

CONTEMPORARY SHORT-FORM GENRES IN WEEKLY PRINT MEDIA

SUVREMENI ŽANROVI KRATKE FORME U TJEDNIM TISKOVNIM MEDIJIMA

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Abstract

The nature of journalistic genres evolve as they are exposed to various cultural, social, political and technological changes and developments. Today, the influence of the Internet and the emergence of new media have a significant impact on the development of new trends in contemporary classical print media. This study examines the range of current genre forms used by Slovak weeklies focusing on political and current affairs. The analysis is based on extensive research which has led us to define 16 new genres which can be categorized into three groups – long-form, short-form and lifestyle. The results of this research are presented in detail only for the short-form texts, and within this group we have identified four new specific genres: weekly news coverage, news update, diary and testimony. The basis of our classification is the established genre-constituting criteria (topic, function, form, composition and language). The study reaches three key findings: (1) the tendency of current genres towards increased levels of subjectivity (the so-called 'blog phenomenon'); (2) the dependence of specific forms within the genre model upon the positioning of a periodical on the decency/tabloidism scale (the continuum between the extremes of respected and tabloid periodicals, and hence between 'hard' and 'soft' form genres); and (3) the converging development of different genres (texts converge in terms of language, composition and form, while nonetheless keeping their key discerning criteria – function and topic – intact).

Sažetak

Priroda novinskih žanrova evoluirala je zbog izloženosti raznim kulturnim, društvenim, političkim i tehnološkim promjenama i razvoju. Danas utjecaj Interneta i pojava novih medija imaju značajan utjecaj na razvoj novih trendova u suvremenim klasičnim tiskovnim medijima. Ova studija ispituje raspon aktualnih žanrovskih oblika koje koriste slovački tjednici usmjereni na političke i aktualne događaje. Analiza se temelji na opsežnim istraživanjima koja su nas dovela do definiranja 16 novih žanrova koji se mogu svrstati u tri skupine – duga forma, kratka forma i stil života. Rezultati ovog istraživanja detaljno su prikazani samo za kratke tekstove, a unutar te skupine identificirali smo četiri nova specifična žanra: tjedne vijesti, ažuriranje vijesti, dnevnik i svjedočanstvo. Temelj naše klasifikacije je utvrđeni kriterij koji određuje žanr (tema, funkcija, oblik, sastav i jezik). Istraživanje donosi tri ključna otkrića: (1) tendenciju postojećih žanrova prema povećanoj razini subjektivnosti (tzv. 'Blog fenomen'); (2) ovisnost specifičnih oblika unutar žanrovskog modela na pozicioniranju periodike na ljestvici pristojnosti / tabloidizma (kontinuum između ekstrema uglednih i tabloidnih časopisa, a time između žanrova "tvrdih" i "mekih" oblika); i (3) konvergentni razvoj različitih žanrova (tekstovi se konvergiraju u smislu jezika, sastava i oblika, iako imaju ključne kriterije - funkcije i temu – oni ostaju netaknuti).

News genres undergo a continual process of evolution as they come under the influence of a wide range of social, political, technological and cultural

changes. The terminology used to identify different news genres is also affected by these changes, and therefore it is rewarding to revisit and revise

the definitions and standard classifications and to examine how they have changed over time, particularly in today's rapidly changing media environment. The research presented in this study examines the validity of the established models and definitions and focuses on weekly magazines covering social and political affairs; tabloids are excluded from the scope of this research. The study provides an overview of general developments in this field and examines weekly print media content with a special focus on so-called short-form genres.

State of the art and methodology

Our research was based on a detailed analysis of the content of four Slovak weekly magazines (*Týždeň*, *Plus 7 dní*, *Slovenka*, *Život*) which focus on political themes and current affairs aimed at a general audience. The examined issues of the four magazines were published over a 26 week period between March and August 2014, and the study sample was thus comprised of 104 editions. Individual news items were then evaluated and categorized based on the genre classification criteria detailed below.

The starting point of any examination of genre forms, new or otherwise, is to analyze the genre-constituting factors and to evaluate the distinctiveness of potential individual patterns within the framework of such factors. A model of five genre-constituting criteria was used for the purposes of this study, and this approach mirrors that adopted by many other academics, albeit with some minor nuances in their definitions. For instance, D. Slančová uses the terms function, topic, form, composition and language /1/. In this context, S. Skwarczyńska discusses 'structural fields' /2/ and discerns three basic configurations: semantic, pragmatic and stylistic. In fact, such a division closely follows the pattern of criteria suggested by Slančová, in which she proposes that the category of stylistics includes the last three of her chosen terms (form, language and composition). M. Wojtková suggests that 'components of genre pattern' /3/ are constituted of four aspects: structural, pragmatic, cognitive and stylistic. This is also in line with the five criteria presented above if we consider the cognitive aspect to be associated with 'topic', the pragmatic with 'function', the structural with 'composition', and the stylistic with 'form' and 'language'. Finally, linguistic schools focusing on formal textual aspects are probably also noteworthy in this context as they attempt (albeit rela-

tively marginally) to examine function and topic in the light of the definition of genre forms. The key representative of this school of thought is J. Mistrík, the author of the theory of 'genre morphology' /4/ which identifies three distinct morphological elements of genre: the physical, the lingual and the complementary. All three of these categories are divided further into subcategories linked to three separate criteria: formality, composition and language-related. However we believe that this approach to the definition of genres is too narrow and therefore our analysis has focused instead on the topic and function of the text. A similar approach can be found in the work of F. Mika and his theory of expression categories which emphasize the role of function and topic in journalistic texts /5/, /6/ (Miko 1969, p. 223; Rončáková 2011, p. 24)⁷. Unlike newspaper genres, it is not particularly helpful to consider straight news reporting within the context of weekly magazines because weekly news coverage is rather opinionated in nature and often takes on hybrid forms which can even exhibit many of the traits of interpretive journalism. Thus, if we were to divide genres based on the classical dichotomy between objective news writing and interpretive journalistic style (either rational or emotional), or to apply the trichotomy (objective news writing, interpretive journalism, literary journalism) to these genres⁸, we would be left with only two distinct categories – opinionated (rational) and literary (emotional) journalism. In taking this route, we would end up with two relatively large and rather vaguely defined groups of genres; we would also be faced with the problem of how

⁷ The genre-constituting significance of the function of the text is also emphasized by Fernando López Pan in his 'new paradigm of genre typology' (López Pan 1998). He suggests that basic genre categories should not be identified through the presence or absence of opinion, i.e. in line with common practice, but through (1) function and (2) responsibility. Based on these criteria he arrives at two 'macro-genres': news update (information function, corporate responsibility) and opinions ('make-sense' function, individual or collective responsibility). These two forms are categorized into auxiliary genres (which serve the former or the latter, but are not distinct) and specialty genres (expert analyses, evaluations, expert judgments on art, history, technology etc.).

⁸ This type of breakdown based on the presence or absence of authorial opinion and subsequently based on the logical and terminological means of expression is generally accepted and was introduced and elaborated in the Slovak context by A. Tušer 1999, Š. Veľas 2000, M. Foltrichová 2012, I. Jenča 2014. We by no means intend to distance ourselves from this approach in the following passages; rather we have chosen to categorize genres by formal attributes in order to make the explanation more clear and structured.

to integrate lifestyle and tabloid genres into this schema, as these forms are not usually not taken into account in these classical concepts.

On this basis, it seems more appropriate to adhere to formal attributes in our research whilst still acknowledging the validity of the dichotomy of straight news writing versus interpretive journalism. Therefore, a combined model will be applied in our analysis: weekly magazine content will be divided into the following categories:

- short-form;
- long-form; and
- lifestyle.

Table 1: Breakdown of genres

Long-form genres	Short-form genres	Lifestyle genres
Hard long-form	News coverage ⁹	Phenomena
Soft long-form	News update	Gossip ¹⁰
Analysis	Diary	Good advice
Investigative journalism	Testimony	'Ask an expert'
Popular science		Teaser
Story		
Profile		

The research presented in this study will focus specifically on the individual models listed under the short-form genres¹¹.

Short-form genres in general

Short-form journalism focuses on short articles with relatively small amounts of content. This content may take on a wide range of different forms – news-style, opinionated and literary. The

The first two groups consist of typical and widely-acknowledged genres such as news writing, opinion writing and literary journalism. However the third group is more specific and the inclusion of tabloid and entertainment elements within the category means that special subcategories should also be applied.

It is not the aim of this study to examine 'classical' genres which are, quite naturally, prevalent in contemporary journalistic practice. Instead, our analysis will focus on genres which are as yet largely unexplored in the Slovak context, but we will also re-examine the existing genres which have undergone fundamental transformations.

A total of 16 genre models have been identified, labelled, defined and characterized within the three main categories. Some of the genres identified within the group of long-form texts, for example analysis, popular science, story, and profile, are not completely new and have been the subject of previous research. However genres such as analysis and popular science have been largely omitted from key genre theories, while others, such as story and profile, are largely confined to editorial board discussions.

following new forms were identified and are not covered by previous concepts of the form:

- weekly magazine news coverage;
- news update;
- diary; and
- testimony.

However, short-form genres comprise almost all of the currently used classical genre forms: commentary-based content (commentary, editorial), feuilleton-based content (feuilleton, short polemic commentary (glosa), note, opinion column), review, response of readers, etc.

⁹ Specific weekly news coverage.

¹⁰ The plural is used to denote those genres which typically occur in the form of series or mosaic-like coverage.

¹¹ Research results on the long-format and lifestyle genres have already been discussed in previous works, cf. Rončáková 2014, 2015.

Weekly magazine news

Weekly magazine news sections differ from standard daily news mainly because it places a greater emphasis on the selection and summarization of news items and the evaluation of these topics. The content is specifically targeted at less demanding media consumers who prefer to screen through what has happened over the past week in a condensed form. The evaluation element of weekly magazine news sections often enhances the original news item with a personal opinion such as an intelligent comment or a new

perspective, and at this point the genre can be seen as blurring the borders between news writing and interpretive journalism. In the evaluation element the author presents his or her opinion in a distinctive commentary-style fashion, the form of which can vary from implicit or light allusions to direct or explicit remarks. Within the field of weekly news writing, short-form informative straight-news flash reports or notes are also fairly common.

Table 2: Genre-constituting elements in weekly magazine news coverage

Function	To inform & interpret the news, to entertain, to advertise.
Topic	Current home and foreign affairs, culture, marginal topics about people and their lives on the edge of lifestyle gossip (oddities, showbiz).
Form	Short news (flash reports, notes), or short one-column forms. One or two sentence texts without illustrations, longer forms also include some graphic formatting and photography.
Composition	Macro: both informative and explanatory procedure. Micro: internally unstructured texts with an emphasis on headlines either separate or embedded, which place emphasis on attractiveness and originality in addition to news items, and often adopts a tabloid style.
Language	Depends on the profile of the particular weekly – ranges from straight news language to more unrestrained language; also takes on forms of critical assessment or even irony, it is vigorous, expressive, creative and subjective.

The attitude of the editorial board to the form of the publication's news writing is largely dependent on the credibility of the magazine. The most respected magazines usually use this section to present current political affairs with a minimum of opinion, while the more 'populist' or 'tabloid-like' weeklies tend to present topics on culture and showbiz and often resort to promotional features (news writing in the service of advertising). In terms of significance, these middlebrow magazines tend to cover marginal events and phenomena while adding more subjective aspects of evaluation or reflection to the informative writing. Indeed it is fairly common for weekly news items to be printed without an authorial by-line, suggesting that the views expressed in the article are representative of the entire editorial board's attitude towards the developments of the past week. Unlike classical daily news writing, these texts tend to generalize and summarize simple facts and often refrain from identifying exact sources of information (i.e. by avoiding phrases such as 'the press agency informed...', 'according to the contract...', 'as concluded by the deputy state's attorney...'). The journalist responsible for writing such

texts is expected to be able to place the facts in context in a concise manner, and thus the backgrounds of these stories tend to be extremely short; in the case of flash news, this can even be as short as two to three lines.

Weekly magazines also represent one of the last bastions of the small report genre, a form which has disappeared almost entirely from daily print media¹². A typical report may cover birthdays of famous figures; for example, *Slovenka* covered the birthday of a famous Slovak actor, Ladislav Chudík, in the form of a report which offered detailed information about the life of the figure and also featured quotes from the actor and his wife. A report like this can also incorporate a short story or the author's reflections or opinions. Some weekly magazines pay attention to the extent of short polemic commentary which features

¹² Within the context of Slovak genre studies, the title 'riport' is used for a small-scale news report. It is regarded as a hybrid of hard news coverage and news report, in that the informative text is amended with elements of atmosphere, experience or evaluation, which then translates into the use of more expressive and colloquial language. This approach places far less emphasis on factual accuracy and completeness than is found in standard news coverage.

in their news stories; if the article features too much subjective content, it may begin to take on the form of a column. However if a piece is 'untidy' enough to transgress the borders of genre, editors are unlikely to see it as a mistake if it nonetheless 'works' as a piece of journalism. On the contrary, this type of subjective article can allow weekly magazines to make a welcome contribution to the discussion of current affairs in the public forum; readers consuming information from the daily press, radio or television during the week may often seek a concise and succinct view of the week's most important developments in a weekly magazine.

Journalists who write this kind of articles are expected to have a sharp wit and are often given free rein to use their own creativity and ingenuity; irreverent and even tabloid-like sensibilities are often encouraged in such pieces. This type of news writing is typical in the tabloid *Plus 7 dní*, which places no limits on the creativity of the writer. For instance, in an article covering the activities of Ivan Gašparovič, the former President of the Slovak Republic, during his last days in office, the author did not hesitate to use pointed phrases such as 'built up a crushing momentum', 'made public statements on everything', pointing out that he has appointed professors and rectors, and handed over awards to sportsmen. As he continues, 'maybe the president has only just realized that the party is almost over. Fingers crossed that he doesn't manage to mess up too many things.' (Hyperactive in *Plus 7 dní*, 2014, Vol. 26, No. 22, p. 17.)

Naturally, this type of news cannot always avoid sliding into the category of infotainment or even lifestyle gossip; there is a constant danger that the writer gives too much colour and entertainment value and stray too far from the original aim of imparting information to the piece. The gap between weekly news coverage and gossip is often rather permeable and it can be difficult to assess the dominant genre of a news piece. A news feature on a migrating eagle named Arnold which was monitored by conservationists through an attached GPS tracker may serve as a good example of this ambiguity. The weekly *Plus 7 dní* reported that the bird had arrived back in his Slovak breeding grounds a little late and that, despite the fact that 'spotted eagles vow faithfulness until death', his mate had found 'a younger mate' in the meantime. But the piece goes on to reassure readers that our 'action hero' Arnold has also found a new

mate... (Arnold's new mate in *Plus 7 dní*, 2014, Vol. 26, No. 18, p. 17).

In some tabloid-leaning magazines, the news coverage is restricted entirely to the cultural sphere, and these types of articles can be concerned with topics such as concerts, exhibitions, birthday parties, new books and CDs. This type of soft news verging on showbiz news can typically be found in sections such as 'Society' or 'People and Affairs'.

Such texts even allow the reader to track the economic ties of the weekly to sponsors or advertisers with a high degree of reliability. Advertisements and promotions masquerade as news articles in the photo galleries depicting directors handing over diplomas or fold out photo features with a minimum amount of accompanying text. A good example of this is the full-page report in *Slovenka* covering the opening of a new hotel in the well-known spa resort of Rajecké Teplice, which features five large photos above a short text.

In the elite-orientated and highly respected weeklies represented in Slovakia by *Týždeň*, short news reports are not entirely free of evaluation, but they lack the explicitly subjective and ironic tone of the middlebrow titles. Instead, the material in these 'commentary-free' articles is selected and ordered with the specific aim of creating a particular impression on the reader. Key information is recapped, and the reader is left with a clear impression of the main gist of the issue under discussion. For example, a report on the Russian annexation of Crimea summarizes the main events and the reactions of the West and Moscow, but the key point of the article draws more attention to the positive consequences of increased cooperation between the Ukraine and European Union (Ukraine en route to the EU. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 13, p. 5.)

Thus, the weekly news reports in the more respected publications tend to be less amusing than their less respected counterparts, but they share the same willingness to impart commentary to their readers. Nonetheless, commentary in its pure form is rather rare; one of the few examples found during our analysis was a report on the general elections in India, in which the author discussed the causes of the elections ("Modi's victory is the result of a feeling prevailing among the voters that the Indian economy still does not offer enough opportunities to all.") and potential new challenges ("The problem is his nationalism and the

fact that he attacked Muslims in his campaign. There are concerns that if Modi does not take a more moderate approach in future, riots may ensue between Muslims and Hindus.”; mg: Indian general elections. In: Týždeň, 2014, Vol. 12, no.21, p. 14.)

News update

News update is a term which has been introduced to denote news and interpretive texts which do

not attain the level of hard or soft long-form texts but which still retain the form of news reports enriched for background, or slightly amended by commentary or news report elements. News updates are more extensive than standard weekly news or reports and editorial boards tend to be more generous in terms of space and photo material for this type of text.

Table 3: Genre-constituting elements of news update

Function	To inform, but also to comment, mediate atmosphere and provide background
Topic	Current, political, with nation-wide impact, serious in terms of style
Form	Wider scope than in standard reports or narrative reports, however, shorter than long-form material, thus positioned in the area in between short-form and long-form genres.
Composition	Macro: information, description, partially narrative and explanatory. Micro: text closely associated to an extended report, often structured chronologically, not based on inverted pyramid.
Language	News writing language often with lively elements.

News update is a rather ‘formless’ and to a large extent hybridized genre. It can take the form of an in-depth report which is augmented by elements of commentary or free-form reflection, but it can also attempt to provide an analysis or narrative coverage with elements of a literary-style news report. Clearly, the term news update can encompass a mix of approaches and it can also evoke a sense of amateurism which is found in non-journalistic texts. It occurs almost exclusively in lifestyle or more tabloid-like magazines. Journalists typically resort to a news update when they want to dedicate more room to a significant event but lack the capacity to cover the story through in-depth news analysis, commentary or other hard long-form genres.

Sometimes a news update is used to cover less significant topics (for example, cultural or social events), and this draws the article into the territory of the news report, expunging any commentary elements in the process. Such news updates may even resemble lifestyle gossip if the writer is tempted to apply his or her sharp wit, honed on more serious topics, to potentially frivolous showbiz topics. A news update about the Austrian transsexual singer Conchita Wurst which featured in *Život* weekly is a good example of this trend. The author concocts her news update from a mixture of juicy pieces of information, political mini-commentary and quotations from involved parties: “A triumph of tolerance – that’s the phrase used by many to describe the success of the Austrian transvestite Thomas Neuwirth (25), aka Conchita Wurst. Even the stage name of this protagonist is provocative as it connects both female and male elements.

Conchita is a small cat in Spanish and the word is sometimes used as a euphemism for female sexual organs, while ‘wurst’ means a sausage in German, an obvious allusion to the source of male pride. Add to this the extravagant appearance – female clothes, mesmerizing eyes with smoky make-up and a thick black beard – and attention is guaranteed. And all this even before the final round, when this Austrian candidate was discussed almost more frequently than Russian-Ukrainian conflict...” (ABEILLE, Katarína: The lady of the beard. In: Život, 2014, Vol. 65, no. 20, p. 10.)

Despite the aforementioned monopoly of middle-brow or lifestyle magazines in the news update genre, a mixture of information and commentary can also be found in the elite weekly press. For instance, *Týždeň* featured a news update on a police raid on cannabis producers organised by the Albanian police. The author presents in-depth information on the historical development of cannabis growing and smuggling routes from Albania, and includes further details on the connections to political elite and the mentality of the locals; readers are thus offered a spiced up story which is bookended by a news-story-like introduction and conclusion. Similarly, *Týždeň* featured a news update on the Ebola pandemic in Western Africa which covered two thirds of the page devoid of any illustrations; in this piece, the emphasis was placed exclusively on providing the readers with information.

Diary

Diary is a genre which covers a vast range of different styles and it is often difficult to determine exactly where the boundaries of the genre lie. Examples of diary can encompass elements of short polemic commentaries, news reports or feuilletons. However at the core of this genre is a significantly subjective, personalized approach which differentiates this genre from classical ob-

jectivized genres and which allows us to consider the form as a separate genre. Authors of diaries draw on their own experiences and present personal observations and reflections which are supported and enhanced by generally valid ideas. Thus, one can also describe it as genre of emotional (literary or narrative) interpretive journalism, drawing on current trends developing in the environment of new media, specifically blogs.

Table 4: Genre-constituting elements of diary

Function	To consider a question, open a topic, offer interesting insights.
Topic	Subjective experience, observations – exotic environments, historic events, interesting figures...
Form	Typically short-form text within the scope of a 'column': 400 – 600 words.
Composition	Macro: focus on reflection, interpretation and narrative, enhanced by description; the provision of information is secondary. Micro: mostly unstructured text similar to a feuilleton, however, extensive structuring is also an option to emphasize each idea separately; short, concise, even curt; economical use of language.
Language	Literary or narrative, inventive, original, metaphorical language with a sense of contraction, punchline.

Diary forms are found almost exclusively in respected weeklies which invest into regular features by well-known figures who can express interesting and meaningful ideas through the medium of their own experiences, observations and personal insight. Typical examples of the form are the column-like sections published in *Týždeň* which are dedicated to the thoughts of interesting and inspiring people from various backgrounds. Regular columns also feature the experiences of Slovaks living abroad; these authors share their opinions and experiences from their lives in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Austria, Russia but also from more far-flung locales such as China or Sweden. Others reflect upon their own personal experiences and extrapolate these personal reflections onto a wider topic of general significance.

The unifying element of diary sections is a stable author who can switch genres with ease depending on the topic and function of his or her chosen topic. Such authors use classical genres but also apply the subjectivity and internal incoherence of the diary form to create a mosaic of impressions, observations and snapshots of his or her life. This mosaic-like output could be considered as the key attribute of a diary.

A mosaic resembling a news report is the domain of an Austrian-born journalist active in Slovakia, Martin Leidenfrost. In a diary piece from Odessa, he offers a truly concise description of his chosen subject matter: "*Odessa – sounds just about like this:*

blue-eyed sailors, cynical sutlers, Jewish humor and Russian chansons under the plane trees with leaves resembling those of maple"; "In Taraclia, capital of the Moldovan Bulgarians, an old lady in black invited me to a quick meal to her house surrounded by chicken and rabbit cages. 'There's a war in Odessa' says a 78-year old woman, 'but who fights against whom, I don't know...' A foodservice counter is covered by a communist party newspaper with a headline 'Towards Customs Union with Russia'. The old lady is strongly religious, she thanked God after literally every sentence she uttered" (LEIDENFROST, Martin: Odessa mom. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 32, p. 52.)

A common feature of such articles is a unifying thread which pulls the whole mosaic of images and impressions together, but this unifying idea is nonetheless often absent. One of the *Týždeň* correspondents from the Czech Republic, Roman Joch, discusses (but chooses not to connect) both the topic of an advertising campaign against domestic violence and the case of the politically incorrect comments of the Czech President Zeman on 'Islamic ideology' following the murderous attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. Joch adopts a first person approach to confront his readers directly, and uses emotive expressions underscored by expressive syntax and punctuation marks to express his strikingly courageous views, thereby proving that serious topics can also be covered by this most quintessentially subjective genre.

At its best, the diary form can be strikingly creative in terms of style; it can sparkle with poeticiz-

ing elements and the witty use of language. When a strong idea is matched with an expressive flow of thoughts, the genre can lead to well-written lyrical texts which aim to tell 'more' than words can say.

Subtle details from ordinary life, but also from the world of high culture or politics, are adopted in order to create a *pars pro toto* effect. Martin Leidenfrost's masterpiece entitled *About my trousers* can serve as a textbook example here. "In fact, I now only want to talk about my trousers. As a result, I am forced to allude to something like alienation between Great Britain and the rest of the EU." The introduction is followed by a short story which reads like it could have been excerpted from a novel. "One rainy night in Brussels, I met a red-glowing phantom, a revelation of its own. Its classical black shoes and grey-black pinstriped jacket softened the colourful dynamics of a pink checked shirt, a multi-coloured tie – and truly hellish-red corduroy trousers. Those trousers hypnotized me. Jacek approached him as 'Sherlock Holmes', which obviously amused this sturdy Englishman. A scar on his cheek reminded me of the old German patriotic societies called *burschenschaften* where duels were usually resolved with the sword. The afflicted, however, had a better explanation: A prostitute bottled me. That is to say, a prostitute offered him sex for 20 pounds and when he mocked her, she hit him over the head with a broken bottle." (LEIDENFROST, Martin: *About my trousers*. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 14, p. 47.)

Against the backdrop of this story of an interesting yet unknown person, 'a man in corduroy trousers', the author projects the question of the relationship between Britain and the EU to arrive at the following conclusion: "And that's where the story really starts. The following morning, I went downtown to buy myself just such trousers. I found them with an inscription: 'Trousers that make you look younger'. A look in the mirror lived up to this promise, but they were really expensive. I hesitated for a while, my heartbeat soared. Finally, I spent my last money on those trousers. I am wearing them right now. They glow and make me shine. So let me thank you, England, before you leave us, for this very special inspiration!" (LEIDENFROST, Martin: *About my trousers*. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 14, p. 47.)

Testimony

Testimony is another example of a relatively new genre which has emerged from the environment of new media. A typical feature of testimony is an extreme level of subjectivism, an approach which is similar to that found in blog posts. These types of texts are often written by significant public figures who enjoy a degree of authority and whose personal, intimate or insightful experiences or feelings are associated with a specific person, phenomenon or event which is related in the testimonies.

Table 5: Genre-constituting elements of testimony

Function	To provide personal testimony about a person/ thing/ phenomenon; to impress emotionally, persuade.
Topic	Famous person (at the occasion of death, anniversary, etc.), significant event or phenomenon set in the context of the author's personal experience.
Form	Rather short 'column' text, maximum one magazine page.
Composition	Macro: emphasis on narrative rather than reflection, explanation or description. Micro: unstructured text; longer texts are structured through intertitles.
Language	1st person singular, subjective, expressive – in terms of lexical choice and syntax (short sentences, one-element sentences, separated sentence elements).

The testimony form may to a certain extent overlap with that of the diary, but it is distinctive in terms of the strongly emotion forms of expression employed. A further difference lies in the fact that the subject matter of testimonies tends to be far more contemporary than that of diary texts; the topics are often the most pressing issues of the day and are not chosen arbitrarily by the author. Testimonies are usually written by authors with significant personal ties to the subject matter. For example, a text published in *Týždeň* about the beatification of

John Paul II was written by a well-known conservative politician and former dissident František Mikloško, who had close contacts with the Vatican and had met the late Pope several times. Another example may be an article on Ukraine in the early stages of the war in the Donbass written by a Ukrainian writer. On the anniversary of the death of the well-known Czech singer songwriter, Karel Kryl, a testimony was written by Kryl's long-time colleague at *Radio Free Europe*, Agneša Kalinová. In the text, she draws on her extensive day-to-day

contact with the singer in order to depict the deeply personal patterns of his life and to offer insights into his relationships with his colleagues.

Experience and memory play an important role in testimonies. František Mikloško presented an exclusive personal account of his visit to the Vatican in early 1990s: *"During our private visit to the Vatican in November 1991 he invited Silvester Krčmery, Ján Čarnogurský, his wife and I to a private dinner. Among other things Ján Čarnogurský mentioned the current problem of liberalism. John Paul II listened carefully but when asked how the Church wants to respond to this threat, he replied that in the first place the Church had to build a dam through its existence and its actions against moral relativism."* (MIKLOŠKO, František: My John Paul II. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 19, p. 33.)

Subjectivity and emotionality are inevitably key attributes of testimony, and this is true even in its commentary or explanatory parts (i.e. the non-narrative elements). The editorial board of one weekly found this approach an ideal means by which to cover the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In his testimony piece, the Ukrainian writer Jurij Andruchovyč wrote: *"Well, yes, we always knew Putin was evil, revengeful and cruel. It was accepted and we got used to it, so to speak. But here's the bad news: He is also a madman. When I saw the unanimous vote of Russian senators in favour of the 'deployment of Russian military forces into Ukraine' live on television I couldn't resist a feeling that a completely abhorrent and a bit amusing puppet show was unfolding in front of our eyes and that this simply cannot be true. The anachronism was too obvious and the absurdity too astounding to comprehend."* (ANDRUCHOVYČ, Jurij: In a brotherly hold. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 13, p. 28.)

Subjective experience is the key defining attribute of a testimony. Regardless of the importance or significance of the subject matter, the author decides to use testimony in order to emphasize his or her point of view, and to draw a persuasive argument from a seemingly trivial topic, thereby pointing to a broader context or a more significant idea. Štefan Hríb, Chief Editor of *Týždeň*, for example, describes the strong impression made on him when watching the Champions League eighth-final between FC Barcelona and Manchester City in the Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona. He uses emotional terms such as 'passion', 'feast' and 'lust' in order to share his experience of *'the world-class football and captivating football culture'* with Slovak readers: *"And that's when the small-big Leo comes in.*

He is the first world-class football player of the decade who I have had the chance to almost 'touch'. He's great on television but it's simply something different to see him live. No player in the history of football has ever controlled the ball so tightly at such speed; his marvelous tricks and passing angles beyond the laws of physics can no longer be described merely as 'sport'. It's pure art. As if casually, he scores a goal off the post, but that's not the point. Messi has more. Unpretentious at workouts, it is difficult not to overlook him. Twenty minutes of easy running, sometimes he touches the ball slightly, throws in some jokes toward his teammates. In his team jacket, he appears timid like a ball kid. But when the referee blows the whistle, a wraith suddenly turns into an unstoppable genius. One thing is clear: this is not just sport. It resembles more the tone of an oboe or the interplay of colour used by the Impressionists." (HRÍB, Štefan: Inside the famous arena. In: *Týždeň*, 2014, Vol. 12, no. 13, p. 33.)

Testimonies often cover controversial topics which can arouse strong passions. They are often used to express the editorial board's opinion on a given topic. For example, *Týždeň* opted for testimonies to cover a developing story about the metal festival *Gothoom* in Nova Bana which had sparked controversy and provoked local citizens to organize a petition protesting the unacceptable noise levels. Several articles had also appeared on the web claiming that the festival was promoting anti-Christian or even satanic music. In addition to standard news reports, the magazine also published four testimonies written by editors and correspondents of the weekly who delved deep into their youths to describe their first encounters with metal, sharing their passion for this musical genre and attempted to present it in a moderately positive light.

Interpretation and conclusion

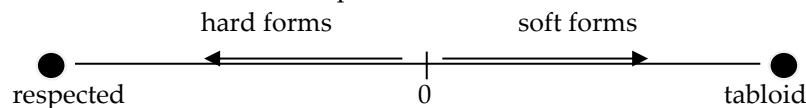
Four relatively new genres used in today's political and current affairs weekly magazines have been presented in this study and categorized within the group of short-form genres: weekly news coverage, news update, diary and testimony.

Two of these genres are largely related to news writing and the remaining two fall within the domain of interpretive journalism. The first conclusion that can be drawn from our study is that authors of weekly news coverage do not refrain from presenting their opinions in their articles. On the contrary, opinionated writing is desirable and plays a crucial role in weekly news writing. Thus, one can conclude that the presence of opinion, or

even of irony and related expressive language, are among the defining attributes of weekly news writing – a genre which has not been the focus of much academic study to date.

High levels of subjectivity are typical and distinctive for both diary and testimony forms, and these types of text may also include expressive or even poetic language. The subjectivity and intimacy of the texts is expressed in a very loose fashion (artistic or sometimes colloquial expressions), and this approach can be attributed to the influence of new media writing styles. The term ‘blog phenomenon’ is suggested as being more appropriate in this context.

Clearly, the key genre-constituting factors – function and topic – remain in place and they can be used to discern different genres with a high degree of reliability. On the other hand, there is a considerable overlap in the form, composition and language employed in different genres. Whereas weekly news coverage primarily informs and ‘makes sense’ of information, or draws on a broad spectrum of domestic or foreign events (including marginal or local stories), news updates focus more on analysis and the mediation of atmosphere and background; a news update usually covers key events of national interest. Whereas diary attempts to point to or comment on new topics, testimony aims to provide personal, emotional, and persuasive accounts of known events or phenomena



Each genre adopts both hard and soft forms. The intensity of ‘hard’ forms increases in the highly respected weeklies, and texts tend to take on softer forms in tabloid weeklies. For example, short-form weekly news coverage can adopt the form of a short polemic commentary or can also move towards looser forms in terms of both stylistics and language, extending as far as lifestyle gossip. On the other hand, respected periodicals tend to lean toward more concise, diary-like coverage in which commentary elements are proffered through allusions or hidden meanings ‘between the lines’.

The aforementioned intra-genre differences and recent tendencies in genre development depend primarily on the actual composition of specific editorial boards. Their vision, their understanding of their mission, and established internal conventions are the key factors which define the palette of genres used, the positioning of articles on the re-

na. Whereas the focus of the former is extremely wide, in effect anything which takes the fancy of its author, the latter focuses exclusively on important events, phenomena or individuals.

The key finding of this study however lies in its confirmation of the classical theory of conjunctive tendency in the development of journalistic genres. Whereas genres in other areas develop disjunctively and tend to be formed through splits or evolution, the mode of development within the domain of interpretive journalism is markedly different: instead, a gradual assimilation of different heterogeneous genres is observed, especially in terms of their common formal attributes /7/. Whereas traditional sources of unity of genres are based on the underlying scriptural, monological, public and conceptual nature /8/, this list can now be amended to include terms such as understandable, attractive, opinionated and simple (or even simplified).

A further conclusion reached during the course of our study points to significant internal differences in the attributes of genres depending on their position within the respected vs. tabloid scale. All of the genres examined in this study can be plotted onto such a scale and positioned somewhere between the two extremes – mainly based on the type of periodical and the editorial ‘climate’ of the publication. Thus, it is possible to discern some form of continuum between decency and tabloidism.

spected vs tabloid scale, and the language and style employed. Similarly, the intra-editorial mindset translates into the language and style found in the published texts. During the course of the analysis, a number of articles were found to use uninspiring or even clichéd language, and this finding is in accordance with the notion of A. Tušer, who concludes that modern readers often see no need for unnecessary ‘embellishment’ or eloquence in the articles they read /9/ (2008, p. 56 – 57). However, many of the articles analyzed in this study also displayed strikingly creative, original, metaphorical and aesthetically enlightening approaches.

This study is an attempt to track current developments in genre processes and concepts in order to identify the key defining attributes of each specific genre. New trends are presented and it is hoped that they will find their place in contemporary journalism or instigate processes which will even-

tually lead to the formation of new functional genre models.

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