the tone of their news stories. The deep-rooted values that were expressed through these roles thus present a barrier for including solutions and the coverage of positive developments in the news" (Rasmussen, 2020, p. 28).

Similar is the opinion from US' journalists who "construct emotion and emotional labor as central to what news is. In this way, journalists interviewed acted as mood-managers, connectors, inspirators, and guides to their audience" (Steinke & Belair-Gagnon, 2020, p. 623).

The concepts of objectivity and established news values also have a great influence on journalists' perception of constructive journalism. Many journalists from the UK and Netherlands are worried about their objectivity if they put story focus on solutions, and some of them also told researchers that finding or bringing light to solutions is not their job (Rasmussen, 2020). Same thoughts are shared by Russian journalists who also think that constructive journalism is not always in line with the concept of objectivity (Rossbach, 2017).

However, journalists from Europe (UK inclusive), Australia, Africa and North America think that constructive journalism can be a good solution for several challenges such as: "apathy and disengagement, loss of shared reality and increased polarization, and declining trust" (Van Antwerpen et al., 2022, p. 11). Also, journalists from Germany who already practice constructive journalism have positive opinions about this approach to stories. Researchers have found "eight role dimensions", directly or indirectly mentioned by journalists "of which the most important were the Social Integrator, the Transformation Agent, the Active

Watchdog, the Emotional Storyteller, and the Innovation Reporter" (Krüger et al., 2022). This research has shown that:

> "the constructive journalists clearly show stronger ambitions than the average German journalist to act as a watchdog of political and business elites, motivate people to participate, and contribute not only to social change but to a fundamental transformation of society" (Krüger et al., 2022, p. 74).

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research we used semi-structured interviews with journalists from the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main reason for choosing these countries is the level of constructive journalism practice in their media. On one side, there is the United States, already with rich experience in constructive journalism reporting, especially one of its forms – solutions journalism. Solutions Journalism Network which has existed since 2013 is based in New York. On the other side, there is Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country where constructive journalism is still in its very beginnings and it is practiced very sporadically only through nongovernmental organizations projects. However, there are some efforts for more constructive journalism stories handled mainly by Mediacenter of Sarajevo.

We have chosen semi-structured interviews because we wanted more qualitative insight into the thoughts of journalists from US and B&H about constructive journalism and its possibilities. We also allowed journalists to ask some additional questions about the concept of constructive journalism so we could explain constructive journalism elements to them in more detail. "Semi-structured interviewing, according to Bernard (1988) is best used when you will not get more than one chance to interview someone" (Rossbach, 2017, p. 47), which was the case in this study. We had prepared a questionnaire with ten topics or open questions we wanted to discuss with journalists. The topics are connected with previous research findings: understanding constructive journalism concept and term, thoughts about constructive journalism possibilities for objective reporting, meaning of objective reporting for journalists, thoughts about news values and the main news values journalists consider when they choose their stories, the main obstacles for practicing constructive journalism in their editorial offices, thoughts about journalism and constructive journalism future.

Interviews with US journalists were conducted via Zoom meeting application and lasted for an hour on average. We obtained permission from all interviewees to record the meetings for later analysis and consent for their names

to be used in the final paper. Interviews with Bosnian journalists were conducted either via zoom or in person and were also recorded on zoom or phone. We also obtained consent for recording and using journalists' names. The research lasted from January to May 2023.

Five journalists from United States were interviewed for this research: Heather May who is a project manager at the Great Salt Lake Collaborative, a group of 23 organizations committed to informing the public about the crisis facing the Great Salt Lake and what could be done to save it; Allison Steinke, currently employed at the University of Minnesota as a teaching assistant professor, writer, consultant and blogger; Evan Cobb, Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) fellow and photojournalist who is telling community-focused stories about climate change and systemic inequality; Christopher Johnston, one of the SJN's fellows too, a freelance journalist who has been working on constructive journalism stories for more than 30 years for publications such as American Theatre, The Christian Science Monitor, History Magazine and Scientific American; and Anne Kniggendorf, a staff writer and editor for the Kansas City Public Library. Five journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina have also been interviewed for this research: Azur Delić, reporter for N1 news channel currently on his journalism master study, Tahir Žustra, reporter for Nova BiH (NewsMax Adria), student of journalism master studies with experience in local media, Haris Buljubašić from Aljazeera Balkans who does his own explanatory journalism TV show, Azra Husarić Omerović from Balkan Investigative Report Network (BIRN), and Azra Delmanović from public broadcasting service FTV and also an assistant at the Journalism Department at the University of Tuzla.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Familiarity with the concept of constructive journalism

The first set of questions was about constructive journalism and understanding of that concept among journalists. Most of US journalists use term solutions journalism as a synonym to constructive journalism[2] which is not unexpected. Three respondents have already done constructive journalism stories and are very familiar with this concept.

First respondent, Allison Steinke did her PhD on Solutions journalism, and she is also a university teacher.

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[2] In this paper we will use the terms used by journalists. However, it should be noted that the term solutions journalism in this context is used as synonym to constructive journalism.

> *I talked with 52 journalists around the world, and I would say, most of, if not all of the scholars and journalist in Europe were very familiar with constructive journalism and had a lot of things to say about the similarities and differences between solutions and constructive journalism and also there's a lot of really positive energy around solutions and constructive journalism in Europe.*

Steinke often thinks about applying constructive journalism principles on her stories, and she does that on her blog stories. She also explained that constructive principles can be applied to strategic communication too, and every aspect and field where communication is practiced, which is an interesting perspective mentioned by neither of the other journalists. In her early career, Steinke didn't know that she wrote some constructive stories. In this research we heard the same from some journalists, especially those from B&H.

> *So, I didn't even know solutions or constructive journalism existed when I started, and this is interesting because I got these same answers when I was doing my dissertation interviews that a lot of journalists look for solutions, but don't call it solutions journalism, or they look for positive elements of things, but don't call it constructive journalism.*

From her perspective, it is very important to have organizations such as Constructive Institute or Solutions Journalism Network which have the money and resources and training programs to help educate the students and journalists about those journalistic concepts.

> *This is a formal institution, like we can do this on a systemic level if we fund programs, if we help people understand how to do this well, and so I wish I'd known about those things earlier because it would have helped me formalize my reporting process, it would have helped me, maybe ask more insightful questions when I'm doing my interviews as a journalist.*

Besides Steinke, Christopher Johnston is one of the journalists who is very familiar with the concept of constructive journalism. He has great writing experience on solution stories. Among US journalists, he is the only one who mentioned that "solution journalism was always practiced". On the contrary, the majority of B&H journalists told us that they practice or did practice constructive journalism in their stories before, although later conversation revealed that what they did report was actually feature journalism.

As an editor of The Great Salt Lake Heather May doesn't write stories, but, as she said, she "encourages solutions stories by emphasizing them in reporter and editor meetings". The Great Salt Lake Collaborative has been created by Solutions

Journalism Network in January 2022. They mostly write about crises facing the Great Salt Lake and what could be done to prevent them. She understands her role to help journalists in the editorial office to do more constructive stories very seriously. As Steinke pointed, it is really important to have institutional help when learning to write those kinds of stories.

> *Some of our news partners have been trained in solutions journalism through SPJ or other means. But I still think the concept is new to most of our members. They've been given training on the topic through Solutions Journalism Network. I've hired a solutions consultant to give 1:1 training to reporters and editors. Some journalists have tried it more than others. The Collaborative is paying for journalists from three newsrooms to travel to California to report on solutions stories related to air pollution mitigation and other topics. And another team of two newsrooms will be going to learn from how Las Vegas conserves water.*

The other two journalists from the US have less experience with constructive journalism, but currently both of them practice it. Anne Kniggendorf did not formally study journalism, but she "learned solutions journalism in practice". She explained that she would never call her stories solutions stories, but when you read them, they completely follow the structure of solutions stories and are noted down by Solutions Journalism Network[3].

Kniggedorf explains constructive journalism, in the same way as Evan Cobb, journalist from US and Haris Buljubašić, journalist from Bosnia, in terms of contextual or explanatory writing or telling stories.

> *If I am writing about something that seems maybe insignificant and not a news event, I want to be able to say here is how what we're doing locally fits with something of bigger concern or trend seen in other cities. Contextualizing is just very popular right now. People don't want a report, they want to know why whatever it is, the reading should take five or ten minutes of their day.*

For other journalists, like Evan Cobb, who has less experience in constructive journalism, it is "a new methodology", and the method of constructive journalism is new for him. His background is in peace studies and conflict resolution, and he thinks that constructive journalism has a lot of similarities to these fields.

> *Solutions journalism is a kind of constant conversation, it's not definitive. It's more of an open dialogue. We don't have all the answers in a story,*

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[3] Some of Kniggendorf stories can be found on Reason to be cheerful platform. Link: https://reasonstobecheerful.world/what-is-the-future-of-americas-greenest-town/ (12.4.2023).

there is no perfect answer. It's not about things done bad or good, we can always slightly improve them. Solutions journalism is about opening up a dialogue, and just that happening is a progress.

Journalists from B&H mistake the term constructive journalism with feature or narrative journalism, stories, thematic journalism, or explanatory journalism. However, even if they say that they do practice constructive journalism, they are usually aware that they don't do it systematically. Journalist Azur Delić prefers working on narrative, human-interest stories. He explains that those stories are harder to find, he constantly speaks with ordinary people to find such stories. However, he believes that most of his colleagues do write constructive stories.

We are a big newsroom. We are trying to find balance between breaking and feature stories. A lot of people have an opportunity to speak. However, sometimes we don't go to the end, in a sense that we offer solutions.

Azra Delmanović has a similar opinion, she explains that she and her colleagues have an opportunity to write more thematic stories ("meaning feature stories") on weekends when they have more time to choose stories they like.

Then (on weekend) editors let us write solutions, but that is just one paragraph, it is not enough.

Tahir Žustra is in a similar situation, he explains that "70 percent of stories are breaking, 20 are features and 10 are investigative" in his media. However, he believes that in his newsroom, constructive journalism is widely used even though they don't mention terms constructive or solution journalism.

We rarely end the story by just stating the problem. At the end, we call for responsibility or say what the solution mechanisms are.

In Haris Buljubašić's newsroom, editors and journalists use terms breaking stories and stories. He explains that he works mainly on explanatory stories. Same situation is in the newsroom of journalist Azra Husarić Omerović. She explains that they usually work on reportages, stories that report on war crimes, justice and the trials of war crimes convicts. Husarić Omerović understands constructive journalism as the solutions that journalists made with help of experts for the public.

BIRN B&H resorts to solutions journalism to a small extent as far as the topics we deal with allow. For example, through the topic of war crimes, after two years of active research and content preparation, BIRN B&H has extracted all the judicially determined facts about the war in B&H and adapted them with content in written and video format and offered them for introduction into the curriculum, i.e. primary and secondary curricula

school. Considering that this war period is hardly studied in the B&H education system, BIRN decided to contribute to this problem by engaging in it and offering a solution.

4.2. Constructive journalism in perspective

All journalists, to a smaller or greater extent, believe that constructive journalism has a bright future. Journalist Evan Cobb believes that constructive journalism definitely has perspective.

What's the motivation for doing this story? What will happen for five years if we continue down this path, as a community? There is definitely room for more complicated stories that unpack a little context, add a little history, and draw wider voices, maybe not the easiest accessible voices, but ones that matter more. I am asking myself, why is journalism being done? If it's for clicks and its quick efficiency but not actually for depth, accuracy and trust, it's like two conflicting things being held at one time.

He mentioned classic journalism several times as a "quote and quote news", while constructive or solutions journalism as "contextual and in-depth". His opinion is in correlation with Parks' conclusion about joy as a news value. As Parks explained, joy surely exists, the question is "whether we want to prioritize it, and what it might mean for ourselves, our field, and our planet if we do" (2021, p. 827).

When we discussed journalism and its threats and opportunities, a lot of respondents from both countries mentioned constructive journalism as a good opportunity for journalists to differentiate themselves from other producers of media content, but also as an opportunity for journalism to redefine its role in the world and gain its credibility as a profession.

Heather May believes that there is a great need in journalism for constructive journalism stories.

I think there is a real hunger for journalism that points people to solutions or how to get involved to solve problems. The most popular page on our website is the "get involved" tab. Of our top 40 news stories, about 40% would be solutions stories with titles like "The proposed plan to save the Great Salt Lake from drought;" "Could Utah children help shape the destiny of the ailing Great Salt Lake?" and "Utah farmer plants differently to save soil moisture during historic drought."

The same is with Johnston. He sees a growing need for constructive stories:

We are so overloaded with challenges from global climate changes, gun violence, and all of those things, racism, gender issues, obviously, conflicts such as Ukrainian and Russian. It can become overwhelming if all we're hearing are the problems, number of people being murdered, number of fires, homes burned out, it's just overwhelming for us as human beings. I don't want to overload people with that. I want to focus on what are the solutions, what can we do, because there are solutions, pretty much always, and people don't know about them.

Kniggendorf told us that it is important to tell the story in a compelling way, "with the ability to contextualize". She emphasized the importance of editors and general institutional support when it comes to practice of constructive journalism.

Editors are interested in a story that gives a reader some sort of big picture. That's what editors think readers want. In some cases, they want a call for action and they want to know why they should care.

Journalists from B&H also agreed that in journalism practice there should be more constructive-oriented stories, although they used to explain that "breaking stories should stay", too. Azur Delić said that it is possible that journalists "are afraid that their focus will be only on positive aspects of reality", while Azra Delmanović believes that it is "possible that journalists and media would be treated better if they offered more constructive stories".

Investigative journalist Azra Husarić Omerović shares a similar opinion:
Given that society is changing due to the advancement of technology and the improvement of access to information, and that everything is happening too quickly and that people's concentration remains at a very low level, it is necessary to adapt the content in a way to research, present, explain and offer a solution or reach a conclusion in the clearest possible form so that people remain interested in learning important information and read and understand it to the end.

Tahir Žustra was critical about journalists who are, as he explained, "just microphone holders". He also sees constructive journalism as a possible reporting method.

While journalists from the USA are more confident in their views on constructive journalism as useful for both media and society, journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina are more cautious. It seems that, similar to journalists from Croatia, they are afraid that they will seem biased or that they will be attributed with ties to politics if, besides problems in society, they also write about solutions.

4.3. Preferred news values among journalists

Five journalists from the US confirmed that they care about their audience a lot in our discussion about news values. They mentioned values such as hope, well-being of audience, mental health of audience. Steinke, for example, in her PhD research found out that the journalists she was talking to mentioned five news values they appreciate the most when they choose their stories and those values are: accountability, advocacy and social change, objectivity, emotions and hope. When it comes to objectivity as a news value, Steinke explains that she found very contradictory claims from her respondents. She pointed out that her opinion is that "no journalist can be objective, especially when you're reporting on systemic racism like there was a yes and a no".

> *And there are other people who say objectivity is the gold standard; objectivity is something that we should all do. But then, when you ask them, can you tell me what objectivity is, it sounds a little bit different, it involves elements of fairness and balance and context, like those things are all very important, but they also were passionate about being advocates and so that's why I listed advocacy and objectivity, as these values that were basically on par with each other and yet there's this tension around them.*

She also explains that journalists she talked with were very careful to say that they do not "write fluff pieces".

> *I don't write PR or public relations pieces and a lot of people think that solutions constructed news are fluff or PR or just trying to make a certain organization look good. Like if you're quoting someone from a nonprofit like Amnesty International, or something like that they make it sound like they're doing PR work for them, and they want to try to push back against that. But they're very passionate about maintaining that relationship between being an advocate and wanting social change while remaining objective by supporting elements of fairness and balance and context within the reporting.*

Journalist Azur Delić explained that constructive journalism stories are not valued very much in his newsroom. There are journalists who have sense for these stories, but most journalists he works with prefer breaking stories. Those stories are valued the most among his colleagues. It depends on the journalist's character what he/she will offer as a story.

As news values he adheres to, Delić mentioned significance for society, truth, objectivity, and empathy. He explains that empathy is important for human-interest stories.

Journalist Azra Delmanović said that B&H journalists should change journalistic values, especially the conflict news: "We cultivate the public to value conflict news."

"Journalism can't be the place where problems will be solved", said Haris Buljubašić, Aljazeera Balkans journalist. However, he added that there is a place and need for a change in the news culture. He thinks that new, young generations of journalists, should question the journalism canons.

> *We need more constructive stories, some shows are black and toxic, we shouldn't turn a blind eye to problems, but we need to go one step further. I can't be an expert on everything, but I can call those who know.*

Tahir Žustra from Nova TV told us that journalism in B&H needs a "good restart". He thinks that news values should be changed "gradually". However, breaking stories should stay. This is an interesting point of view among B&H journalists. They used to stress that breaking stories and values connected to them should stay, as if they think that constructive journalism is only positive journalism, although they mentioned that they do recognize this concept and that they know it is not "fluff journalism".

> *Every story gains legitimacy if it is humanized. There is more space for human stories in the local media. However, painful reality should not be excluded either. One should not exaggerate the negativity because people are often angry at the media because they have no one else to turn to. They don't like what they see and what they see is the truth.*

For investigative journalist Azra Husarić Omerović, news values are the public interest and story impact.

> *The values without which we cannot even do this work are objectivity, impartiality, comprehensiveness, providing context and solutions, verification.*

Evidently, while the focus of American journalists is shifting towards news values that include emotions, empathy, public welfare, Bosnian journalists insist on objectivity, public interest and other values characteristic of hard journalism.

4.5. Understanding objectivity as an obstacle in writing constructive stories

The US respondents have no doubt that constructive journalism is objective. They all share opinions about the need for change when it comes to negatively-oriented news stories. Heather May explained her media "mission" as she said:

> Our mission is to cover the whole story—the crisis and the response to the crisis and to find out what other places save water better and what we can learn from them. That's an inherently hopeful lens because it assumes there are solutions and that they should be explored/investigated.

Kniggendorf also mentioned that her focus is more on human-oriented than on elite-oriented stories, and she explains that she likes to positively surprise her readers with stories that inspire. She doesn't want to write problem-focused stories which she named "old-fashioned news reporting".

> Who wants to read that? Those kinds of stories still exist, but those stories are very brief and almost like a tiny news bulletin. I am starting to see more trend towards I person narrative which eliminates some objectivity, but generally solutions journalism is usually objective. Generally, choosing and leading a reader somewhere is always somehow biased. Negative stories are less objective than contextual stories.

Johnston also explains that constructive journalism stories are not just bright or positive stories, but whole, contextualized stories. He wants to show people that they are not "helpless and hopeless".

> Solutions journalism is objective. I take it very seriously. It does have an impact, because on one level it's just giving people the hope that someone is doing something to solve this problem. On another level, they can actually, in many cases, get involved themselves.

Cobb thinks that journalists should try to do more constructive stories and watch how people will react to them. It is objective for him, because the idea is "to show that problem is and will be there, but also that there is hope for solving it". He wants the media to be more proactive.

> By showing the audience what a complex and rich story looks like, they'll start to be more critical of the shorter story. If we're only responding when a problem is done, then we're part of that system, we're part of that ongoing circle.

As mentioned above, B&H journalists share the fear that they will risk their objectivity if they do more constructive stories. In their perception of objectivity,

breaking stories focused on problems in society are still the most objective. They have a bivalent opinion about constructive journalism. On the one hand, they consider the concept valuable and promising. On the other hand, they seem to fear that by using this approach they will lose their journalistic objectivity.

Delić explained objectivity as "rationality, exclusion of emotions, so that the story is not dominated by our attitude". Later, while talking about constructive stories objectivity, he mentioned that "emotions in human-interested stories do not affect objectivity".

Delmanović told us that journalists "have to talk about bad things that are happening". She added that "journalists can show that the story is not so dark".

> *When it comes to objectivity my opinion is divided. Journalists have to step out from their mental models. Constructive journalism can be objective. However, a journalist is not the one who should offer the solution. He/she has to find relevant sources to speak.*

Journalists from B&H often mentioned the experts as important for constructive journalism in terms of "offering solutions". However, in constructive journalism the emphasis is on the constructive tone of the story and not on the individual, including the experts. It seems that Bosnia and Herzegovina journalists are worried that anything beyond expert opinion could be perceived as biased. They did not mention the possibility for journalists to find examples of solutions, perspective or hope.

Buljubašić shares his colleagues' opinion about objectivity in constructive stories.

> *The trap of constructive journalism is promoting one's own opinions and views. I am not an advocate of complete distancing from the news, somewhere we have to maintain objectivity.*

Similar opinion is shared by Husarić Omerović.

> *Unfortunately, some newsrooms have a very clearly expressed work policy and reporting angle. Such newsrooms would be used by solutions journalism as a mask for something they want to present as a potential solution and offer it to the public. It is a huge space for manipulation of the public, because the audience often cannot distinguish such media and contents from really objective and professional ones.*

4.6. Willingness to create more constructive stories

In the end, interviewees from the US believe that there is a space and place for constructive journalism in the journalism profession, but also that there is an

interest for those stories from the audience. However, journalists need to produce more constructive-oriented stories and wait for the audience to accept this approach of reporting. As Steinke hinted, people usually "evolutionary desire negative news", and negative-bias is something that they used to see in the media.

> *So constructive journalism inherently combats and pushes against that which is going to be counterintuitive for audiences and yet the constructive. Institute at our House University in Denmark, they say that constructive journalism has three pillars of practice, those are a focus on solutions, a coverage of nuance and promoting democratic conversation. And you can see that in the Washington Post has the optimist it's that newsletter they sent out and like there's all these outlets that are now dedicated to constructive or solutions journalism and they're becoming economically viable but it's still very much a burgeoning field, because audiences are going to want the if it bleeds it leads kind of news and that sells ads and clicks and revenue.*

Reasons mentioned above show why we need institutionalization of the constructive journalism paradigm, as Steinke explained.

> *If journalism is supposed to promote democratic conversation it needs resources to do that, and it needs time and that can only happen if there's people who are investing resources and time into that effort, and so I don't think that it's natural for audiences to desire it yet, because they have been trained for centuries to not even know the value of it. And so, trying to change the way that people think in an evolutionary way is not easy, but I think it's a worthy effort.*

Other US journalists share opinions about the need for constructive stories. Evan Cobb explained: "Solutions journalism won't solve everything. But it can put something in motion or help".

These journalists also believe that constructive approach can help journalism regain the audience's trust. The main obstacles for implementing these stories are economic resources and journalism news culture.

Some of B&H journalists also believe so. However, there are several obstacles for implementing a more constructive approach to stories. Those are mainly time constraints, funding, editorial politics, news culture focused on negativity, journalists' willingness to write these stories, and weak capacities of newsrooms.

It is interesting that they mentioned people as a main obstacle several times. They explained that editors are usually desensitized for these stories, that journalists prefer breaking stories, that audiences also prefer negative stories,

experts who can help with explanations, the lack of quality interlocutors, low level of media literacy of politicians and citizens. Azur Delić mentioned that more constructive narrative in stories depends on journalists' sensitivity for it, Azra Delmanović thinks that the audience is impatient to read these stories. For Haris Buljubašić, it is "difficult to find an interlocutor who does not spread hatred", and the same opinion has Tahir Žustra who said that "politicians don't know how to speak with journalists".

Azra Husarić Omerović summarized their opinions:

Unfortunately, I am of the opinion that the public is interested in negative and dark stories and will read them regardless of what else is offered to them as an option, unless they are completely banned. We see this through analytics, how some darker stories pass compared to some positive ones. On the other hand, solutions journalism could in practice mean a larger volume of text and thus the time needed to analyze it, which is why I am sure that a significant number of the public will not use that content.

5. CONCLUSION

Ten journalists, five from the US and five from B&H, were interviewed. We have discussed several topics such as understanding of the concept of constructive journalism, news values that journalists follow in their practice, their opinions on constructive journalism, meaning of objectivity and future of constructive journalism and obstacles for its implementation.

As expected, journalists who already practiced constructive journalism or one of its forms (mainly solutions journalism) understand the concept very clearly. They also understand the importance of education on constructive journalism conducted by professionals from Constructive Journalism Institute or Solutions Journalism Network. Most of them have had an opportunity to cooperate with those organizations. Although US journalists understand that constructive journalism is different from classical breaking or feature reporting, they confuse the term constructive journalism with its most used form – solutions journalism. Reason for that may be their connection with Solutions Journalism Network. Other journalists, from US and from B&H, who have not had an opportunity to practice constructive journalism, often misunderstand this concept as explanatory or contextual journalism, storytelling, narrative or feature stories, human-interest stories. While journalists who have had the experience understand the concept properly, most of B&H journalists understand constructive journalism as a journalism that seeks for experts who will offer solutions on contemporary problems. However, all B&H journalists told us that they always practiced some

type of constructive journalism in their media, while only one journalist from the US told us so.

All interviewed journalists believe that constructive journalism has a bright future. There are similarities and differences between US and B&H journalists when it comes to news values they are following in their work. Importance for audience and objectivity is the same for everyone, but US journalists emphasized values such as hope, well-being of the audience and mental health of the audience that were not mentioned by B&H journalists. However, Bosnian journalists think that journalism should change from its very core, they mentioned that it "needs a restart", to change its focus from conflicts towards other values. It is important to stress that most of this country's journalists stressed that "breaking" reporting about "painful reality" should stay, as if they think that constructive journalism will present only positive stories or positive side of stories.

There are differences between journalists from two countries in understanding the objectivity of constructive journalism, but also in objectivity as a concept too. US journalists mentioned that constructive journalism is objective, that negatively oriented stories are more biased than constructive, that maybe "I person narrative eliminates some objectivity", but it still is more objective than negative stories, that constructive journalism gives a whole story. They called breaking reporting "old-fashioned" or "quote and quote" reporting.

Journalists from B&H are afraid that they will compromise their objectivity, which is core news imperative for them, if they use more constructive elements in their stories. They believe that biased media would take advantage of constructive journalism. These research findings correspond with results from Croatia, Netherlands, The Great Britain and Russia where journalists also show skepticism about constructive journalism objectivity.

In spite of this, Bosnian journalists agree with their US colleagues about the need for constructive stories. Journalists from both countries believe that journalism news culture focused on negativity and the lack of economic resources prevents journalists from doing more constructive oriented stories. B&H journalists also mentioned other obstacles such as editorial politics, the will of journalists, audience preferences, low level of media literacy of politicians and citizens.

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FORCED INTO A MEAT GRINDER OR DEFENDING THEIR HOME COUNTRY? THE REPRESENTATION OF ETHNIC HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS OF UKRAINE IN THE HUNGARIAN PRESS

Abstract: Before the Russian aggression, approximately 150,000 Hungarians lived in Ukraine, primarily in its areas bordering Hungary. So far, fighting has not affected this westernmost part of the country, but soldiers, including those of Hungarian ethnicity, have come to the front from here as well. The presentation of Hungarian soldiers shows a clear difference in the pro-government and independent press in Hungary. In our paper, we present the two separate representation systems. These have a significant impact on how Hungarian society views the war taking place in its neighbourhood. According to our results, the pro-government media presented the Transcarpathian Hungarian soldiers more as just passive victims, while in the independent media the soldiers often appeared as active agents, who in many cases started fighting voluntarily. The pro-government media reported more often on the allegedly violent and brutal conscription taking place in Transcarpathia, and also reported on the deaths in more detail. Regarding the independent media, it was regular during the period we examined that the soldiers presented as active agents were also personified and heroized.

Keywords: Ukraine, Russo-Ukrainian war, Hungarian press, representation, soldiers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In our study, we examine a specific segment of the media representation of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In the westernmost administrative area (*oblast*) of Ukraine, approximately 150,000 ethnic Hungarians lived according to the 2001 census. This war affected them, and other national minorities (Romanians, Slovaks, and Roma) in the same way as it did the Ukrainian majority. The full impact of the war on national minorities cannot be assessed yet since, at the time of our writing, the war has not ended.

In this article, we analyse the representation of ethnic Hungarian soldiers with Ukrainian citizenship in the Hungarian media. Thus, our article primarily examines the characteristics of the Hungarian media through the depiction of Hungarians in Transcarpathia. We studied this topic for more than a year from the outbreak of the war. We collected our sources from two pro-government and two independent media outlets using keyword searches. We categorized and analysed the articles based on their form and content, and then examined the discourse related to our research topic. Our hypothesis is that the representation of Hungarian soldiers from Transcarpathia fundamentally differs in the pro-government and in the independent media. We also assumed that we would uncover different framings and that the related discourses would significantly vary in the articles. Behind our hypotheses was our preliminary observation, which, considering the general Hungarian media discourse on the Russian-Ukrainian war, perceived a stark difference between different media representation systems. Regardless of its thematic constraints, our findings can contribute to comprehensive research on the discourse about the war.

In our paper, we first provide a brief overview of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia and touch on the main structural features of the Hungarian media system. Subsequently, we clarify the methodological and theoretical aspects of our research. After summarizing the characteristics of the articles found in the examined media outlets, we identify those thematic micro-discourses that essentially shaped and contextualised the media discourse about Transcarpathia in Hungary. Beyond the general media discourse on the Russian-Ukrainian war, the media representation of Hungarian soldiers is evidently embedded in this broader Transcarpathia discourse. We finally present our research findings on the media representation of Hungarian soldiers, organized into thematic nodes.

2. HUNGARIANS IN UKRAINE

The westernmost territory (*oblast*) of Ukraine has two known names. As this region was part of historical Hungary until the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, historical literature, and Hungarian professional and general writings referred to this area as Subcarpathia, in the sense of the foothills of the Carpathians (Pop, 2005, p. 481-482). After 1920, the region became part of Czechoslovakia, then after World War II part of the Soviet Union, and after 1991 part of Ukraine. Its current official name, Zakarpattia Oblast, meaning 'Beyond the Carpathians', reflects the perspective of Moscow, and later Kyiv (Pop, 2005, p. 496-497).

The plains forming the foreland of the northeastern Carpathians and the ridges of the Carpathians were somewhat peripheral in Hungarian history until the 19th century. During the age of national romanticism, the symbolic importance of this peripheral area grew, as according to Hungarian legends and archaeological research, the Magyar tribes came from this direction into the Carpathian Basin in the 9th century (Fodor, 2009). The first monument celebrating the Hungarian conquest was erected in 1896 at the Verecke Pass. The monument's tumultuous history aptly demonstrates the intolerance associated with national symbols placed in public spaces in Eastern Central Europe (Túri, 2013).

For many centuries, Transcarpathia had a mixed population. The last census of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1910 registered 55% Ukrainian/Ruthenian[3] inhabitants, 30% Hungarian, 11% German, 2% Romanian, and 1% Slovak inhabitants. Due to statistical methods of the time, a significant Jewish and Roma population was recorded as Hungarian. Because of the rapid changes in the territory's legal status outlined above, the proportion of nationalities fluctuated extraordinarily in 20th-century censuses. During the relatively long Soviet period, 75-78% of the inhabitants were Ukrainian, while 13-15% (around 150,000 people) were Hungarian, and 2% were Romanian. Due to the consequences of World War II, the German and Jewish populations disappeared from the region (Kocsis, 2001).

The number of ethnic Hungarians practically did not change after Ukraine gained independence. The 2001 Ukrainian census recorded 151,500 Hungarians in Transcarpathia, constituting 12% of the total population. No official census was conducted in Ukraine after 2001. In the summer of 2017, a research project of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences named SUMMA 2017 studied demographic processes with an extensive questionnaire sample. This research estimated the number of Hungarians at 130,000 in 2017. The primary reason for the decline was emigration (Tátrai et al. 2018).

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[3] We will not address the distinction between Ukrainians and Ruthenians in this context. Among others Paul Robert Magocsi provided good summaries of the debate (Magocsi 1999).

Due to the war, many Transcarpathian Hungarians and Ukrainians sought refuge in Hungary. From the outbreak of the war until June 30, 2022, the entry of 861,000 people from Ukraine to Hungary was registered (Tóth & Bernát, 2022). It is currently indeterminable how much of the population, including ethnic Hungarians, remains in Ukraine. Empirical research among the Hungarians indicated that a myriad of diverse and heterogeneous reasons might inspire emigration or staying in Ukraine (Kovách, 2022). If they stayed in Ukraine, Hungarian men of military age are subject to the conscription obligations prescribed by Ukrainian war laws. As it was mentioned above, we assume that the pro-government and independent sections of the Hungarian press reported differently about the conscription and about the Hungarian soldiers on the front.

3. SEGMENTATION OF THE HUNGARIAN MEDIA

The Hungarian media landscape witnessed remarkable transformations during the 2010s. According to Péter Bajomi-Lázár (2020), the media system in Hungary has shifted away from a more or less democratic-liberal model to what he defines as a patronage-client media system. This new media model bears an authoritarian hallmark. Although the media scene was already politically polarized prior to 2010, the 2010s saw this polarization intensify. PM Viktor Orbán's right-wing leadership executed an unprecedented media concentration and a notable surge in resources.

Gábor Polyák (2022) postulates that three critical elements underscore Orbán's media policy: the abolition of erstwhile independent supervisory institutions and the inception of government-aligned control organizations (1), a methodical and biased allocation of media market resources—emphasizing the state's overpowering role in the advertising sector and its uneven distribution (2), the relentless control over information access and dissemination, enabling the government to dominate both media and political agendas (3). A prevailing narrative from the right-wing purports that these measures ensure prolonged dominance for the ruling party. Remarkably, since 2010, the ruling faction has clinched three consecutive elections, each time with a two-thirds majority.

The zenith of Orbán's media centralization became glaringly evident in November 2018. With a theatrical act, pro-government media moguls freely handed over 476 various media outlets to the nascent Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA). This level of media concentration, unparalleled since the 1989 regime change, drew widespread criticism. However, dubbing this consolidation of 'national strategic importance', the Prime Minister shielded KESMA from potential probes. This media conglomerate now encompasses

influential national and local daily newspapers, like Magyar Nemzet and Délmagyarország, and significant online platforms such as Origo and mandiner.hu. A hallmark of KESMA-affiliated media is their consistent alignment with right-wing political agendas, mutual source referencing, and predominant funding via state advertisements (Bátorfy, 2022).

Paradoxically, despite the might of the KESMA universe, several government-critical journalistic factions have found significant traction online, even surpassing pro-government portals in reach. Yet, these predominantly left-leaning and liberal platforms grapple with financial constraints, compelling many to explore subscription-based models. Platforms like 24.hu, telex.hu, 444, and HVG stand out as the most popular government-critical portals.

Péter Bajomi-Lázár and Kata Horváth (2023) shed light on a pivotal development in Hungary's media landscape: they argue that due to deepening polarization, we have to view the 2020s media system through a bifocal lens. In their article, they underscore distinct disparities across parameters such as funding sources, political alignment, journalistic independence, role interpretations, and stylistic methodologies. These differences are so pronounced that they champion the concept of 'two media systems in one country' to encapsulate Hungary's media environment. A breakdown of these dual systems can be gleaned from the table below:

Table 1.
Source: Bajomi-Lázár – Horváth (2023)

	State media system	Market media system
Main source of funding	state advertising	commercial advertisements
Economic sustainability	profitable	hardly sustainable
Political parallelism	high	low
Autonomy	restricted	unrestricted
Newsroom logic	closed	open
Ideology	rightist	leftist or righist
Reporting style	one-sided	mostly balanced
Journalistic culture	collaborative	monitorial

Disturbingly, Hungary's rank plummeted from 26 in 2009 to 85 in 2022 on the Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index. This decline mirrors the bleak trust levels in Hungarian media, as evidenced by the 2022 Digital News Report. Polarization isn't just a media issue; the Hungarian populace is similarly politically bifurcated. For example, a 2022 survey also highlighted this divide: 85% of

opposition supporters perceived state media as propagandist, whereas 58% of pro-government voters echoed similar sentiments about the market media (Bajomi-Lázár & Horváth, 2023).

In our study, primarily for clarity, we term the components of the market media system as 'independent'. This terminology primarily emphasizes their relative insulation from political interference and their greater journalistic autonomy.

4. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

We considered the most widely read Hungarian news sites as the sources for our research. For the precise distinction between pro-government and independent views, we selected the most popular news outlets from the KESMA group and from among the market media. Due to the nature of our research question, we did not examine niche media outlets that just rarely publish news on politics and public affairs. Likewise, we excluded media that predominantly present tabloid content. Media outlets directly connected to opposition parties, explicitly affiliated with pro-government business circles but not owned by KESMA, and those with an uncertain status were also not examined.[4] As a result of these specifications, from the KESMA media we analysed the news portal Origo and the news portal of the daily newspaper Magyar Nemzet. From the independent media, we analysed the news portals 24.hu and Telex.

The outbreak of the war significantly influenced the readership of various news websites. According to a report from March 2022, due to the thirst for war news, the traffic indicators for 24.hu and Telex surged dramatically. During the first week of the war, these two sites were the most visited among independent, non-tabloid news media outlets. Users spent most of their time on average on index.hu, Telex, and 24.hu. The traffic to the KESMA-affiliated Origo did not increase due to the war, but the site still ranked among the most-read news portals. The pro-government Magyar Nemzet's website slightly increased its traffic during the first week of the war, but it did not rank among the top news portals (Bicsérdi-Fülöp, 2022). A press analysis published in June indicated that the KESMA-affiliated Origo initially reported objectively on the war events, but by the end of March, it took a pro-Russian turn, increasingly highlighting the aggressive stance of the Ukrainian side and emphasizing the superiority of the Russian president

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[4] We introduced the latter filter criterion primarily because of index.hu, which is among the most-read news websites, legally associated with businessmen close to the government, but currently has a rather unclear content orientation.

(Diószegi-Horváth, 2022). Our own research showed different results, though we only studied discourses related to Transcarpathia.

We defined our sample time interval between February 24, 2022 (the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war) and May 15, 2023. Due to the varying accuracy of the portal search engines, we constructed our corpus based on Google search results. We limited our Google searches to the aforementioned sites using the 'site:' command. Our corpus was defined by the simultaneous appearance of the search terms 'Transcarpathian Hungarians' and 'war'. Understandably, using the two search terms separately yielded many irrelevant results. To uncover micro-discourses more precisely during corpus compilation, we also used combined search terms like 'turul' and 'Transcarpathia', as well as the personal names 'Fegyir', 'Fedir', and 'Traski'. We will elaborate on their significance during our analysis.

Following the sampling described above, we identified 95 articles on magyarnemzet.hu, 45 articles on Origo. In the independent media examined, this number was 55 on telex.hu and 45 on 24.hu. Thus, our corpus consisted of 240 articles in total. It is important to note that all media covered the Russo-Ukrainian war in much greater depth during the examined period. In addition to the articles included in our corpus, the situation of the Transcarpathian Hungarians was also discussed more broadly (either not or only indirectly linked to the war). Our search questions most likely did not identify all articles on the topic but did identify the most significant part.

Due to the nature of our search terms, several texts were included in our corpus that only mentioned the situation of the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority in passing, such as when quoting a Hungarian politician. However, we did not find it justifiable to exclude these texts from a methodological standpoint. In the case of magyarnemzet.hu, the abundance of sources was due to the stronger presence of opinion journalism.

From a theoretical perspective, our research aligns with the Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis. However, instead of focusing on the examination of large societal macro-discourses, the method we follow is deemed suitable for researching narrower topics. Meanwhile, it retains the constructivist and power-critical orientation of the original Foucauldian concept (Glózer, 2007). In relation to media studies, this method of discourse analysis fundamentally assumes that the objectivity of press texts, interpreted as linguistic-ideological constructions, can never be fully achieved even in the most objective journalistic genres. Moreover, the concept of objectivity itself is hard to define. The shaping of these texts is inevitably influenced by various journalistic decisions, editorial expectations, journalistic conventions, and social, economic, and political factors (Jakusné, 2002; Van Dijk, 1988). The impact of external contextual influences and the

current power dynamics also determine the topics an article addresses, its linguistic elements, the narrative framing, and its explicit or implicit references. These decisions ultimately produce public texts that not only report on events and phenomena but also play an active role in the construction of social reality and in shaping the perception patterns of how the world is seen (Jakusné, 2002).

In our specific work, we employed the archaeological-genealogical approach of discourse analysis. In compiling our analytical viewpoints, we primarily took into account the four-level rule of discourse formation proposed by this approach (Glózer, 2007). Thus, we mapped the thematic field of the articles included in our corpus, the subjects and themes of the discourse, and examined their development and dynamics (1). We noted the primary statements recurrent in the discourse (2), tried to identify the frequently occurring concepts in the texts and the meanings attached to these concepts (3), and also attempted to determine the strategic function of the texts (4). Accordingly, our research was primarily of a qualitative nature. However, for some key thematic elements, concepts, and names, we also quantified their frequency of occurrence.

Beyond applying the aforementioned criteria, we also documented the timing and authorship of the writings. Furthermore, we found it important to record which media outlets the articles refer to. In these instances, we noted whether these references were openly contentious, mutually reinforcing, or merely cited as sources among the various media. While examining the source material, we also determined which broader discourse each article was connected to. In this context, an important question for us was how they define the situation of the Hungarians in Transcarpathia and what kind of relationship they establish between them and the Ukrainian majority. We felt it was important to uncover whether the Hungarian community of Transcarpathia is portrayed as active agents or passive subjects. We also recorded who among the Transcarpathian Hungarians are presented by the given media and in what way. Using all these aspects, we tried to identify the narrative universes that these texts form in the minds of their readers. What meanings are associated with the war, the Hungarians of Transcarpathia, and certain specific individuals based on these texts? Ultimately, how do the Hungarian soldiers from Transcarpathia appear in the Hungarian media's portrayal: as heroes or victims?

5. RESULTS

5.1. *Characteristics of our corpus in the examined media*

From the KESMA-affiliated Origo portal, 45 articles were included in our corpus during the investigated period. Out of the authors of these articles, only 6 are known by name, and they have authored 11 articles. Thus, in 34 cases, the medium used an authorship indication that does not allow for the precise identification of the author. In these cases, the author is listed as Origo, Mediaworks News Center[5], or MTI[6]. In the case of Origo, we found many cross-references. Origo cites KESMA or other pro-government media (e.g., Pesti Srácok, Magyar Nemzet, TV2, Metropol) 18 times, but also quotes the government-dominated state television's (M1) news broadcast. Independent media outlets (Telex, 444, Magyar Hang) are cited only four times. Additionally, there are four mentions related to Hungarian language media in Transcarpathia and two related to Ukrainian media in Transcarpathia. The mentions related to independent media are strongly qualifying: Origo's articles identify independent media as 'left-wing press'. Furthermore, they use the term 'dollar media' for these outlets. This alludes to the fact that, due to the aforementioned anomalies in the advertising market causing a lack of resources, these media, alongside their subscription systems, also try to find international sources that support free journalism. These sources might come from democratic European countries or the USA. In our corpus, there are no instances where Origo's journalists reported on-site from any part of Ukraine. On-site reports were only taken over from other pro-government media, but even these were exclusively prepared in Transcarpathia. According to our database, they had no on-site reports from Kiev, Bucha, or the front lines.

From the Magyar Nemzet website, which is also part of the KESMA system, we identified 95 texts matching our search terms. Out of these, 53 had specific authors named, while 42 were published with collective authorship. As mentioned earlier, the abundance of sources might be due to a more prominent presence of opinion journalism. 6 journalists appeared as authors of 3 or more articles, indicating that several staff members closely monitored the events surrounding the Hungarian minority. The Magyar Nemzet articles frequently referred to state or pro-government media (such as Mandiner, origo.hu, M1, and Pesti Srácok) as well as to Hungarian media in Transcarpathia. Notably, Magyar Nemzet did not refer to the most-read independent portals as sources. The

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[5] The pro-government newspapers examined are published by Mediaworks Hungary Zrt., which is owned by KESMA.

[6] MTI (Magyar Távirati Iroda) is Hungary's official news agency, the influence of which by the government was most recently exposed by the investigative portal Direkt36.

newspaper published numerous firsthand reports from Transcarpathia, with prominent figures from the local Hungarian minority public life. However, our database does not show any coverage of other parts of Ukraine.

From the independent news portal Telex, 56 articles were included in our corpus. Every article had a specific author. During the studied period, a total of 34 journalists wrote articles addressing Transcarpathia and the war concurrently. Among them, 8 journalists covered the topic in 3 or more articles. At least five Telex authors not only reported from Transcarpathia but also from Kyiv and its surroundings, as well as from the southern or eastern fronts. In terms of media references, Telex quoted pro-government media four times and the MTI (Hungarian News Agency) another four times. Comparable in number, they cited independent media 9 times and referred to Transcarpathian Hungarian or Ukrainian media just as often. There is no discernible bias or qualification from either side; they typically only cite facts, information, or official announcements from media sources. Surprisingly, we even found a report on a notably ad hominem video by a well-known pro-government influencer where critical tones are only cited from other public figures responding to the video, and not from the journalists themselves.

From the independent news portal 24.hu, we identified 45 relevant articles with the help of our search terms. In 37 cases, the authorship was clear, while in 8 cases, the article was marked with the editorial office designation. The journalists writing these articles came from a relatively narrow circle, with 10 authors writing more than 3 texts. A significant portion of the articles referred to another medium, and the cited sources were extremely diverse. 24.hu used both pro-government (Hír TV, M1, Magyar Nemzet, MTI) and independent sources (telex.hu, HVG, Klubrádió, rtl.hu). The referred media were not qualified, except for noting Magyar Nemzet's 'pro-government' status. The portal's on-site reports were primarily intensive following the outbreak of the war. Concerning the situation in Transcarpathia, one of the paper's most well-known journalists, József Nagy, reported from the scene. During the studied period, the news portal also had reports from Kyiv and near the frontlines. From a stylistic perspective, 24.hu's writings were highly characterized by a neutral journalistic style.

Even a mere descriptive characterization of the selected articles confirms many of the previously summarized features of the divided Hungarian media landscape. Pro-government newspapers typically referred to each other (thereby amplifying each other's voices), and when referencing independent media, they often immediately labelled them. Independent media had a much broader source material, and their references primarily aimed to simply indicate the original source of the information. Significant differences were also seen considering the authorship data of the articles. Collective authorship was much more present in

pro-government media than in independent portals. This is especially noticeable for Origo, where a striking proportion of articles lack a specific author. The difference, also visualized in the following chart, points to a perceptible depersonalization of pro-government media that has been ongoing for years, indicating a departure from professional journalistic ethos and pointing towards a much lower degree of journalistic autonomy.

Figure 1.
Distribution of authorship data of articles included in our corpus (black column: number of articles with specific author, gray column: number of articles published without an author name) (edited by the authors)
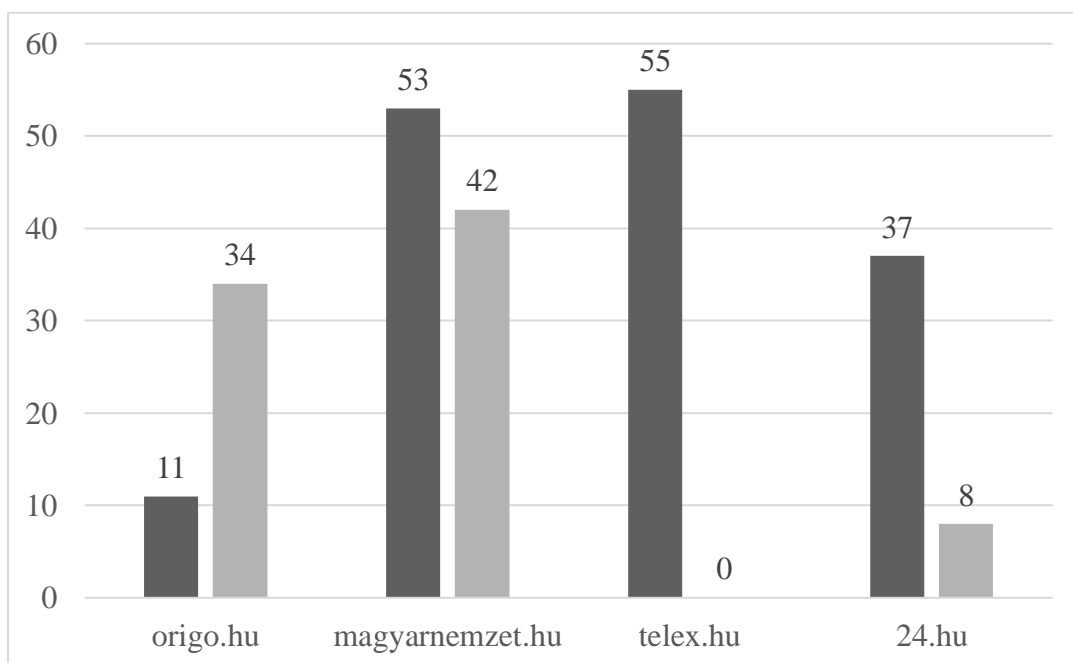
5.2. *Micro-discourses as Contexts*

Over the span of more than a year under study, distinct periods can be identified based on the dominant themes present in articles from various media outlets in our corpus. Initially, these themes were majorly aligned around common subjects, such as the outbreak of the war, the appearance of refugees in Hungary, events violating the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia, and the first deaths from Transcarpathia. However, as the war became protracted, a divergence in topics became apparent. This is especially true regarding the portrayal of

Hungarian soldiers from Transcarpathia. In the following, we provide an overview of those micro-discourses that prominently emerged during our research period. These micro-discourses contributed only contextually to our more specific area of interest: the media representation of Hungarian soldiers from Transcarpathia.

The micro-discourse of the refugee issue

After the outbreak of the war, the first articles on Origo were related to assisting ethnic Hungarians and Ukrainians arriving from Transcarpathia. In the context of Transcarpathia, the refugee issue was primarily acute in the first weeks of the war when it was not yet clear which areas of Ukraine would be exactly affected by the Russian aggression. Alongside humanitarian aid, there was already an element in Origo's articles that sought to distinguish between the current refugees and those identified as 'economic migrants' by the Hungarian government since 2015, coming from the Near East via the Balkans. After the outbreak of the war, the refugee issue was also the leading topic on the Magyar Nemzet's website. These, often heavily nationalistically framed articles, emphasized the importance of solidarity with Hungarians from Transcarpathia. The issue of legal violations affecting the Hungarians of Transcarpathia also quickly arose, mainly used by the site to construct a negative image of Ukraine.

In the case of Telex, the first articles also talked about the refugee crisis. One of them is a longer article aiming to assist the refugees, explaining Hungarian regulations, and also introducing NGOs involved in humanitarian aid that aren't mentioned in KESMA papers. During the war's initial period, the independent 24.hu also regularly covered the refugee issue. While most of the site's articles were generally neutral, emotional framing was evident in the refugee-related articles. Like Telex, the site also published a long list on how ordinary Hungarian citizens can help refugees from Ukraine. To sum up: in the context of assisting those forced to flee their homes due to the war, government media emphasized the state support, while independent media highlighted the civil assistance.

The micro-discourse of election and war

The second contextual micro-discourse can be defined as the connection between the war and the Hungarian elections. As Hungary was in the campaign period for the parliamentary elections 2022 during the war's early weeks, the issue of war quickly became an election topic. Especially after the opposition's prime ministerial candidate stated in a video interview that if NATO decides to send troops to Ukraine, military assistance from Hungary to Ukrainians might also arise. As the April election approached, articles on Origo dominantly linked the

war to the Hungarian opposition. The backdrop is that in this period the opposition harshly criticized the Hungarian government's decision to only provide humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, maintain dialogue and economic relations with Russia, not allow arms shipments aimed to Ukraine through Hungary, and delist prominent Russian public figures from the EU sanction list. As a result of the opposition's demands, the government labelled the opposition as 'war supporter' and consistently portrayed itself as the representative of peace. This epithet, 'war supporter', became a constant adjective for the opposition on Origo.

Despite the fact that only a small portion of the general war-related articles made it into our corpus, we have found five articles from Origo written in this tone. The ethnic Hungarians of Transcarpathia are hardly mentioned in these writings. After the criticism of one of the opposition leaders, the phrase 'would send Hungarians to their death' also appeared in the articles. It's worth noting that non-government-controlled media was identified as 'the left-wing press'. After the election weekend, which ended with another two-thirds victory for the governing party, Transcarpathia and its Hungarian population disappeared from Origo's war-related articles for a long time. Articles in the KESMA-affiliated Magyar Nemzet's site also frequently mentioned the 'war supporter left', that could potentially endanger the country, and the peace-party right, providing protection and support for every Transcarpathian.

Four articles from the independent Telex matched this microdiscourse, essentially describing government and opposition campaign events. At this time, both political sides discussed the war and the situation of the Hungarians in Transcarpathia during their campaign events.

The micro-discourses on the Turul statue and the Ukrainian language law

On October 13, 2022, the Ukrainian leadership of the city of Mukachevo in Transcarpathia decided to remove the Turul statue[7] in the city's castle and replace

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[7] The main figure of the monument is the turul, a bird of prey with outstretched wings, most likely a saker falcon, which already appears in the first written records of Hungarian origin myths. During the era of national romanticism, it became a symbol of national identity, not least because of the celebrations commemorating the Hungarian conquest in 1896. The statue in Mukachevo was one of seven monuments erected at various points in the country on the thousandth anniversary of the Hungarian conquest in 1896. These statues commemorated not just the conquest but also Hungarian statehood. In the 20th century, all statues that ended up outside of Hungary were toppled. The Mukachevo statue was removed in 1924. The turul figure was melt into a monument commemorating the Soviet victory in 1945 in the main square of Mukachevo. In 2008, the statue that was recently toppled was restored thanks to a donation from Imre Pákh, a Hungarian-origin American businessman. The turul remains a frequently used symbol in Hungary today. Turul statues can be found in many places throughout modern-day Hungary, and it also adorns the

it with a monument depicting a Ukrainian coat of arms. The removal of the statue further strained the already tense Hungarian-Ukrainian relations. A precursor worth mentioning is the subdued reactions of previous Orbán governments to Russian interventions against Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity (e.g., the annexation of Crimea). Relations were further strained by the determined protest of the Hungarian government against the 2017 Ukrainian language law, which severely restricted the mother tongue rights of minorities due to the Russian threat and affected not only the Russian-speaking population but also ethnic Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, and Slovaks. In recent years, the Hungarian government has generally used this minority rights-infringing language law to justify why it does not support Ukraine's accession to the Western alliance system.

The pro-government media articles frequently mentioned the issue of minority language use, and the accusation of forced Ukrainization was also formulated. Moreover, according to one of Magyar Nemzet's editorial articles, a 'cultural war' was underway against the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia. In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, this expression might have suggested that although Ukraine only has an armed conflict with Russia, in the realm of culture, the Ukrainian state is also waging war against the Hungarians of Transcarpathia. Another article in the government-aligned newspaper even articulated the idea that it's only a matter of time before the notion of 'the physical extermination of Hungarians' arises from the Ukrainian state.

Not surprisingly, Origo reacted to the toppling of the Turul statue with strong-toned articles. This theme was dominant in the pro-government media until the end of January 2023. Magyar Nemzet's site covered the Turul issue in nearly 20 articles just in October 2022. The prevailing discourse of these articles at that time juxtaposed Hungarian humanitarian assistance with the anti-Hungarian, 'barbaric' actions of Ukraine. The strategic purpose of this juxtaposition in the pro-government media could have been to reinforce a negative image of Ukraine. The name of the Mukachevo mayor who ordered the removal of the statue, Andrej Baloha, frequently appeared in the articles, personalizing the anti-Hungarian actions.

Since the rights violations of the Hungarians in Transcarpathia represented one of the leading topics in our corpus, we conducted supplementary research on how often the 2017 Ukrainian language law or any issues related to minority language use were thematized in the selected 4 news portals. Our preliminary assumption was that in the pro-government press, which uses the issue of rights violations for strategic purposes, the language issue was mentioned more frequently than in the examined part of the independent media. We conducted

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Hungarian 500 Forint banknote. In areas outside of Hungary but inhabited by Hungarians, there are a few dozen statues. Cf. Turi 2013.

searches using the term 'language', and due to the general usage of the term, we checked with every hit whether the word's occurrence in the text pertains to the topic of minority language use. Our results, as can be seen in the following figure, did not fully confirm our initial hypothesis. While the percentage of articles thematizing the Ukrainian language law or the issue of minority language use was considerably higher in the pro-government press, the issue of language use was also frequently thematized in the independent media. Especially, we found many mentions in articles of the Telex, although the context and strategic aim of these mentions were fundamentally different from those in the pro-government media. Our results show that the problematic nature of Ukraine's language regulations, which indeed heavily restrict the use of minority languages, was a concern for the entire Hungarian public sphere during the examined period.

Figure 2.
Percentage of articles thematizing the Ukrainian language law or the issue of minority language use in some way, within our corpus (edited by the authors)
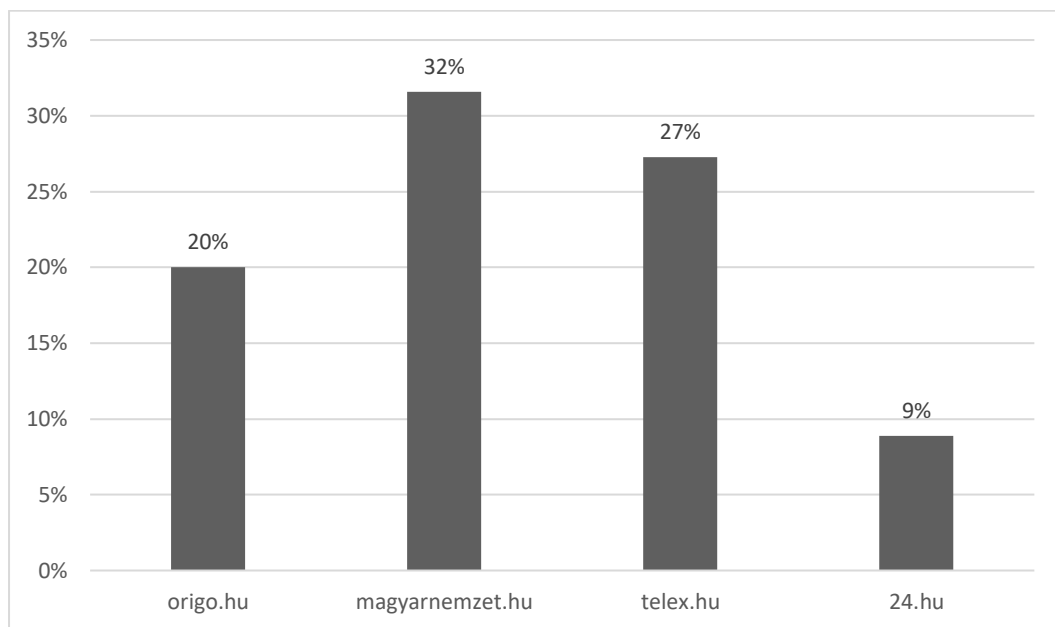
5.3. *Representation of the Transcarpathian Hungarian's role in the war in Hungarian media*

Our main results, focusing on the representation of Hungarian soldiers from Transcarpathia, are presented in the following thematic nodes: conscription among Transcarpathian Hungarians, ethnic Hungarian soldiers on the frontlines, and fallen Transcarpathian Hungarian soldiers. From a methodological perspective, it's worth noting that only a portion of our complete corpus addressed the war involvement of the Transcarpathian Hungarians.

Conscription in Transcarpathia

As we touched upon while presenting the micro-discourses, after the outbreak of the war, the entire Hungarian press reacted with dedicated articles to the surging tide of refugees. It was in these articles that the topic of conscription first emerged. In its report recorded at the Ukrainian-Hungarian border, Telex interviewed a Hungarian man fleeing from conscription. The independent 24.hu also featured several ethnic Hungarians who were fearful of the expected draft. A man quoted in one of the articles expressed that he had no desire to fight in a conflict that solely concerned the Russians and the Ukrainians, and had nothing to do with the Hungarians.

This narrative was further radicalized by the pro-government media in the initial weeks of the war. An article in Magyar Nemzet's site quoted a Hungarian from Transcarpathia as saying, 'I won't die for their homeland.' Magyar Nemzet also shared the view of a local resident of conscription age, who believed that the Russians were just 'dragged into' the current war, with Ukraine merely serving as a pretext. The report also levelled an accusation against the Ukrainian administration, alleging that they provided refuge in the war-inaffected Transcarpathia to 'party-going' Ukrainian refugees from the eastern territories, while sending the local Hungarians to the front through conscription.

After the first weeks the topic of conscription did not resurface for quite some time in our corpus. However, as the war progressed in Ukraine, the conscription of eligible men became increasingly extensive. By the end of June, articles on this topic appeared simultaneously in both the pro-government and independent media. Relying on Magyar Nemzet, the pro-government Origo reported that local Hungarians were shocked that Transcarpathians were being drafted while Ukrainian men fleeing from the eastern part of the country were reluctant to join the army. At this time, Telex revisited the account of the man who had fled conscription at the end of February. However, during the spring and summer months of 2022, independent media outlets, including Telex and 24.hu,

featured several reports on Hungarian soldiers who joined the Ukrainian army not through compulsion but voluntarily, painting a more balanced picture.

The issue of conscription was thematized again in the discourse in October 2022, partly due to the first deaths of ethnic Hungarians from Transcarpathia, and partly because of Viktor Orbán. During a press discussion in Berlin, The Hungarian Prime Minister stated that '200 Hungarians have died. When we talk about the war, we Hungarians have already lost 200 of our people, who died on the front as conscripted soldiers. Most of them had dual citizenship.' Orbán's speech in Berlin was not without precedent. In his Tusnádfürdő (Tusványos) speech in the summer of 2022, the Prime Minister had mentioned significantly more Hungarian victims than what could be inferred from the data published. At that time, a journalist from 24.hu compiled in a detailed article, what we could know about the war involvement of ethnic Hungarians from Transcarpathia based on official sources. In October 2022, the pro-government media outlet, Origo, provided a detailed presentation of Orbán's speech in Berlin, reflecting the government's position without adding any commentary. Telex also presented the speech on the same day without comment. A week later, the independent Telex revisited the topic in light of a Hungarian ethnic soldier's family receiving governmental assistance from Hungary. The article featured an interview with the fallen soldier's mother, who stated that her son had voluntarily joined the Ukrainian army. The text provided an overview of the losses and, referencing a local Hungarian newspaper, mentioned nine Hungarian casualties. The article concluded by citing Orbán's statement about the 200 deceased and noted a significant discrepancy between this figure and local data. It also emphasized that a portion of the Hungarians from Transcarpathia were not conscripted under duress but had chosen to fight voluntarily.

From autumn 2022, the governmental communication not only began mentioning the casualties but framed it within an increasingly complex narrative, diverging from the independent media, composed of various micro-discourses. Days after the Orbán's speech in Berlin, the city council of Mukachevo decided to dismantle the Turul statue located in the castle. In pro-government media, the debate about the Hungarian casualties began to intertwine increasingly with articles about Hungary providing humanitarian aid and alleged anti-Hungarian atrocities by Ukraine. The independent media also reported on the dismantling of the Turul and the restrictions on Hungarian rights due to the Ukrainian language law, but they did not connect these events to the Hungarian casualties or conscription; these topics appeared in separate articles, without commentary. The already bifurcating discourse drifted even further apart when a successful Ukrainian offensive liberated the vicinity of Kharkiv around the same time. Several soldiers of Hungarian ethnicity, including Fegyir Sándor, participated in

the operation. Sándor soon became one of the key figures in the discourse we examined. According to our corpus, the Hungarian relevance of Kharkiv's liberation was reported only by the independent Telex and 24.hu.

In the articles from the pro-government media included in our database, there was no mention of the Hungarian frontline soldiers at this time. In fact, the direction of the pro-government discourse became even more radical in parallel. In early November 2022, an aggressively-toned opinion article written by a pro-government influencer presented the government's stance on the war in even cruder terms than Orbán's Berlin statement: this is America's war, and Hungary has nothing to do with it. The influencer's piece made evident a notion that was increasingly emerging in the pro-government media: that Russia didn't want this war at all. Ethnic Hungarian soldiers were clearly depicted as victims of the forceful Ukrainian conscription: 'The longer the war goes on, the more Hungarians from Transcarpathia will die. Because the Ukrainians are diligently taking them to the front.'

The pro-government media revisited the topic of ethnic Hungarian soldiers in January 2023. During this time, Origo covered the topic of conscription in four articles over the span of four days. According to these texts, there's a violent and disproportionately anti-Hungarian conscription ongoing in Transcarpathia. Short video materials taken from KESMA media outlets and filmed in Transcarpathia depict a 'brave' investigation in a perilous world, where journalists strive to find evidence of recruitment targeting Hungarians. This is when the terms 'meat grinder' and 'bullet catcher' in relation to Hungarians first appeared in the discourse. In the pro-government media, these articles built on one another, further deepening the previously mentioned narrative. Some articles even argue that the Ukrainian state holds no moral high ground in continuing the battles, suggesting that Ukrainians themselves aren't motivated by the war, all while anti-Hungarian sentiments intensify. Phrases like 'forced conscription' and 'manhunt' appeared in descriptions of the draft.

In relation to on-the-ground recruitment, these articles emphasized the brutality and insensitivity of Ukrainian authorities. A report in the Magyar Nemzet's site even suggested that the Ukrainian military leadership is rumoured to deploy a specific brigade, comprising mostly of Transcarpathian Hungarians, in the bloodiest battles. The rationale might be that the Ukrainian military command is more willing to sacrifice units filled with national minorities. The escalating articles in the pro-government media network reached their pinnacle with an article by a government-affiliated influencer in January 2023. This article attacked opposition journalists and civilians assisting those fighting on the front lines. By using personal attacks in the narrative, the pro-government media established an extreme position on the topic: 'Of course, the Hungarians from Transcarpathia

don't want to participate in the war between Ukraine and Russia. They are expressly averse to being conscripted... Not to mention, the Hungarians from Transcarpathia feel that the Ukrainians are using them as bullet catchers.'

The independent Telex in January did not merely write about conscription, but also dedicated more space to voluntary ethnic Hungarian soldiers. We will delve into this topic later on. The only article that explicitly dealt with the issue of conscription was essentially investigative in nature. At the end of January 2023, it was reported that, according to the Russian news agency Ria Novosti, the Hungarian foreign minister strongly protested against the conscription of Hungarians during a UN Security Council meeting. No evidence of this could be found in a video uploaded to the foreign minister's Facebook page. However, Telex interviewed an expert from the government-affiliated think tank, Mathias Corvinus Collegium, about the conscription. In this, the pro-government expert clarified that contrary to all rumours, the conscription does not exclusively target Hungarians. The actions of the Russian news agency at the end of January undoubtedly fitted the narrative of the Hungarian pro-government media, but based on our current knowledge, it was more likely a disruptive action.

We conducted a supplementary quantitative research to determine the frequency of the variants of the words 'peace' and 'volunteer' appearing in the articles. Our preliminary assumption was that due to the government communication that increasingly emphasized the paramount goal of reaching peace as soon as possible, we would encounter more articles in the pro-government press with variations of the word 'peace'. Regarding variations of the word 'volunteer', our hypothesis was that expressions related to voluntary assistance and voluntary enlistment would appear more frequently in independent media. The results shown in the subsequent chart confirmed both of our hypotheses:

Figure 3.

Frequency of occurrence of variants of the words 'peace' (black) and 'volunteer' (gray) in our corpus (during the analysis, we counted one mention even if the given word variant appeared multiple times in the article) (edited by the authors)
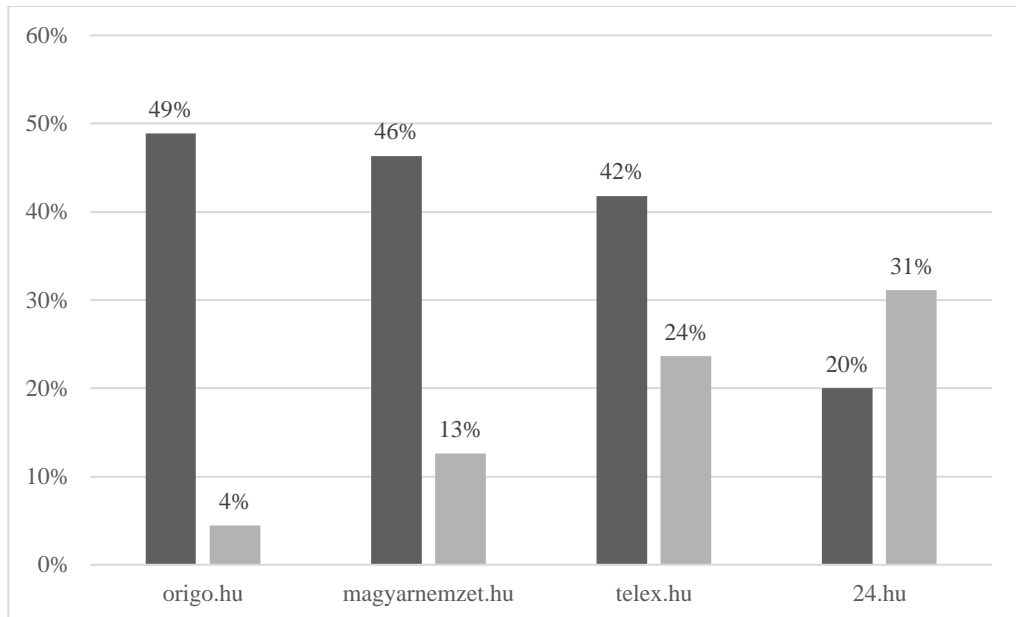
Personalized Hungarian Soldiers on the Front

The independent Telex first wrote about Hungarian soldiers actively serving on the front in May 2022. The occasion was the awarding of a significant scientific prize by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) in May 2022 to Viktor Traski, a mathematician of Hungarian origin from Uzhhorod University, who was serving on the front. The article highlighted that Traski had voluntarily enlisted in the Ukrainian army the day after the Russian attack. Traski thanked for the award in a video message recorded in a bunker on the front, which was played in front of the general assembly of the MTA and was also included in the Telex article. The independent media's attention immediately turned to the calm, thoughtfully speaking young mathematician, who quickly became one of the faces of Hungarians defending their homeland. The 24.hu also reported in early May about the mathematician fighting on the front, emphasizing that 'Traski did not have to enlist, he had no military experience, but he volunteered and became a soldier in the 128th Mountain Brigade'. The disproportionate media portrayal of the

mathematician is shown by the fact that Traski appeared in a total of 10 articles in our corpus, 9 times in independent media and only once in pro-government press. The pro-government Magyar Nemzet once discussed Traski's award in a longer article in May, portraying generally the situation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, mentioning that the mathematician is currently fighting in the Ukrainian army, but did not mention his volunteering.

Another key figure in the discourse on Hungarians from Transcarpathia fighting on the front is Fegyir Sándor, a professor from Uzhhorod National University, who also volunteered for combat. He came to the attention of the Hungarian public in May 2022. The 24.hu reported, with a visual illustration attached, that the professor gave an online lecture to his students from a trench, holding a weapon in his hand. A few months later, Sándor also appeared as a positive figure of the war in pro-government publicity. However, Magyar Nemzet, in relation to the professor, pointed out that Sándor identifies himself as a Ukrainian from Transcarpathia, even though 'Hungarian blood also flows in his veins'.

Sándor reappeared in the independent press in October 2022, in connection with the Ukrainian offensive near Kharkiv in the autumn, with the news that, together with a Hungarian unit, they liberated three villages near Kharkiv. This was also captured in a photo where they posed with a Ukrainian flag and a Hungarian flag representing the 1956 Hungarian revolution with a hole in it. The message of the image was clear, suggesting that Ukraine's fight for independence can be paralleled with the Hungarians' struggle in 1956. The photo taken near Kharkiv was published by both Telex and 24.hu. Sándor appeared a total of 18 times in our corpus, 12 times in independent media and 6 times in pro-government media.

From the autumn of 2022, more and more articles about the two soldiers began to appear in independent media. The fact that both university lecturers volunteered was always emphasized, which fundamentally contradicted the narrative of forceful and disproportionate conscription presented by pro-government media at this time. The discourse about Hungarian volunteers from Transcarpathia also includes the re-broadcast of a report from a local television, which the independent Telex published in December 2022. The brief interview was conducted with Tímea Fábián, a violinist of Hungarian nationality from Uzhhorod, who took on a three-month service on the front. After the article was published, other independent media outlets also approached Fábián.

At the beginning of 2023, Telex reported that one of the market-leading commercial televisions, RTLdid not broadcast the greetings of the president of the republic after the midnight national anthem on New Year's Eve 2023, but instead conveyed the thoughts of Viktor Traski recorded from a trench. In an article about

Fegyir Sándor in January 2023, they reported for the first time about a Hungarian civil movement that supports Hungarian soldiers fighting on the front with non-weapon equipment (night vision goggles, drones, batteries, clothing). Although the article doesn't mention it, the movement, which has collected more than 100 million HUF by now, called 'Transcarpathian Dragon Supply', implicitly stands as a civic moral critique of the official policy of the Hungarian government.

In early 2023, Traski and Sándor, the volunteer professors from Uzhhorod, became symbols of moral-based homeland defence in the independent media. Sándor began to be called the 'professor of the trenches'. In January 2023, both 24.hu and Telex reported that the Ukrainian-Hungarian artist Mihály Kolodkó, well-known in Budapest, even made a miniature statue of the professor depicting him teaching from the trench. Partly in response to this process, at the end of January, a well-known influencer from the pro-government public questioned Fegyir Sándor's Hungarian identity and political independence. In an article appearing on Origo, he wrote that Fegyir Sándor is 'partly half Ukrainian, and partly politically involved in Zelensky's party; several interviews with him can be found online, and while he gives the impression of being a decent man, he fundamentally possesses a Ukrainian identity'.

Given the official Hungarian policy of only providing humanitarian assistance and the Hungarian government communication that avoids explicitly blaming Russia, it's not surprising that in March 2023, the previously mentioned Viktor Traski voiced open criticism about the Hungarian government's stance. In an interview given to Telex journalists at the front, he said: 'We are not leaving our country, why can't we be given the opportunity to defend ourselves? I don't understand the position that we shouldn't receive weapons. It was painful to hear.' Also in early March, Telex reported that the two Hungarian soldiers personally met at the front. In a photo they shared on Facebook, they pose pointing to the Ukrainian flag on their uniforms and the Hungarian flag they sewed on. Their textual comment was critical yet nuanced, speaking of 'shameless politicians' and the 'wise people' who see through them. This was the moment when the representation of the volunteer Hungarian soldiers reached the threshold of the pro-government media, which had largely been silent about them until then. A few days later, both Telex and 24.hu reported that after seeing the soldiers with the Ukrainian and Hungarian flags, a pro-government influencer not only questioned the moral basis of their actions but also presumed some sort of mental deformation in their case, stating: 'numerous historical examples and situations testify that residents of countries treated as second-class by their own nations, time and time again, take pride in being sent to the slaughterhouse as second-class citizens.'

In the world of the pro-government media, which regularly resorts to personal attacks and confrontations, this particularly offensive statement caught

them off guard in a completely unexpected way. Two weeks after the outburst by the pro-government influencer, the independent press reported the first news that Ukraine would nominate Fegyir Sándor as its next ambassador to Budapest. In response to this information, the pro-government press repeatedly published a picture of Fegyir Sándor reading the Magyar Nemzet at the front, implying that the 'professor of the trenches' might identify politically more with the views of the Hungarian right-wing. It would definitely be worth following the continuation of the media discourse around Fegyir Sándor in the summer months as well since the debate over Sándor's ambassadorial appointment intensified then. The intention of political appropriation not only appeared with Sándor but also from the Hungarian political opposition in the case of Traski. As reported by 24.hu, in March 2023, Traski received an award from an opposition party European parliamentary representative in Hungary. In his acceptance speech, the mathematician drew parallels between the struggle on the Ukrainian front and the Hungarian revolutions of 1848 and 1956.

As can be seen from the chart below, the personalities of Sándor and Traski primarily appeared in the independent press. In Sándor's case, we could register quite a few mentions from the pro-government publicity as well, but some of these were notably offensive or appropriative. The story of Viktor Traski was almost completely silenced by the segment of the pro-government press we examined.

Figure 4.
Number of articles mentioning Fegyir Sándor and Viktor Traski in our corpus (black column: mentions of Fegyir Sándor, gray column: mentions of Viktor Traski) (edited by the authors)
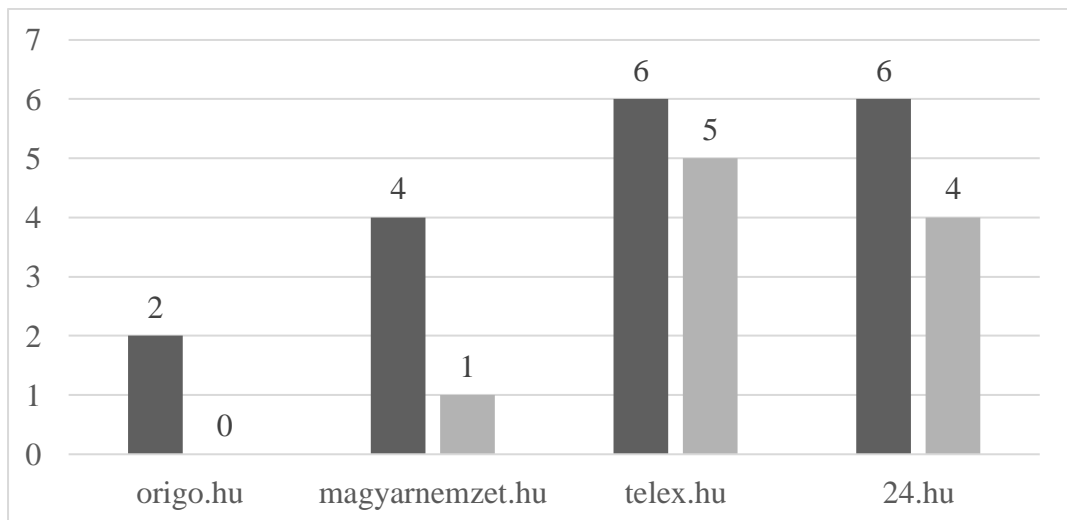
Hungarian Casualties

Understandably, as the war progressed and intensified, more and more recruits from Transcarpathia lost their lives. In the pro-government media, the 'dead Hungarians' generally appeared after Viktor Orbán's speech in Berlin in the fall of 2022. A week after Orbán's Berlin speech, the independent Telex reviewed the Hungarian casualties. A deceased soldier's mother was also interviewed. The article revealed that her son had voluntarily joined the army.

In our corpus, we first found an article about specific Hungarian casualties on the pro-government Origo in January 2023. The article named both Hungarian and Ukrainian-named soldiers. The text reported that Hungary had assisted the families of 12 Hungarian soldiers. Immediately after, however, they wrote about estimated Hungarian losses in the hundreds, and that Ukrainian authorities were concealing the deaths even from the relatives. Accusations of the intentional concealment of deaths were also articulated in articles in Magyar Nemzet. During this same period, Origo took over videos from other KESMA media outlets where pro-government Hungarian journalists tried to locate railway wagons in Transcarpathia believed to be hiding the bodies of numerous deceased Transcarpathians. The article claimed that Ukrainian authorities were hiding the deceased so that nobody would know the true extent of the losses. While they did not manage to find the wagon, they did report on a Hungarian soldier's funeral. The article emphasized that compared to the known 12 victims of Hungarian nationality, the real number could be in the hundreds. In the embedded video, a Hungarian widow and a deceased soldier's sibling were interviewed. The commentary, while listing the horrors of the war, did not mention Russia's responsibility, in fact, it did not mention Russia at all. The interviewed Hungarian soldiers appeared only in this video; they are not approached or questioned again regularly, unlike Traski or Sándor by the independent media. A likely reason for this might be that the interviewed soldier was a woman, implying she was a volunteer.

In January and February 2023, the pro-government newspaper, Magyar Nemzet, also reported the Hungarian's massive losses. On several occasions, it published the names of deceased Transcarpathian Hungarian soldiers, describing their age, family status, and the circumstances of their deaths. The paper also reported that a morgue near Mukachevo was allegedly filled with the bodies of fallen Transcarpathian soldiers. In March, Magyar Nemzet interviewed the widow of one of the first Transcarpathian victims, Kis Sándor. The pro-government media outlet repeatedly highlighted that the victims' families receive support from the Hungarian state on every occasion. The paper also alluded several times that the western delivery of arms and the United States are also highly responsible for the

war casualties in Transcarpathia. This sentiment was most explicitly expressed in one of Magyar Nemzet's articles in May: 'America pours weapons into Ukraine by the trainload and sends its training officers so that, through the corpses of Ukrainian citizens – including Transcarpathian Hungarians – it can pursue its own geopolitical and business interests.'

In February 2023, the independent Telex published a lengthy article exploring the issue of military deaths and everyday life in Transcarpathia. They interviewed local Hungarian representatives who remained in the area, mayors, and local government leaders. In April, they reported on another Hungarian casualty. An expert they consulted considered Orbán's earlier claim of hundreds of Hungarian casualties to be an exaggeration. In April, Telex also covered a soldier's death related to the release of a video showing the beheading of a Hungarian-named soldier from Nagyszőlős near Bahmut. The report on the evident war crime maintained an objective tone, not attempting to exploit the heinous act for a strategic-political purpose. The brutal action by the Russians was also covered by 24.hu. The latest death report in our corpus was published in mid-May by both Origo and 24.hu. Without any commentary, they reported the deaths of several Transcarpathian soldiers with Ukrainian names. 24.hu noted that the fallen soldiers served in the same battalion in which Fegyir Sándor also fought.

6. CONCLUSION

In our research, we set out to map the discourse in Hungarian media regarding the war participation of Transcarpathian Hungarians. After presenting the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority and the Hungarian media system, we established our methodological and theoretical starting points. Subsequently, with the help of our search terms, we characterized our compiled corpus, pointing out that even this descriptive characterization confirmed many features of the bipolar Hungarian media system. Using an archaeological-genealogical approach to discourse analysis, we then examined the media representation of Transcarpathian Hungarian soldiers. We found that the topic under investigation is contextualized by several micro-discourses, such as the arrival of refugees, Hungarian elections, the Ukrainian language law, and the micro-discourse on the toppling of the Turul statue in Mukachevo.

Regarding the topic of conscription, both the pro-government and independent media initially focused on local fears and outrage. However, from the fall of 2022, the discourse began to diverge. In the pro-government media, there was increasing mention of violent, completely insensitive conscription, while the independent media focused more on voluntariness. In the case of frontline soldiers,

primarily two university professors, Viktor Traski and Fegyir Sándor, became pivotal in the examined discourse. The voluntarily enlisted Traski hardly appeared in the pro-government media, while the independent media reported several of the mathematician's statements. Signs of cult formation were evident also around Fegyir Sándor in the independent media. The pro-government media primarily questioned Sándor's Hungarian identity, but after the news of his ambassadorial appointment, pro-government journalists also attempted to leverage Sándor. Finally, considering the topic of Transcarpathian casualties, it can be noted that the examined part of the pro-government press specifically tracked the development of casualty data, reporting the deceased soldiers' names, ages, and family situations. The pro-government media reported on the Transcarpathian casualties more frequently than the independent media. Unlike in the case of frontline soldiers, since we hardly get to know anything about the activities of Transcarpathian Hungarian soldiers on the front from the articles in the pro-government media. In conclusion, Transcarpathian soldiers appeared primarily as passive, conscripted victims of the Russo-Ukrainian war in the pro-government media, while in the independent media they often appeared as active, often voluntarily enlisted participants. This was also supported by a broader discursive framing. Pro-government outlets regularly pointed to the conflicting relationship between Transcarpathian Hungarians and the Ukrainian majority, highlighting an ongoing 'cultural war', while in the independent media, references were often made to the existence of unity between Transcarpathian Hungarians and Ukrainians.

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FACING THE CRISIS: REPRESENTATIONS OF EUROPEAN CRISES AND SOLIDARITY IN CROATIAN AND SERBIAN BROADSHEET PRESS (2007–2017)

Abstract: The paper examines the representation of European crises and solidarity in the Croatian and Serbian broadsheet press between 2007 and 2017. With the help of corpus-based discourse analysis, informed by the discourse historical approach, the study aims to explore the relationship between these crises and the concept of solidarity by analysing the discursive patterns and examining how the meaning of European solidarity evolved over time. The research focuses on broadsheet press, which should provide insights into discursive patterns considered authoritative. The corpus included 19,191 articles from two Croatian newspapers *(Večernji list, Novi list)* and two Serbian newspapers *(Politika, Danas),* selected based on wide circulation and diverse ideological profiles. The findings reveal a dialectical relationship between crisis and solidarity, with solidarity being invoked primarily in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the Eurozone crisis, and the 2015 refugee crisis. It is the latter that marks a significant shift in the discourses on Europeanisation in both countries, as proved by the analysis of verb collocations of the lexeme *Europa/Evropa* 'Europe'. Especially in Serbia, there was a significant transition from attempts to extend the limits of European solidarity to the focus on unsolidarity within the European Union. The analysis also reveals the active role of news language and media in constructing the concept of the European crisis in Croatia and Serbia.

Keywords: discourse analysis, corpus-based discourse analysis, Europeanisation, Croatia, Serbia, media discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

In many respects, the period between 2007 and 2017 shaped the current discourse on European integration in Southeastern European countries and on the continent

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in general. A number of crises and challenging events occurred, including the global financial crisis, the Kosovo declaration of independence, the Eurozone crisis, the 2014 Russian aggression on Ukraine, the 2015 refugee crisis, and the Brexit referendum – some of them influenced the situation in Southeastern Europe directly.

The paper aims to examine the representation of European crises in the Croatian and Serbian broadsheet press between 2007 and 2017, in particular, to explore the relationship between these crises and the notion of solidarity. By analysing the discursive patterns during this period, the study aims to shed light on how the crises were discursively constructed by the local media in two countries and the meaning of solidarity shifted over time.

Comparison between Croatian and Serbian media discourses is especially significant, as it allows for an observation of the clear-cut effects of ideological profiles shared by news outlets and, even more importantly, of the position of a country in the European integration process. A Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Croatia was signed in 2005, although the support for accession was initially quite low, mostly due to issues related to transitional justice – e.g. in 2007, 46% of the population supported joining the EU (Ipsos Puls, 2011). Eventually, the country entered the organisation in 2013, as a result of a referendum, where 66.67% of the citizens voted for the accession (Državno izborno povjerenstvo, 2012). An analogous Stabilisation and Association Agreement was accepted by the EU and Serbia in 2013, however, the accession talks were largely stagnating in the period by the end of the analysed corpus. With regard to popular support for joining the EU, it was relatively high in the beginning of the analysed period (2007: 66%), but sunk in the later phase (2017: 52%) (Pjevović & Subotić, 2019). Beside the important dynamics connected to the relations with the European Union, comparison between the Croatian and Serbian press is worth considering due to linguistic similarities: original texts can be investigated throughout the study with the use of the same procedures, without any need for translation.

The study begins by examining a large corpus of articles from broadsheet press, as opposed to tabloids and semi-tabloids. This approach allows for an understanding of established patterns represented by authoritative discourses, which are often considered as (seemingly) objective knowledge (cf. e.g. Bignell, 2002, pp. 82–92). Although the tabloidisation of news media is a significant concern, particularly in the Serbian context, where tabloids strongly influence public opinion (cf. e.g. Castaldo & Pinna, 2017), analysing broadsheet press provides insights into both expert opinions and widely accepted beliefs. Additionally, the limited number of 'quality' newspapers with similar formats and

publishing practices makes them a more suitable choice for comparative analysis, in contrast to the numerous, often ephemeral tabloids and online portals.

The paper is structured in the following way: first, the corpus collection procedure is discussed in detail. Then, the adopted methodological approach will be purveyed, focusing on the key concepts of so-called corpus-based discourse analysis (cf. e.g. Baker et al., 2008) and useful notions originating in discourse-historical approach (cf. e.g. Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). As a next step, literature dealing with similar issues is briefly reviewed, including analyses devoted to the discursive construction of crises in Western European countries, as well as the studies focused on Southeastern European media, especially their representation of the 2015 refugee crisis. Afterwards, the synthetic picture of the dialectical intertwining between the notions of European solidarity and crisis in the Croatian and Serbian press discourses will be demonstrated, using the adopted quantitative tools. More qualitatively-oriented instruments will be employed to interpret the discovered trends, too, especially in order to grasp a change that happened from 2007 to 2017, both in Croatian and Serbian discourses on European solidarity. The second important question tackled in the paper is connected to the very emergence of crisis discourses: how discursive means used to construct the notion of crisis changed throughout time. This evolution is illustrated using the changing set of verbs employed to write about Europe in the Southeastern European press. A more in-depth analysis allows us to discover discursive actors involved in such a change, revealing the crucial role of local politicians and journalists in constructing a sense of European crisis, both in Croatian and Serbian audiences.

2. METHODS

The methodology employed in this study is corpus-based discourse analysis, inspired by the works of Baker (2006) and Baker et al. (2008). The corpus-based analysis involves the use of large text collections, known as corpora, which are selected based on criteria of representativeness. The overall aim is to uncover the orders of discourse and ideologies present within the texts, which evokes the ideas of Foucault (1972), as well as, more operationally oriented, Reisigl and Wodak (2009), and van Dijk (1998).

The corpus-based approach has a number of merits. Firstly, it provides an incremental effect, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the data. Additionally, the use of corpora helps to reduce bias in the analysis process. Moreover, the methodology promotes transparency, as it stands in contrast to "black box" methods that rely solely on machine learning techniques.

To investigate the data, the analysis relies on instruments centred around the notions of frequency and probability. These instruments help to identify patterns and recurring themes in the text. One important aspect that is examined is the semantic prosody feature, which reflects the speaker's attitude. This feature is often manifested through word co-occurrences, as highlighted by Stubbs (2001, p. 65).

The co-occurrence relationships between two words, known as collocations, play a crucial role in understanding how these concepts are grasped within the text. McEnery and Hardie define collocations as "cooccurrence relationship[s] between two words" (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 240). By examining collocations, the analysis can uncover recurring patterns and frame the concepts under investigation.

In the interpretative part of the undertaking, the understanding of discourse adopted in the discourse-historical approach (DHA) was of great significance. Discourse is here understood as a "socially constituted and socially constitutive" "cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action", "related to a macro-topic" and "linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 89). While corpus-based methods have to be supplemented by other means in order to get a full grasp of social constructivity of discourse, they are very efficient in establishing recurring macro-topics. Moreover, an in-depth insight into the keywords identified by quantitative methods (concordance analysis) may lead to important findings regarding social actors and their differing points of view, as the later part of the paper will demonstrate.

3. CORPUS

At this point, the distinction between 'quality press' and 'tabloids' needs to be elaborated in some more detail. The 'quality press' is normally characterised by its contrast towards the typical tabloid features, i.e. a less eye-catching design, a lower content emphasis on stories about the private and public lives of celebrities and ordinary people, a more complex language, and a stricter division between facts and opinions. Additionally, the narratives presented in the 'quality press' are typically less dramatic and personalised, as highlighted by Pisarek (2008).

The choice to focus on the 'quality press' stems from the perception that it is seen as authoritative, with reporting that is considered more moderate and lacking tabloid-like features. As Jonathan Bignell put it, this "[a]uthority is a mythic meaning connoted by the discourse of the 'quality' press" (Bignell, 2002,

p. 92) – objectivity or transparency by no means can be assumed by an analyst; on the other hand, by analysing the 'quality press,' one can gain insights into the discourses that hold a certain position of authority and influence in society.

Several criteria were considered in selecting the newspapers for analysis. Firstly, newspapers with wide circulation were chosen to ensure that the findings are representative and applicable to a larger audience. Secondly, the aim was to include newspapers with diverse ideological profiles, allowing for a broader understanding of the discourses present in the region. For the Croatian context, the selected newspapers are *Večernji list* and *Novi list.* The first one is considered conservative and in certain years used to be a broadsheet newspaper with the widest readership. The latter is the fourth most-read newspaper, based in Rijeka, and pronouncedly falls under the left-liberal category (Vozab, 2014; for a brief summary of the Croatian media landscape cf. also Newman et al., 2017). In Serbia, the chosen newspapers are *Politika* and *Danas. Politika*'s ideological line has been close to the government since the 1990s and, in the period of the study, it could be roughly categorised as centre-right. On the other hand, *Danas*, since its creation in 1997, is a liberal medium, for the time being, aligned with the opposition. Despite its relatively low circulation, the inclusion of this newspaper in the corpus was justified by its historical reputation as the sole independent daily publication in Serbia (Media Ownership Monitor, 2019), associated with anti-authoritarian attitudes among its readership (Stetka et al., 2020).

The corpus used in this study consists of 19,191 articles. The articles were collected from national and international news columns in the online issues of the newspapers. The texts were randomly selected to create balanced annual subcorpora spanning from 2007 to 2017. The corpus was then lemmatised and stored in the corpus manager NoSketchEngine (Rychlý, 2007).

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourses on European crises as such were an object of numerous studies, originating in various approaches. The idea of crisis in European culture is the focus of a longitudinal study in the spirit of *Begriffsgeschichte* by Koselleck (2006). This inspired Krzyżanowski (2009) to explore the evolution of the concept of European crisis between 1956 and 2006, using a mixed discourse-historical and corpus-based approach. More attention was devoted to particular crises, for instance, several studies have focused on the discursive representation of the Eurozone crisis, especially on the depiction of the crisis-struck countries. This body of research includes the works by Bickes, Otten and Weymann (2014), Kutter (2014), Lampropoulou (2014), Boukala (2014), Georgakopoulou (2014), and

Angouri and Wodak (2014). The discourses surrounding Brexit have also received scholarly attention – in particular, Western European discourses framing this event – with research conducted by Maccaferri (2019), Tolson (2019), Ruzza and Pejovic (2019), Krzyżanowski (2019), and Zappettini (2019).

However, the conceptualisation of European crises in Southeastern European discourses remains understudied. In particular, it is so with respect to synthetic, long-term studies; on the other hand, discourses related to the 2015 refugee crisis have garnered significant scholarly interest, including numerous studies focused on Southeastern Europe (i.e. Greenberg & Spasić, 2017; Bilić et al., 2018; Car et al., 2019; Silaški & Đurović, 2019; Šarić & Felberg, 2019). Greenberg & Spasić (2017) extensively examined the concepts of solidarity rhetoric and grassroots solidarity politics within the context of the migrant crisis. Their study delved into the complexity of the response towards the refugee and migrant humanitarian situation in Serbia, challenging the prevailing notion of a stereotypical "Eastern European attitude". The authors contrasted the superficial rhetoric of openness employed by the government of Aleksandar Vučić with the self-organisational efforts of activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Certain researchers (Bilić et al., 2018; Car et al., 2019) have observed a shift in the portrayal of refugees and migrants. Specifically in Croatia, private media outlets underwent a notable change in their depiction, particularly after the Cologne New Year's Eve incidents in 2015. The focus shifted from a humanitarian perspective to emphasising security concerns (Bilić et al., 2018). Other analyses pointed to the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks as a crucial turning point, where the Croatian press, irrespective of the media outlet's ideological stance, increasingly portrayed refugees and migrants as a security threat. Meanwhile, Croatia continued to be represented as the most welcoming country for refugees in the region, with Hungary being perceived as the least hospitable (Car et al., 2019). Silaški & Đurović (2019) observed that Serbian media reporting on the 2015 migrant crisis frequently employed the WALL metaphor. This metaphor was utilised to depict two potential scenarios for Europe: the first being the consolidation and thickening of the EU's outer border ('Fortress Europe scenario'), and the second being the emergence of internal divisions within the EU ('Berlin Wall scenario'). Each of the scenarios conveyed a sense of exclusion from Europe, both for the migrants and for the Serbian nation. On the other hand, Šarić & Felberg (2019) focused on how refugees and migrants were verbally and visually represented by public broadcasters in Croatia and Serbia. They found that these representations were generally positive, but often served the purpose of promoting a positive image of their own country, while simultaneously presenting neighbouring countries in a negative light.

This short literature review demonstrates that the research on the notion of solidarity was connected with the concept of crisis. In fact, it is the latter notion which received more attention, especially when particular crisis events are concerned. However, only the representation of the 2015 refugee crisis in the Croatian and Serbian press was sufficiently analysed. Synthetic approaches are lacking and so are analyses focusing on the evolving understanding of solidarity. The goal of this paper is to fill in this gap, with a particular emphasis on discursive and interdiscursive means of constructing crisis-like situations in need of a solidarity-oriented response.

5. DIALECTICS OF CRISIS AND SOLIDARITY

An insight into the relationship between the concepts of European solidarity and crisis can be operationalised by examining the co-occurrences of the corresponding lexemes in question (*Europa/Evropa* 'Europe' and, respectively, *kriza* 'crisis', as well as *solidarnost* 'solidarity') within annual subcorpora. To provide a comparison, occurrences of the keyword *Europa/Evropa* 'Europe' along with the associated term *integracija* 'integration' were also incorporated as a reference group. The findings, divided into annual subcorpora, are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Co-occurrences of the node keyword Europa, Evropa *'Europe' and collocations* kriza *'crisis',* solidarnost *'solidarity', as well as* integracija *'integration' in the Croatian and Serbian press corpora*

Serbia
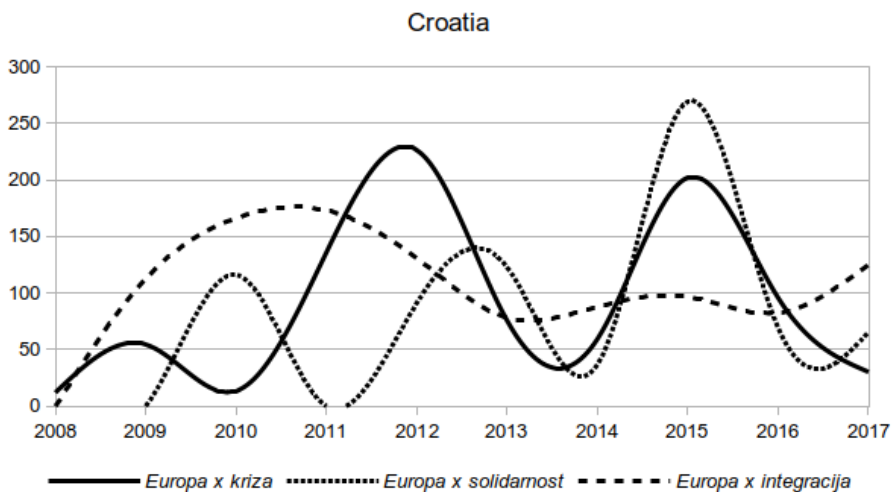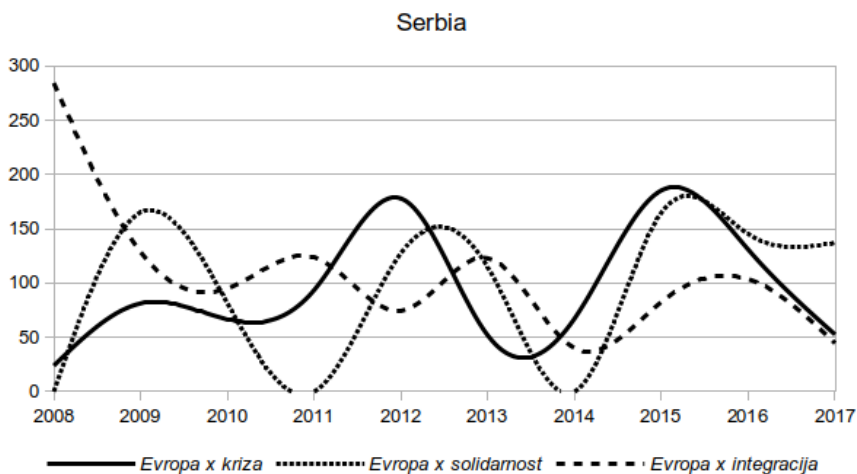
The relationship between the concepts of crisis and solidarity in the examined media is evidently interconnected, in contrast to the unrelated distribution of the keyword *integracija* 'integration'. It is also clearly visible that the peaks of crisis discourses occurred in 2009, 2012, and 2015 in both Croatia and Serbia. These peaks coincide with events such as the global financial crisis, the European debt crisis, and the migration crisis. As for the solidarity discourses, one can notice that, until the refugee crisis, their peaks were delayed by about one year. In the Serbian press, peaks of solidarity discourses were observed in 2009, 2013, and 2015, while in the Croatian press, peaks occurred in 2010, 2013, and 2015. The European debt crisis, however, provoked a less correlated discursive response.

Therefore, the changing meaning of European solidarity – and of European crisis could be noticed already by a quantitative insight into the material. In fact, when one compares the texts from the beginning of the corpus (2007-2011) and from its end (2016-2017), a surge in the use of the keyword *solidarnost* 'solidarity' can be clearly noticed in both Croatian and Serbian discourses, independently from the ideological profile of a newspaper. In the Croatian subcorpus, the relative frequency rose from 3.26 occurrences per 1 million tokens to 10.08 per 1 million and in the Serbian press, the surge was from 6.22 per 1 million tokens to 10.07 per 1 million.

The analysis of the occurrences of the keyword *solidarnost* 'solidarity' in the concordances reveals that until 2015 there was a vague sense of crisis prevailing. At the beginning of the analysed period, around the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008, appeals for solidarity were rather ambiguous and not necessarily co-occurring in the same texts where references to the notion of crisis

were found. For example, during the global financial crisis, appeals for solidarity from Serbia were observed, highlighting the significance of EU guarantees and solidarity in preventing financial and social collapse, e.g.:

> Every year outside of the EU is a huge cost to Serbia! Take a look at the EU solidarity on which, for instance, Hungary could count on, or Greece can now. Without EU guarantees and solidarity, these two countries and many others would experience a financial and social crash. [*Politika*, 2010][2]

In fact, the change is manifestly visible in the quantitative analysis of the text samples, representing Croatian and Serbian discourses from the beginning and the end of the corpus, focusing on the discourse actors referring to solidarity. In the Serbian press, one can observe a significant deviation from the tendencies observed at the beginning of the analysed period, where appeals for financial support during the global financial crisis were prevalent. Towards the end of the corpus, there is a notable increase in citations from foreign discourse actors. This contrasts with the patterns typically seen in the Croatian press, where domestic actors gradually began invoking solidarity more frequently, likely influenced by increasing references to the core EU discourses (cf. Table 1).

In 2015, a coordinated response to the crisis emerged, emphasising the value of solidarity, particularly among the core EU actors. While the question of the policies is outside of the scope of this paper, it is clearly visible that solidarity became a fixed part of the EU parlance, reflected in the Croatian and Serbian media discourses. Importantly, in the period after 2015, Serbian actors referred to solidarity less frequently compared to the previous period, while Croatian actors started invoking solidarity more often, especially in relation to the refugee crisis:

> It is about solidarity, which we all have to display, also with regard to our size and possibilities, however, I stress, we are ready for solidarity, but we have limited resources", said Milanović after the ending of the EU summit, where one of the main topics was how Europe should react to a great influx of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa. [*Novi list*, 2015][3]

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[2] Serb.: 'Svaka godina van EU Srbiju papreno košta! Pogledajmo i EU solidarnost na koju su mogle da računaju jedna Mađarska, sada jedna Grčka. Bez garancija i solidarnosti EU bi te dve zemlje i mnoge druge doživele finansijski i socijalni krah.' Citations from the corpus are marked with the newspaper title and the year of publication.

[3] Croat.: 'Radi se o solidarnosti koju svi moramo pokazati i u skladu sa svojom veličinom i mogućnostima, ali naglašavam spremni smo na solidarnost ali imamo ograničene resurse«, rekao je Milanović nakon završetka summita EU-a, na kojem je jedna od glavnih tema bila kako se Europa treba postaviti prema velikom priljevu migranata s Bliskog istoka i sjeverne Afrike.'

Table 1

Share of utterances with references to European solidarity by domestic and foreign social actors in chronological subcorpora and per newspaper in random samples

	actor	**2007-2011**	**2016-2017**
***Danas* (Serbia)**	domestic	68%	32%
	foreign	32%	64%
***Politika* (Serbia)**	domestic	36%	8%
	foreign	60%	92%
***Večernji list* (Croatia)**	domestic	44%	48%
	foreign	52%	35%
***Novi list* (Croatia)**	domestic	44%	52%
	foreign	56%	36%

These tendencies can be grasped with the help of a conceptual framework developed by Reuben Wong and Christopher Hill (2011) to describe and interpret Europeanisation policies. In particular, it relies on such notions as 'downloading' (impact of the EU on the national level), 'uploading' (national impact on the EU level), and 'cross-loading' (mutual influence between the European states) (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 1). These concepts can be also successfully applied in the analysis of values (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 7) and their discursive representations: in the case of Serbian discourse actors, their references to solidarity during the 2007-2011 period can be understood as an effort to 'upload' the EU agenda so that it includes assistance to the pre-accession countries in Southeastern Europe. On the other hand, the discourses in Croatia during 2016-2017 demonstrate a different trend, where the rhetoric of European values is 'downloaded' from the core EU.

6. VERBS AND DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN CRISES IN THE CROATIAN AND SERBIAN PRESS

This paper aims to investigate how multiple crises influence the representations of Europe in the Croatian and Serbian media. To operationalise this investigation, verbs collocated by the keyword *Europa/Evropa* 'Europe' were examined in two chronological subcorpora: one from the beginning of the corpus (2007-2011) and

the other from the end (2016-2017)[4]. The focus on verbs seems appropriate given the characteristics of the news genre, which typically strives to avoid explicit bias introduced by adjectives or strongly loaded nouns. Even in genres that appear to be neutral, such as news, verbs play a significant role by effectively conveying sentiments towards the objects of discourse.

The verb collocations unique for the end of the analysed period (2016-17) will be discussed here in detail (cf. also Table 2). The analysis of the Serbian liberal newspaper *Danas* revealed collocations such as *suočavati* 'face', *preuzeti* 'overtake', *nemati* 'not to have', *vratiti* 'return', and *postati* 'become'. Similarly, the Serbian newspaper *Politika* showed collocations including *suočavati* and *suočiti* 'face', *nalaziti* 'find itself', *ostati* 'stay', *znati* 'know', and *reći* 'say'. In the case of Croatian *Večernji list*, the collocations included verbs such as *bojati (se)* 'fear' *suočavati* 'face', *postati* 'become', *ostati* 'stay', *izgubiti* 'lose', *nalaziti* 'find itself', *zaštititi* 'protect', and *željeti* 'want'. The newspaper *Novi list* had collocations such as *trebati* 'need', *suočiti* 'face', *moći* 'can', and *reći* 'say'. Importantly, a significant number of these verbs referred to dangers and negative possibilities.

Table 2
Verb collocations of the keyword Europa/Evropa *'Europe' unique for the period after 2015 (2016-2017)*

Newspaper	Collocations
Politika (SR)	*suočavati* 'face', *preuzeti* 'overtake', *nemati* 'not to have', *vratiti* 'return', *postati* 'become'
Danas (SR)	*suočavati, suočiti* 'face', *nalaziti* 'find itself', *ostati* 'stay', *znati* 'know', *reći* 'say'
Večernji list (HR)	*suočavati* and *suočiti* 'face', *nalaziti* 'find itself', *ostati* 'stay', *znati* 'know', *reći* 'say'
Novi list (HR)	*trebati* 'need', *suočiti* 'face', *moći* 'can', *reći* 'say'

Among these collocated verbs, *suočavati* and *suočiti* 'to face' were particularly noteworthy. They were predominantly used in relation to objects such as challenges, crises, dangers, problems, and other negatively connoted phenomena. It is worth noting that most occurrences of this verb did not come from citations

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[4] The analysis account for verbs occurring among the 100 most frequent collocations of the keyword *Evropa/Europa* 'Europe', calculated with a log-likelihood algorithm in a window of three words to the right of the node.

of European politicians. In fact, an analysis of all the concordances containing the collocation of the node word *Europa/Evropa* 'Europe' and the collocate *suočavati* 'face' clearly demonstrates that in the Serbian subcorpus, 70% of the occurrences of the loaded verb can be found either in the citations from Southeastern European politicians or in the paraphrases written by local journalists. In the Croatian subcorpus, all of the occurrences are either utterances by the regional politicians or paraphrases by Croatian journalists (cf. Table 3; the complete data is provided in Annex 1-2). Moreover, a relatively large share of the uses of the verb *suočavati* 'face' by Western discursive actors in the Serbian press can be only put down to the fact that the daily newspaper *Danas* published opinion texts in its news section.

Table 3
Categories of discourse actors uttering the collocation of the lexemes
Europa/Evropa *'Europe' and* suočavati *'face' in the Croatian and Serbian*
subcorpora

Discursive actors	Croatian press	Serbian press
Domestic	71% (10)	40% (8)
– Domestic journalist	29% (4)	15% (3)
Western	0	20% (4)
– Western journalist	0	5% (1)
Paraphrased	29% (4)	30% (8)
Other	0	10% (2)

As Jonathan Bignell puts it, the discourses of news sources (the parliament, local councils, police and emergency services, law courts, press offices, regular events, press releases and conferences of various organisations etc.) "become the raw material for the language of news stories, since news language is parasitic on their discursive codes and ideological assumptions" (Bignell, 2002, p. 88). News, often considered as 'embedded talk' (Bell, 1991, p. 52; Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 90), incorporates sources in a number of ways. Its intertextuality can manifest in direct quotes, mixed quotes, indirect speech (including free indirect speech), paraphrasing, and nested reported speech (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 92). As Norman Fairclough (1988) notes, it is only direct speech which distinguishes the voice of the media outlet and the voice of the news source; in case of other strategies of intertextuality/interdiscursivity, the voices may be mixed and the journalists are left with a certain space for semantic intervention. This is

particularly the case when the verb *suočavati* 'face' occurs in a journalist paraphrase of a (local or foreign) news source: in each of such situations the discourse may be framed in a way introducing all the connotations of the verb in question by a choice dependent on a media outlet. For instance, one may take into consideration the following citation:

> At that time [2015] I was struggling hard for the stability of the Eurozone, especially for Greece. If I had not done it, Eurozone would have fallen apart", he explained. However, Juncker admitted that Europe is facing problems, including Poland and Hungary, which refuse to accept refugees according to the relocation agreement. [*Politika*, 2017][5]

The verb *suočavati* 'face' is introduced in the journalist paraphrase, there is no indication that a perfect equivalent was used by the news source, in this case, Jean-Claude Juncker.

While Bignell considered news language as parasitic on the language employed by its sources, including their codes and ideological assumptions, the interdiscursivity relations are, in fact, more or less mutual. The verb suočavati 'face' is, therefore, used in direct quotations from local – Croatian or Serbian – discursive actors, too, mostly politicians, e.g. in a lengthy citation from a speech of the former President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović:

> I assumed the duty of the President of the Republic at a time when, alongside the economic crisis, other crises were emerging, such as the demographic crisis. Simultaneously, Europe and the world were facing terrorist attacks and a migrant crisis, while the European Union was grappling with a crisis of its values, unity, and identity. [*Večernji list*, 2017][6]

A possible hypothesis explaining this phenomenon would point at interdiscursive relations between two stylistic varieties of language: journalistic (particularly, style of political opinion journalism) and political. Occurrences of the verb *suočavati* 'face' would be an intrusion of journalistic style into the Croatian and Serbian political style of language. Obviously, such a hypothesis demands further studies.

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[5] Serb.: '»U to vreme [2015] naporno sam se borio za stabilnost Evrogrupe, naročito za Grčku. Da to nisam uradio, evrozona bi se raspala«, objasnio je on. Junker je ipak priznao da se Evropa suočava sa problemima, uključujući Poljsku i Mađarsku koje odbijaju da prihvate izbeglice po dogovoru o relokaciji.'

[6] Croat.: 'Dužnost predsjednice Republike preuzela sam u vremenu u kojem su uz gospodarsku krizu izrastale i druge, poput one demografske. Istodobno, Europa i svijet suočavali su se s terorističkim napadima i migrantskom krizom, a Europska unija i s krizom svojih vrijednosti, jedinstva i identiteta.'

Nonetheless, the discussed data – in particular, the tendency of the verb *suočavati* 'face' to occur in paraphrases – illustrate the role of news language in the discursive construction of European crises. It has been demonstrated that an important change in the meaning of European crisis and solidarity after 2015 was, in part, created by the language of local journalism both in Croatia and Serbia.

7. CONCLUSION

The period between 2007 and 2017 was marked by multiple crises that shaped the discourse on European integration in Southeastern European countries. The study focused on the representation of these crises and solidarity in the Croatian and Serbian broadsheet press during this time. By analysing discursive patterns, the study aimed to shed light on how the crises were constructed and how the meaning of solidarity evolved.

The findings revealed a dialectical relationship between crisis and solidarity, with solidarity being invoked in events explicitly framed as crises. Events such as the global financial crisis, the Eurozone crisis, and the refugee crisis coincided with peaks in crisis discourses. However, solidarity was rarely invoked in events resembling crises that were not explicitly labelled as such, such as the war in Ukraine or Brexit. This indicates the complex interplay between the notion of crisis and the concept of solidarity.

During the period of 2007-2011, the concept of European solidarity was extended beyond the borders of the EU in the Serbian discourses. This was interpreted as an attempt to "upload" the Europeanisation process (Wong & Hill, 2011), i.e. trying to shift the European norms and values. However, in the period of 2016-2017, discourses on solidarity within the EU limits prevailed, although with different meanings in Croatia and Serbia.

The situation in the Croatian discourses can be rather interpreted as "downloading" EU discourses, i.e. aligning with and adopting EU values and perspectives. To some extent, this can be understood through the concept of "tactical Europeanisation", which refers to superficial signalling readiness to align with European norms (Slootmaeckers, 2017). Another interpretative frame can be offered by the concept of "Euro-opportunism" playing a role, characterised by declarative support driven by a desire for rapid integration rather than democratic reforms. Meanwhile, Serbia's representation of European (un)solidarity in the period of 2016-2017 increasingly revealed internal discord within the EU.

Furthermore, the study explored the construction of crisis discourses through verb collocations. The analysis demonstrated that, when addressing European issues, the press discourses in both countries frequently used verbs

connoting challenges, dangers, and negative phenomena. On the example of the verb *suočavati* 'face', it was demonstrated that such verbs appeared in direct quotations from local politicians and paraphrases by journalists – but not in direct speech of Western discursive actors – suggesting an active role of news language and media in constructing the (concept of) European crisis in Croatia and Serbia.

To summarize, the paper demonstrated a dialectical nature of the relationship between the notions of European crises and solidarity, with the latter being invoked selectively in explicitly framed crisis events. The study focused on different dynamics in the discursive representation of solidarity within and outside the EU. In Serbia, depictions of the internal discord in the EU gradually started to shape discourses on European (un)solidarity, especially in *Politika*. In contrast, Croatia showed a tendency to align with EU discourses, although the investigation did not explicitly explore the underlying values. These research findings provide an overview of the interplay between crisis, solidarity, and Europeanisation processes in Croatia and Serbia, shedding light on the active role of media discourses in creating concepts circulating in the public sphere.

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Annex 1

Concordances containing the collocate suočavati *'face' of the node lexeme* Evropa *'Europe' in the Serbian press [D – Danas, P – Politika]*

Daily, year	Concordance		
D, 2010	*... prikriva manjak sposobnosti Beograda, nudeći Evropi izgovore i suočavajući se s neispunjenim...* '…conceals Belgrade's lack of capability, offering excuses to Europe and confronting unfulfilled…'	Stratfor, about Boris Tadić, not Europe	–
D, 2011	*...valjanu alternativu. Nezavisno od toga da li se Evropa suočava s teškoćama, mi pripadamo Evropi.* '…a valid alternative. Regardless of whether Europe is facing difficulties, we belong to Europe.'	Boris Tadić	local

D, 2014	*...položaj srpske vlade u okolnostima kada se Evropa suočava sa ukrajinskom krizom. Naravno, od...* '…the position of the Serbian government in circumstances when Europe is facing the Ukrainian crisis. Of course, from…'	Predrag Simić	local
D, 2015	*...unije, susedne države i one udaljenije. Ali, Evropa se takođe suočava sa izazovima koji se odnose na...* '...Union, neighboring countries, and those further away. However, Europe is also facing challenges related to...'	Sergei Stanishev	other
D, 2015	*...na razmere migrantske krize s kojom se Evropa suočava, Merkelova je kazala da „nije...* '...regarding the scale of the migrant crisis that Europe is facing, Merkel stated that «it is not...'	Angela Merkel, paraphrased	paraphrase
D, 2016	*...da ponudi je bar podjednako važno. Budući da se Evropa suočava s kombinacijom spoljnih pretnji, kao...* '...to offer is equally important. As Europe faces a combination of external threats, such as...'	Dominique Moisi, journalist	Western
D, 2017	*...posebno u kontekstu novih izazova sa kojima se Evropa suočava nakon jučerašnjeg referenduma u...* '...especially in the context of the new challenges that Europe is facing after yesterday's referendum in...'	Prokopis Pavlopoulos, paraphrased	paraphrase
D, 2017	*...i ćutanje o ključnim pitanjima s kojima se Evropa suočava još jednom dati rezultate. To se...* '…and keeping quiet about the key issues confronting Europe would work once again. This…'	Joschka Fischer	Western
D, 2017	*...mogu da priušte. Ali od svih izazova s kojima se Evropa suočava predstojeći predsednički izbori u...* '…can afford. But of all the challenges that Europe is facing, the upcoming presidential elections in...'	Richard Haass	Western

P, 2010	*...sa takvom politikom". Ukazujući da se Evropa suočav asa izazovom – kako da definiše samu sebe...* '...with such a policy.» Pointing out that Europe is facing a challenge –how to define itself...'	Boris Tadić	local
P, 2013	*...oscilacije i tendencije sa kojima se danas Evropa suočava. „To je ujedno i najveći motiv za nas da u...* '...oscillations and tendencies that Europe is facing today. «This is also the greatest motivation for us to...'	Tomislav Nikolić	local
P, 2013	*...i mesnim prerađevinama – još se nisu stišala, a Evropa se suočava sa novom prevarom u prehrambenom...* '…and meat products - have not yet subsided, and Europe is facing a new fraud in the food…'	Miloš Kazimirović, journalist	local
P, 2015	*...i politike", smatra Orban. On je dodao da se Evropa suočava sa većim problemima od Amerike i da je...* '...and politics», Orban believes. He added that Europe is facing greater problems than America and that it is...'	Viktor Orbán, paraphrased	paraphrase
P, 2015	*...Nikolić kaže i da razume sa kakvim se strahom Evropa suočava, jer se postavlja pitanje zašto bi iko...* '...Nikolić also says that he understands the fear Europe is facing because the question arises as to why anyone would...'	Tomislav Nikolić, paraphrased	paraphrase
P, 2015	*...projekta i spoljni izazovi sa kojima se Evropa suočava, a posebno trenutna izbeglička kriza...* '...of the project and external challenges that Europe is facing, especially the current refugee crisis...'	V4 foreign ministers	other
P, 2015	*...taj broj će verovatno biti premašen ove godine. Evropa se suočava sa masivnim prilivom migranata sa...* '...that number is likely to be surpassed this year. Europe is facing a massive influx of migrants from...'	Tanjug, news agency	local

Daily, year	Concordances		
P, 2016	*...gde su im omogućeni uslove za pristojan život . Evropa se suočava sa mogućom novom izbegličkom krizom...* '…where they are provided with conditions for a decent life. Europe is facing a possible new refugee crisis…'	Tanja Vučić, journalist	local
P, 2016	*...javne uprave i garantovanju slobode medija. „Evropa se suočava sa izazovim vremenom, a glas Srbije...* '…public administration and guaranteeing media freedom. «Europe is facing challenging times, and the voice of Serbia…'	David McAllister	Western
P, 2017	*...Jugoistocnoj Evropi (CDRSEE), rečeno je i da se Evropa suočava sa brojnim problemima, da joj...* '...in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE), it was also stated that Europe is facing numerous problems, that it...'	Centar za demokratiju i pomirenje u Jugoistočnoj Evropi, paraphrased	paraphrase
P, 2017	*...objasnio je on. Junker je ipak priznao da se Evropa suočava sa problemima, uključujući Poljsku i...* '...he explained. However, Juncker did acknowledge that Europe is facing problems, including Poland and...'	Jean-Claude Juncker, paraphrased by a Western journalist	Western
P, 2017	*...javlja HINA, a prenosi Tanjug. HAG – Evropa se suočava sa bezbednosnim izazovima među...* '...reports HINA, as transmitted by Tanjug. THE HAGUE - Europe is facing security challenges among...'	Rob Wainwright, paraphrased	paraphrase

Annex 2

Concordances containing the collocate suočavati *'face' of the node lexeme* Europa *'Europe' in the Croatian press [VL –* Večernji list, *NL –* Novi list*]*

Daily, year	Concordances

VL, 2008	*...prevladavanje trenutnih problema s kojima se Europe suočava - rekao je Sanader. - Hrvatska će...* '...overcoming the current problems that Europe is facing», said Sanader. "Croatia will...'	Ivo Sanader	local
VL, 2012	*...s reformama. Naš izbor dobra je poruka i za Europu koja se suočava s problemima i možda su stare...* '…with reforms. Our choice is a good message, even for Europe facing problems, and perhaps the old…'	Vesna Pusić	local
VL, 2012	*...i komunizmom. Današnja Europa se trajno suočava s tim najvećim zlom, s...* '...and communism. Today's Europe is permanently confronted with this greatest evil, with...'	Dražen Budiša	local
VL, 2012	*...jako obvezujuć. Naš izbor dobra je poruka i za Europu koja sesuočava s problemima i možda su stare...* '...highly binding. Our choice is a good message, even for Europe facing problems, and perhaps the old…'	Vesna Pusić	local
VL, 2015	*...predsjednik Europskog vijeća Donald Tusk. Europa se suočava s jednim od najvećih izazova od...* '...European Council President Donald Tusk. Europe is facing one of the greatest challenges since...'	Hina, news agency	local
VL, 2016	*...je najvažnija prijetnja od niza s kojima se Europa suočava. Ova teroristička skupina je ili...* '...is the most significant threat among a series that Europe is facing. This terrorist group is either...'	Hina, news agency	local
VL, 2016	*...srednje Europe noviji je trend, dok se zapadna Europa s njima suočava još od 2. svjetskog rata. Prema...* '...in Central Europe is a newer trend, while Western Europe has been facing them since World War II. According to...'	Lidija Kiseljak, journalist	local

VL, 2017	*...je predsjednik Sabora. Dodao je da se suvremena Europa suočava s dva ključna izazova: moralnim...* '...is the President of the Croatian Parliament. He added that contemporary Europe is facing two key challenges: moral...'	Goran Jandroković, paraphrased	paraphrase
VL, 2017	*...i druge, poput one demografske. Istodobno, Europa i svijet suočavali su se s terorističkim...* '...and others, such as the demographic one. At the same time, Europe and the world have been facing terrorist...'	Kolinda Grabar Kitarović	local
NL, 2015	*...tako da se stečeni sustav vrijednosti u Europi suočava s novim izazovima. U prvom redu uočava...* '...so that the acquired value system in Europe is facing new challenges. First and foremost, it is observed...'	Srđan Brajčić, journalist	local
NL, 2015	*...stižu izbjegličkim rutama može samo štetiti. Europa se odavno suočava s problemom neadekvatnih...* '...by the refugee routes can only do harm. Europe has long been facing the problem of inadequate...'	Julija Kranjec, expert	local
NL, 2015	*...dio zajedničke strategije kojom se današnja Europa suočava s izbjegličkom krizom bez presedana.* '...part of a shared strategy with which today's Europe is facing an unprecedented refugee crisis.'	Angela Merkel, paraphrased	paraphrase
NL, 2016	*...ali da je migrantska kriza problem s kojom će se Europa još dugo suočavati. Hrvatska i BiH uskoro...* '...but that the migrant crisis is a problem that Europe will continue to face for a long time. Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina will soon...'	Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, paraphrased	paraphrase
NL, 2016	*...gospodarske krize, u trenutku kada su se Europa i svijet suočavali s terorističkim napadima i...* '...economic crisis, at a time when Europe and the world were facing terrorist attacks and...'	Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, paraphrased	paraphrase

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THE "FEARSOME DISEASE" AND THE "FIGHTING THING" COMPARING THE DISCOURSE OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE IN THE MANSI PRESS

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to analyse the discourse of the representation of the Covid-19 epidemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Mansi press. The paper also describes the situation of Mansi language use, the short history of the Mansi press and media, and concentrates on the differences in the Mansi journalists' strategy of reporting about the two major crises of the 21st century. The Mansi press and media is limited in size, all the outlets are dependent on state support, and they are supervised by both local and federal regulating agencies. In consequence of the unequal power relations, concerning political, financial, and cultural arrangements as well, the Mansi press and media are not in the position of enjoying freedom of speech or freedom of press, and are especially deprived of the possibility to criticise the government. Although during the Covid-19 epidemic division from state propaganda was not considered a criminal offence, no considerable difference could have been observed between the Mansi reports and the discourse of any other governmental newspaper. Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on the other hand, the opinions represented in the Mansi newspaper *Luima Seripos* became more diverse: the Mansi press decided not to broadcast official propaganda or to use its terminology, while the Mansi journalists found a way to occasionally report on Mansis' negative attitudes about the invasion.

Keywords: Mansi, Russian-Ukrainian war, freedom of speech, minority press, endangered language.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to compare the discourse of the representation of the Covid-19 epidemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Mansi press. The paper

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also describes the situation of Mansi language use, the short history of the Mansi press and media, and concentrates on the differences in the Mansi journalists' strategy of reporting about the two major crises of the 21st century.

The data used in the present paper concerning the Mansi language status and language use were collected via participant observation during fieldwork in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (eight times between 2006 and 2019), while the research of the Mansi press was conducted online. The online observation of the representation of the Covid-19 epidemy and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Mansi press took place between 1st March 2020 and 1st March 2023, understanding the Covid-19 epidemic to have been happening between 1st March 2020 and 23rd February 2022, while the reports on the Russian invasion of Ukraine between 24th February 2022 and 1st March 2023.

2. THE MANSI LANGUAGE

2.1. Language status

Mansi (by former exonym: Vogul) is endangered indigenous minority language, that belongs to the family of Uralic languages and is spoken in Western Siberia, especially on the territory of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Virtanen & Horváth, 2023). According to the UNESCO categorisation (UNESCO, 2011), the only remaining dialect of Mansi is severely endangered, while according to the EGIDS classification (Lewis & Simons, 2010) the vitality of the Mansi language can be described with belonging to grids 7 and 8a, that is definitely or severely endangered, as few of the speakers within the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children and most of the remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation. The digital vitality (c.f. Kornai, 2013) of Mansi is close to non-existent, but there are a handful of speakers and heritage language speakers using it on social media pages, and several initiatives are known that aim to create Mansi language technology tools, both in the speakers' community[2] and outside it (Horváth et al. 2017).

Mansi is not an official language, neither at the regional nor the municipal level in Russia. According to an act passed on 4th December 2001 by the Duma of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, the authorities of the Okrug provide a social, economic, and legal protection of the languages of indigenous peoples living in the Autonomous Okrug (Act N 89-оз), but despite of the seemingly positive attitudes very little support is given to the maintenance or revitalisations of the Mansi language (c.f. Horváth, 2020).

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[2] Since 2020 a group of Mansi heritage speakers has been working on a Mansi-Russian translator, being rather an online dictionary than an actual machine translator (https://amvogul.ru/).

2.2. Demographic data

Census data are often regarded to be unreliable due to administrative reasons, sometimes also for political reasons. Also, the data, no matter how carefully they were collected, do not necessarily reflect the real situation, but being based on self-report, they are more suitable for indicating attitudes and tendencies. Taking all of this into account, it can be said that since the first census carried out in the territory of the whole Soviet Union in 1926, the size of the Mansi population has been constantly rising. The number of speakers, oscillating until 1970, started to quickly decrease with the 1979 census, and by 2010 reached the number of 938 Mansi speakers in Russia, while this tendency appears to be halted by 2020, and the results of the latest census indicate a small growth in the number of speakers. According to the data of the 2020 Russian census, 1,346 people claimed to be able to speak Mansi. (see Table 1).

Table 1.
The census data of those declaring themselves to be of Mansi ethnicity, to speak Mansi, and the ratio of Mansi population living in urban settlements (1959-2010).

	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002	2010	2020
Mansi population	6,318	7,609	7,434	8,279	11,432	12,269	12,228
speakers of the Mansi language	~3,820	~4,040	3,742	3,184	2,746	938	1,346
ratio of Mansi population living in urban settlements				45.6%	51.8%	57.3%	57.0%

According to the results of the 2020 Federal Census, there were 12,228 Mansis living in the territory of the Russian Federation, 6,974 of them in cities and towns, while 5,254 Mansis lived in other types of settlements (Census RF 2020 5/1). 11,065 of them lived in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, 111 Mansis in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and 407 people in other parts of the Tyumen region. Another 334 Mansis lived in the Sverdlovsk Oblast, and 5 in the Komi Republic (Census RF 2020 5/17). In Russia, 2,229 people claimed to have Mansi as their mother tongue (Census RF 2020 5/6), altogether 2,093 of them were of Mansi ethnicity (Census RF 2020 5/7, 2020 5/20).

In Russia 1,346 people claimed to have proficiency in Mansi (Census RF 2020 5/4), 1,183 of them live on the territory of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Altogether 1,236 of them were of Mansi ethnicity (Census RF 2020 5/5, 2020 5/18).

While 12,233 of the Mansi respondents claimed to speak Russian, they showed growing diversity in speaking other languages as well. Among those answering the question about their language skills, 416 mentioned English, 114 German, 39 Komi, 25 Khanty, 17 Russian sign language, 11 Mari, 8 Tatar, 6 Turkish, 4 Ukrainian, 3 Nenets, 2-2 Bashkir, Hungarian or Japanese, 1-1 Arab, Chechen, Chinese, Kalmyk, Korean, Mongol, Tadjik, Yakut or Yiddish, and 26 some other language (Census RF 2020 5/18).

According to the Ukrainian census data from 2001, 43 Mansi live in Ukraine, of whom 5 named Mansi as their mother tongue (Census Ukraine, 2001).

2.3. Mansi language use

The Mansi language is a minority language with no official status, thus it is not used as the language of jurisdiction, and no laws, regulations and administrative provisions are published in Mansi, except for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Mansi is also absent from public transport and official public signage, and has limited economic significance. Speaking or understanding Mansi does not provide any advantage in working positions unconnected to the Ob-Ugric languages or cultures.

Although the use of the Mansi language is of course closely connected to the speakers' proficiency, there are several other factors influencing language choice. The Mansi native speakers especially prefer to use their mother tongue when speaking or writing about various illnesses and their treatments, certain crimes, and family secrets, often of a sexual nature, that is to speak about tabooed topics.

3. THE HISTORY OF MANSI PRESS AND MEDIA

3.1. Mansi press

Mansi articles appeared occasionally during Soviet times, frequently during the 1980s in the mainly Khanty-speaking local newspaper of the time, the *Lenin pant khuva* (*Ленин пант хува*, "On Lenin's way" in Khanty). The official Mansi newspaper started to appear in February 1989, under the name *Luima Seripos* (*Лӱимā сӯрипос*, "Northern dawn" in Mansi) twice a month on four pages, now it is available every second week on 16 pages. The print version of the newspaper is in Mansi only, while on the official homepage, operating since 2013, articles can be found in Mansi and in Russian as well. The Mansi texts published in the

newspaper cover various topics such as traditional lifestyle, folklore and short biographies, as well as aspects of urban life. Since the newspaper is financed by governmental sponsorship, the laws and decrees issued in the Okrug have to be published in *Luima Seripos* as well, thus encouraging the journalists to create the missing Mansi (first and foremost, judiciary) terminology (c.f. Horváth 2019, 2020, 2022).

In addition to *Luima Seripos*, the editorial board also published five issues of a journal for children, under the title *Khotalkve* (*Хōталкве*, "little Sun" in Mansi). Another monthly journal for children, *Vitsam* (*Витсам*, "waterdrop" in Mansi) has been published since 2014, written by the Mansi poet Svetlana Dinislamova and edited by Mansi journalist Tamara Merova. The first three issues of the children's journal Vitsam appeared in 2012 (Динисламова, 2017, p. 3), titled *Vitsam*, *Rakvsam* and *Tuytsam* (*Витсам*, *Раквсам* and *Туйтсам,* "waterdrop", "raindrop" and "snowflake" in Mansi). Since 2014 it has been published once a month, on twenty pages, and – according to its imprint – in 999 copies. The journal does not accept subscriptions and is not available online. Every issue features a greeting from a Mansi person, a reader's letter from a Mansi child, various educational materials, puzzles, wordlists, riddles, and recipes (c.f. Horváth, 2019, 2020, 2022).

3.2. Mansi media

A very limited number of programs is available in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug in Mansi, and a very limited amount of information is presented about them. The *Yugoriya* television and radio channel broadcasts a Mansi program titled *Taryg tursuye* (*Тарыг турсуе*, "the crane's voice" in Mansi), on every second workday, in approximately ten minutes (c.f. Horváth, 2019, 2020, 2022).

The *Yugoriya* television and radio channel, the local branch of the of the state-owned *Rossiya* company has been broadcasting regular programs in the indigenous languages, in Khanty since 1992, and in Mansi since 1994. The channel *Yugoriya* airs news in Mansi every second week, for approximately 30 minutes in the framework of *Uvas mir putar* (*Увас мир путар*, "the word of the peoples of the North" in Khanty). The program *Yomvosh shunyang yoh* (*Ёмвош шунянг ёх*, 'happy people of Khanty-Mansiysk' in Khanty) occasionally broadcasts videoclips in Mansi as well (c.f. Horváth, 2019, 2020, 2022).

4. THE "FEARSOME DISEASE"

4.1. The timeline of the Covid-19 epidemic in Russia

The first case of Covid-19 infection was confirmed in Russia on 31st January 2020, followed by the first confirmed death casualty on 19th March. On 25th March 2020 Vladimir Putin declared a lockdown across the country, which, although it was meant to last only one week, was not suspended until 12th May. The most famous Russian vaccine against Covid-19 infection named "Sputnik V" was registered on 11th August 2020, and although it was popularised all around the country, including the Mansi press and media, it never became as popular as the Western vaccines in their respective countries. According to the official statistics only 54.5% of the total population got fully vaccinated in Russia by 26th May 2023 (*Статистика вакцинации…*).

The total number of Covid-related fatalities on 5th August 2022 were officially 820,307 in the whole Russian Federation (*Russia's official toll…*). No statistics are available on the Covid-related fatalities among the Mansi, but according to the data collected via private communication the epidemic caused several deaths, especially among the Mansi above 50.

4.2. The Mansi terminology of the Covid-19 epidemic

The two most generally used terms for the Covid-19 epidemic in the Mansi press were *пилыщмаӈ āгм* ("dreadful disease" in Mansi) and *хащтāл āгм* ("mysterious disease" in Mansi). The term *пилыщмаӈ āгм* is generally used in connection to different serious diseases and infections familiar to the Mansi, both traditionally known ones as for example anthrax, Opisthorchiasis or Lyme disease, as well as in the case of recently met ones, e.g. HIV or cancer. The term *хащтāл āгм*, on the contrary, has almost exclusively been used in connection to the Covid-19 epidemic.

4.3. The coverage of the Covid-19 epidemic in the Mansi press

The coverage of the Covid-19 epidemic in the Mansi newspaper differs from the coverage of any other topic in the history of the Mansi press. When reporting about the events, tendencies, provisions connected to the epidemic, the Mansi journalists focused on the federal directives, and referred to the local regional actors only to emphasise that they were fully able to handle the situation, and that their actions

were in complete accordance with the decisions of the federal authorities. When reporting about the epidemic and the introduction of arrangements in connection with it, the articles preferred to cite politicians' and other public figures' opinion, in contrast to the discussion of other stories related to the health care system, where they interviewed doctors and other specialists.

During the observation period for Covid-19 epidemic, 17 articles appeared in the Mansi press discussing topics related to the Covid-19 epidemic, including news on the declaration of the lockdown, and the popularisation of vaccination, while eight more articles discussed other medical issues. During the observation period for the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one further article on the epidemic was published, alongside with seven articles about other medical topics. This means that during the observation period for the Russian invasion of Ukraine the situation of healthcare and medical issues was better covered than the invasion itself.

No archive was available for Mansi media programs broadcasted during the epidemic period, which unfortunately makes the comparison of Mansi press and media reports impossible.

5. THE "FIGHTING THING"

5.1. Timeline of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that started in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and Donets Basin. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has started on 24th February 2022. In this chapter only those events having direct impact on the life of the representatives of the indigenous peoples in Western-Siberia are listed.

The agents of Russian mass media were called upon to use exclusively Russian state resources already on the first day of the invasion, but "distributing unreliable information" about the "special operation" and the "discreditation" of the Russian army became criminalised on 4th March 2022, providing imprisonment for up to 15 years and 5 years, respectively (Act N 32-ФЗ). The use of Facebook and Instagram became restricted the same day, while on 21st March 2021, as a reaction to Meta Platforms' temporal lift of ban for call for violence against Russia in certain countries, at the request of the Russian state communications regulator Roskomnadzor, the Tverskoy District Court in Moscow pronounced Meta Platforms as extremist organisation (*Генеральной прокуратурой России…*).

The ("partial") mobilisation of the military reservists in Russia started on 21st September 2022 by the announcement of Vladimir Putin. By 2nd October 2022

2,500 citizens were mobilised from the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (*В Югре…*). The proportion of Mansi and Khanty mobilised in unknown, but on one hand the mobilisation's disastrous effects on the indigenous minority peoples is already clear (*Иди через лес*), on the other hand occasional reports about Ob-Ugric soldiers being mobilised (Артемьев, 2022), and eventually killed in combat (*На Украине погиб…*) are appearing in the Russian online media. According to the data collected via private communication, despite of the lack of news on further mobilisation, the recruitment of soldiers to the Russian army is continuous, and it effects the Mansi men of draft age in growing numbers.

5.2. The Mansi terminology of the Russian-Ukraine war and the Russian invasion of Ukraine

The traditional Mansi term for war is *хōнтлан вāрмаль* ("fighting thing" in Mansi). It appears in the research material several times, although usually in connection of World War II, and only occasionally referring to the Russian-Ukrainian war. The term *специальный военный операция* ("special military operation" in Mansi), the translation of the official Russian term *специальная военная операция* ("special military operation" in Russian) appears in the research materials only once.

5.3. The coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Mansi press

As it was observed during the 2022 study on the discourse of war among Ob-Ugric social media users (c.f. Horváth, 2022), since the implementation of laws threatening the freedom of speech, the Mansi media outlets simply stopped mentioning the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The newspaper *Luima Seripos* is financed and published by the regional government, and for this reason it is expected to publish the Mansi translation of the political declarations and news provided by the government. These declarations contain certain elements of the state propaganda rhetoric regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war, as for example the New Year's greeting by the Okrug's governor and the speaker of the local Duma (both in LS 2023/1:2[3]), where the governor emphasised the need of "praising the people defending our homeland, protecting our country", and the speaker summarised the cause and aim of the war being self-defence, saying:

Родинав ос Донбассыт ōлнэ мāхманув вуянтан мāгсыл мāн мирув нōх-люльсыт ос хōнтлаӈкве та минасыт. Тот ōлнэ щēмьят наскāссыг та

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[3] The abbreviation LS stands for Luima Seripos, and it is followed by the year and number of publication, while the last number indicates the page the article is to be found at.

порславет, аквосытыл пӑтлуптавет, тӑнаныл вуянтӑв ос мирыҥыш ӯлаль ōлуҥкве патӑв.

"We stood up and went to fight to protect our homeland and our people living in the region of the Donets Basin. We protect them, so that those families would not be annihilated, would not be shot at all the time, and we will continue to live peacefully."

In the Mansi journalists' own reports the name of Ukraine, the ongoing war or the invasion are never mentioned directly, only blurry references are made to the consequences that may be witnessed by the readers who are living in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Such a reference is to be found for example the article titled *Макеевка ӯсныл ёхтум нӓврамыт урыл* ("About the children from Makiivka" in Mansi, LS 2022/15:13), that reports about the vacation of the children from Makiivka in Khanty-Mansiysk, the capital of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Makiivka or Makeevka is a city of approximately 300,000 citizens, located 15 km from Donetsk, it is the metallurgical and coal-mining centre of the Donets Basin. According to the 2001 Ukrainian census data, Makiivka was dominantly Russian-speaking (80% of the population), the largest ethnic group in the city was also Russian (50.8%), followed by Ukrainians (45%) and Tatars (1.1%) (Census Donetska Oblast). Ukraine regards the city to be a part of its territory, temporarily occupied by Russian forces, while Russia between 2014 and 2022 regarded it to be located on the territory of the Donetsk People's Republic, until in 2022 Russia annexed it. The pro-Russian government of Makiivka signed an agreement of cooperation with the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug on 30th May 2022 (*Югра и Макеевка…*), as a result of which the Okrug is committed to provide several kinds of humanitarian and financial aid to Makiivka and its citizens. However, none of these facts are mentioned in the Mansi reports about Makiivka residents arriving to the Okrug for recreation or medical treatment, but leaves the interpretation of the context to the readers.

Another report titled *Нӑт маснут юнтӑгыт ос носкыт сагӗгыт* ("Women are sewing cloths and knitting socks" in Mansi, LS 2022/22:4) introduces the local initiative "*Шьём для наших*" ("We are sewing for our people" in Russian). The initiative to invite women to knit and sew warm clothes for soldiers has been started on a regional level, with regional state support. The room and the materials for the project were provided by local governmental institutions, while women were expected to volunteer to participate. The representatives of the indigenous peoples were not involved in the preliminary planning of the project, the first Khanty and Mansi masters turned up to volunteer during the making of the reportage. The Russian translation of the article mentions the soldiers in question being mobilised in the frame of the "partial mobilisation" program. The

lead of the Mansi original introduces the situation in a slightly different manner, saying:

> Округувт ань кāсыӈ пāвылныл ман ӯсныл мāньлат хум хōтпат хōнтлуӈкве ханищтахтын мāгыс тотвēсыт. Ань мāхум, вāим, тāн нупыланыл сунсым лӱньщēгыт, самвит тāртэ̄гыт, воссыг хоталь вāрхатэ̄гыт. Тамле тāрвитыл ōлуӈкве патсӯв, мирн мāнки халувт нē̄туӈкве э̄ри.

"In our Okrug young men are taken to military training [literally: teaching how to fight – *CsH*] from every village and town. Now the people, as is well known, who look at them are crying, let their tears [*to drop – CsH*], where could they turn [*for help – CsH*]. We have fallen to such a distress, we have to help them ourselves."

The Mansi original of the article does not refer to "partial mobilisation", or the war in general, it does not criticise the army, does not inquire the possible reason of shortage in supplies, only mentions that the soldiers are taken for a training where they need warm clothes.

Open criticism towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine is impossible to be formulated, but not only the support or the adaptation of the governmental propaganda are missing from the Mansi journalists' articles, but sometimes also aversion towards the mandatory participation in the invasion on Russia's side can be read between the lines. The article titled *Пыгыт армият лусытэ̄гыт* ("The boys are serving in the army" in Mansi, LS 2023/4:7) tells the story of a Mansi boy coming from the Mansi countryside, who was serving in the army together with his former classmates, also Mansi. The report leaves the nature of the young men's services unclarified. It is clear that they are not serving by contract, but received a call-up, while the report also mentions that one of the boys was drafted in November, and the other two during the summer of 2022, although the regular recruitment of conscripts in Russia usually happens during spring and autumn. The report is based on a letter from the first soldier's grandmother, in which she expresses her best wishes for her grandson, saying:

> Мāн таӈхē̄в, тав акв тамле ёмас сымыӈ э̄лумхōласыг вос ōлнув, лусытан мāтэ̄т нэ̄матыр люль накыт ул вос ēмталэ̄гыт. Ёмас нō̄мтыл вос ōлы, мāн таве сака э̄руптылӯв ос ю̄в ӯрилӯв.

„We wish that he would remain such a kind-hearted person, may nothing bad happen to him at the location of his service. May he be worth to take pride of [literally: may he be with good thought – *CsH*], we love him very much and cannot wait for him to come home."

The location of the young Mansi men's service is not mentioned in the article, but the tone of the grandmother's concern makes it difficult to interpret it being a conscript service in Russia.

During the observed period seven articles appeared in the Mansi newspaper that had any connotation with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Two of them were the New Year's greetings of the Okrug's leading political figures, one was a report of the governor's annual press conference, one introduced the new law about providing financial aid to the families of the volunteers serving in the army, one depicted the summer vacation of the children from Makiivka, while two articles reported of the local women's initiative to prepare warm clothes for the soldiers of the region. At the same time the Mansi TV and radio programs were confined to present only the local, ethnic, folkloristic aspects of Siberian indigenous life, and completely avoided making any reference to the Russian-Ukrainian war, including the topics mentioned in the newspaper as well.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Mansi is an endangered indigenous minority language spoken in Western Siberia. The Mansi are one of the titular ethnic groups of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, but the Mansi language does not have any kind of official status. The Mansi press and media is limited in size, all the outlets are dependent on state support, and they are supervised by both local and federal regulating agencies. In consequence of the unequal power relations, concerning political, financial, and cultural arrangements as well, the Mansi press and media are not in the position of enjoying freedom of speech or freedom of press, and are especially deprived of the possibility to criticise the government.

The comparison of the coverage of two prominent crises of the 21st century provides a good opportunity to observe the limited toolkit of minority press to give voice to non-majority opinions. During the Covid-19 epidemic the Mansi press and media was obliged to publish governmental directives, while journalists refrained from creating reports about the effect the epidemic had on Mansi people's life. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine the obligation of the Mansi press as state-owned media and the Mansi journalists as Russian citizens to obey laws concerning the communication about the invasion was increased even higher.

Although during the Covid-19 epidemic division from state propaganda was not considered a criminal offence, no considerable difference could have been observed between the Mansi reports and the discourse of any other governmental newspaper. Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on the other hand, the opinions represented in the Mansi newspaper *Luima Seripos* became more

diverse: the Mansi press decided not to broadcast official propaganda or to use its terminology, while the Mansi journalists found a way to occasionally report on Mansis' negative attitudes about the invasion.

This strategy appears to be a conscious decision even more concretely, when the coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Mansi press is compared with the reports appearing in the Mansi media, which has not mentioned any event connected to the invasion.

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MEDIA REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Abstract: Violence against girls and women has different forms, but it is present to a greater or lesser extent in all parts of the world and all spheres of society. The media plays a significant role in shaping attitudes, prejudices and opinions on various (social) topics, especially topics that are sensitive and/or controversial from the perspective of the patriarchal social structure. The aim of this research is to show how the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on violence against girls and women during the coronavirus pandemic. Research is based on critical discourse analysis and content analysis. The sample includes 151 articles published during the sampled period March 11, 2020 – December 31, 2021 on four internet portals: Klix, Srpskainfo, Oslobođenje and Glas Srpske. Oslobođenje had the fewest number of articles mentioning the coronavirus pandemic (16%) and Klix the most (28%). Glas Srpske had 20% of analyzed articles mentioning the impact of the pandemic on the increase in violence against girls and women, while the Srpskainfo portal had 25% of articles with the mentioned topic. The results show that the analyzed media did not adequately indicate the cause-and-effect relationship between the pandemic and the increase in violence against girls and women. Based on all analyzed parameters, we conclude that the portals Srpskainfo and Klix paid the most attention to the topic of violence against girls and women, while the content of the portal Srpskainfo had better quality in terms of journalistic involvement and approach to the topic.

Keywords: violence against girls and women, gender-based violence, pandemic, coronavirus, media reporting.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The media has an active and important role in suppressing or emphasizing stereotypes in the general public about certain topics and social problems, including the roles played by women and/or men in modern society. The role of the media is of essential importance in raising the awareness about violence against girls and women as a social and not as a private problem.

The emergence of the Internet and social networks has changed journalism and media reporting, as well as the role of journalists and the media in general. Bojana Begović states that "the media, due to their indispensable informational, communicative and potentially educational role, represent one of the most important factors in modern society and key mediators in marketing and transmission of value systems" (Begović, 2015, p. 63).

Internet journalism is to a certain extent based on sensationalism and commercialization, which further complicates the already complex media reporting on a very sensitive topic such as violence against girls and women. Vanesa Benković and Ivan Balabanić point out that Internet portals, more precisely daily news Internet portals "have a constant imperative to produce content that satisfies their audience and that will maintain the level of visits at which they become interesting to advertisers" (Benković & Balabanić, 2010, p. 46).

UN Women's research entitled *Research on media reporting on gender-based violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020* shows that:

> "despite the efforts of the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international and governmental sector, and primarily the gender mechanisms in BiH, to emphasize the importance and role of the media in preventing violence against women, slow progress has been made in this area, and media coverage analysis still points out the unprofessional approach and negative practices in reporting on this topic" (UN Women, 2021, p. 6).

When media reporting on violence against girls and women is analyzed, the way the victims are presented in the media tells us a lot about their position in society, because "the marginalization of women in media content speaks of the marginalization of women in society" (Begović, 2015, p. 65).

Another important aspect that should be taken into account when analyzing media reporting on this complex topic is iceberg journalism, which represents "superficial coverage of only the visible part of reality, ignoring a much larger part below the surface, calling it a silent process that transforms society" (Benković & Balabanić, 2010, p. 50).

In the context of reporting on this topic, it is necessary to consider whether the news is focused only on the factual data of the committed crime or whether it

is a descriptive and analytical article that offers the readers a broader picture and the context beyond the specific case of committed violence, highlighting violence against girls and women as a social phenomenon, not a private thing.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, there has been an increase in rates of gender-based violence and domestic violence around the world due to numerous interconnected factors such as lockdown, stress, health and financial concerns, etc. Nobuhle Judy Dlamini states that "the social and economic stress brought by COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequality" (Dlamini, 2021, p. 585). Coronavirus pandemic had an impact on all spheres of life, including violence against girls and women, as well as on the response of relevant organizations and safe houses, which could not work adequately or receive new residents due to restrictive measures.

In November 2021, Oxfam published the report *The Ignored Pandemic: The Dual Crises of Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19* in which is stated that "the pandemic has seen a reported increase in cases of GBV – especially intimate partner violence – that has led to the
loss of lives, injuries, anxiety, emotional distress, and more" (Oxfam, 2021, p. 3).

Gender-based violence is a complex process that requires a multi-sector approach and the joint creation of tools and strategies by interested parties, and the role of the media is of essential and multiple importance in the fight against gender-based violence, that is, violence against girls and women.

News or media in general can be considered as public opinion shaper because human perception of events, affairs and accidents is influenced by what we hear, see and/or read in the media (Broekaert et al. 2021, p. 3).

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on society as a whole, as well as the correlation between the pandemic and violence against girls and women is a very complex topic that will surely be addressed from different angles in the future.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Gender-based violence

When the term gender-based violence is mentioned, people usually think of girls and women as victims of violence, because all available statistics and reports indicate that girls and women are primarily victims of gender-based violence, both at the global level and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it is important to emphasize that boys and men can be victims of gender-based violence, although this is much less common in practice.

Also, gender-based violence is often identified with domestic violence which is wrong because it is a much more widespread form of violence that does not only happen at home, but also at the workplace, on the street, at school, etc.

Gender-based violence is any type or form of violence (physical, psychological or sexual) that is primarily based on differences in sex and/or gender. According to Valerija Barada and Željka Jelavić, "the main or most important reason for the emergence and maintenance of gender-based violence is the inequality between men and women present in society, based on stereotypes of men as privileged and powerful, and women as inferior and submissive" (Barada & Jelavić, 2004, p. 71).

When it comes to the legislative framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina that refers to gender-based violence, the Law on Gender Equality of BiH and the Laws on Protection from Domestic Violence of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and Brčko District play an important role, defining measures, strategies and mechanisms for the protection of victims in cases of domestic violence. Nevertheless, the legislation does not contain provisions related to the manner of media coverage of domestic violence.

In this paper, we will not deal with the legal or legislative framework and analysis of the mentioned documents, but we would like to emphasize that all the mentioned acts aim to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence. According to Article 29 of the Law on Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "it is foreseen that anyone who commits violence, harassment or sexual harassment on the basis of gender, which endangers peace, mental health and physical integrity, will be punished with a prison sentence of six months to five years" (Grbić Pavlović, 2020, p. 6). Based on the aforementioned article, we conclude that according to this law, domestic violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is treated as a criminal offense. At the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gender Action Plan 2018-2022 (Gender Action Plan 2018-2022), as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are significant. Among the international documents that deal with violence against girls and women, gender-based violence and domestic violence it is important to mention the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) which the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina ratified in 2013.

Although there is no precise and explicit legislation related to media reporting on gender-based violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to point out that the existing regulations and laws have recognized the role of the media and media reporting on an important and sensitive topic such as violence against girls and women, domestic violence, etc. The topic of gender-based violence is particularly interesting in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

Numerous studies, both local and global (UN, 2021; Oxfam, 2021), point to statistical data on the increase in violence against girls and women during the coronavirus pandemic, primarily during the lockdown, i.e. organized movement when girls and women were forced to be constantly in a living space with an abuser, without the possibility of separation or escape. However, there is still very little data and research related to the analysis of media reporting on violence against girls and women during the pandemic. Therefore, this paper is a modest contribution to illuminating and popularizing the topic of violence against girls and women as the "invisible" pandemic during the coronavirus pandemic.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. The aim of the research

The aim of this research is to show how the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on violence against girls and women during the coronavirus pandemic.

3.2. Hypothetical framework

We assume that all four analyzed internet portals equally reported on violence against girls and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the coronavirus pandemic. The auxiliary hypothesis of this paper is that during the analyzed period there were more media articles that referred to specific cases of violence against girls/women (published in the section Crime) compared to informative and educational media articles about violence against girls and women (published in other sections).

3.3. Methods

Research included the application of qualitative and quantitative research methods: critical discourse analysis and content analysis.
Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary (critical) approach and research method established in the early 1990s by Gunther Kress, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. Today there are numerous approaches to the understanding, study and application of critical discourse analysis: "the discourse-historical approach of Ruth Wodak, the dialectical-relational approach of Fairclough, the socio-cognitivist approach of Teun van Dijk, the cognitive-linguistic approach by Chilton, critical analysis of metaphors by Charteris and

Black" (Pešić & Stošić, 2019, p. 393-394). Van Dijk states that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is:

> "A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality" (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 352).

Critical discourse analysis "involves a principled and transparent movement back and forth between microanalysis of texts using various tools of linguistic, semiotic and literary analysis, and macroanalysis of social formations, institutions and power relations that these texts index and construct" (Luke, 2002, p. 100). Norman Fairclough provides an analytical framework consisting of three dimensions for analysis: "(a) the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text; (b) the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, and finally, (c) the explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality" (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018, p. 14).

Content analysis "was first used more than 200 years ago to analyse textual material from newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, political speeches, hymns, folktales and riddles" (Harwood & Garry, 2003, p. 479). According to Haggarty content analysis is "a research method which allows the qualitative data collected in research to be analysed systematically and reliably so that generalizations can be made from them in relation to the categories of interest to the researcher" (Haggarty, 1996, p. 99).

The research corpus consists of 151 articles published in the period from March 11, 2020 – the day the coronavirus pandemic was declared, until December 31, 2021 on four Internet portals: Oslobođenje, Glas Srpske, Klix, Srpskainfo.

The media selection criterion was based primarily on media readership and relevance, but one of the criteria was that two outlets from Republika Srpska and two media from Federation BiH should be represented. The unit of analysis was the text.

For the purposes of the research, a code sheet was created in accordance with the objectives of the research. The elements of the code sheet are divided into four categories: article, topic of the article, (textual) representation of the victim and perpetrator of violence, photographs and visual representation of the victim and perpetrator of violence.

4. RESULTS

During the analyzed period, 151 articles on the topic of violence against girls and women were published in four selected portals. It is important to point out that Srpskainfo, Glas Srpske and Oslobođenje are daily newspaper portals, while Klix is an Internet native portal.

Srpskainfo portal had the most reports on the topic of violence against girls and women, and Glas Srpska portal had the least (7%). Based on the presented results, it is evident that the two analyzed media from Republika Srpska had more reports. i.e. a total of 89 articles in comparison to the two analyzed media from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had a total of 62 media publications on the topic of violence against girls and women.

In terms of content ownership, most of the news on Klix (79%) were prepared by portal's male and female journalists, followed by Oslobođenje (74%), Srpskainfo (62%), while in last place is the daily newspaper portal Glas Srpske with only 10% of newsroom own content published.

It is positive that the articles of the portals Oslobođenje and Klix were written in a very informative, analytical and educational manner, and it is especially important to emphasize that the vast majority of the Klix's articles contained useful information, for example on the current legislative framework for domestic violence or gender-based violence, information on cities where safe houses are located, phone numbers that girls and women who are victims of violence can call, projects aimed at raising awareness of gender-based violence, etc. It is important to point out that positive examples are the interviews or columns of local politicians, foreign ambassadors, as well as artists with messages about the importance of preventing violence against women, which were published on the Klix portal.

The only negative aspect observed on the Klix portal is that none of the texts were signed with the name and surname of the journalist. When it comes to Glas Srpske only one of the analyzed articles is the result of journalists work, while the rest of the analyzed articles were taken and re-published from news agencies.

When we take into account the signed texts on the portal Srpskainfo, it is interesting to point out that only female journalists wrote about violence against girls and women. It is precisely in those articles that dedication to the topic, research approach, presentation of important information and data, reliance on reports, official statistics, as well as statements by experts are very visible. Also, during the analysis, we noticed that some female journalists are "specialized" in topics such as women's rights, violence against girls and women, gender-based violence, gender equality, etc. The journalists of the Srpskainfo portal, Milkica Milojević and Nataša Telebak, stand out in particular, reporting on violence

against girls and women in a very objective manner, indicating that this violence is one of the most current and widespread social problems that should to be adequately addressed and presented in public, and highlighting that the perpetrators of violence against girls and women should be held accountable for their crimes.

Portal Oslobođenje mostly reported on specific cases of violence against girls and women (56%), while Glas Srpske did not report on any specific case. It is important to point out that Oslobođenje and Srpskainfo reported on both local, regional and global cases of violence.

We hypothesized that during the sampled period there would be more media articles related to specific cases of violence against a girl/woman compared to informative and educational media articles on the mentioned topic. However, the results show completely opposite findings. Although we assumed that articles about specific violence published in the Crime sections would dominate, it turned out that there were more informative and educational articles in which the topic of violence against girls and women was approached from different angles and in different contexts (e.g. economic violence against women, the work of safe houses during the pandemic, etc.). It is also interesting to note that articles on violence against girls and women could be found in different sections, ie. Economy, News, Politics, Panorama, Entertainment. We need to point out that it is inappropriate for an article about violence committed against a famous woman to be found in the Entertainment section, and that the media should take into account not only the title and content of the text, but also the section in which an article has been published.

Out of a total of 151 analyzed articles, only one article referred to violence against girls and women with disabilities, while only one article referred to violence against Roma women. We believe that, as important as it is to talk about violence against women and girls in a general sense, it is much more important to talk about different categories of victims of violence and point out the double marginalization and discrimination experienced by certain categories of girls and women.

A positive development is that all analyzed portals, some to a lesser extent, some to a greater extent, raised awareness of the work and role of safe houses. A significant number of articles had information with useful phone numbers that victims can contact at the end of the text, as well as instructions regarding legal assistance, psychosocial support, etc.

Although the coronavirus pandemic was current in the sampled period, surprisingly few articles mentioned the pandemic or the coronavirus in the context of violence against women. Oslobođenje had the fewest articles mentioning the coronavirus pandemic (16%) and Klix the most (28%). Glas Srpske had 20% of

articles mentioning the impact of the pandemic on the increase in violence against girls and women, while the Srpskainfo portal had 25% of articles with the mentioned topic. These results show that the analyzed media did not adequately indicate the cause-and-effect relationship between the pandemic and the increase in the rate of violence against women.

When it comes to the length of the analyzed articles, the portal Klix had the longest articles (42%), while the portal of daily newspaper Glas Srpske mostly had short articles (70%). At the same time, the portal Klix had the most articles of medium length (40%) compared to the other three analyzed portals.

In 63% of the articles by the portal Oslobođenje, it is unknown whether the author is a male or female journalist. Also, it is important to point out that more articles were written by female journalists (31%) compared to two articles (3%) which were written by journalists of the Oslobođenje portal. In none of the analyzed articles of the Klix portal can it be determined whether they were written by male or female journalists, and the reason for this is that the articles are either signed with initials or only the news agency or media from which the content was taken is signed. Out of a total of 10 analyzed articles of the Glas Srpske portal, only one article is the author's own work, and its author is a female journalist, signed with her full name and surname. It is important to point out that 38% of the analyzed articles of the Srpskainfo portal were written by women, while none of the analyzed articles that were signed with full names were written by male journalists.

The portals Klix, Srpskainfo and Glas Srpske had 100%, and the portal Oslobođenje had 95% of articles that were written in accordance with the ethical and professional standards of the journalism, which is of particular importance for articles dealing with specific cases of violence against girls or women.

The largest percentage (42%) of the analyzed articles of the internet portal Oslobođenje were news, while 58% of the analyzed articles of Klix were reports. Glas Srpske had 60% of the reports in the analyzed period, and 40% of the news, while the Srpskainfo portal had 54% of the news. In all analyzed media, the column proved to be an unpopular journalistic genre in the context of violence against girls and women, while news and report are the most represented journalistic genres in all four analyzed portals.

The majority of articles in the portal Oslobođenje were published in the News section (19%), and the least in the Crime section (4%), Sport (4%) and Topics (4%) sections. As for the Klix portal, the majority of articles (44%) were published in the section News (BiH), and the least (one article each) in the sections Magazine, Technology, Crime, Life, Economy, Promo and Lifestyle. The analyzed media content of Glas Srpska was published equally in five sections: Themes (10%), World (10%), Panorama (10%), Daily News (10%), while most articles

were published in the News section (60%). Majority of the analyzed articles of the Srpskainfo portal (47%) were published in the Society section, while the least (1%) were published in the Sport section.

The portal Glas Srpske had the most informative and educational articles (100%) and the least of them was found in Oslobođenje (47%). The portal Oslobođenje had the most articles about specific cases of violence against a girl or woman (53%), and the least was found in Glas Srpske (0%).

The portal Klix had the most articles (79%) in which the form of the violence against girls and women was mentioned, and the least mentions was identified in the portal Glas Srpske (30%).

As for the photos and visual elements that accompany the text, based on the results obtained for all four analyzed portals, we can see that stock photos were dominantly used. The exceptions were articles that referred to certain conferences and events where the topic of violence against girls and women was discussed, because then photos from the specific event were used.

We assumed that all four selected Internet portals report on violence against girls and women with equal dynamics and intensity in the analyzed period. However, the portal Srpskainfo l had by far the highest number of the published articles in the sampled period – 79 articles, and it paid significantly more attention to this topic than the other three selected portals. We hypothesized that during the sampled period there would be more media articles related to specific cases of violence against a girl or woman compared to informative and educational media articles on the mentioned topic. However, the results indicated the complete opposite.

5. CONCLUSION

The media has an important role in raising awareness about violence against girls and women as a social problem, and in positioning this, often marginalized, topic in the center of media coverage continuously throughout the year. Also, it is of great importance to report on this topic in a sensitized manner and in accordance with all professional and ethical principles of the journalistic profession.

Based on the findings, we conclude that three internet portals, that is all except Srpskainfo, had an inadequate or insufficient number of media articles, and that the continuity and intensity of media reporting was not in accordance with the increase in violence against girls and women during the coronavirus pandemic. This data is indicated by the statistics and reports of the relevant institutions and organizations. It is important to point out that although the portal Srpskainfo had

the highest number of articles, it did not have the most published content which was original, produced in the newsroom.

Based on all analyzed parameters, we conclude that the portals Srpskainfo and Klix paid the most attention to the topic of violence against girls and women, with the content of the portal Srpskainfo being of higher quality in terms of journalistic involvement and approach to the topic. The portal Klix is a positive surprise, because it was expected that clickbait headlines and sensationalist reporting would dominate the mentioned portal. However, the Klix portal reported on the subject of violence against girls and women in a professional manner.

We can conclude that the task of the media is to create a platform, to create a safe and encouraging media space in which victims of violence will not be judged and stigmatized, but will be given the opportunity to openly share their experiences, so that their example and experience encourages other victims to seek help from trusted persons and relevant institutions, as well as organizations dealing with the rights of girls and women. Primarily the media must report responsibly on specific cases of violence committed against a girl or woman, and respect the dignity of the victim they are writing about, without endangering her safety and privacy in any way, and without leading to secondary victimization through their reporting. Serious media houses that want to contribute to the understanding and presentation of violence against girls and women as a social problem must remove all forms and types of gender stereotyping, misogyny, discrimination and sexism from their content, and continuously inform and educate the general public about this important topic. They should not just pay short-term attention to it on dates such as November 25, The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, or when a specific case of violence occurs.

The recommendation for the media is to include statements from relevant institutions and experts as much as possible in the articles on violence against girls and women, as well as to provide, at the end of the text, contact information for services and organizations (e.g. safe houses, SOS telephone, etc.) which victims of violence can contact. It is necessary to give media space to solutions, positive examples and successful stories about girls or women who managed to leave the abuser, rebuild their lives and regain their dignity. Also, it is important to support the media work of non-governmental organizations and associations that continuously work to prevent violence against girls and women and provide direct support and assistance to victims of gender-based violence. The media should, can and must be aware of their influence and it is their responsibility and obligation to be part of the solution, not the problem.

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TEXT GENERATING TOOLS IN MEDIA ENVIRONMENT – FRIEND OR FOE?

Abstract: A text generating tool (TGT) is a software application or program that utilises artificial intelligence (AI) or natural language processing (NLP) techniques to generate written content automatically. These tools, nowadays, can produce human-like text on a wide range of topics, based on different criteria and using given keywords or tasks. Text generating tools are trained using vast amounts of data to generate and produce content that is coherent, contextually relevant and grammatically correct. Even though TGTs undergo rapid development and gain more focus in everyday life, such pace threatens to transform the media environment in an undesired direction, with implications for journalism, advertising and social media. This paper focuses on five text generating tools which were selected based on their availability on the Internet and trial period functionality. The same input prompts (tasks and keywords) on four different subjects were used in content generation. In this study, the differences between tool-generated and human-written texts were highlighted, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using TGTs in the media environment. Discussion about increased efficiency in content production, enhanced personalisation and ethical concerns such as misinformation and bias is also included. Drawing clear-cut conclusions about the usage of TGTs in the media environment is not straightforward. Complex and dynamic nature of the specific topics, context used in search and generation, and desired goals of the media industry are some of factors that influence the lack of a solid conclusion.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, text generating tool, media, content creation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly advancing and finding applications in an increasing number of domains (Islam et al. 2022). AI can

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automate various tasks, thereby enhancing productivity and efficiency. Recent progress in this field, large language models (LLM), and natural language processing (NLP) has resulted in various publicly accessible online text generation tools (TGTs). Due to being trained on human-written texts, the output produced by these tools can often closely resemble content authored by humans (Gunser et al. 2021). These tools are also used within the media industry. Media professionals can employ TGTs to produce news articles, summaries, captions, and even automate routine reporting tasks (Owsley & Greenwood, 2022). Some characteristics of generated texts compared to human-written ones can be observed. However, with the advancement of AI and TGT, these differences will become increasingly less detachable (Köbis & Mossink, 2021). Although integrating TGTs into media workflows presents an opportunity to optimise resources and expedite content delivery, ethical considerations and ensuring the preservation of journalistic integrity remain crucial aspects that warrant careful attention and further research. What raises the most concern, both in general and in the media environment, is that if TGT lacks sufficient training data to generate an accurate response, it may frequently produce a fabricated answer (Brainard, 2023).

In this paper, the history of TGTs development is outlined, tracing its origins from the Turing machines to contemporary TGTs. Five specific tools were chosen and tasked with generating texts on four distinct topics. These generated texts were then analysed, focusing on word and phrase repetition as well as loss of coherence in longer texts, aiming to identify discrepancies between generated and human-written texts.

2. HISTORY OF TGTs DEVELOPMENT

A text generating tool (TGT) is a software application or program that uses AI or NLP techniques to generate written content automatically (Kumar & Singh, 2023). These tools can produce human-like text on a wide range of topics, such as articles, blog posts, social media posts, product descriptions, job descriptions, resumes, business letters, and more (Lancaster, 2023). TGTs often use large language models trained on vast amounts of data to analyse text and generate new content based on that analysis, which is coherent, contextually relevant, and grammatically correct (Kumar & Singh, 2023). While these tools generate text on a certain subject, the quality of the output can vary depending on the complexity of the subject and the specific use case (Chaka, 2023). TGTs can come in various forms, such as standalone software, web-based applications, or integrated within other software platforms.

While TGTs are typically used for creative writing and content generation (Lancaster, 2023), a chatbot is a computer program designed to interact with users in a conversational way and provide specific information or services (Nimavat & Champaneria, 2017). Although both chatbots and TGTs use NLP and AI to produce text-based output, the key difference between them is their intended use.

The history of TGTs is closely related to the history of NLP, which helps computers to understand and use human languages (Liddy, 2001). The roots of NLP can be traced back to the early 1900s, but the real development began during the 1950s when Alan Turing wrote a paper describing a test for a 'thinking' machine, which inspired the idea of AI, NLP, and the evolution of computers (Jones, 1994; Muggleton, 2014). The first TGT was introduced in 1951 by Christopher Strachey, who created a program that generated love letters (Klobucar, 2020; Gaboury, 2022). This shows that even in those early days of TGT development, attempts were made to see if these tools were capable of creative writing.

With the advent of machine learning, deep learning algorithms and AI, TGTs have become more sophisticated and can now generate high-quality content that is consistent in style, tone, and formatting (Wölker & Powell, 2021; Henestrosa, Greving & Kimmerle, 2023). Additionally, text generators demonstrate the ability to efficiently analyse extensive datasets, swiftly extracting relevant information and presenting it in a clear, concise, and structured manner (Akhtar, Neidhardt & Werthner, 2019; Liu & Duffy, 2023). Today, even professionals are no longer able to perfectly distinguish between narrative texts mainly written by an AI-writing-tool and purely human text (Gunser et al. 2021; Köbis & Mossink, 2021). However, there are specific traits that can suggest the text being generated, rather than human written, such as usage of repetitive phrases or words, inconsistent use of language as well as occasional loss of focus (Fitria, 2023; Liao et al., 2023).

In the dynamic realm of contemporary media, the synthesis of AI and NLP has resulted in a revolution in content creation and dissemination (Diakopoulos, 2017; Veglis et al., 2022). TGT represents the convergence of cutting-edge technologies, employing algorithms and deep learning methodologies to produce coherent, contextually relevant, and engaging textual content (Chan-Olmsted, 2019; Bailer et al., 2022). With the rapid digitisation of media platforms and the exponential growth of online content, there has been an escalating demand for efficient and scalable content generation, curation, and dissemination (Hastie, 2023). TGT responds to this demand, automating the process of generating news articles, reports, summaries, and even social media updates (Owsley & Greenwood, 2022).

Input prompts are crucial for TGTs because they provide the initial context or instruction that guides the generation of subsequent text, although formulating a convenient prompt can be difficult (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2023). Writing effective prompts empowers users to customise the generated text so they can influence the output to match their specific requirements, whether it's answering a question, generating a story or creating a poem, and also extends creative possibilities of individuals (Dang et al., 2022).

3. GENERATED TEXTS ANALYSIS

3.1. Method

Today, there are numerous TGTs available on the Internet. They are typically not free, offering various payment options depending on the level of functionality and usage. However, many of them provide free trial periods or limited free versions, allowing users to test these tools before committing to payment. In this research, five different TGTs have been selected, specifically those that offer full functionality over a limited period: Anyword, ChatGPT, ContentBot, CopyAI, and CopySmith.

Anyword (available at https://anyword.com) represents a sophisticated text generation tool, primarily tailored for marketing applications within the digital domain. Employing NLP techniques, Anyword analyses user-provided input, intended tone and target demographic, crafting tailored textual content. Through this process, it generates customised marketing content, aiming to optimise advertising campaigns, enhance user engagement, and bolster brand communication strategies.

ChatGPT (available at https://chat.openai.com), developed by OpenAI, stands as a versatile language generation model capable of producing coherent and contextually appropriate text. Rooted in the principles of deep learning, this tool offers an interactive platform through which users can engage it via prompts. This tool finds utility across a spectrum of applications, including email drafting, code composition, question resolution, and creative ideation.

ContentBot (available at https://www.contentbot.ai) embodies an AI-powered writing assistant crafted to facilitate the seamless creation of high-caliber content spanning diverse domains. By leveraging NLP techniques, ContentBot offers insightful suggestions, structural guidance, and judicious citations, thereby augmenting the content generation process. Tailored for the production of blog

posts, articles, and related written artifacts, it optimises efficiency and effectiveness in content development.

CopyAI (available at https://www.copy.ai), as a specialised TGT, finds its niche in crafting marketing and advertising copy. Proficient in delineating an array of writing styles, CopyAI contributes substantially to the efficiency of marketing campaigns. It thus aids in expediting the content creation process for marketing materials such as advertisements, product descriptions, social media posts, and other promotional content, thereby optimising resources and enhancing market impact.

Similar to CopyAI (available at https://www.copysmith.ai), CopySmith is an AI-powered copywriting instrument, engineered to craft captivating marketing copy. Grounded in advanced NLP algorithms, CopySmith facilitates the creation of compelling ad copies, product descriptions, and associated marketing collateral. It allows its users to elevate their strategic marketing initiatives, effectively resonating with target demographics through impactful messaging.

In this paper the observational method was used to study the way of functioning of selected TGTs. TGTs were observed without direct interference, and the content generated by these chosen TGTs was subsequently analysed.

3.2. *Texts analysis*

TGTs typically require an input prompt, which is a cue or instruction provided by the user, meant to guide the generation process. The input prompt can be a word, phrase, sentence, or even a larger context, and it influences the type of text generated by the tool. The selected tools were tested using four identical prompts for each. This was done in an attempt to see if the generated text would differ depending on the accuracy of the requests and the specified text format, as well as how systems respond to nuanced and refined prompts.

Prompts used in this paper are:
Prompt 1: Write a text about Exit festival in Novi Sad 2023
Prompt 2: Write a news article about Exit festival in Novi Sad 2023
Prompt 3: Write an essay about Exit festival in Novi Sad 2023
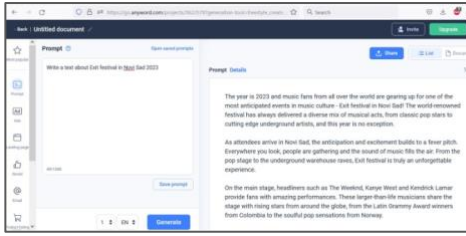Prompt 4: Write a poem about Exit festival in Novi Sad 2023
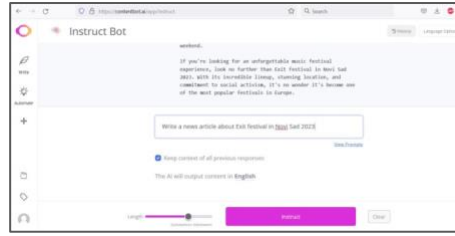
Figure 1: Anyword, prompt 1

Figure 2: ContentBot, prompt 2

All tools were accessed, and all texts were generated during the spring of 2023, before the actual Exit festival in 2023 took place. In total, there are 20 generated texts and they are listed in the appendix (Appendix 1).
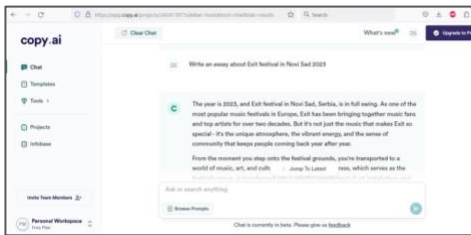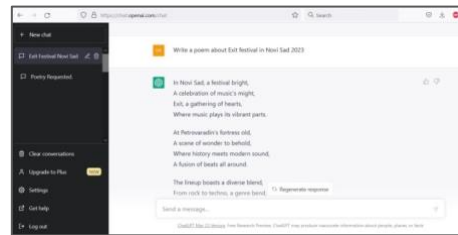

Figure 3: CopyAI, prompt 3

Figure 4: ChatGPT, prompt 4

Distinguishing generated text from human-written text can be challenging, especially when the generated text utilises natural language and sounds similar to text written by a human. However, there are certain characteristics that can indicate the text is generated rather than written by a human.

According to the reviewed literature, a characteristic by which we can conclude that the text was generated rather than written by a human is word and phrase repetition.

In texts generated for the purpose of this research, the term 'festival-goers' appears a total of 32 times across all generated texts. The ChatGPT tool, in response to prompt 1 'Write a text about the Exit festival in Novi Sad 2023' generates a text of 470 words in which this term is repeated 7 times. If the text were to be human-written, there would likely be more lexical variation, incorporating terms like 'attendees', 'concertgoers' or 'spectators'.

Similarly, the term 'renowned' recurs 17 times across all generated texts. Most often in the form of the phrase 'renowned music festivals', although it also repeats and in phrases 'renowned festival', 'world-renowned', 'internationally-renowned', 'renowned artists', 'renowned for its rich history' and 'to be renowned'.

The next term whose repetition was observed is 'stunning location', which appears a total of 10 times across all generated texts. It generally appears once in a text (generated for a specific prompt by a single tool), but it was observed to have appeared in two sentences within one text (ChatGPT, prompt 1): "*As one of the most renowned music festivals in Europe, Exit Festival has earned a reputation for its electrifying atmosphere, diverse lineup, and <u>stunning location</u> at the Petrovaradin Fortress, overlooking the picturesque Danube River.*" and "*With its diverse lineup, <u>stunning location</u>, cultural richness, and commitment to sustainability, Exit Festival 2023 is shaping up to be an unmissable event for music and festival enthusiasts alike.*"

Additionally, the phrase 'music lovers' is repeated 9 times across all generated texts. It generally occurs once in a single generated text in response to a given prompt, except in the case of the ContentBot tool, where it appeared in two sentences generated for the same prompt (prompt 2): "*The festival, which was held at Petrovaradin Fortress overlooking the Danube river, welcomed thousands of <u>music lovers</u> from all over the world to experience four days of diverse music genres, from electronic to rock and everything in between.*" and "*The 2023 edition of Exit festival proved once again why it has become a must-attend event for <u>music lovers</u> and activists from around the world.*"

The next term with observed repetition is 'unforgettable experience', present 8 times across all generated texts. As in previous cases, it typically occurs once in a single generated text for a given prompt, except in the case of the ChatGPT tool and prompt 3, where it appears twice within the same text: "*Exit Festival, one of Europe's most renowned music festivals, is set to return to the historic city of Novi Sad in Serbia in 2023, promising an <u>unforgettable experience</u> for music lovers and festival-goers alike.*" and "*Whether it's dancing to the beats of your favorite artist, exploring the historic Petrovaradin Fortress, indulging in local flavors, or engaging in meaningful discussions, Exit Festival promises to be an <u>unforgettable experience</u> that will leave a lasting impression.*"

It was expected that one tool (ContentBot) for similar prompts (prompt 1, prompt 2) would generate similar (and in some cases, identical) sentences: "*This annual event brings together <u>thousands of music lovers from all over the world to experience a diverse range of music genres, from electronic to rock, and everything in between</u>.*" and "*The festival, which was held at Petrovaradin Fortress overlooking the Danube river, welcomed <u>thousands of music lovers from all over the world to experience</u> four days of <u>diverse music genres, from electronic to rock and everything in between</u>.*" However, concerning repetition, it has been observed that there is repetition of phrases and similar constructions of entire sentences in the texts generated by different tools. For instance, for prompt 2, the ChatGPT tool generates the sentence: "*<u>With its diverse lineup, stunning location,</u>*

cultural richness, <u>and commitment to</u> sustainability and <u>activism</u>, Exit Festival 2023 is shaping up to be an unmissable event for music and festival enthusiasts alike" and ContentBot tool for prompt 2 generates "*<u>With its incredible lineup, stunning location, and commitment to</u> social <u>activism</u>, it's no wonder it's become one of the most popular festivals in Europe*".

When generating longer texts (prompt 3), an occasional loss of focus is noticeable, as indicated in the available literature. Although it can be linked to the Exit Festival, a sentence about greenery and parks in Novi Sad might not be fitting amidst the description of stages and events at the Exit Festival "*For those looking to enjoy some peace and quiet in between gigs, Novi Sad is home to many beautiful green parks and gardens, where you can relax and enjoy a variety of attractions, including markets, concerts and traditional folk shows.*" (AnyWord, prompt 3). Likewise, in the essay about the Exit festival, CopyAI inserts a paragraph about COVID-19 pandemic restraints, even though they are no longer in effect in 2023 "*Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the festival's organizers have taken strict safety measures to ensure the health and well-being of festival-goers. All attendees are required to present a negative COVID-19 test result or proof of vaccination before entering the festival grounds.*" (CopyAI, prompt 3).

Together with that, it was also noticed that some of the generated sentences are simply not correct "*For a truly immersive experience, why not take a night boat trip to Fruska Gora and check out some of the best traditional Serbian music?*" (AnyWord, prompt 3) since Fruska Gora is a mountain near Novi Sad and it is not possible to organise "*night boat trip to Fruska Gora*".

Notably, all the generated essays follow a common structure: initial paragraphs are about music, followed by segments about the festival's location (Petrovaradin fortress), then about art, and subsequently about culinary specialties. The final paragraphs mention social activism and the experience of making new friends during the festival.

Although designers of some TGTs claim that they are designed to produce creative and imaginative text, such as poetry, stories, or other forms of artistic expression, the quality of the songs generated in this experiment is at a very low level (prompt 4). One of reasons may be the fact that TGTs generate texts based on patterns and statistical analysis of vast amounts of data, while human creativity often stems from personal feelings, imagination, and complex emotional states that machines cannot replicate. Rhyme is present in the generated poems, but the rhyming word pairs are reused throughout the poem ('light-night-bright', 'day-stay', 'loud-proud', 'together-weather').

"...
Let the bands play and your feet sway,
Feel the rhythm and stay in this dream all day
...
New people, old faces and strange places,
Jazz and rock to dubstep, dancing in many places." (AnyWord, prompt 4)

"In Novi Sad, a festival bright,
A celebration of music's might,
...
Recycling stations, reusable cups,
A zero-waste goal that truly sups,
....
Activism shines at Exit's core,
A voice for causes to explore,
LGBTQ+ rights, equality,
Humanitarian issues with clarity." (ChatGPT, prompt 4)

"Young and old, all coming together,
To celebrate the music that knows no weather." (ContentBot, prompt 4)

"The sun beats down on the Petrovaradin walls,
As we explore the Art District and admire the stalls.
The Activism Zone is alive with debate,
As we come together to make the world a better place." (CopyAi, prompt 4)

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Much is being written about text generation and use of AI for this purpose, and TGTs have a wide array of applications in everyday life. In the media environment, advancements in AI-powered TGTs have the ability to automate repetitive tasks, such as transcribing interviews, summarising lengthy documents, or generating social media updates, which can lead to substantial time and resource savings for media professionals (Lancaster, 2023). This automated assistance may extend even further to generating automated reports on various topics such as financial earnings, sports scores, weather updates, empowering media outlets to swiftly disseminate information, ensuring timely coverage in rapidly evolving news scenarios (Moravec et al., 2020). However, research conducted in this paper has

shown that during the generation of longer texts, there is a tendency for some parts of text to lack focus, so there could be sentences which are thematically or organizationally incongruent. Additionally, it has also shown that generating texts with a higher degree of creativity still remains a challenge for TGTs, which is in line with some other research as well (Köbis & Mossink, 2021).

Text generating tools have the potential to enable media organisations to create personalised content, tailored to individual users' preferences, interests, and browsing behavior (Roy et al., 2015). Media enterprises can use these tools to generate personalised news summaries, newsletters, and recommendations tailored to each user, enhancing user engagement and satisfaction, which could, potentially, increase user engagement and loyalty (Thurman, 2018; Bodó, 2021).

What is most concerning when using AI and TGTs in media environments is ethical questions regarding authorship, transparency, and the responsibility of media outlets in disclosing the use of AI to the audience (Ouchchy, Coin & Dubljević, 2020; Ashok et al., 2022; Henestrosa, Greving & Kimmerle, 2023), as well as potential for misinformation and bias in generated content (Akter et al., 2021; Kreps, McCain & Brundage, 2022). These tools can amplify existing biases or produce content that is not up to ethical journalism standards such as fact-checking, source verification, and unbiased reporting. Together with that, if TGT hasn't been exposed to enough training data to generate a correct response, it will often fabricate an answer (Brainard, 2023).

On the one hand, TGTs can be seen as a 'friend' of the media industry because they can help content creation processes, enabling media companies to produce more content more efficiently. However, the desire for rapid content creation may lead to a trade-off between the quantity of generated content and its overall quality, impacting the credibility of the media outlet. On the other hand, TGTs can also be viewed as a potential 'foe' of the media industry, as they have the potential to undermine the credibility and trustworthiness of news sources. Additionally, the use of TGTs could lead to a reduction in jobs for journalists, which could have a negative impact on the industry as a whole.

Determining a definitive answer on the impact of TGTs on the media industry is challenging, given the diverse factors at play including the specific tools used, their context of application, and the objectives of the media industry. It is crucial to recognise that the impact of these tools in the media domain encompasses a spectrum of positive and negative effects. Despite the automation potential of TGTs, human journalists and content creators remain indispensable in the media landscape, bringing their expertise in storytelling, context comprehension, and critical thinking to effectively interpret the output of these tools.

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Appendix 1

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RpcpeAWobvsN80YGQIExunFjl9QHTH_6/view?usp=drive_link

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JAVNI INTERES U LOKALNOM INFORMISANJU: DRŽAVNO SUFINANSIRANJE I POTREBE PUBLIKE

Apstrakt: Kroz ostvarivanje tradicionalne tripartitne uloge – da informišu, obrazuju i zabave – lokalni mediji istovremeno osnažuju građane da razumeju i ostvare svoja prava kako bi se izborili za bolju lokalnu upravu i ostvarili viši nivo poverenja unutar zajednice. Mehanizam projektnog sufinansiranja javnog interesa koji je Srbija uvela 2014. imao je za cilj upravo da osnaži lokalne medije kao jedan od stubova demokratskog društva. U dosadašnjim analizama efekata projektnog sufinansiranja prevladavaju analize regularnosti samog procesa i perspektive medijskih radnika, koje iako mogu da ukažu na odnos države prema slobodi medija i profesionalnim standardima, ne daju adekvatan odgovor na pitanje u kojoj meri država i lokalni mediji kroz projektno sufinansiranje odgovaraju na informativne potrebe građana. Kombinujući dve istraživačke metode, ovaj rad ima za cilj da uporedi dve perspektive razumevanja javnog interesa – jednu koja proizilazi iz sekundarne analize javno dostupnih podataka o rezultatima projekata konkursnog sufinansiranja i drugu koja proizilazi iz analize publike zasnovane na fokus grupama sprovedenim u tri lokalne samouprave s 47 punoletnih građana. Istraživanje je pokazalo da iako između države i publike postoji visok stepen slaganja oko valorizacije informativnog programa, ključna razmimoilaženja nastaju u domenu utvrđivanja standarda u pristupu izveštavanju od javnog interesa. S druge strane, uporedna analiza informativnih potreba i finansiranih tema ukazuje na nužnost analize specifičnih potreba zajednice kao preduslova za adekvatniju raspodelu javnog novca.

Ključne reči: lokalna publika, informativne potrebe publike, lokalni mediji, javni interes.

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1. UVOD

Bez obzira na to u kojoj meri je globalizacija izmenila informisanje, medije i publiku, lokalni mediji i dalje igraju ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju svakodnevnog života lokalne zajednice. Osim osnovne uloge da pružaju relevantne informacije, lokalni mediji imaju značajnu ulogu i u formiranju zajedničkog identiteta zajednice, doprinose većoj društvenoj koheziji, podstiču građanski aktivizam i podržavaju razvoj lokalnih preduzeća i inicijativa.

Lokalni mediji u Srbiji prešli su dug put vlasničke transformacije koji je duboko uzdrmao ulogu koju bi trebalo da ostvaruju u lokalnim zajednicama. Podaci iz Registra medija pokazuju da je u Srbiji registrovano više stotina lokalnih elektronskih medija i više od 700 štampanih izdanja, što je krajnje ekonomski neodrživo, navodi se u Strategiji razvoja sistema javnog informisanja u Republici Srbiji za period 2020–2025 (u daljem tekstu: medijska Strategija). U ovom dokumentu dodaje se da su upravo nepovoljni ekonomski uslovi rada i ekonomska nesigurnost najveći problem lokalnih medija danas. Međutim, osim ekonomske i tržišne neodrživosti, mediji su suočeni i s političkim pritiscima i problemima koji se odnose na bezbednost novinara.

U složenim finansijskim okolnostima, nameće se imperativ da se lokalni mediji okrenu raznim oblicima državnog finansiranja – pre svega projektnom sufinansiranju, čime je, kako se to ocenjuje u medijskoj Strategiji, ovaj mehanizam „pretvoren u socijalnu kategoriju umesto da konkursi prevashodno služe za obezbeđivanje sredstava za ostvarivanje javnog interesa" (Strategija... 2020).

Premda je više istraživanja usmerenih na analizu projektnog sufinansiranja pokazalo brojne procesne nedostatke u sprovođenju ovog mehanizma, mali broj istraživanja bavi se analizom pitanja u kojoj meri je konkursno sufinansiranje javnog interesa odgovorilo na informativne potrebe građana lokalne zajednice.

Sagledavanjem problema dominantno iz ugla medijskih profesionalaca gubi se važna perspektiva pozicije primalaca, odnosno publike ili građana lokalne zajednice. U izvesnoj meri, ovaj odnos između medijskih organizacija i njihove publike je odraz tradicionalnog profesionalnog etosa novinarstva, koji daje prioritet prosuđivanju profesionalaca o tome šta bi javnost trebalo da zna, dok bi dublje razumevanje savremene lokalne medijske publike moglo da pomogne da se identifikuju potencijalna rešenja za mnoge izazove s kojima se susreće savremeno novinarstvo (McCollough et al., 2017, p. 2).

Analiza informativnih potreba publike mogla bi da bude važna alatka u jačanju savezništva između medija i publike koje se u profesionalnim raspravama apostrofira kao ključno za održivi razvoj medija, a njega je nemoguće postići bez međusobnog poznavanja i usaglašavanja vrlo široko postavljenog okvira javnog interesa u medijskom zakonodavstvu.

Zato ovaj rad teži da upotpuni postojeće analize projektnog sufinansiranja, dodajući im nedostajuću perspektivu publike. Ovo ne doprinosi samo razumevanju sprovođenja konkretnog mehanizma ulaganja budžetskog novca u medijski sektor, već pomaže strateško planiranje razvoja medijske sfere s ciljem zadovoljenja informativnih potreba građana. Ključni nalazi ovog rada ukazuju na postojanje diskrepanci između perspektiva države, medija i publike, i to posebno u tri sfere: u tumačenju informativnih potreba, odnosno u određenju javnog interesa od strane države, medijskih profesionalaca i publike; pristupu operacionalizaciji javnog interesa kroz medijske sadržaje; razumevanju novinarskih uloga na savremenom medijskom tržištu, a naročito u lokalnom informisanju.

Ovde je ipak važno napomenuti da se kontinuirana analiza publike predviđa novim Zakonom o javnom informisanju i medijima (ZJIM) kao sastavni deo mehanizma konkursnog sufinansiranja, pri čemu se kao potencijalni partner navodi upravo akademska zajednica. Imajući u vidu da bi takva praksa tek trebalo da bude uspostavljena, uporedna analiza dosadašnjih rezultata konkursnog finansiranja, s jedne strane, i potreba publike, s druge strane, koju donosi ovaj rad mogla bi da pruži jednu od mogućih perspektiva budućeg mehanizma.

2. TEORIJSKI OKVIR

2.1. Lokalno informisanje – uloga lokalnih medija i stanje u Srbiji

Pod pojmom lokalni mediji podrazumevaju se one medijske institucije koje svojim opsegom emitovanja (elektronski) i tiraža (štampa) ne pokrivaju celu državu, već manje geografsko područje, odnosno koji su usmereni na informisanje teritorijalno omeđenih grupa građana (Drašković i Gruhonjić, 2015, str. 110).

Iako je pojam *lokalni mediji* prihvaćen i u profesionalnoj i u akademskoj zajednici u Srbiji, u literaturi se mogu pronaći i termini *regionalni mediji* ili *mediji zajednice*, koji neće biti upotrebljeni u ovom radu jer sužavaju određenje lokalnim medija. Dok termin *regionalni mediji* ukazuje na medije koji imaju širu geografsku pokrivenost, termin *mediji zajednice* upućuje na specifičan tip medija koji je osnovan kao medij civilnog sektora. Hes (Hess, 2013) takođe zagovara i termin *geo-socijalnih* medija koji objedinjuje geografsku povezanost s određenim područjem, ali i individualnu identifikaciju bez obzira na geografsku udaljenost. Ovakva definicija medija koji su u Srbiji označeni kao *lokalni,* širi koncept razumevanja definišući ih kao medije koji „imaju čvrstu vezu s geografskom teritorijom, a istovremeno sagledavaju širi društveni prostor u kojem ove publikacije igraju ulogu, kako u pogledu uticajne pozicije koju imaju u određenim

društvenim tokovima i pokretima, tako i kao čvorište za širu globalnu medijsku mrežu" (Hess, 2013, str. 49).

Uloga lokalnih medija je višestruka. Oni su prvenstveno izvor informacija, ali osim toga, oni svojim izveštavanjem pružaju građanima priliku da budu deo zajednice stvarajući ličnu vezu s temama o kojima se izveštava i omogućavajući njihovo informisano učešće u lokalnom javnom diskursu (Park et al., 2022, str. 2).

Bivajući forum za izražavanje mišljenja i specifičnih problema lokalne zajednice (Milojević i Ugrinić, 2012, str. 104), oni su ujedno i kohezivni mehanizam zajednice, ali i važno sredstvo za izražavanje nezadovoljstva velikih razmera „zbog, na primer, velikog projekta izgradnje stadiona ili neadekvatnosti lokalnih bolničkih odeljenja ili navoda o maltretiranju u domovima za negu" (Barnet, 2009, str. 6).

Lokalni mediji mogu i da podstaknu aktivizam građana u pravcu pokretanja važnih pitanja o ostvarivanju prava na lokalne usluge, ali i da utiču na lokalne samouprave da „kreiraju i sprovode politike usmerene ka rešavanju aktuelnih socijalnih i ekoloških izazova, kao što su siromaštvo, nerazvijena infrastruktura, zapuštenost javnih površina, zagađenost vazduha, reka, zemljišta itd." (Krstić, 2022, str. 205). Analizirajući efekte koje lokalno informisanje može da proizvede, Krstić je uočila tri nivoa na kojima lokalni mediji mogu da utiču na rešavanje problema u lokalnoj zajednici. Oni mogu da pokreću određene teme u javnosti i objavljuju serijale tekstova i priloga na osnovu kojih reaguju gradske uprave i druga javna preduzeća; mogu svojim izveštavanjem da utiču na izmene gradskih budžeta, urbanističkih planova i strategija razvoja grada i drugih oblasti; i da otkrivanjem korupcije i ozbiljnih propusta na najvišim nivoima vlasti dovedu do smene onih koji ne rade svoj posao u interesu građana (Krstić, 2022).

U ovome se naročito ogleda demokratski potencijal lokalnih medija koji deluju kao posrednici između građana i institucija lokalne samouprave koje se često oglušuju o potrebe građana, što rezultira time da građani lokalne medije prepoznaju kao svojevrsne javne servise i institucije od poverenja kojima mogu da se obrate za pomoć kada ih druge institucije iznevere (Krstić, 2022, str. 223).

Lokalni mediji u Srbiji nisu posebno definisani Zakonom o javnom informisanju i medijima (2023, član 35), već su obuhvaćeni širom definicijom kao „sredstvo javnog obaveštavanja koje rečima, slikom, odnosno zvukom prenosi urednički oblikovane informacije, ideje i mišljenja i druge sadržaje namenjene javnoj distribuciji i neodređenom broju korisnika".

Lokalno informisanje u Srbiji je poslednjih dvadeset godina prošlo kroz složen proces vlasničke transformacije. Nakon dugogodišnjih javnih rasprava, Vlada Srbije je 2011. godine kao jedan od glavnih ciljeva proklamovala izlazak države iz vlasništva u medijima. Ovakav cilj potvrđen je i donošenjem krovnih medijskih zakona u avgustu 2014. godine (Drašković i Gruhonjić, 2015, str. 109).

Ovaj proces rezultirao je time da jedan deo lokalnih medija potpuno nestane s medijske scene, jer nije bilo zainteresovanih za njihovu privatizaciju, dok je u brojnim slučajevima onih koji su prešli iz vlasništva lokalne samouprave u privatno vlasništvo zabeležen upliv političkih interesa u medijsku sferu, a za nove vlasnike postoje ozbiljne indicije da su povezani sa političkim strankama u vlasti (Srećković et al., 2022).

Kako ocenjuje Tomić (2015), iako je deregulacija u polazištu i svojim prvim oblicima primene u zapadnoevropskoj i američkoj medijskoj praksi prevashodno podrazumevala „redukovanje birokratske kontrole" i stvaranje „stimulativne komercijalne konkurencije" (prema Tomić, 2015) u srpskom slučaju te odrednice deregulacije su uglavnom izostale. Povlačenje države iz medijskog vlasništva sprovedeno je više pod pritiskom okolnosti iz domena usaglašavanja s pravnim tekovinama i normama Evropske unije, a manje kao autentičan razvojni koncept (Tomić, 2015, str. 183).

Lokalni mediji se danas nalaze u vrlo teškom finansijskom položaju. Kako to beleži i medijska Strategija, lokalni mediji „posluju na malim, ograničenim, izuzetno siromašnim lokalnim/regionalnim ekonomskim tržištima, vrlo malo prihoduju od oglašavanja, ali i prodaje, a prelazak na digitalno terestričko emitovanje televizijskog signala nametnuo je nove troškove televizijama koje nije pratilo i povećanje prihoda" (Strategija... 2020, str. 21).

Tako su lokalni i regionalni mediji prinuđeni da se okrenu raznim oblicima državnog finansiranja, uključujući projektno sufinansiranje, ugovore s javnim preduzećima, sponzorstva, donacije, što lokalne medije dovodi u poziciju da su direktno ekonomski zavisni od države, što otvara široko polje mogućih pritisaka na uređivačku politiku i narušava osnovni princip nezavisnosti. Istraživanje organizacije Balkanska istraživačka regionalna mreža – BIRN (2017) pokazalo je na brojnim primerima na koji način se putem sistema javnih nabavki ili sklapanja ugovora o poslovno-tehničkoj saradnji s javnim preduzećima favorizuju mediji koji su naklonjeni vladajućim strukturama.

2.2. Javni interes

Javni interes je u Srbiji normativno uobličen Zakonom o javnim informisanju i medijima. Dok je u prethodnoj verziji zakona iz 2014. godine on definisan kroz osam tačaka, u novom ZJIM donetom 2023. godine ta definicija je proširena na 15 tačaka. Najvažnije odrednice sadržane u ovoj širokoj definiciji jesu da javni interes podrazumeva istinito, nepristrasno, pravovremeno i potpuno informisanje svih građana Srbije o temama od nacionalnog, ali i od regionalnog i lokalnog značaja, i to posebno na maternjem jeziku nacionalnih manjina, na stranim jezicima i informisanje srpske dijaspore.

Osim informisanja, javni interes se određuje i kao unapređivanje medijskog i novinarskog profesionalizma i etičkih standarda i bezbednosti zaštite novinara i medijskih radnika i podrška sadržajima koji se bave ovim pitanjima.

Pod javnim interesom smatra se i podrška proizvodnji medijskih sadržaja radi negovanja i očuvanja kulturnog identiteta srpskog naroda i nacionalnih manjina, kao i sadržaja namenjenih osobama sa invaliditetom. Na listi medijskih sadržaja koji se definišu kao javni interes su i oni koji imaju za cilj zaštitu i razvoj ljudskih prava i demokratije, unapređivanje pravne i socijalne države, slobodan razvoj ličnosti i zaštitu dece, mladih i ostalih osetljivih grupa, razvoj kulturnog i umetničkog stvaralaštva, razvoj obrazovanja, uključujući i medijsku pismenost kao deo obrazovnog sistema, razvoj nauke, sporta i fizičke kulture i zaštite životne sredine i zdravlja ljudi.

Posebno je apostrofirana i podrška sadržajima koji imaju za cilj podizanje interesovanja građana za raspolaganje sredstvima u javnoj svojini, promovisanje i razvijanje svesti o toleranciji, rodnoj ravnopravnosti i međukulturnom dijalogu, sprečavanje svih oblika diskriminacije u javnom prostoru radi unapređenja uzajamnog poštovanja i razumevanja građana koji žive na teritoriji Republike Srbije, bez obzira na njihov etnički, kulturni, jezički, rodni ili verski identitet.

Kao javni interes definiše se i razvijanje i sprovođenje koordinisane nacionalne politike medijske, informacione i digitalne pismenosti, informisanje o procesu evropskih integracija Srbije, zajedničkom evropskom kulturnom, istorijskom i geografskom području, kao i o politikama, vrednostima i budućnosti Evropske unije.

Članom 15. se staranje o ostvarivanju javnog interesa poverava Republici Srbiji, autonomnoj pokrajini i jedinicama lokalne samouprave koje su dužne da podstiču „raznovrsnost medijskih sadržaja, slobodu izražavanja ideja i mišljenja, slobodan razvoj nezavisnih i profesionalnih medija i podsticajno okruženje za održivost medija što doprinosi zadovoljavanju potreba građana za informacijama i sadržajima iz svih oblasti života, bez diskriminacije" (ZJIM, 2023).

U teorijskim razmatranjima, međutim, koncept javnog interesa smatra se vrlo kontroverznim, jer kako navodi Radojković (2016), javni interes nije fiksna kategorija zato što on ne može da bude isti u svako vreme i u svim društvima. Govoreći o pravnoj formulaciji, on ukazuje na dva nedostatka – to što brzo zastarevaju i to što imaju tendenciju da stalno proširuju inventar onoga što bi mediji i novinari trebalo da čine ili ne čine u ime javnog interesa (Radojković, 2016). Stoga je javni interes koji postoji u datom trenutku u datom prostoru samo trenutni rezultat borbe interesa i ideja oko toga šta je poželjno ponašanje medija. „Zakonski tekst samo definiše ono što u svakom društvu i u svakom istorijskom trenutku diktira vladajuća (hegemonska) ideologija. Kao što smo rekli, postoji

pluralizam pogleda na svet (ideologija), ali zakonski tekst ih ne uvažava sve“ (Radojković, 2016, str. 10).

Najznačajniji doprinos ovoj raspravi dao je Denis Mek Kvejl (1994) koji je uočio pet univerzalnih zahteva za poželjno funkcionisanje medija i novinara, kako bi radili u skladu sa javnim interesom, a to su sloboda, raznovrsnost, kvalitet informacija, društveni poredak i solidarnost i kulturni poredak. Međutim, kako god jedna zajednica definisala javni interes, teško će dostići potpuno zadovoljenje svih faktora, jer se oni međusobno potiskuju i nadopunjavaju (Mek Kvejl, 1994). Zato je neophodno stalno traganje za privremenim kompromisom oko slaganja komponenti nekog javnog interesa. To isto važi i za rad medija i novinara i javni interes u tom polju, jer nema javnog interesa koji bi bio nepromenljiva, istorijski i kontekstualno nezavisna i zbog toga trajna kategorija (Radojković, 2016).

Ukoliko se postojeća razumevanja javnog interesa primene na lokalno izveštavanje, teme koje se prioritetno nameću obuhvataju pitanja, brige i dešavanja koja direktno utiču na dobrobit, kvalitet života i celokupno funkcionisanje zajednice. Ove teme obično uključuju lokalnu upravu i politiku, obrazovanje, javnu bezbednost, zdravstvenu zaštitu, infrastrukturu, životnu sredinu, ekonomski razvoj, socijalne usluge, kulturne i rekreativne aktivnosti i događaje u zajednici. Teme od javnog interesa mogu se razlikovati od jedne zajednice do druge na osnovu njihovih jedinstvenih karakteristika, ali se uglavnom vrte oko stvari koje se bave i utiču na živote lokalnog stanovništva.

Iako im kategorija javnog interesa u medijima nije nepoznata, medijski profesionalci u lokalnim medijima, često je u praksi svode na oskudno izveštavanje u kom dominiraju institucionalni izvori (Mihajlov-Prokopović et al., 2019, str. 6).

Međutim, najdominantnija kritika upućena profesionalnom novinarstvu ipak je na drugom tragu, a odnosi se na stav da su novinske organizacije bile sklone da ostanu odvojene od svoje publike i da rade isključivo na osnovu sopstvenih sudova i percepcija o važnosti pojedinačnih priča i kritičnim potrebama zajednice za informacijama (McCollough et al., 2017, str. 1).

Imajući to u vidu, Nezavisno udruženje novinara Srbije zalagalo se za uspostavljanje mehanizma utvrđivanja javnog interesa na nivou lokalne samouprave. Ovaj model prvo je prepoznat u Strategiji razvoja sistema informisanja u Republici Srbiji za period 2020-2025. godine, a potom je uprkos prvobitnom otporu, uvršten i u finalni tekst novog ZJIM. Tako je članom 28. definisana obaveza organa koji raspisuje konkurs da najmanje jednom u tri godine sprovodi analizu o potrebnim medijskim sadržajima, koja bi potom postala i sastavni deo konkursa.

2.3. Projektno sufinansiranje

Proces transformacije vlasništva u lokalnim medijima u Srbiji pratio je i proces uspostavljanja sistema konkursnog sufinansiranja medijskih sadržaja od javnog interesa koji podrazumeva da država, pokrajina i lokalna samouprava nastavi da ulaže javni novac u javni interes, ali ovog puta ne direktnim davanjima, već organizacijom nadmetanja medijskih projektnih predloga o kojima bi odluku donela stručna komisija, ocenjujući temu projekta, ciljeve i ciljne grupe, održivost i sposobnost medijske organizacije da sprovede ciljeve projekta, a sve to imajući u vidu zakonom definisan okvir javnog interesa. „Dakle, država u medijsku sferu interveniše – sledeći duh zakona – da bi građanima obezbedila kvalitetno informisanje, oslobođeno od političkih, ekonomskih i drugih interesa onih koji imaju vlast i/ili moć u društvu" (Sejdinović i Medić, 2021, str. 4).

Međutim, brojne stručne analize (NDNV, BIRN, CRTA) konstatovale su brojne probleme u sprovođenju ovog modela finansiranja. U „Beloj knjizi konkursnog sufinansiranja" (Gruhonjić, 2016) analizirana je primena zakona tokom prve dve godine i identifikovani su problemi koji sežu od toga da lokalne samouprave uopšte nisu raspisale konkurse, preko problema koji se odnose na proceduralne nedostatke u sprovođenju konkursa – bilo da se odnose na tekst konkursa, izbor stručne komisije ili transparentnost procesa – do favorizacije medija koji su po vlasničkoj strukturi i/ili uređivačkoj politici bliski organu državne uprave koji je raspisao konkurs.

Stručna javnost takođe posebno kritikuje neadekvatnost kriterijuma za podelu novca i strukturu komisija koje odlučuju o dodeli sredstava, u smislu nekompetentnosti njihovih članova, bliskosti strankama na vlasti čime se omogućava uticaj politike na način raspodele sredstava medijima, a samim tim i narušava nezavisnost medija (Gruhonjić, 2016).

Iako se navedeni model projektnog finansiranja u Srbiji aktivno brani i promoviše kao napredan i koristan za lokalne opštine i njihove medije, što on po svojoj definiciji i u teorijskom smislu i jeste, ovaj model ne daje željene rezultate (Tomić, 2015).

Razlog tome bi osim u procesnim nedostacima trebalo potražiti i u kapacitetima lokalnih medijskih kuća za pisanje projektnih predloga. Kako navode Drašković i Gruhonjić (2015), veliki broj novinara nema nikakvo iskustvo sa projektnim menadžmentom niti su ikada pisali predloge projekata, niti poznaju tehnike pisanja projektnih aktivnosti. Dobar broj zaposlenih u lokalnim medijima nema fakultetsko obrazovanje, niti bilo kakve reference iz oblasti neformalne edukacije, što ima kako su navodili predstavlja glavnu prepreku (Drašković i Gruhonjić, 2015, str. 114)

2.4. Publika lokalnih medija

Iako se analizom lokalnog informisanja posvećeno bave i naučna zajednica i civilni sektor, dominantna perspektiva ovih istraživanja polazi od stavova medijske zajednice – kako urednika, novinara i vlasnika medija, tako i medijskih stručnjaka. O publici lokalnih medija u Srbiji, s druge strane, postoje tek sporadični podaci.

Prema istraživanju koje je sproveo Centar za medijska istraživanja Fakulteta političkih nauka 2020. godine, građani Srbije visoko vrednuju informacije o neposrednom okruženju u kome žive (Milivojević et al., 2020). Tako je čak 90% ispitanika navelo da je koristilo neke od izvora informacija o lokalnim temama, a najveći broj njih je pratio lokalne medije, bilo tradicionalne ili onlajn (70%). Veliki deo (44%) se oslanjao na mrežu kontakta i u ličnoj, neposrednoj komunikaciji saznavao stvari, a trećina (33%) se informisala putem lokalne grupe na društvenim mrežama (Milivojević et al., 2020, str. 25).

Nešto potpunije podatke daje Izveštaj o digitalnim vestima iz 2022. godine koji je pokazao da se pojedinačno posmatrano građani najviše informišu u komunikaciji sa svojom zajednicom (37%) ili posredno, putem lokalnih onlajn grupa, foruma i grupa za diskusiju (26%), dok su institucije i zvaničnici izvori lokalnih vesti za 11% stanovnika (Kleut et al., 2022). Kada je u pitanju informisanje putem medija, četvrtina ispitanika (25%) pratila je sadržaj lokalne televizije i isto toliko (24%) je čitalo lokalnu štampu, dok lokalni radio sluša 16% građana (Kleut et al., 2022, str. 22).

Oba istraživanja pokazuju da je najmanja zainteresovanost za lokalne vesti u Beogradu, dok su najzainteresovaniji za ovu vrstu informacija oni koji su generalno zainteresovani za vesti (57%), a najmanje su zainteresovani najmlađi ispitanici (34% među njima) (Milivojević et al., 2020, str. 25).

U Izveštaju iz 2020. godine napominje se i da je „potreba za pouzdanim i pravovremenim informacijama iz lokala u vreme pandemije bila značajno povećana" (Milivojević et al., 2020, str. 25), kako zbog potrebe za informisanjem o epidemiološkoj situaciji na lokalu, tako i zbog potrebe za informisanjem o građanskim protestima koji su usledili kao odgovor na mere za suzbijanje epidemije.

Kada je u pitanju sadržaj lokalnih medija, analiza koju je 2015. godine uradila agencija za istraživanje tržišta Ipsos za potrebe Regulatornog tela za elektronske medije pokazala je da bi građani voleli da lokalne radio i TV stanice imaju više informativnog programa. Do vrlo sličnih rezultata dolaze i anketna istraživanja koje je sprovela Fondacija Slavko Ćuruvija tokom 2017. i 2018. godine. Ukupno posmatrani rezultati za Pančevo, Suboticu, Novi Pazar, Užice, Kragujevac, Požarevac i Leskovac pokazuju da su glavne teme o kojima bi građani

voleli da se informišu kultura, komunalne teme, privreda i poljoprivreda, a u svim opštinama više od četvrtine građana ocenjuje da mediji dobro prate ove teme, dok petina smatra da to možda rade dobro.

3. METODOLOGIJA

Imajući u vidu upravo sužen spektar podataka o publici lokalnih medija, cilj ovog rada je da kvalitativno sagleda i identifikuje ključne aspekte informativnih potreba građana u lokalnoj zajednici i ukaže na to u kojoj meri se konkursnim sufinansiranjem javnog interesa zaista odgovara na te potrebe.

Dosadašnja istraživanja uglavnom su bila fokusirana na procesne nedostatke mehanizma konkursnog sufinansiranja i perspektive medijske zajednice, što iako ima veliki značaj za razumevanje i unapređenje ostvarivanja javnog interesa na lokalu, ne daje potpunu sliku o svrsishodnosti ovog mehanizma koja se pre svega ogleda u vezama s informativnim potrebama publike.

Ove veze biće identifikovane kroz sagledavanje različitih perspektiva u razumevanju javnog interesa, pri čemu će fokus biti na razumevanju prioriteta i interesovanja građana u lokalnoj zajednici, s jedne strane, odnosno evaluaciji trenutnih praksi projektnog sufinansiranja u lokalnoj zajednici, s druge strane. Sagledavanje rezultata mehanizma projektnog sufinansiranja ne doprinosi samo razumevanju javnog interesa od strane države kao osnovnog stratega u razvoju lokalnog informisanja, već i medija čiji je zadatak da operacionalizuju ostvarenje javnog interesa. Ukrštanjem ove tri perspektive, ovaj rad će težiti da pruži potpuniju sliku o lokalnom informisanju koja bi mogla da posluži kao osnova daljeg unapređenja ostvarivanja javnog interesa na lokalu.

Istraživanje kombinuje dve istraživačke metode – sekundarnu analizu javno dostupnih podataka o rezultatima projekata konkursnog sufinansiranja i fokus-grupni intervju.

Sekundarna analiza javno dostupnih podataka o rezultatima projekata konkursnog sufinansiranja zasniva se na bazi podataka objavljenoj u okviru projekta koji je sproveo Centar za održive zajednice u saradnji s Misijom OEBS u Srbiji. Ova baza sadrži podatke o 14.022 projekta koja su odobrena na sva tri nivoa vlasti – republičkom, pokrajinskom i lokalnom – u periodu od početka 2015. do 2022. godine.

Osim podataka o tome koji organ je raspisao konkurs, koje godine i kome je novac dodeljen, u kom iznosu i za koji projekat, ova baza podataka klasifikuje projekte i po temama koje su izvedene iz određenja javnog interesa Zakonom o javnom informisanju i medijima iz 2014. godine. Tako se u bazi projekti raspoređuju u osam tematskih okvira: ekologija i zdravstvo, ekonomija,

informativni program, kultura i obrazovanje, neprivilegovane grupe, manjinski sadržaj i sport, kao i kategorija *ostalo* u koju su svrstane verske i religiozne teme, povećanje nataliteta i teme koje nisu bile dovoljno jasno definisane da bi mogle a se podvedu pod druge oblasti. Kategorizacija projekata prema temi izvršena je prema nazivima projekata.

Za potrebe ovog istraživanja korišćeni su podaci o projektima koje su raspisale lokalne samouprave. Važno je napomenuti da lokalni mediji mogu da konkurišu i na konkursima koje raspisuju pokrajinski i republički organ, ali je za ovo istraživanje od posebnog značaja novac koji lokalne samouprave izdvajaju za finansiranje javnog interesa, kako bi se uočile zakonitosti u tumačenju informativnih potreba građana u lokalnoj zajednici. Poseban akcenat biće stavljen na tri lokalne samouprave u kojima je sprovedeno fokus-grupno istraživanje – Pančevo, Lučani i Novi Pazar.

Drugi deo istraživanja zasniva se na metodi fokus-grupnog intervjua. Fokus-grupni intervju je kvalitativna istraživačka tehnika koja podrazumeva seriju grupnih razgovora koji okupljaju učesnike, slične po nekim karakteristikama ili iskustvima, da raspravljaju o određenim pitanjima relevantnim za istraživački problem (Đurić, 2005, str. 5). Ova tehnika je, s jedne strane, omogućila razgovor s većim brojem ispitanika, a s druge, sagledavanje stavova i tumačenja medijskih sadržaja kako na individualnom, tako i na nivou zajednice. To je od posebne važnosti, jer informativne potrebe imaju i individualno i grupno određenje i razvijaju se u kontekstu i deljenom razumevanju zajednice.

Fokus grupni razgovori organizovani su u Lučanima, Novom Pazaru i Pančevu. Ove tri opštine izabrane su imajući na umu izdvajanja za projektno sufinansiranje medija. Opština Lučani nikada nije dodelila sredstva po ovom osnovu i spada među samo 10 opština u Srbiji koje nisu nikad raspisale konkurse za medije. Opštine Novi Pazar i Pančevo se pak nalaze se među onima koje su od 2015. do 2022. godine izdvojile najviše novca. Osim toga, na izbor opština uticali su i drugi kriterijumi, poput regiona, veličine i etničke strukture.

Ispitanici su selektovani po modelu snežne grudve, a naknada za učešće u fokus grupi bila je vaučer iz supermarketa ili drogerije u iznosu od 1.000 dinara. Pri izboru ispitanika, posebno se vodilo računa o tome da oni ne budu zaposleni u medijima i politički angažovani, kako bismo dobili perspektivu ljudi iz uloge publike. To je, međutim, bio i najveći izazov, jer su upravo ove grupe građana pokazale interesovanje da učestvuju u razgovoru.

Po dve fokus grupe u Lučanima i Pančevu imale su heterogenu strukturu u pogledu pola, uzrasta i profesionalne orijentacije. Najstarija sagovornica ima 72 godine, dok je četvoro sagovornika tek napunilo 18 godina. Među ispitanicima je bilo više žena i više mladih. Imajući u vidu da Novi Pazar i statistički nosi epitet „mladog grada" zbog proseka godina svog stanovništva, u ovom gradu su

realizovane dve fokus grupe samo sa mladima (do 35 godina) i dve fokus grupe sa starijima građanima (iznad 35 godina).

Fokus grupni razgovori organizovani su u oktobru i novembru 2022. godine. Najkraći razgovor je trajao 47 minuta, a najduži 88. Svi učesnici su pre razgovora popunili formular saglasnosti za učešće u istraživanju, kojim im se između ostalog garantuje i anonimnost.

4. REZULTATI

## 4.1. *Rezultati sekundarne analize javno dostupnih podataka o projektnom sufinansiranju*

Prema podacima dostupnim u bazi Centra za održive zajednice, lokalne samouprave su u periodu od 2015. do 2022. godine dodelile 79.843.325 eura za 11.703 projekta. Od 152 analizirane lokalne samouprave, njih deset nijednom nije raspisalo konkurs u posmatranih sedam godina. To su opštine Batočina, Bosilegrad, Gadžin Han, Golubac, Kostolac, Lapovo, Lučani, Rača, Sjenica i Žabari. Novac koji su lokalne samouprave izdvajale za sufinansiranje javnog interesa se tokom godina uvećavao, uz blagi pad 2021. godine. Pet gradova koji su izdvojili najviše novca su Beograd, Niš, Novi Pazar, Novi Sad i Pančevo. Ovi gradovi su ujedno i među najvećim lokalnim samoupravama, ali budžeti koje izdvajaju za medije nisu u potpunosti proporcionalni veličini ovih gradova, o čemu će biti reči u daljem pregledu rezultata.

Slika 1. Izdvajanje za konkursno sufinansiranje
u lokalnim samoupravama u evrima
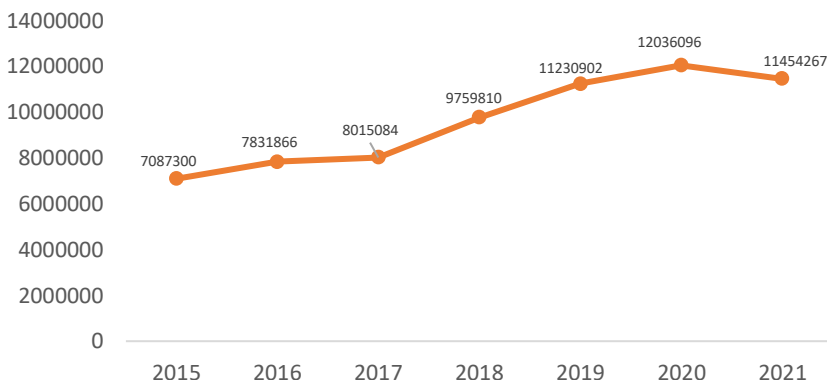
Najviše novca dodeljeno je za projekte u domenu informativnog programa, a daleko manje za sadržaje o kulturi i obrazovanju, ekologiji i zdravlju ili neprivilegovanim grupama.

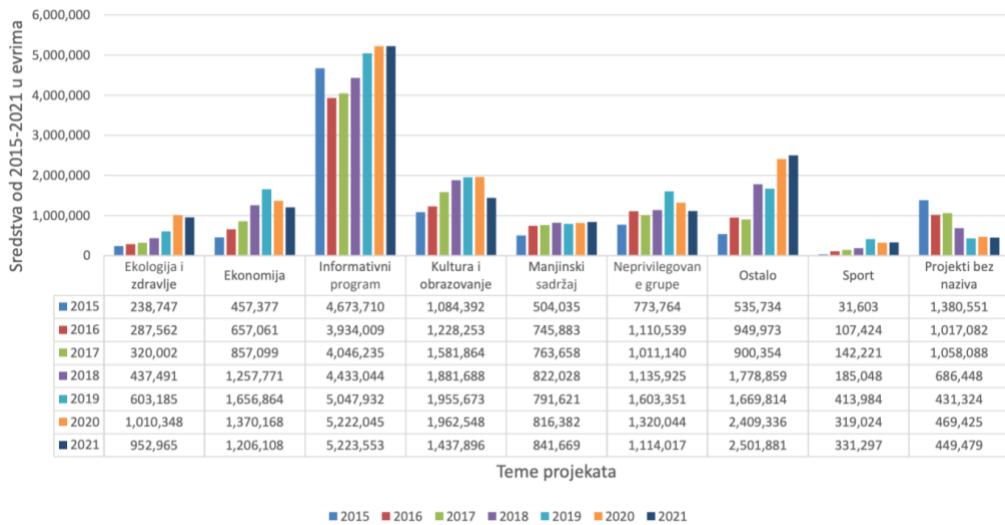*Slika 2. Zastupljenost tema u finansiranim projektima*
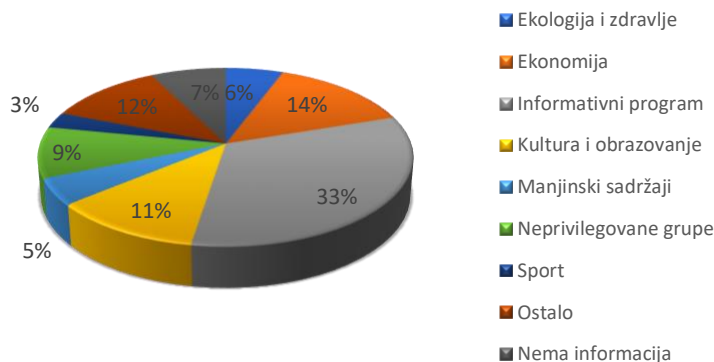
Iako se kroz informativni program najdirektnije ostvaruje informisanje građana o temama od značaja, nazivi projekata ukazuju na to da se novcem predviđenim za sufinansiranje javnog interesa zapravo finansira redovan rad medija, odnosno proizvodnja dnevnog informativnog programa, na šta pojedini nazivi i direktno ukazuju: „Proizvodnja i emitovanje TV programa za potrebe informisanja stanovnika opštine Ćićevac", „Svakodnevno ažuriranje sajta vojvodinainfo.net", „Info klik – centralna informativna emisija" itd. Osim toga, iz naziva pojedinih projekata proizilazi i to da su oni namenjeni za praćenje rada lokalnih samouprava: „Rad javnih preduzeća i ustanova", „Unapređenje publiciteta aktivnosti Opštine Inđija", „Medijsko praćenje i informisanje javnosti o radu lokalne samouprave", „Izveštavanje o radu organa Opštine Ub"). Iako bi za detaljniju analizu bilo neophodno sagledavanje sadržaja projektnih predloga, a naročito evaluacija medijskih sadržaja koji su nastali kao rezultat takvih projekata, zaključak koji se nameće iz naziva ukazuje na to da projekti u kojima se izdvaja novac za praćenje rada organa nije u podudarnosti s definicijom informisanja u javnom interesu koja predviđa visoke profesionalne standarde, nepristrasno izveštavanje i kritičku distancu u cilju najpotpunijeg informisanja.

Osim projekata koje su istraživači okarakterisali kao informativni program, u kategoriji „Ostale teme" takođe se nalazi značajan udeo projekata koji nose slične nazive: „Opština Alibunar-lokalna samouprava u funkciji samouprave građana" ili „Medijska kampanja MUP-a Srbije Zajedno možemo bolje".

U ovom tematskom okviru ipak dominiraju teme iz oblasti turizma, podizanja nataliteta i medijske pismenosti i medijskih sloboda u celini, premda su nazivi projekata često vrlo neodređeni i metaforični, te se ne može zaključiti kojoj tematskoj oblasti pripadaju. To još jednom ukazuje na potrebu detaljnije evaluacija sadržaja kako bi se s dobili precizniji rezultati o dometima konkursnog sufinansiranja u zadovoljavanju informativnih potreba građana.

Slika 3. Prikaz izdvojenog novca po godinama i temama
(Izvor: Sejdinović i Međić, 2021)

|	Ekologija i zdravlje	Ekonomija	Informativni program	Kultura i obrazovanje	Manjinski sadržaj	Neprivilegovan e grupe	Ostalo	Sport	Projekti bez naziva
■ 2015	238,747	457,377	4,673,710	1,084,392	504,035	773,764	535,734	31,603	1,380,551
■ 2016	287,562	657,061	3,934,009	1,228,253	745,883	1,110,539	949,973	107,424	1,017,082
■ 2017	320,002	857,099	4,046,235	1,581,864	763,658	1,011,140	900,354	142,221	1,058,088
■ 2018	437,491	1,257,771	4,433,044	1,881,688	822,028	1,135,925	1,778,859	185,048	686,448
■ 2019	603,185	1,656,864	5,047,932	1,955,673	791,621	1,603,351	1,669,814	413,984	431,324
■ 2020	1,010,348	1,370,168	5,222,045	1,962,548	816,382	1,320,044	2,409,336	319,024	469,425
■ 2021	952,965	1,206,108	5,223,553	1,437,896	841,669	1,114,017	2,501,881	331,297	449,479

Pri pregledu novca koji su lokalne samouprave izdvajale za konkursno sufinansiranje medija može se uočiti još nekoliko trendova. Kada je u pitanju finansiranje tema iz oblasti ekologije i zdravlja, može se uočiti nagli skok 2020. godine, što se može tumačiti i pandemijskim okolnostima u kojima je zdravlje prepoznato kao najvažnija tema. Međutim, dok se povećanje ukupnog novca koji lokalne samouprave izdvajaju za medijske sadržaje direktno održava na novac opredeljen za informativni program, teme iz oblasti ekologije i zdravlja, kulture i obrazovanja, sporta, pa i ekonomije, takvi trendovi nisu vidljivi i u izdvajanjima za sadržaje koji se bave manjinskim zajednicama i neprivilegovanim grupama. Rezultati, naprotiv, pokazuju da ulaganja u sadržaje koji su visoko kotirani pri određenju javnog interesa stagniraju, odnosno imajući u vidu ukupno povećanje budžeta može se zaključiti i da procentualno opadaju iz godine u godinu.

Ukoliko posmatramo trendove u tri lokalne samouprave u kojima je sprovedeno fokus-grupno istraživanje, prvo zapažanje svakako je to da Opština Lučani nije nikada dodelila sredstva medijima po osnovu projektnog

sufinansiranja medijskih sadržaja od javnog interesa, dok se Novi Pazar i Pančevo ubrajaju u pet lokalnih samouprava koje su izdvajale najviše novca.

Slika 4. Izdvajanje za konkursno sufinansiranje u Pančevu i Novom Pazaru
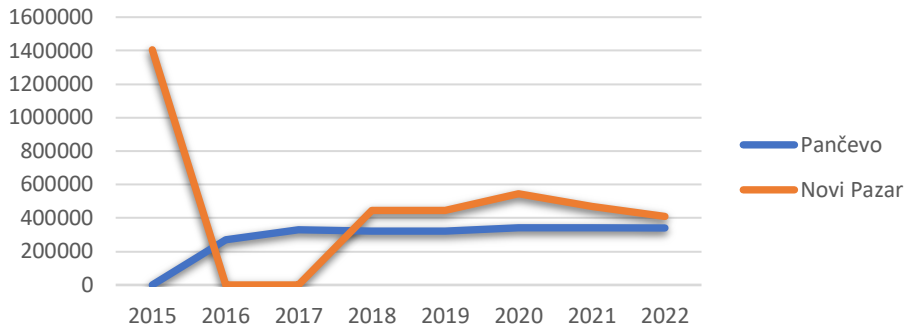
Grad Pančevo samo prve godine nije raspisao konkurs, dok je od 2016. godine do danas budžet za projektno sufinansiranje iznosio u proseku 320.000 evra. S druge strane, Novi Pazar i pored dve godine u kojima nije raspisao konkurs za konkursno sufinansiranje i dalje zauzima treće mesto po obimu dodeljenih sredstava. S ukupno 3.718.143 evra, nalazi se neposredno iza Beograda i Niša.

U obe lokalne samouprave uočen je isti trend dominacije informativnog programa, što u slučaju Novog Pazara iznosi čak 94 odsto, od čega je petina dodeljena samo jednom mediju, a to je RTV Novi Pazar. Ova medijska kuća nekada je poslovala kao javno preduzeće, a 2015. godine prešla je iz opštinskog u vlasništvo petočlanog konzorcijuma, među kojima je bio i gradonačelnik Novog Pazara Nihat Biševac, koji se po stupanju na funkciju zvanično povukao iz vlasništva. Ipak, podaci pokazuju da je RTV Novi Pazar na lokalnim medijskim konkursima iz godine u godinu dobijala od 60 do čak 85 odsto svih sredstava namenjenih za lokalno informisanje, a ujedno je i medij koji je dobio najviše novca na konkursima svih lokalnih samouprava. Druga velika televizijska kuća TV Sandžak je za isti period dobila 23 puta manje novca. Ovaj medij posluje u okviru „Sandžak medija grupe" koju je osnovao nekadašnji muftija Islamske zajednice u Srbiji i osnivač Stranke pravde i pomirenja Muamer Zukorlić.

Ukoliko se sagledaju ostale teme koje su zastupljene u odobrenim projektima, može se uočiti nekoliko projekata koji se bave temama iz oblasti ekologije, a kojima svake godine apliciraju isti mediji, ali i nekoliko projekata koji se bave ženama i mladima, što kategoriju *neprivilegovane grupe* stavlja na drugo mesto po obimu finansiranja. U ovoj kategoriji je i projekat koji je posle informativnog programa dobio pojedinačno najviše novca (blizu 15.000 evra), a

to je projekat koji nosi naziv „Humanost na delu". Kulturom se dominantno bave mediji s nacionalnom pokrivenošću i u ovim projektima dominira tradicionalna kulturna baština, dok se samo jedan projekat bavi savremenim kulturnim stvaralaštvom. Nijedan projekat ne tematizuje obrazovanje.

Slika 5. Zastupljenost tema u Pančevu (levo) i Novom Pazaru (desno)

Informativni program dominira i u Pančevu, iako raspodela novca nije koncentrisana kao u slučaju Novog Pazara. Međutim, i ovde se može uočiti isti trend kao u opštem pregledu, a to je da se kroz ovaj tematski okvir finansira redovan rad medija. Drugo mesto po zastupljenosti zauzima tematski okvir „manjinski mediji". Uvidom u podatke o finansiranim projektima može se uvideti da je 307.810 evra od ukupno 330.655 evra koliko je izdvojeno za manjinske sadržaje dodeljeno za projekte koji svake godine nose naziv „Multijezični dodatak u nedeljniku Pančevac". Za teme iz oblasti ekologije koja je od posebne važnosti za građane Pančeva dodeljeno je svega 3 odsto novca, od čega je najveći deo dodeljen specijalizovanim medijima civilnog društva.

4.2. Rezultati fokus-grupnih razgovora

Pri definisanju informativnih potreba ispitanici se dominantno rukovode dvoma kriterijumima – tematskim okvirom i novinarskim pristupom pri obradi teme. Svoje potrebe definišu na preseku ove dve kategorije, a ne isključivo kroz tematske odrednice. Ovako definisan, spektar informativnih potreba građana je veoma širok, ali se može klasifikovati u nekoliko kategorija.

Prva asocijacija na javni interes na lokalu za ispitanike su servisne informacije. Ova kategorija podrazumeva informacije koje direktno utiču na svakodnevicu, a koje se odnose i na komunalne probleme, građevinske radove, isključenja struje, vode i drugih usluga.

NP2.1: Kad je zatvorena neka ulica i pratim kad su udesi ili bilo kakve saobraćajne nesreće zato što se često krećem i onda da znam gde da izbegavam, to često gledam.

Druga grupa su vesti koje ispitanici određuju kao lepe vesti i u njih svrstavaju medijske sadržaje o uspešnim pojedincima iz zajednice, kulturnim i drugim događajima koji doprinose kvalitetu života u lokalnoj zajednici, ali i sadržaje orijentisane ka rešenjima koji se u medijskoj teoriji označavaju kao konstruktivno novinarstvo. U Lučanima i Novom Pazaru su se posebno istakle i teme humanitarnog karaktera, za koje ispitanici kažu da bi trebalo da dobiju više prostora u medijima.

LU2.1: Da je neko naše dete iz Opštine, ima ovaj dečak koji je paraolimpijac pa je on uspeo, pa smo mi ponosni svi, svi ga znamo kad je bio mali.
PA2.1: Spasao psa, napravio spravu za vežbanje, očistili ulicu, sredili ispred zgrade, napravili kao šta god. Napravili su kao strelište gde ja živim, blizu mene, jer kao model Tamiša i Svetionika i parkić ispred zgrade, što je lepo u suštini, jer to je neka vrsta brige za lokal, i to mikro lokal ispred zgrade svoje, što je super.
PA2.1: Voleo bih da čujem lika koji drži Popaj, da čujem kako je napravio to što je napravio. Mislim, to su mali lokalni biznisi, ali voleo bih da čujem šta ti ljudi rade, jer to su ljudi koji rade nešto, neku vrstu dodatne vrednosti prave.

Ispitanici u Pančevu ovaj pravac određuju i kao odgovor na nezainteresovanost građana za vesti, jer „kad bi bilo lepših vesti, ljudi bi više želeli da se informišu".
Treća grupa su analitičko-istraživačke priče koje pokrivaju teme iz oblasti društva, ekonomije i politike u sferu upravljanja lokalnom samoupravom. Zajednička odrednica svih ovih tema je društveno-ekonomski kvalitet života u zajednici. Ispitanici su izrazili potrebu da saznaju kako žive „njihove komšije", „obični ljudi" i koje probleme imaju. Žele da se informišu o siromaštvu, zdravstvu i cenama u prodavnicama i ekonomskim problemima.

LU2.3: Mene zanima kako siromašni ljudi žive, što ćute. Znam što ćute, i ja spadam u te ljude, moja porodica je kucala u i onoj opštini na pet vrata, slagana, taj i taj nije tu, predsednik idite tu i tu, to je sve manipulacija.
NP2.4: Možda bih istakao problem zaposlenosti odnosno nezaposlenosti u našoj lokalnoj zajednici, možda problem zdravstva i lečenja, kao i školstva,

to su bitne stvari od kojih možda treba da se počne više, pre od politike, mada od njih sve zavisi svakako.

U Pančevu i Novom Pazaru izdvojila se i potreba za temama iz sfere zaštite životne sredine, za koje ocenjuju da su u medijima nedovoljno zastupljene i neadekvatno obrađene.

> *NP 4.2: Ja sam pre dve nedelje izašao na Viskin stadion, to je stadion u dolini reke Jošanice, znači baš nizak, nisko ispod puta, da prošetam dva kruga sam, dosadno mi, a gledam deca igraju fudbal, na drugi krug mene glava već zabolela, bila od zagađenja, ja odem u kuću i rekoh ovo je stvarno nenormalno, neću više ni da izlazim.*
> *NP 4.3: A time se nijedan medij ne bavi.*
> *M: To sam htela da vas pitam, ima li toga u medijima?*
> *Nema*
> *Nema*
> *Nema*
> *NP 4.2: Pa i ako ima, to je više njima što odgovara, kao „eto znate da je zagađeno". Imate tu stanicu tamo što javlja neke brojeve koju naši građani ne znaju da čitaju.*

Analitičko-istraživački pristup ispitanici naročito očekuju u sferi informativnog programa i izveštavanja o upravljanju lokalnom samoupravom. U okviru ovog tematskog okvira ističu i potrebu razumevanja politika upravljanja i pravca razvoja zajednice kojoj pripadaju.

> *PA2.1: Šta je plan grada za narednih 10 godina u smislu u kom pravcu će ići, hoćemo li ostati na javnim preduzećima i na kao manufakturi ili ćemo da radimo nešto šire.*
> *LU2.2: Mene interesuje na primer šta se radi u mestu, da li će se nešto izgraditi, da li će se poboljšati život lokalnih meštana. Konkretno me interesuje kada će biti završena sportska hala jer sam bio sportista i tako neke stvari. Hala je još u izgradnji od 2006, 2005, kada sam ja bio srednjoškolac.*
> *PA1.5: [Nedostaje] da se komentarišu stvari koje se dešavaju u gradu u različitim oblastima i da postoji to neki kao prostor za neku javnu debatu, da postoji prilika za različite ljude, odnosno različita mišljenja, prostor gde mogu da podele, to nedostaje.*

Definišući ovaj širok opseg tema o kojima bi želeli analitičke i istraživačke sadržaje, ispitanici zapravo identifikuju potrebu za medijskom inicijativom nasuprot nekritičkom praćenju rada organa lokalne samouprave.

> *NP 3.6: Ovde nema nijednog nezavisnog medija koji će da nam prenese stvarno šta se dešava i kako se dešava, nego upravo tako ako voliš SDP upali onog koji će da ti priča ono što želiš da čuješ o toj divnoj stranci, ako voliš SDA isto tako, ako...*
> *PA2.1: Radio Pančevo ne slušam ali kad god ukačim, kad god vidim bukvalno kao da nije, mislim kao da ne priča o ovom gradu. Kao jedne stvari su kroz medije se provlače, a ja vidim druge stvari i niko ne priča o tome. I onda malo nekako, iskreno, mislim sad pokušavamo da budemo politički korektni kao, fini smo ljudi, ali da je situacija takva da su ti mediji imaju jasnu agendu, tako bih rekao i onda nekako nisu mi relevantni.*

Ispitanici su posebno definisali informativne potrebe mladih, u čemu nisu učestvovali samo mlađi, već i stariji ispitanici koji su iskazali visok stepen slaganja sa stavovima mlađih ispitanika. U odgovorima se posebno uočavaju potrebe za medijskim predstavljanjem uspešnih biznis modela i rol-modela u zajednici, ali i sadržaje o putovanjima i novinama u svetu tehnologije, koje mladi ističu kao posebno interesantne i važne, ali i nedovoljno zastupljene.

> *NP2.4: Šta bi moglo da pokrene nas da kupimo televizor za početak i da imam resiver i tako to šta već treba, možda da ima dva sata dnevno gde bi se pažnja obratila mladim licima, mladim licima pa i do 35, što da ne, i mlađim ljudima koji su nezaposleni i koji su zainteresovani za razne teme a ne mogu da dođu do toga. Neko ko će probuditi malo ovu omladinu, ko će naterati decu srednje škole, osnovne škole da posete neka kulturna umetnička društva, da vide kulturu ne znam nekih turskih igara, nekih ne znam pravoslavno-srpskih kako već da ih nazovem igara, i jednih i drugih Abraševića, društava (...) Nešto što bi zainteresovalo omladinu, da to budu stvarno teme koje interesuju omladinu a ne neke ne znam gde je, što kažu gde je Vučić bio, posetio neko selo...*
> *Moderator: A koje su to teme?*
> *NP2.4: Pa vezano za nauku. Ne znam sad sa čime se ko svako od nas bavi. Neka bude sat vremena ne znam o književnosti, jeziku, nemam predstavu, o veterini, o zbrinjavanju pasa lutalica, tako nešto. To bi stvarno bilo humano da se radi.*

NP2.6: Na primer što je malopre Adam pomenuo za Svetionik za te stipendije, npr. to je, nije samo za Novi Pazar nego i oni imaju na primer stipendiste u Turskoj.

Pri definisanju javnog interesa na lokalu, ispitanici ističu važnost geografske odrednice. Ovo se ne odnosi samo na sadržaj priče koji bi trebalo da ima lokalni karakter, već od lokalnih novinara očekuju da budu njihovi sugrađani, ali i da u svojim pričama prostor daju akterima s lokala, bilo da to znači da biraju sagovornike iz lokalne zajednice ili da izveštavaju o događajima u kojima su učestvovali njihovi sugrađani.

PA1.6: Ja bih isto ovo rekla i dodala bih još da bi mi značilo ako su i novinari i novinarke takođe iz Pančeva ili sela oko Pančeva. Mislim da to daje onako jednu dodatnu dimenziju vestima koje prave ti mediji, jer ako je neka vest o Pančevu, to jeste vest o Pančevu, ali ne smatram te medije lokalnim medijima.
LU2.1: Nešto se dogodilo pa te ljude znaš, da li se dogodio udes, kao što je bilo u Požegi, to je čovek iz Lučana, pa me zanima jel' se povredio, eto tako te neke stvari.

Ispitanici prepoznaju i da određenje javnog interesa ne podrazumeva samo o čemu se izveštava, već i kako se izveštava. Izveštavanje u javnom interesu određuju kao ono izveštavanje koje je „slobodno", „objektivno" i „istinito" i novinarstvo koje pospešuje pluralizam ideja i mišljenja.

PA1.6: Znači neki stručnjaci i stručnjakinje iz nekih oblasti vezano za sve sfere života. Transport u Pančevu, isto veliki problem već dugo. Rekla sam, urbanizam u Pančevu, problem već jako dugo. Da li je javno zdravstvo problem u Pančevu već jako dugo. Ima li neko da kaže nešto da tu temu, a da kao nije rešićemo nekad tamo, ne znam šta, neko levi upitan. Mislim, eto, možda bih volela da čujem zapravo mišljenja nekih ljudi koje… pa ću ja da procenim sama na kraju da li da verujem u to ili ne. Ali samo drugo mišljenje o nečemu. Znam da postavljate pitanje koja tema. Iskreno, nije bitno koja je tema. Nama treba drugo mišljenje, drugi način, drugi metod, nešto što nije ravna linija.
PA1.1: A ko da da drugo mišljenje?
PA1.1: Oni daju mišljenje koje ne odgovara nama, odgovara nekom drugom. A oni koji bi dali drugačije mišljenje, oni ćute.

Nasuprot tome, u Novom Pazaru i Pančevu ispitanici ocenjuju da su mediji „potkupljeni", „pristrasni", „neobjektivni", a vesti koje u njima pronalaze „ulepšane", „nameštene" i „filtrirane", što rezultira izrazitim nepoverenjem prema lokalnim medijima.

U Pančevu i Novom Pazaru na gubitak poverenja najviše utiče to što medije vide kao izrazito politizovane, „obojene režimski" i „potkupljene" od strane političkih aktera. U ovim gradovima postoji veliki broj portala, od kojih mnoge karakteriše i netransparentnost vlasništva i uređivačke politike, što najbolje oslikava ispitanica iz Novog Pazara koja navodi da prema tome kojim političkim akterima su mediji dali prostor „iz druge sobe prepoznaje koji je [televizijski] kanal [uključen]".

Do pada poverenja naročito je dolazilo u kriznim situacijama. Ispitanici u Novom Pazaru navode izveštavanje lokalnih medija o poplavama i epidemiji korona virusa kao primere grubog kršenja načela koje prepoznaju kao profesionalne novinarske standarde. Osim nepotpunog i pristrasnog informisanja, ispitanici u sva tri mesta identifikuju i druge loše prakse u izveštavanju lokalnih medija za koje smatraju da proizilaze iz težnje medija ka ostvarivanju profita, nauštrb javnog interesa. To su senzacionalističko izveštavanje u sferi crne hronike, klikbejt naslovi i hiperprodukcija sadržaja koji nemaju informativnu vrednost.

5. ZAKLJUČAK

Određenje pojma javni interes u lokalnoj zajednici u ovom radu nastaje na raskršću tri velika aktera: države kao donosioca zakona, medijske zajednice kao čuvara javnog interesa i građana zarad čije dobrobiti se teži ostvarivanju javnog interesa. Iz tog preseka razumevanja proizilaze njegove tri osnovne linije. Prvu čini bliže određenje profesionalnih standarda koje novinari i mediji moraju da zadovolje, drugu čini skup vrednosti oko kojih postoji društveni konsenzus, a treću širok spektar tema koje su od značaja za zajednicu.

Iako legislativni okvir u Srbiji poručuje da su sve tri strane saglasne oko razumevanja ovih određenja i svoje uloge u operacionalizaciji kroz konkretne medijske sadržaje, analiza prvih sedam godina funkcionisanja mehanizma konkursnog sufinansiranja javnog interesa pokazuje postojanje velikih diskrepanci u svakoj od tri osnovne linije razumevanja javnog interesa.

Sveobuhvatna baza konkursnog sufinansiranja ukazuje na jasne trendove da se novcem iz budžeta finansira redovan rad medija, i to dominantno onih medija koji su pre privatizacije bili u vlasništvu lokalnih samouprava. Iako zakonskim i podzakonskim okvirima to nije eksplicitno zabranjeno, svakako se kosi s duhom reforme medijskog sistema koja je iznedrila ovaj mehanizam s ciljem da se praksa

finansiranja medija zameni praksom finansiranja sadržaja u skladu s potrebama zajednice.

Posebno važna karakteristika ovakvog vida (zlo)upotrebe konkursnog sufinansiranja je to što se on operacionalizuje kroz finansiranje informativnog programa, što nalazi svoje teorijsko i zakonsko uporište, jer informativni program jeste kičma informisanja koju i ispitanici visoko rangiraju pri definisanju sopstvenih informativnih potreba i informativnih potreba zajednice. Međutim, ovde se diskrepanca manifestuje ne kroz teme, već pre svega kroz profesionalne standarde, što rezultira time da obimno finansiranje informativnog programa, kao najšireg tematskog okvira kroz koji se ostvaruje javni interes, ne daje očekivane rezultate, jer građani uočavaju da su zbog pristrasnog i nepotpunog izveštavanja koje je dominantno orijentisano ka promociji rezultata vladajućih struktura, ne dobijaju dovoljno informacija koje su funkcionalno važne za njihov svakodnevni život u zajednici.

Uporedna analiza pokazala je kontrast i u valorizaciji uloge koju lokalni mediji imaju u kreiranju kolektivnog identiteta i povećanju društvene kohezije. Rezultati fokus-grupnih razgovora pokazuju da su građani izuzetno zainteresovani da u vestima vide ljude poput njih, bilo u svrhu identifikacije s izazovima i problemima ili u svrhu promocije zajedničkih vrednosti kroz rol modele zajednice. Prema podacima dostupnim u bazi konkursnog sufinansiranja, ovakav pristup se tek sporadično pojavljuje kao direktan projektni predlog, što ukazuje i na potrebu za redefinisanjem uloge lokalnih medija kako bi se napravio iskorak iz tradicionalističkog pristupa koji diskreciono pravo na postavljanje prioriteta daje medijskim profesionalcima, ka pažljivijem osluškivanju stvarnih informativnih potreba zajednice koja u suštini definiše neophodnost postojanja lokalnih medija.

Iako bazi konkursnog sufinansiranja svakako nedostaje precizniji uvid u sadržaj finansiranih projekata kako bi se mogao steći bolji uvid u tematske okvire, trendovi koji iz postojećih podataka proizilaze ukazuju na to da postoji visok nivo disproporcije između novca koji je izdvojen za svaki od tematskih okvira i specifičnih informativnih potreba lokalnih zajednica u kojima je sprovedeno istraživanje. Ta disproporcija ukazuje na nužnost analize informativnih potreba lokalne publike koji bi prethodio raspisivanju javnog konkursa, a čiji bi rezultati bili obavezujući za konkursnu komisiju prilikom raspodele novca. Ovaj mehanizam našao se i u novom Zakonu o javnom informisanju i medijima, ali će njegovo dalje uređenje biti predmet novog Pravilnika o sufinansiranju javnog interesa u sferi javnog informisanja za čije je donošenje nadležno Ministarstvo kulture i informisanja Republike Srbije.

Periodične analize publike, međutim, nužno moraju biti kombinovane s kontinuiranom i transparentnom evaluacijom sadržaja, i to iz dva razloga. Prvi se odnosi na kompleksnost određenja javnog interesa na lokalu, koji nije

nepromenljiv institut, već rezultat kontinuiranog pregovaranja države, medijske zajednice i publike, i varira u odnosu na specifičnosti konteksta lokalne zajednice. Drugi argument nameće se upravo rezultatima ovog istraživanja iz kojeg se ne može zaključiti da li građani čije lokalne samouprave izdvajaju značajan novac za konkursno sufinansiranje medijskih sadržaja uočavaju benefite u odnosu na one u čijim sredinama se novac za medijske sadržaje ne izdvaja uopšte.

Takve dve kompatabilne analize mogle bi da pruže široku sliku o stanju i specifičnostima lokalnog informisanja i ukažu na moguće razvojne pravce i potrebe u cilju unapređenja nivoa ostvarivanja javnog interesa nastalog na preseku perspektiva države, medija i građana.

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LOCAL INFORMATION LANDSCAPE: STATE FUNDING AND AUDIENCE NEEDS

Abstract: Local media play a pivotal role in informing, educating, and entertaining their audience, thereby empowering citizens to comprehend and exercise their rights, ultimately fostering improved local governance and enhanced societal trust. To ensure that local media effectively address matters of public importance, Serbia implemented the system of project-based co-financing for media content in 2014. Previous analyses have predominantly focused on the procedural regularity and the

perspectives of media practitioners and shed light on the state's stance concerning media freedom and professional standards, but they fall short of adequately addressing the extent to which the state and local media align with the information needs of citizens through project co-financing. To bridge this gap, this paper employs a two-fold research approach: secondary analysis of publicly available data related to media project co-financing, along with insights garnered from focused group interviews conducted in three municipalities, involving 47 adult citizens. Key findings from the research reveal a significant convergence between the state and the audience regarding the value of news programming. However, notable discrepancies surface in the realm of establishing standards for public interest reporting. Conversely, a comparative assessment of topics that receive funding and information needs of citizens underscores the imperative of delving into the specific needs of the community, as a prerequisite for a more equitable allocation of public funds.

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LOKALNO NOVINARSTVO I POLOŽAJ NOVINARA NA LOKALU: STUDIJA SLUČAJA PORTALA „JUŽNE VESTI" I RADIJA „CITY SMART"

Apstrakt: Pritisci, napadi, pretnje i borba za opstanak na medijskoj sceni predstavljaju ogromne probleme sa kojima se suočava novinarska profesija, a pogotovo mediji na lokalu. Izuzetno je važno napomenuti da novinarke i novinari lokalnih medija kroz svakodnevni rad na terenu ostvaruju važnu ulogu kada je u pitanju informisanje svoje zajednice, ali oni takođe utiču na oblikovanje stavova građanki i građana, pogotovo kada govorimo o društveno-političkim pitanjima. Kako rade, kako opstaju i odolevaju pritiscima, sa čime se sve suočavaju redakcije i njihove novinarke i novinari na dnevnom nivou, i u kakvom su položaju novinarke i novinari lokanih medija, tema je ovog rada. Rezultati dubinskih intervjua pokazuju da su novinarke i urednice lokalnih medija stava da je potrebno više raditi na jačanju mentalnog zdravlja novinarki i novinara, te povećanju plata koje nisu na zadovoljavajućem nivou, kao i na novinarskoj kolegijalnosti i solidarnosti koja nedostaje na jugu Srbije.

Ključne reči: mediji, lokalno novinarstvo, bezbednost novinara, pritisci na novinare, Južne vesti, radio City smart, mediji.

1. LOKALNO NOVINARSTVO U SRBIJI

Lokalno novinarstvo je od suštinskog značaja za građanke i građane koji žive u malim mestima. Nažalost, situacija poslednjih godina nije najpovoljnija za lokalne medije. Česti pritisci, napadi, pretnje, ali i borba za opstanak na medijskom tržištu predstavljaju veliki problem novinarske profesije u celini, a pogotovo medija na lokalu. Neophodno je na samom početku istaći koliko je važan rad novinarki i novinara lokalnih medija koji kroz svakodnevni rad na terenu doprinose boljitku građana u svom mestu. Sem toga, lokalni mediji kakvi su „Južne vesti" i radio

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„City smart" iz Niša pokazuju koliko je važna zaštita javnog interesa kada je u pitanju informisanje lokalne publike, ali oni takođe utiču na oblikovanje stavova građanki i građana, pogotovo kada govorimo o društveno-političkim pitanjima na svakodnevnom nivou.

Da bismo pričali o lokalnim medijima, potrebno je na početku odrediti šta pod tim pojmom podrazumevamo. Prema Drašković i Gruhonjić, „pod pojmom lokalni mediji podrazumevaju se one medijske institucije koje svojim opsegom emitovanja (elektronski) i tiraža (štampa) ne pokrivaju celu državu, već manje geografsko područje, odnosno koji su usmereni na informisanje teritorijalno određenih grupa građana" (Drašković i Gruhonjić, 2015, str. 110). Mihajlov Prokopović piše da su „lokalni mediji element pluralizma jednog društva, ključne institucije mikro javne sfere i da često imaju ulogu kontrolora lokalnih vlasti" (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2014, str. 95).

Kolika je uloga medija u svakodnevnom informisanju o aktuelnim događajima, pisala je Mihajlov Prokopović (2017) u svom drugom radu. Autorka kaže da je uloga medija snažno vezana za izveštavanje o radu institucija vlasti koje utiču u najvećoj meri na život građana. Uz to, dodaje i da je uloga medija da osnaži demokratski proces i da omogući da se čuje i mišljenje građana (Mihajlov Prokopović, 2017, str. 60).

S druge strane, Aleksandra Krstić u publikaciji „Na šta mislimo kada kažemo... Lokalni mediji kao nosioci promena u lokalnim zajednicama u Srbiji" ističe da su „lokalni mediji u razvijenim demokratijama izuzetno važan element medijskog tržišta i medijske industrije uopšte. Oni se često smatraju glasom lokalne zajednice i forumom za ona mišljenja koja ne dobijaju prostor u 'velikim' medijima" (Krstić, 2022, str. 1). Iako su lokalni mediji izuzetno važni, godinama se nalaze u brojnim problemima.

> „Suočavaju se sa brojnim problemima, od nedostatka finansijskih i ljudskih kapaciteta, preko izraženih pritisaka iz sfere politike i biznisa, do neadekvatne tehničke opremljenosti i nespremnosti da idu u korak sa savremenim izazovima i uslovima rada u sferi medija i novinarstva. Medijsko tržište, kojem pripadaju i lokalne medijske organizacije, i dalje je preopterećeno velikim brojem štampanih i elektronskih medija, odnosno sve većim brojem onlajn medija i internet portala. Prema Indeksu održivosti medija, u Srbiji ima preko 2.200 registrovanih medija koji zajedno čine neodrživ mešovit sistem u kome su profesionalno novinarstvo, medijski pluralizam i sloboda medija na izuzetno niskom nivou i često pod uticajem vlasti" (Krstić, 2022, str. 5).

Lokalno novinarstvo, odnosno informacije iz neposrednog okruženja značajnije su za ljude u lokalnoj zajednici od vesti koje se bave opštijim temama, jer su bliže

specifičnim interesima lokalne publike: to su informacije o događajima koji se neposrednije osećaju i često podstiču na akciju kako bi se unapredio život u zajednici (Veljanovski, 2017, str. 9).

Opstanak lokalnih medija u Nišu nije lak. Mnogi su poklekli u privatizaciji medija i borbi za svoje mesto, ostavljajući medijske radnike u strahu za svoje pozicije. U svom master radu autorka Tasić bavila se privatizacijom lokalnih medija. Kako piše, privatizacija je samo još jedna od nepogodnosti koja se javljala pored bojazni da li će pojedini mediji nakon privatizacije opstati na tržištu. Sem toga, u svom radu ukazuje i na lošu realizaciju sufinansiranja projekata u oblasti javnog informisanja. „Rezultat ovoga se ogleda u tome da je novac iz budžeta umesto da podstakne produkciju sadržaja koji su u javnom interesu, postao finansijska podrška za političku propagandu i režimske medije“ (Veljanovski, 2017 prema Tasić, 2021, str. 10).

Sem loše materijalne, odnosno finansijske situacije u kojoj se nalaze novinarke i novinari lokalnih medija, česti su i napadi na novinare, pretnje koje se dešavaju u oflajn i onlajn svetu, a pogotovo one na društvenim mrežama.

Autori Vujović, Pavlović i Obradović u radu „Lokalni mediji Nišavskog okruga u digitalnom dobu: ekonomski položaj lokalnih medija“ došli su do zaključka da je položaj novinarki i novinara lokalnih medija Nišavskog okruga veoma loš.

> „Većina lokalnih medija Nišavskog okruga ima probleme u poslovanju, a među kojima su najčešći egzistencijalni i kadrovski. Lokalno medijsko tržište je malo i siromašno, a više od polovine medija ima pozitivne rezultate poslovanja, dok ostali 'opstaju'. Većina medija zaposlenima isplaćuje minimalac ili plate ispod republičkog proseka. Svi lokalni komercijalni mediji koriste sredstva projektnog sufinansiranja iz gradskih, opštinskih i republičkih budžeta, a neki od njih nisu zadovoljni dobijenim sredstvima“ (Vujović, Pavlović i Obradović, 2019, str. 53).

U ovom periodu sprovedeno je još jedno istraživanje koje se tiče digitalnih izazova lokalnih medija Nišavskog okruga. U ovom radu autori Mihajlov Prokopović, Jevtović i Jovanović zaključuju da su inovativniji oni lokalni mediji koji su nastali i koji žive samo na internetu kakvi su „Južne vesti“, radio „Protok“, „Građanin“, „Niške vesti“, „Alpres“, „Svrljiške novine“ i „Studentski dnevni list“, dok je strategija tradicionalnih lokalnih medija prvenstveno da unaprede svoj matični (tradicionalni) medij i stoga pribegavaju modelu „neophodnog minimalnog prisustva“ u onlajn sferi (Mihajlov Prokopović et al., 2019, str. 25).

Sa kakvim se još problemima suočavaju mediji na lokalu istraživalo je poslovno udruženje Asocijacije lokalnih i nezavisnih medija „Local press“. Analiza je pokazala da se percepcija urednika i novinara o stanju slobode medija

nije poboljšala u odnosu na istraživanje koje je udruženje sprovelo 2020. godine. Naime, kada su u pitanju pritisci, svi ispitanici (njih 35 iz 26 redakcija), reklo je da su u periodu od juna 2021. do juna 2022. godine najviše bili izloženi administrativnim pritiscima.

> „Najdominantniji su: 1) Izostanak poziva pojedinih novinara na događaje; 2) Dugo čekanje na tražene informacije; 3) Fizički napadi, verbalne pretnje i omalovažavanje na društvenim mrežama (registrovan je čak i poziv na linč); 4) Izbegavanje predstavnika vlasti da se pojavljuju u konkretnom mediju; 5) Povećana aktivnost lažnih profila na društvenim mrežama u cilju diskreditacije sadržaja i novinara i 6) Izbor članova komisija na konkursima za sufinansiranje informisanja građana koji ne opravdavaju zvanje medijski stručnjak. Pokušaji plasiranja gotovih informacija pripremljenih za objavu od strane PR službi u cilju smanjenja direktnih kontakata sa izvorima, takođe su registrovani pritisci u poslednjih godinu dana" (Local press, 2022: 4).

2. METODOLOGIJA ISTRAŽIVANJA

Za potrebe ovog istraživanja izabran je metod dubinskog intervjua, koji omogućava detaljnije sagledavanje stanja lokalnog novinarstva, kao i položaj novinarki i novinara u niškim medijima „Južne vesti" i radio „City smart". Ovi mediji izabrani su na osnovu dva kriterijuma: (1) jer na profesionalan, odgovoran i etički način informišu građanke i građane sa juga Srbije; (2) jer imaju široku publiku.

Cilj istraživanja je utvrditi kakav je položaj novinarki i novinara i sa kakvim problemima i pritiscima se suočavaju u svakodnevnom radu. U dubinskim intervjuima učestvovale su urednice radija „City smart" Ivana Petrović i „Južnih vesti" iz Niša Ljubica Jocić, kao i četiri novinarke, po dve iz oba medija – Tamara Todorović i Tamara Tasić iz „Južnih vesti" i Anđela Jeremić i Jelena Jocić iz radija „City smart".

2.1. Istorijat „City smart" radija

„City smart" radio ove godine slavi 28 godina postojanja. Bio je jedini medij u Nišu koji je zatvoren za vreme vladavine Slobodana Miloševića, i to na „teatralan način", oduzimanjem opreme uz policiju, kako kaže urednica ovog medija Ivana Petrović.

> *Bio je medij koji, u tom trenutku se činilo, nema nikakvu mogućnost, jer 8- 9 meseci od otvaranja je došlo do zatvaranja, zbog toga što nismo*

izveštavali u duhu onoga što je u to vreme bilo poželjno i dozvoljeno, a i tada je postojala ovakva uniformnost informacija na nivou države. Sa demokratskim promenama, Dragan Kostić i ja smo ilegalno imali City radio, te smo do petooktobarskih promena radili na taj način, tako što smo menjali frekvencu.

Nakon demokratskih promena, urednici ovog medija čekali su na dozvolu sve do 2008. godine, kada su je prvi put zvanično dobili. Za razliku od mnogih radio stanica koje su odmah prihvatile zabavnu programsku šemu, ovaj niški radio je zadržao informativni program što je, kako ističu, poprilična retkost.

Transformacije masovnih medija i prilagođavanje publici je novina u svetu, na šta su i oni morali da se naviknu. Radijske emisije koje su se nekada emitovale otišle su u istoriju. Prema rečima Petrović, one su se sada preselile na podkaste. Misija i vizija ovog medija se uvek oslanjala na ideju da pre svega informiše i da time utiče na stvaranje demokratskog, tolerantnog i dobrog društva, te im zabavna komponenta nikada nije bila primarna. Među prvima u Nišu su pokrenuli i portal, 2006. godine, kada su zvanično i počeli sa emitovanjem podkasta i outdoor promocijama. Iz velike želje da budu nezavisni, pokrenuli su City smart (Social media art) klub, koji za cilj ima okupljanje svih ljudi koji više nemaju svoj javni prostor u Nišu gde mogu da govore.

2.2. Istorijat „Južnih vesti"

Jedan od najuticajnijih medija na jugu Srbije „Južne vesti" osnovane su pre 13 godina, 29. januara 2010. godine. Prema podacima „Južnih vesti", od 2010. godine do danas zabeleženo je oko 295 miliona otvorenih stranica, od toga 235 miliona jedinstvenih poseta sajtu, a objavljeno je više od 113.000 tekstova (Radovanović, 2023).

Rad ovog medija otpočeo je tekstom „Manipulacije na niškom aerodromu" tadašnjeg glavnog i odgovornog urednika Predraga Blagojevića, koji je nešto kasnije dobio Nagradu za istraživačko novinarstvo. Tekstovi novinara ovog portala su još dva puta bili među pet najboljih u Srbiji: 2017. godine to je bio tekst „Gerontološki centar Niš na spornom tenderu kupio luksuzna kola za Ministarstvo", a 2019. „Firma koja 'krpi' niške ulice u blokadi, a ugovore sa Gradom založila kod privatnika".

Brojne su nagrade koje je ovaj medij dobijao. Neke od njih su „Dušan Bogavac" za etiku i hrabrost, „Stanislav Staša Marinković" i „Katarina Preradović" koje su uručene glavnom i odgovornom uredniku Predragu Blagojeviću. Nagradu za uređivački rad u lokalnim medijima pod imenom „Slađana Veljković" dobio je zamenik glavnog i odgovornog urednika Aleksandar

Stankov. Sem nacionalnih, „Južne vesti" dobijale su i lokalne nagrade Šetač i LAF (Lokalni antikorupcijski forum), ali i nagradu za najboljeg sportskog novinara godine, koju je dobila aktuelna zamenica glavnog i odgovornog urednika Ljubica Jocić.

Kako bi čuli glasove građanki i građana, „Južne vesti" pokrenule su servis „Prijavi problem" na svom sajtu među prvima u Srbiji. Na taj način problemi poput divljih deponija, rupa na putevima ili neki drugi komunalni problem građanke i građani mogu da prijave preko sajta, ali i preko mobilnih telefona, nakon čega će novinarke i novinari proveriti o čemu je reč i blagovremeno reagovati kako bi alarmirali nadležne organe.

Otkad postoje, „Južne vesti" se suočavaju sa brojnim pretnjama i pritiscima. Naime, još 2016. godine Viši sud u Nišu doneo je odluku da poruka „Treba zapaliti novinare" nije pretnja, već sloboda govora. Radi se o tekstu u kome je radnik Direkcije za gradski prevoz poručio da novinare ovog medija „treba zapaliti", a sve zbog nezadovoljstva tekstom o nameštenom tenderu za gradski prevoz.

Ovaj medij na jugu Srbije se skoro tri pune godine borio sa pritiscima Poreske uprave. Da je slučaj jedne od najobimnijih poreskih kontrola nekog medija rešen, „Južne vesti" su saznale u junu 2021. godine. Naime, kako piše Stankov:

> „Poreska uprava je priznala grešku i umesto nezakonito obračunatog milionskog duga zaključila da firma koja je osnivač Južnih vesti ne duguje ni dinar poreza, niti je u svom radu prethodnih godina prekršila ijedan zakon. Odluka je, kažu u menadžmentu firme, svojevrsna pobeda nad politizacijom Poreske uprave i Ministarstva finansija koji su primenom propisa koji se odnose na javni servis zloupotrebljeni za pritisak na profesionalni medij i zastrašivanje drugih" (Stankov, 2021).

Nakon toga usledilo je i lažni sajt „Južnih vesti" sa istim imenom i logoom, dizajnom i bojama koje su podsećale na pravu verziju ovog medija, čije je korišćenje bilo namenjeno uglavnom za hvalospeve lokalnoj vlasti i servisne informacije. Međutim, bilo je i više izmišljenih tekstova usmerenih ka tadašnjoj glavnoj i odgovornoj urednici „Južnih vesti" Gordani Bjeletić (Đokić, 2021).

Najsvežiji primer pretnji dogodio se početkom 2023. godine. Naime, nakon što je predsednik Udruženja porodica kidnapovanih, ubijenih i nestalih sa prostora KiM Simo Spasić prvostepeno osuđen na šest meseci zatvora, nezadovoljan tom presudom umesto žalbe nadležnima, svoj stav putem SMS-a izneo je novinarki „Južnih vesti", gde je pominjao sanduke i targetirao redakciju. Nekoliko meseci pre toga, Spasić je pretio novinaru ovog medija Aleksandru

Stankovu, a takođe je pominjao i da novinare ovog medija treba nabiti „na kolac“ (Redakcija, 2023).

3. REZULTATI

Zamenica glavnog i odgovornog urednika „Južnih vesti“ Ljubica Jocić smatra da je novinarstvo na lokalu veoma važno. Sama ideja „Južnih vesti“ nastala je zbog ljudi iz Nišavskog okruga, ali i onih koji su otišli u inostranstvo a žele da saznaju nešto novo o svom rodnom gradu.

> *RTS ili drugi nacionalni mediji o Nišu pišu kada su hronike ili reportaže ili nešto treće i onda iz tog poriva nekog da bi generalno i građani u svom gradu znali šta se dešava, za takve su i 'Južne vesti' nastale, i pokazalo se izuzetno bitnim.*

Položaj novinarki i novinara na lokalu, prema rečima Jocić, zavisi od medija u kom rade, ali i od predstavnika vlasti i opozicije, tj. njihovog odnosa prema medijima.

> *Što je manja sredina u kojoj rade novinari, to su veći pritisci, jer se svi znaju – porodica, komšije i ostali. Pritiske češće trpe oni koji su u režimskim medijima jer ne mogu slobodno da pišu. Takav primer je kada je jedna koleginica na svom Fejsbuk profilu napisala kritiku koja je upućena javnom gradskom preduzeću, gde je to video direktor preduzeća, a potom i pozvao vlasnika medija i ona je to obrisala. Ona nije mogla da se izbori za sebe, jer je posao u pitanju. Dešavalo se i to da je gradonačelnica Niša Dragana Sotirovski određivala ko treba i ko može da je prati, a ko ne, do toga da li hoće da odgovori na pitanje ili neće. Bilo je i pretnji tužbama i tužbi, ali mislim da je taj sve bahatiji odnos najveći pritisak, jer kad ti znaš da će neko tebi da se obraća, kako je navikao da se obraća svojima u stranci ili potlačenima, da se tako izrazim, onda jeste to pritisak.*

Pretnje su nešto sa čime se susreću stalno u svom svakodnevnom radu. Dešavalo se da su im pretili preko komentara, a Jocić su, kako kaže, više puta i psovali: „Mislim da nemaju granice šta sve mogu u svom bahaćenju, misleći da neće nikada snositi posledice za sve to“.

Prednost rada na lokalu je što je lakši način do dolaženja informacija, jer je manja sredina, lakše se upoznaju ljudi, a samim tim se i ređe menjaju direktori i funkcioneri, priča Jocić:

Prednost je i dobro poznavanje svih sfera, lakše je novinarima u manjoj sredini da prate više oblasti, da se specijalizuju, zato što je sve nekako isprepleteno. Mana je to što su u manjoj sredini i pretnje češće, kao i to što je država centralizovana – sve je u Beogradu, retko šta je u Nišu, i sve ide nekim dužim tokovima.

Novinarke i novinari „Južnih vesti" susretali su se sa direktnim pretnjama, pritiscima i vređanjima. Kao što je navedeno, dobili su i poruku „Trebalo bi vas sve zapaliti". Jocić ističe da su to prijavili sudu:

Međutim, to nije shvaćeno kao pretnja, već je to ono 'kao šta bi trebalo uraditi', to je potencijal. Bilo je pritisaka da ne pišemo. Jedan veliki ekonomski pritisak bio je kada je Poreska uprava boravila u 'Južnim vestima'. Tu je naša administracija preuzela na sebe teret. Znali smo otprilike, ali nisu nam sve pričali baš zbog toga da ne utiču na motivaciju novinara. Nije svejedno kad ti Poreska uprava boravi tu, šta će se desiti sa platama... Veruješ ti da je sve po papirima u redu, ali nije svejedno, jer su sve vreme bili tu inspektori koji su boravili godinu dana u prostorijama. Sve to jeste pritisak, bilo je teško raditi, ali nekako ne može u glavi da ti ne bude da li će da nam puste i tužbe, ne znamo ni kako će sud da presudi, tako da su nam razne stvari prolazile kroz glavu.

Jocić smatra da se živi u „mnogo teškim vremenima" gde su ljudi odavno „prešli određene granice". Ona ističe da je bezbednost novinara ugrožena i na lokalu, jer živimo u teškim vremenima, te neke stvari mogu da se dese kao „nesrećni slučaj".

Lokalno novinarstvo, pojavom i većeg broja tabloida i većeg broja hronike, veću pažnju dobija samo kad su u pitanju crne hronike ili kada je neka priča izuzetno specifična. Nema tu poziciju kakvu bi trebalo da ima i kakvu zaslužuje, ali se trudimo da dobije i da se izdigne na viši nivo.

„Južne vesti" su jedan od prvih medija koji su uveli dugme „Prijavi problem" na svom sajtu. Na ovaj način oni dobijaju direktne informacije o problemima sa kojima se suočavaju građanke i građani.

Izuzetno je značajno, jer pokazuje poverenje prema nama, da mi možemo da im rešimo neki problem. Traže bilo koji način da im neko pomogne, svako od njih želi da im okolina bude bolje, čistija i urednija za život. Sad su videli da može, a naročito je zanimljivo kada se reši problem i kada institucije urade to.

Da bi se unapredilo lokalno novinarstvo potrebno je ojačati mentalno zdravlje novinara, finansijsku sigurnost i stabilnost, smatra Jocić, jer – kako navodi – „Novinarstvo nije posao koji se radi od 9 do 17 časova, već 24 sata".

Novinarka „Južnih vesti" Tamara Tasić smatra da je novinarstvo na lokalu jako važno, jer građani koji žive južno od Save i Dunava treba da se informišu putem medija koji su u njihovoj sredini, jer samo tako i mogu dobiti informacije o temama od javnog značaja, kao i servisne informacije.

> To ne bi mogli da saznaju u nacionalnim medijima, bilo da je reč o elektronskim ili štampanim, zato što su to vesti sa lokala, ili nekih drugih gradova ili mesta. Tamo se te vesti plasiraju samo vikendom, a često i tada ne budu, i to su uglavnom udarne teme, a ne teme koje građane sa lokala zanima – da li će imati vodu, da li je voda ispravna za piće, kada i zašto će saobraćaj biti zatvoren i slične teme. Pored tih osnovnih informacija koje dobijaju od svojih lokalnih medija, dobijaju i onu ulogu medija koju imamo, a to je uloga nadziranja vlasti, i naravno da to rade lokalni mediji pored nacionalnih, i na tom malom prostoru jeste to važno. To je teže raditi na lokalnom, nego na nacionalnom nivou, jer se ovde svi znamo skoro sa svakim, a danas znamo da su veliki pritisci na novinare.

Glavni problem sa kojima se suočavaju novinarke i novinari jeste finansijske prirode.

> Položaj novinara u tom finansijskom pogledu je apsolutno loš jer su plate male i bukvalno se na neki način preživljava iz meseca u mesec. Kada govorimo s druge strane o građanima, smatram da ulogu koju mi imamo, kao novinari Južnih vesti, jeste lepa, jer vas ljudi prepoznaju da radite pravu stvar za društvo i za javni interes. 'Južne vesti' jesu lokalni medij, ali mi smo čitani i na nacionalnom nivou, te imamo čitaoce iz Čačka, Šapca i tako dalje. Treća strana jeste položaj novinara u odnosu na vlast i opoziciju ili politiku, kako sagovornici doživljavaju nas novinare, jeste da određeni broj odnosno većina građana ima strah da govori za naš medij upravo zbog nezavisnosti odnosno zbog nadziranja medija odnosno kritičkog načina izveštavanja.

Prednosti rada na lokalu su doprinos ideji da društvo treba da bude pravovremeno informisano o važnim temama, ali i pisanje o temama koje niko drugi ne bi medijski pokrio, i onda građanke i građani imaju širu sliku o onome što se dešava u njihovom okruženju.

> Druga stvar je što se osećate ispunjeno, kao pojedinac, i kao deo kolektiva u mediju, da na neki način vrednujete sami to što radite. Lep je osećaj kada uradite neki tekst i kada ste pomogli nekoj porodici, nekom pojedincu, kroz

samu priču, da ste možda skupili novac za neku akciju... Mana jeste ta što mnogi sagovornici ne žele da daju odgovore, odnosno da govore za naš medij. Treća stvar jeste što se često javljaju pritisci, sa bilo kojih strana. Često ljudi danas doživljavaju kao loše ljude koje žele da im naštete, a to je sve potegnuto od tabloidnog novinarstva i onda se ljudi ne vode zdravim razumom, kritičkim promišljanjem i medijskom pismenošću, te sve to prebacuju na sve medije.

Tasić kaže da se sa prvim pritiscima susrela posle tri-četiri meseca rada u Južnim vestima, kada je počela da prati politiku, tačnije, skupštinska zasedanja.

Naime, pritisak je u tim prvim trenucima dolazi od najviše instance grada, od gradonačelnice, na različitim terenima, u različitim telefonskim razgovorima, ili mejlom. Jednom prilikom mi je na terenu rekla 'Ne znam zašto me sada to pitate, ja sam to objašnjavala na nekom drugom terenu, ali vi selektivno pratite događaje', na šta sam ja rekla 'Da li možete da mi odgovorite?', na šta je ona uzvratila 'Potražite od drugih kolega odgovor, da vam oni daju da prepišete'. Nakon mog insistiranja da mi odgovori, na kraju je to i uradila. To je više jedna vrsta neprijatnosti no pritiska, u tom pogledu da vi ne možete da dobijete informaciju, da se mediji dele na podobne i nepodobne. U takvim situacijama ne postoji kolegijalnost drugih koleginica i kolega, već svi ćute i gledaju. Na jednoj pres-konferenciji, kada sam upitala da li je dogovor da se nama, Južnim vestima, ne daju odgovori na pitanja, gradonačelnica je istakla da za medije, nije rekla konkretno nama, ali se odnosilo samo za nas, koji komentarišu odgovore, nećemo odgovarati, i da je to dogovor u svim gradskim institucijama. Tu se pokazao taj diskriminatorni govor prema medijima i pritisak da vi stvarno ne možete da imate odgovor od važnih ljudi. Tu su i poruke, klevete i pretnje Sime Spasića, prvo našem kolegi Stankovu, a onda i svima nama.

Lokalno novinarstvo u odnosu na novinarstvo na nacionalnom nivou, konkretno televizije i onlajn medije, nema senzacionalistički ton, niti ga karakteriše učestalo kršenje kodeksa.

Imamo klasično tradicionalno novinarstvo, s tim što se onlajn mediji prilagođavaju u tim nekim naslovima. To je nešto što je bitno i što se nadam da će ostati. Lokalno novinarstvo u budućnosti vidim u mnogim gradovima kao kupljeno od strane velikih medijskih korporacija koji će ponuditi veliki novac za kupovinu tih lokalnih medija i oni će se preobratiti ili u baš provladine medije ili u baš opozicione medije.

Svaki tekst koji se objavi u lokalnom mediju jeste od javnog značaja, kako za pojedince, tako i u celini za društvo: „Ne znam kako bi društvo na lokalu funkcionisalo da ne vide informacije koje se dešavaju oko njih". Da od ljubavi prema novinarstvu ne može da se živi i da je novac preko potreban svima da bi preživeli i živeli, smatra Tasić.

> *Ljubav jeste velika, ali ne treba da radimo da bi preživljavali. Treba ojačanje – što više budete plaćeniji za svoj rad, to ćete bolje raditi. Ključ vidim i u poboljšanju tehnike, snimanja, bukvalno od bubice, do kamere i svetla. Tu je i edukacija za novinare, posebno za one koji rade, a imaju malo iskrivljenu sliku stvarnosti, da to edukacijom nameste, kroz radionice koje takođe treba da budu plaćene. Nisu to mnogo velika ulaganja, ali su značajna, i tako bi trebalo da funkcioniše taj jedan medijski sistem.*

S druge strane, novinarka istog medija Tamara Todorović kaže da je novinarstvo na lokalu važno iz razloga što su novinari koji rade na lokalu jedina nada građanima da dođu do ostvarivanja svojih prava, te su novinari njihovi saborci. Novinari ih, sem toga, informišu o svim bitnim događajima koji bitno utiču na njihov kvalitet života. Todorović kaže da je često bila u prilici da joj neko onemogućava rad, ali i da je prolazila kroz tretman ćutanja kad institucije ne odgovaraju na sva postavljena pitanja.

> *Tu su bila i vređanja od strane gradskih čelnika, kako bi umanjili naš značaj... Dešavalo se da mi se javi jedan advokat nekoliko puta sa pitanjem: 'Koliko plaćate da vam dam informacije za malverzacije gradskih čelnika?'.*

Ona lokalno novinarstvo vidi kao najugroženiju granu novinarstva, a lokalne novinare kao najveće saborce onih građana koji su uskraćeni za prave i istinite informacije.

> *Uopšte kad pričamo o lokalnom novinarstvu uvek postoje dve ideje koje zastupaju redakcije na lokalu – jedan deo je priklonjen vlasti, dok se drugi deo trudi da izveštava objektivno o svim stvarima koje se tiču javnosti. Upravo ti novinari, koji se trude da budu nezavisni, najviše su na udaru i zbog toga se redakcije tog tipa gase i novinari sve češće biraju da ne budu izloženi takvom riziku, već im je lakše da rade u redakcijama koje su podobne vlastima.*

Kada je reč o javnom interesu, uloga lokalnog novinarstva je izuzetno važna jer građani prvo treba da znaju šta se to dešava u njihovom gradu.

> *Svi problemi zapravo kreću sa lokala, a preslikavaju se na nacionalni nivo; prema tome, ukoliko bi lokalno novinarstvo potpuno nestalo bili bi*

uskraćeni da saznamo korene mnogih problema, ali da isto tako dođemo do rešenja. Pored finansija, što više i nije tajna da novinari rade za minimalac, mislim da je neophodna solidarnost kolega, da se manje guše kritički mediji, da se neguje slobodna reč i sloboda govora, a sve to je jedino moguće ako se novinari i redakcije drže zajedno, a ne smatraju jedne druge konkurencijom.

Za urednicu „City smart" radija iz Niša Ivanu Petrović lokalni mediji su esencijalno važni, jer, kako ističe, neinformisani građani ne mogu doprineti izgradnji društva, ne mogu poboljšati kvalitet sopstvenog života, pa onda samim tim i komšiluka, a zatim i čitavog grada.

Za razvoj jednog zdravog društva, lokalni mediji su od suštinskog značaja. I u tom smislu nikada se nije promenila uloga lokalnih medija, od početka novinarstva, pa do dana današnjeg. Danas je možda u Srbiji to još važnije nego ikada, jer je prosto došlo do jednog, možda i prirodnog procesa, da se informacije ponovo konzumiraju na nekakve drugačije načine, putem interneta, ali ne putem internet medija, već putem društvenih mreža. Promenile su se navike publike, ali se promenio i način plasiranja informacija. Vrlo je važno ponovo vratiti novinarstvo u njegove prirodne okvire. Zašto? Zato što u moru tih informacija kojima smo mi sada izloženi, građani vrlo lako mogu da se izgube te je bitno graditi zdrave, male i jake lokalne medije koji će plasirati proverenu, tačnu informaciju i ono što je najbitnije, u interesu onoga ko tu informaciju konzumira. Zapravo, mnoštvo informacija koje mi možemo da čujemo na svakom koraku i nisu u našem interesu, već su plasirane tako da budu nametnute kao da jesu.

Kada je reč o položaju novinara, navodi da je on nezahvalan i težak, a kao razlog tome ističe to što je novinarska profesija prilično unižena.

I to nije slučajno. Nekada se o novinarima govorilo sa strahopoštovanjem, imali su jedan ugled u društvu, pogotovo u poslednjih desetak godina, opet zbog jedne klime koja je namerno politički izazvana ovde i zbog jednog preuzimanja praktično velike većine medija od strane jedne političke opcije i jednog čoveka, koji iza nje stoji. Uloga medija se promenila, ugled medija je opao, a samim tim i ugled novinarstva kao profesije. Drugi razlog tome je svakako i ekonomska situacija, nažalost, novinarstvo nije lepo plaćena profesija i nju zaista danas obavljaju samo zaljubljenici u taj posao koji pristaju na sve to, i ne očekuju previše od toga.

179

Problemi lokalnih medija su različiti. Petrović kao jedan od ključnih izdvaja to da su institucije zatvorene i odbijaju da odgovore na pitanja novinara. Kao drugu stvar izdvaja „kilavost" institucija zbog kašnjenja sa odgovorima.

> *Dakle, dobijete odgovor, ali za dva meseca, ili ako se obratite Povereniku, ili dobijete odgovor tako što se na vašem pitanju odgovori na nekom drugom mediju. Druga stvar je opet ta, ekonomska situacija, koja je tragična za lokalne medije pogotovo, tržište reklama je gotovo nepostojeće.*

Kao treću, i možda najvažniju stvar Petrović izdvaja usvojenu medijsku strategiju.

> *Mi imamo usvojenu novu medijsku Strategiju od 2020. godine, ali do dana današnjeg nemamo nijednu jedinu meru iz te strategije koja je sprovedena, a sad je 2023. godina. Imamo set medijskih zakona koji nužno nije loš, ali koji niko od 2014. godine ne želi da sprovodi. Dakle, mi imamo sve na papiru što treba da imamo kako bi se poboljšao naš položaj i imamo sve u praksi da nam taj položaj učini dodatno težim. To je jedno vrzino kolo iz kog, nažalost, teško da vidim izlaz.*

Kada je reč o prednostima i manama rada na lokalu, ona kaže da je i prednost i mana to što su novinari izuzetno bliski sa okolinom, sa sredinom, jer na taj način mogu lakše doći do informacija. Međutim, s druge strane, izdvaja da se tako dolazi i do potencijalne opasnosti, jer se u malim sredina zna ko su novinari.

> *Vrlo je lako raditi u Beogradu i biti novinar redakcije. Kako pođete ka manjim gradovima, svi znaju čoveka, imenom i prezimenom, znaju gde živi. Ukoliko neko želi da mu naudi ili je nezadovoljan njegovim pisanjem, vrlo lako može da ga pronađe. Druga mana je što smo nevidljivi, ili smo slabo vidljivi. Još uvek imamo tu veliku centralizaciju medijskih udruženja, jer se sve vrti oko Beograda. Lično me pogađa to da ukoliko se dogodi neka blaga uvreda na internetu, a upućena je nekom novinaru iz prestonice, to će biti na sva zvona. Ukoliko se desi neko teže ugrožavanje bezbednosti ili SLAPP tužbe ili šta god iz nekog lokalnog medija, reagovaće se posle dva-tri dana saopštenjem i ostaće ispod radara vidljivosti, što mnoge ljude koji su se bavili novinarstvom ili koji bi se bavili ovom profesijom, verovatno gura od novinarstva u neke druge koje su bezbednije tipa PR i komunikacije.*

Govoreći o pritiscima Petrović dodaje da jedini pritisak koji osećaju jeste onaj koji je vrlo vidljiv – soft pritisak, a koji, kako ističe, trenutna vlast uspešno primenjuje.

> *Mi ne dobijamo novac uopšte iz budžeta grada Niša godinama unazad. Oni znaju da nas to stavlja u vrlo nepovoljan položaj, u odnosu na druge*

koji dobijaju ogromne iznose. Sve se obesmišljava, to je nešto što mi najviše trpimo. Što se tiče odnosa gradskih vlasti prema nama, dešavala su se nipodaštavanja od strane gradonačelnice, međutim, oni nas nešto ne 'diraju' posebno, jer mi otvoreno pokazujemo da se ne plašimo i da nas je nemoguće uplašiti. Moji novinari se nisu suočavali sa ozbiljnim pretnjama, izuzev kada nam napišu na Fejsbuku neke komentare, ali to prosto nije taj nivo pretnji sa kojima se neke kolege u nekim manjim sredinama suočavaju, kao što su fizički napadi.

Kroz dugu istoriju postojanja „City smart" jeste trpeo ekonomske pritiske. Međutim, kako kaže Petrović, radio kao takav više nije medij na kom bi neko platio reklamu.

To više nije situacija u svetu, ne samo ovde. Kada vi imate intervenciju da 85 miliona dinara u ovom siromašnom gradu 'skrkate' u četiri džepa, vi ste ubili posledično i to malo lokalnog medijskog tržišta koje postoji, i samim tim ste meni ugrozili postojanje, i to tako ide u krug godinama. Primer kakve su 'Južne vesti' imali sa Poreskom inspekcijom, mi nismo imali.

Ona ne krije optimizam kada je u pitanju lokalno novinarstvo, ali opet smatra da moramo u jednom trenutku da napravimo zastoj i da kažemo: „Dosta je bilo, previše se ovo ubrzalo".

Verujem da ćemo uskoro početi da radimo retro radionice novinarstva sa sve košuljicama, olovkom i blokčetom, jer to je prosto neophodno da bi novinarstvo kao takvo opstalo i imalo svoju svrhu.

Kada je reč o javnom interesu, Petrović kaže da je uloga lokalnog novinarstva ključna, jer neinformisan čovek ne može da bude koristan čovek u svojoj zajednici.

Vrlo je važno da se radi, da se svi problemi iznose u javnost. Ono što je, međutim, opasnost, je da mora da postoji granica i razlika. Vrlo često se dešava da građani, kada im se pruži mogućnost da iznose svoje probleme, pomisle da smeju i mogu da uređuju medije. Bitno je da se napravi jasna definicija čija je i koja uloga u tom lancu informisanja. Građani treba da izlažu svoje probleme kroz medije, ali ne smeju, ne treba i ne mogu da uređuju lokalne medije, a često su skloni tome.

Da bi se ojačalo lokalno novinarstvo u Srbiji treba da postoji jedan jasno izgrađen edukativni sistem koji će biti svrsishodniji i bolji od ovog koji imamo.

Edukacija je izuzetno važno i sve je u njoj, kao i u ispitivanju javnog mnjenja koje se sve češće i čudnije radi. Suština novinarstva je u slobodi, u hrabrosti da se kaže. Suština novinarstva je da se uredniku kaže da nije

u pravu i da bi neko uradio nešto drugačije. Suština je u suprotstavljanju stavova. To su neke stvari koje deca u tom praktičnom smislu ne nauče na fakultetu i to negde mislim jeste na nečemu što treba da se radi još od srednje škole, da se pravi nova generacija klinaca koji će želeti da znaju informaciju više. Prosto je to nešto što je neophodno. Potrebno je pomeriti granicu, da ne bude s početka studija, već da se krene od srednje škole – znam da postoji predmet koji se bavi medijima, pa eto prilike. Treba raditi sa njima, treba im davati šansu – mladima mora da se da šansa, čak i kad su loši, treba ih podržavati i usmeravati.

Ona misli da lokalni mediji imaju budućnost, ali i da će doći do sigurnih promena, jer kako kaže, radio pre 30 godina i danas nisu isti.

Internet će jednog trenutka postati dosadan, jer mi sada imamo jednu regresiju – sada su podkasti u modi koji su bili u modi 2006. godine. Da bi opstalo lokalno novinarstvo i bilo koje novinarstvo mora da se vrati po malo staromodno unazad, mora da se proširi rečenica, ne sme više da bude lid i naslov važan, jer se na to svelo novinarstvo, i to jeste bitno, ali bitno je i ono ostalo. Mora da se menja ponovo ukus publike, jer ukus publike odražava stanje u društvu. Sve se svelo na konzumerizam i zabavu i to negde ne odgovara realnom životu. Prosto, mora da se vrati medijska scena na neki period koji će odgovarati stanju države u kojoj živimo. Ovo, zasada, je jedna čudna mešavina isključivosti i polarizacije, kao i u društvu.

Prema rečima novinarke Jelene Jocić, novinarke i novinari trpe velike pritiske, pogotovo oni koji rade na lokalu. Ona ističe da je poreklom iz Jagodine, odakle je i preminuli novinar „Večernjih novosti" Milan Pantić, koji joj je bio uzor.

Ja sam znala da želim da budem to, da ja neću biti neko ko će biti samo taj šraf u tom nekom točku koji se pokreće, već sam želela da menjam stvari nabolje. Prednost novinarki i novinara na lokalu je da priču koja je mala, negde sasvim obična, možete da ispričate i da date glas običnim ljudima. Mana je što retko takve priče dospeju na veći nivo. Mi smo glas ljudi na lokalu. Kada steknete poverenje zajednice, to je neprocenjivo.

Njena koleginica Anđela Jeremić ističe da se novinari na lokalu bave društvenim temama i problemima građana koji su u njihovom okruženju.

Stvari se dešavaju i van Beograda – i u selima i manjim gradovima. Te ljude treba neko da čuje i oni imaju određenu potrebu. Novinarstvo na lokalnom nivou zapravo može više da doprinese jer je manja sredina. Novinara na lokalnom nivou nema baš toliko, jer za to treba mnogo

hrabrosti. Lakše je postići cilj i kroz novinarstvo omogućiti tim građanima rešenje nekog problema.

Kao glavni problem novinarki i novinara na lokalu ističe to da svi ljudi poznaju novinare, a da novinari njih ne znaju. Strah ljudi da govore o svojim problemima takođe predstavlja veliki izazov rada na lokalu.

> *Znaju krugove u kojima se krećeš, a da toga nisi ni svestan. Pored toga što si izložen više da srećeš ljude o kojima pišeš, ti ćeš tu osobu da sretneš na ulicu, dok ideš da kupuješ nešto i samim tim si potencijalno izložen napadima od te osobe, ako te ona prepozna, iako samo radiš svoj posao. Takođe, problem koji se javlja na lokalu jeste da se ljudi plaše da pričaju sa novinarima. Građani crtaju metu na čelo novinarima i smatraju ih za neprijatelje, jer nemaju dovoljno poverenja da pričaju o određenim temama. Često nailazimo na zid – ne možemo da pomognemo ljudima ako ne žele da izađu javno, što je jedan od češćih problema i zahteva drugačiji pristup novinara, gde mi treba da sedimo sa ljudima, da ih opustimo i pričamo više sa njima, nego što bi to inače išlo u novinarskom poslu.*

Da bi se unapredio položaj novinarki i novinara na lokalu potrebno je povezati se sa ljudima u zajednici.

> *Mi imamo naš posao i branimo javni interes, ali isto tako mi smo prijatelji svim tim ljudima. Mislim da nam treba više empatije na lokalu, a sa druge strane bi novinari trebalo da sklone svoj privatni interes od novinarskog posla, te zbog toga ne rade priče kakve bi trebalo da rade.*

4. ZAKLJUČAK

Zaključak ovog rada je da je važno raditi na jačanju kapaciteta novinarki i novinara u redakcijama. Sem toga, plate koje medijski radnice i radnici primaju su minimalne ili ispod republičkog javnog proseka. Urednice lokalnih medija i novinarke istakle su da je neophodno raditi na jačanju mentalnog zdravlja novinarki i novinara, ekonomskoj stabilnosti i novinarskoj solidarnosti.

Kada je u pitanju rad na lokalu, sve sagovornice su jednoglasno izjavile da postoje više prednosti, a manje mana kada se radi novinarski posao na lokalu. One su saglasne da je prednost novinarki i novinara na lokalu to što jedna mala priča, koja je naočigled obična, može da se ispriča na takav način da se da glas običnim ljudima i da taj glas dospe do nacionalnih medija. Međutim, te prednosti nisu tako

česte, jer se dešava da sagovornici ne žele da javno istupe, već žele da ostanu anonimni, što umnogome otežava posao lokalnih medija. Kada je reč o manama, to su, prema mišljenjima sagovornica, male plate, nedostatak novinarske solidarnosti među kolegama, zatvorenost institucija i neodgovaranje gradskih čelnika na pozive nezavisnih medija. Građanke i građani su i te kako zainteresovani da vide šta se dešava u njihovoj zajednici, što pokazuje i statistika čitanosti „Južnih vesti“, koje broje milione poseta.

Novinarke i novinari lokalnih medija, govoreći u Nišu, uprkos svim pritiscima, pretnjama i napadima, uspevaju da rade svoj posao u interesu javnosti, kako bi jug Srbije dobio prave, proverene i tačne informacije.

Neophodno je raditi na jačanju mentalnog zdravlja novinarki i novinara, pre svega zbog velikog obima posla i rada sa zajednicom i institucijama. Sem mentalnog zdravlja, od suštinskog značaja je raditi na povećanju plata koje su izuzetno male spram plata novinarki i novinara koji su angažovani u nacionalnim medijima. Primetan je odlazak i promena profesije zbog egzistencijalne krize i nemogućnosti normalnog života i rada sa malom platom, te je potrebno raditi na efikasnijem i češćem povećavaju plata, što će prouzrokovati i veći i bolji angažman novinarki i novinara u redakciji, kao i produktivnost i motivaciju za dalji rad.

Novinarska udruženja moraju reagovati na vreme na napade, pretnje i pritiske koji se sve učestalije dešavaju novinarkama i novinarima koji rade na lokalu. Petrović je izjavila da se često dešava da novinarska udruženja ne reaguju adekvatno i brzo kada su u pitanju novinari na lokalu, te predlaže unapređivanje komunikacije novinarskih udruženja sa kontakt tačkama u lokalnim medijima.

Potrebno je učestalije raditi istraživanja i dubinske intervjue sa urednicima, novinarkama i novinarima, kako bi se na što bolji način procenile potrebe i nedostaci lokalnih medija. Redovni i precizni izveštaji sa preporukama mogu unaprediti lokalno novinarstvo kako bi se ono ojačalo, jer samo jaki, nezavisni i odgovorni mediji mogu opstati na lokalu.

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LOCAL JOURNALISM AND THE POSITION OF LOCAL JOURNALISTS: A CASE STUDY OF „JUŽNE VESTI" AND „CITY SMART" RADIO

Abstact: Pressures, attacks, threats and the struggle for survival on the media scene is an enormous problems faced by the journalistic profession, and especially by the local media. It is extremely important to note that local media journalists, through their daily work in the field, play an important role when it comes to informing their community, but they also influence the shaping of citizens' attitudes, especially when we talk about socio-political issues. How they work, how they survive and resist the pressures, what newsrooms and their journalists face on a daily basis, and what kind of position local media journalists are in, is the subject of this work. The results of the in-depth interviews show that female journalists and editors of local media believe that more work needs to be done to strengthen the mental health of journalists, and to increase salaries, which are not at an appropriate level, as well as journalistic solidarity, which is lacking in the south part of Serbia.

Keywords: local journalism, local media, Južne vesti, City Smart radio, media, safety of journalists, pressures on journalists.