

---

*Book Reviews*


---



---

 Book Review
 

---

Mirjana Kasapović

*Izborni leksikon*  
 (Lexicon of Elections)

Politička kultura, Zagreb, 2003, 430 pages

Croatian political science in more than forty years of the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb has not established the tradition of compiling and publishing handbooks, dictionaries and textbooks for main political science disciplines. Thus political science students or anybody who wants to look up the meaning of fundamental political science concepts or get acquainted with the basic theoretical and empirical political science approaches, is left with a rather small number of translated political science books. It should be noted, however, that in 1990 *Školska knjiga* published *Leksikon temeljnih pojmova politike* (Lexicon of basic political concepts), edited by Ivan Prpić, Žarko Puhovski and Maja Uzelac. In the first year of multiparty democracy in Croatia, this book enabled a very wide circle of users to get their bearings in the categorial universe of contemporary politics, but the lexicon was not meant to be a political science work, either in its concept or the execution. All in all, this neglect of a major segment of political science literature is surprising, since it is essential for both the development of political science and its study.

Hence the publishing of Mirjana Kasapović's *Izborni leksikon* is an important turning point in the development of the Croatian political science. This is the first genuine political science lexicon by a Croatian author for one of the central and today most developed political science disciplines – electoral research. The book is the result of the author's longtime study of elections. Her most important books on this subject are *Izborni i stranački sustav Republike Hrvatske* (Electoral and Party System of the Republic of Croatia), Zagreb 1993, and *Demokratska tranzicija i po-*

*litičke stranke* (Democratic Transition and Political Parties), Zagreb 1996, and two co-authored books (with eminent German electoral scholar, Dieter Nohlen): *Izborni sustavi u Istočnoj Europi* (Electoral Systems in Eastern Europe), Zagreb 1996, and *Wahlsysteme und Systemwechsel* (Electoral Systems and System Change), Opladen 1996. Since 2000, the author is the leader of the research project "Izbori, stranke i parlament u Hrvatskoj" (Elections, parties and parliament in Croatia), within which she has examined the electoral politics in Croatia and in the world. Also, the author – as a renowned expert for electoral systems – participated in 1999 in the work of the committee for the design of a new Croatian electoral law; this committee submitted a draft of the electoral law which is, only slightly modified, still in effect.

Having decided to fill this "black hole" of the lexicographic and handbook/textbook political science literature in Croatia, the author was faced with the dilemma regarding the most suitable format for this publication. Since the dictionary format seemed inadequate as an introduction into the elections-related topics, and the encyclopedic format too comprehensive for a single author, she opted for the proposed lexicon format: 245 items in alphabetical order. The lexicon also has some elements of a political science handbook because about 70 national electoral systems are described in bigger detail within the related items. Most prominence is given to four major western democracies – Great Britain, France, USA and Germany – and the European countries in general, whose electoral systems are practically all outlined. Of course, all the aspects of electoral politics in Croatia after 1990 are also very exhaustively presented. Electoral politics of other major world regions are not overlooked: there are examples of the electoral systems and electoral dynamics of the most important states in Latin America, Middle East, central, Southeast and east Asia and the Pacific states; also included are a few examples of African states. The range of the material covered by the lexicon is impressive, as is the breadth of information (their geographical dispersion). The

items have been garnered from an enormous pool of political science literature: the items mention as many as 158 independent existing states, 4 historical states (including Yugoslavia 1918-1992), and there are a few examples of elections at the subnational level (for example, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, and Delaware and California in the US). The list of references at the end of the book is exceptionally long: there are 711 of them! Regarding the contents, the author has tried to approach electoral policy from three main aspects: institutional, processual and substantial, in line with the already conventional political science division of political phenomena into polity, politics and policy. Such an approach has sometimes led her beyond the scope of electoral politics into the territory of fundamental concepts of politics, when dictated by their relevance for elections. Thus, the lexicon includes items such as direct and representative democracy, parliament, government, parliamentary and presidential systems, political parties, social movements, interest groups and mass media. In that way, the author has laid down the guidelines for compiling a much-needed general political science lexicon.

With Mirjana Kasapović's *Izborni leksikon*, Croatian political science has finally got its first political science handbook by a Croatian author that satisfies the highest world standards, and it would not come as a surprise if it appeared in translation. The lexicon represents both the guideline and the yardstick for this kind of political science literature in Croatia, and it is going to be extremely difficult to attain its high standards of excellence.

Nenad Zakošek

---

## Book Review

---

Zdravko Petak  
Mirjana Kasapović  
Dražen Lalić

*Lokalna politika u Hrvatskoj*  
(*Local Politics in Croatia*)

Fakultet političkih znanosti, Zagreb,  
2004, 178 pages

This book is a pioneer work in Croatian political science, the first book by Croatian authors to deal with local politics in Croatia in the conditions of multiparty democracy. The book is also groundbreaking because it interprets the extensive empirical material from the comparative perspective, using a plethora of methodological instruments: e.g. the analytical and interpretative methods of comparative public policies, comparative institutional analysis and the complex case studies.

The book includes three studies: the study by Zdravko Petak entitled "Financing local government: decentralization policies in Croatia and the world", the study by Mirjana Kasapović entitled "Local electoral law in Croatia in comparative perspective", and Dražen Lalić's study entitled "Crisis of Split's municipal government 2001-2002: the insiders' view".

Zdravko Petak begins by giving an outline of the political science tradition of the analysis of local politics from the perspective of public choice theory that emerged in the US in the early 1960s, and whose precursors were economist Charles Tiebout and political scientists Vincent and Elinor Ostrom and Robert Warren. Unlike at that time very popular theory of interest pluralism, which also emerged from the analysis of local American politics (Robert Dahl's *Who governs?* from 1961), but focused more on the activities of organized interest groups and their influence on political decision-making, public-choice theory centred on institutional analysis, on the relationship between the polycentrally structured local institutions and organizations and on the question how to increase their efficiency in pro-

curing and providing public services at the local level. Public-choice theory convincingly criticized the approaches that advocated political centralization as a prerequisite of such efficacy and developed a model of a polycentric organization of local institutions with overlapping competences. This conclusion is borne out by the theory of fiscal federalism, also generated in the early 1960s by the said Charles Tiebout. This theory cogently highlighted the weak spots of fiscal centralization that characterized the first decades after World War Two and the advantages of the decentralized organization of public services. The author concludes that both theories have contributed to a better understanding of government functioning at various levels and given rise to a polycentric model of development that boosts efficient production of public goods, stimulates innovations and constrains selfish behaviour of politicians.

The author goes on to apply the described theoretical models on the processes of the decentralization of government in the world and in Croatia. The decentralization of government in developed countries has been a response to the crisis of the welfare state and the result of the efforts to cut down on the cost of social services by transferring them to local government units. Local government and decentralization in the field of social services are more advanced in the unitary than in the federal systems. The author offers a review of the level of decentralization and the relations between the central and the local governments in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Holland, Great Britain, Italy, France and Spain. The decentralization in transitional countries has gone hand in hand with the introduction of democracy and market economy and privatization. As a rule it was a result of political programmes at the macro level of political system, and not of the demands at the local level (*top-down approach*). The degree of decentralization is influenced by the level of institutional development, the country's size, the level of social capital and the administrative capacity of local government. The author argues that where decentralization is concerned, Croatia lags behind the other transitional countries. Most services that have been largely decentralized in other transitional countries

(education, health care) are still highly centralized in Croatia. There is no politically articulated need for decentralization, since the local and regional demands for more authority are weak (apart from the demands by regionalist parties). That is why in Croatia the top-down approach is also dominant, with a somewhat more active participation of the nongovernmental sector in the design of the concept of administrative and fiscal decentralization.

The author concludes that the desirable level of decentralization cannot be determined solely on the basis of theoretical models, however advanced, but also on the specific historical traditions, institutional arrangements and socioeconomic and geographical features of a particular country.

In the second study, Mirjana Kasapović analyses the elections for local and regional representative bodies from the comparative perspective. She describes some typical examples of local and regional elections and the elections of the leading officials of local and regional executive bodies (mayors, governors and alike). The hierarchy of elections according to their importance – national, regional and local – corresponds to their structural and political features. Usually local elections are considered to be of less political importance and are marked by a smaller degree of participation, higher voter volatility and a big number of non-party political actors of local standing. Despite these differences between the national and local/regional elections, most political science researchers of local politics insist that the latter also display basic political phenomena that characterize politics at the national level, e.g. party competition or the rivalry between the government and the opposition. It is an empirical question to what extent the political dynamics is concurrent at the national and the local level. In contemporary democracies in general the tendency of the “nationalization” of local elections is evident i.e. the domination of the political actors (parties) that operate primarily at the national level.

The author goes on to describe electoral systems for electing local representative bodies. Those systems have historically often served as a political testing ground for new in-

stitutional-political solutions e.g. systems of electoral division of members into several levels, the cumulative voting and the single transferable vote were used for the first time in local or regional elections. In some countries different electoral systems are used for the local and the national elections. The author offers a review of electoral systems for local and national elections in 19 European countries and shows that the harmonization of electoral systems at those two levels prevails. Exceptions to this rule are some countries (for example Germany, France and Spain) with unharmonized electoral systems at the local level, which in different local units employ different electoral systems.

The author also shows that in several European countries there are direct elections for mayors and municipal officials (for example in Albania, Italy, Germany, Rumania, Slovakia and Slovenia and in some Austrian provinces and in bigger Bulgarian municipalities and cities). These direct elections of local officials have far-reaching consequences through the changes they introduce into the local political system: the creation of the dual instead of the monistic structure of government and the emergence of some kind of local “presidentialism”, in which directly elected local officials accumulate enormous power.

The conclusion of the author’s account of the transformation of Croatian electoral legislation is that it has more or less gone hand in hand with the changes of the electoral law at the national level. She also points out that the Croatian electoral systems at the local and regional level are completely harmonized i.e. that in all units the same type of system is applied. By comparing the electoral competition and the electoral politics in the national elections of 2000 and the local and county elections of 2001, the author identifies several differences: first of all, an increasing role of independent lists in local and county elections, worse results at the local level of the coalition parties, winners in the national elections, and a fewer number of electoral alliances. She explains the local triumph of Croatian independent lists as an expression of the voters’ dissatisfaction with the political parties and the desire to free local politics of party dominance.

And finally the author concludes that the recent experience of local politics in Croatia does not corroborate either of the two dominant political science models: local politics is neither a political process independent of national politics nor its mere reflex, since the electoral behaviour at the local level to a certain extent deviates from the behaviour in the national elections. In the addition to her study, the author puts forward two proposals for the alternative systems of electing local representative bodies: a uniform electoral system of plurality elections for all constituencies and the differentiated electoral system, with the plurality system in smaller local units, and the proportional system (in one or several constituencies) and preferential voting for bigger cities and counties.

Dražen Lalić, the author of the third study – political science case study – analyzes the crisis of local government in Split in the period from the local elections in May of 2001 until the formation of the local government in January of 2002. The crisis stemmed from the polarization of the party scene and the small electoral margin in the local elections. For eight months it forestalled the formation of Split’s local government, and consequently stood in the way of making political decisions and finding solutions for the accumulated problems. The author suggests that the crisis of Split’s local government was in some of its aspects significant for the politics at the national level, primarily as an expression of incompetence and ideological polarization of political elites and as the factor that caused the rift among the coalition partners, primarily between the SDP and HSLŠ, at the national level. In his theoretical approach to the crisis of Split’s local government, the author describes different theoretical models which he utilizes to a bigger or smaller extent: bureaucratic-hierarchical, elitist, pluralist, the theory of urban regime and public-choice theory. The author collected the bulk of his empirical material by the method of structured interviews with the members of the local political elite, who were at the same time the main actors of the local government crisis. By analyzing this material, the author shows that the government crisis in Split is the result of several factors which to a significant extent characterize the

Croatian political scene in general: a high degree of bipolarization of the local political scene, an enormous influence of the elitist political parties, the elitist concept of politics promoted by the main political actors who hardly ever acknowledge other actors such as civic initiatives, social movements and groups, and the prevalence of the political office-seeking pattern of the political elite over the policy approach, that stresses the need for solving social problems and creating social coalitions that would enable this. It may be said that the findings of this case study are paradigmatic for Croatia, and should be seen not only as the diagnosis of a local case but as an indicator of democratic deficits of Croatian politics in general.

Nenad Zakošek

---

### Book Review

---

Gordana Vilović

*Etički prijepori u Globusu i Nacionalu 1999.-2000.*  
(*Ethical Controversies in The Globus and The Nacional 1999-2000*)

Fakultet političkih znanosti, Zagreb,  
2004, 192 pages

Gordana Vilović's book is the author's revised doctoral dissertation. The author makes use of, on the one hand, her own original research material and, on the other, a very extensive literature by both Croatian and foreign authors from various and topic-relevant scientific disciplines – from philosophy via sociology to the media theory. Into this frame of reference the author has incorporated her own recently published works, written either singly or co-authored. The references also include three web-sites and seven dailies, giving the study a broad comparative perspective. The bibliography also includes original texts – interviews and commentaries, as well as documentary, non-fiction and similar pieces – by an array of relevant actors of the Croatian media scene in the 1990s –journalists, editors and

founders/initiators of various print and electronic media, which provides for the study as a whole a stimulating polemical interface between the “objective” scientific discourse and the “dispassionate” research methodology and the “subjective” insider stories and the “sympathetic” personal accounts of the media pros, to a smaller or bigger extent aware of their professional responsibility or the role of the media in general in constituting a society's public sphere.

Despite their inevitable subjectivity, without such texts it would often be very difficult – if not downright impossible – to reconstruct from the public eye hidden internal relationships, attitudes and value judgements of the editorial boards, to disentangle the causes and effects that to a bigger or smaller extent underpin some ethically most dubious episodes, and to convincingly create the multilayered contexts in which the professional ethics has lost ground to the marketplace competition, to the vendettas against the colleagues who switched editorial allegiances, or to the instantaneous reaction to the rivals' media products regardless of the verification/verifiability of the facts those products are based on, etc.

The material that this research was carried out on is relevant and extensive enough to enable informed conclusions and plausible assessments. The selection is well-substantiated: two complete annual issues of the two Croatian weeklies with the highest circulation, and presumably – besides *The Feral Tribune* – the most influential ones. They cover a period that enables a (more) rational analysis since, on the one hand, it is remote enough from the war and some extraordinary collective states that would require an exceptionally complex methodology and the recognition of complex factors, something that a single-handed researcher can hardly hope to accomplish; on the other, it is nevertheless anchored in a momentous political state of flux i.e. the demise of the ailing President Tudman and the anticipated – and eventual – ouster of the HDZ after ten years in power, the occurrence that, at least in principle, involved a much broader reinterpretation and intertwining of the prevailing attitudes both in the society and the media.

The book is divided into six chapters, with suitably and systematically laid out sub-chapters: (*Introduction: Ethics of journalism; Turbulent Croatian media scene: 1990-2000; The Globus and The Nacional: political weeklies; Research of ethic controversies of The Globus and The Nacional* – the central and amply documented chapter; and *Conclusion*). And finally, together with *References and sources*, there is the *List of graphs* since the study comprises 13 graphs that precisely visualize and systematize the categorial frameworks and the analytical results of the study according to various criteria and topics e.g. *The number of controversial texts in relation to the total number of texts* or *The number of controversies per category*, and the sub-categories such as *The discrepancies between the text and the headline* or *The violation of the rights of social minorities*.

In the opening sections, the author clearly explained the concepts of special, professional and applied ethics, and the notions of objective and honest reporting, as well as of the global processes of the tabloidization and the spectacularization of the media as an inevitable broader analytical context. She also provided an account of the changes in the media's ownership structure, in the legal/legislative framework, the relations between the political power and the general socio-economic and educational composition of the society as the factors that also significantly influence the professional ethics and the perceptions of the contents the media present. The ethical controversies are ranked and grouped into eight categories: inaccurate reporting, anonymous sources, bias, violating basic human rights and freedoms, violating social minorities' rights, outright propaganda, bad taste and obscenity, and the discrepancy between the text and the headline. The analysis of the examples does not include only the textual but also the accompanying photo material, ethically dubious particularly when photos of seriously injured or gravely ill people are shown.

All this makes Gordana Vilović's book an original and scientific study that will be useful as a textbook not only to future journalists, but also to students of other social sciences and humanities such as ethics, sociology of the

Croatian society, social and political psychology, communicology, etc. Its topicality and the lucid style will surely make it useful to a wider audience that has in the last fifteen years – by means of sociological research, polls, or individually (with their letters or calls) – communicated how they understand the social role of the media, perceive the inherent ethical problems and the reasons they consider the media important for social development in general. In its scope, insight, and thoroughness, Gordana Vilović's book is the first monograph in Croatia that has successfully tackled the complex issue of ethic controversies in Croatian journalism.

Ivo Žanić

---

#### Book Review

---

Brankica Petković (ed.)

*Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*

Peace Institute and Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, Ljubljana, 2004, 495 pages

The recently published book *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, which gives a detailed account of the problems of the media ownership in 18 European countries – some are long-standing EU members, some became members in May of this year, and the rest are waiting in line to join – is a major contribution to the systematic study of the media in the regions of Central, Eastern and South-East Europe.

The book's editor is Brankica Petković, director of the Peace Institute; the reviewers are eminent European professors such as Sandra Bašić-Hrvatín and Poul Erik Nielsen and some media experts, e.g. Marko Milner, Ian Wright, and Algirdas Lipstas.

The project of the analysis of the media ownership and how it affects independence and pluralism lasted for almost a year – from July 2003 to June 2004 – and was carried out

by the media institutes or the centres for independent journalism, mostly within the network of the media centers *South-East European Network for the Professionalization of the Media*. The funds were provided by the European Council, Open Society Institute, FRESTA SEE *Program of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs* and the Guardian Foundation.

The book consists of 19 chapters: the first (a brief regional review) and 18 media-ownership “landscapes”: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Rumania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The contributors are Ilda Londo, Tarik Kusić, Velislava Stoyanova-Popova, Milan Šmid, Taivo Paju, Mihaly Galik, Isuf Berisha, Anita Kehre and Ilze Nagla, Audrone Nugarite, Snežana Trpevska, Tamara Caraus, Mladen Zadrima, Beata Klimkiewicz, Manuela Preoteasa, Dragan Đoković, Gabriel Šipoš, Sandra B. Hrvatina and Lenart J. Kučić.

Interestingly enough, Kosovo is listed as a separate entity although, as a matter of fact, it is not. The rationale for analysing Kosovo, now under the international protectorate, separately from Serbia and Montenegro was to obtain for these three states as reliable data on media ownership as possible in the circumstances of their “post-conflict situation”.

All individual or team participants in this project had the identical framework and the structure of the data they were supposed to find out and analyse; nevertheless, each text has a different focus: the media laws that get changed much too often, the controversial privatizations of the media, the concentration of the ownership and the media monopoly. These objective tribulations have given rise to the following major issues: 1) the media’s genuine independence; 2) the journalists’ job security by means of the (un)signed collective contracts among publishers, editorial boards and journalists; 3) the role of journalistic associations; 4) the influence of advertisers on the media content-matter; and finally 5) the decline of the journalistic ethics and the professional standards.

It seems that the developed Europe has, over the centuries of democracy, partly resolved those issues to the benefit of journalists’ social security or at least possesses some traditional institutions which protect the public and the journalists. However, the “plague” of the media concentration has swept over the developed as well as the not so developed Europe. A recent debate in the European Council’s Parliamentary Assembly once again highlighted the issue of Berlusconi’s media ownership and his monopoly in Italy. Already, the French NGO *Reporters Without Borders* that monitors the protection of the media freedoms, had ranked Italy quite low on the scale measuring the freedom of the media, due to Italy’s apparently detrimental concentration of the media ownership. That is why, at the beginning of the book, Sandra Bašić and Brankica Petković pertinently and sensibly warn that the book is not solely an account of the “threats to pluralism due to the ownership concentration” in these 18 countries, but that this problem is noticeable in all European countries. The message is: *De te fabula narratur* (This story is about you.)”

The book offers a wealth of data from all the studied countries and describes the genesis of the fundamental problems in the last 14 years. In that sense it can serve as a basis for a comparative analysis and for drawing rather accurate conclusions about, for example, the role of the German group *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (WAZ) in Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia or Macedonia.

A possible shortcoming of this much needed and important book is its updatedness. Namely, the ownership structure, the relations in the media, the media mergers and sales in most analyzed countries change so fast that even today, barely a month after its publication, some information is already outdated. Hence the need for revised editions, since precise data are the prerequisite for any valid conclusions and analyses regarding the media in their broadest sense.

For example, what was true for Croatia’s media scene in February, when the primary research was carried out, no longer applies. Concerning the media ownership changes, professor Stjepan Malović, Director of the Inter-

national Centre for Educating Journalists – the contributor and author of the chapter on Croatia – says that the media ownership in Croatia is “a big secret” and the media legislation “a never-ending story”. For example, the Media Law has been changed twice since the beginning of the year and its implementation is still pending; “Nova TV” has recently been sold; *The Slobodna Dalmacija*, one of the best Croatian dailies in the early 1990s, is hopefully entering the final stages of privatization following a ten-year agony. The fate of *The Vjesnik*, the other non-privatized low-circulation daily, has yet to be decided; the debate is still raging on how to reduce its crippling debts and privatize it profitably. Or is it that each Croatian government needs *The Vjesnik*?

“To own the media in Croatia is a dangerous profession”, to paraphrase the opening sentence of Malović’s chapter, *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, which refers to the never solved cases of assaults on some media owners.

Investigating the media ownership in Croatia is obviously a feat. Whereas in other studied countries the exact data about the owners, shares, circulations, etc. are easily obtained, in Croatia such information is completely out of bounds and top secret! Malović’s team obviously went out on a limb in their search for the valid ownership data since no legal institution, including the Commercial Court, was willing to provide any official data on the ownership structure. Luckily, this is not so in all the countries. In the neighbouring Hungary, for example, anyone can access all the necessary data on the Internet.

Malović’s analysis of the Croatian media ownership shows that the state is still the biggest owner of “82 different media companies, including two dailies, an array of local and re-

gional newspapers, radio stations, the HINA news agency, the HRT, Transmitters and communications, the Vjesnik printing press”. Another major owner is the Catholic Church which is, according to Malović, “quietly emerging as a powerful media force to be reckoned with”. These are undoubtedly interesting findings.

Croatia has had its share of bizarre details regarding the media, particularly in the first, bungled, privatization of the media. However, upon carefully reading all the analyses from this study, it turns out that there are similar oddities in the prosperous Slovenia (e.g. the ownership of the influential *Delo*), as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is under the EU protectorate, where there are six journalistic associations/organizations and 42 private TV stations!

Obviously, the ownership relationships, particularly the growing concentration of the media ownership and the consequent financial clout of advertisers, are reasons behind the powerlessness of journalists and their editorial (in)dependence; journalists simply ignore certain events if reporting about them is not in the interest of the paying party, as illustrated by some cases in Czech Republic or Poland, for example.

In early July, the International Center for Educating Journalists and the University Library published a separate in Croatian entitled *Hrvatska: utjecaj medijskog vlasništva na neovisnost medija i pluralizam* /Croatia: media ownership and its impact on media independence and pluralism/, which includes the integral regional review by Sandra Bašić Hrvatinić and Brankica Petković plus the text on Croatia by Stjepan Malović (translated from English by Đurđa Anišić).

Gordana Vilović