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# Sulejmanpašić and Zelizer: Returning to the Journalism

## **Sažetak**

*Although the book Journalism – the Destroyer of Humanity is one of the most sharply intoned critical reviews of journalism we have read, we believe that this book is also some kind of a call for change. It is interesting that back in 1936 Sulejmanpašić accurately dissected journalistic reality, distinguishing sensational journalism from professional journalism. Thus, he leaves us room for a different, purposeful and visionary journalism. The author discusses the impact of journalism on various spheres of human social and his psychological life, and this impact is, from his perspective, mostly negative.*

*Although the lessons of Sulejmanpašić's book are profound, and the arguments are so strong that they are difficult to refute, we want to believe that there is still hope for the journalistic profession. This paper will compare the reflections of Dževad Sulejmanpašić and Barbie Zelizer in their different, but somewhat similar, views of the profession. While Sulejmanpašić emphasizes and perfectly recognizes all the shortcomings of the profession, Zelizer gives recommendations and in a different, modern digital or online context, devising journalism that would serve humanity, instead of destroying it.*

**Ključne riječi:** Sulejmanpašić, Zelizer, journalism, digital media, profession, credibility.

## **An Introduction: Why Journalism is the destroyer of humanity?**

Asking people what is the main reason they don't read newspapers, watch television news or listen on the radio, during my PhD research, I usually got this answer: "They make me depressed". Why is that so, I often asked myself. This is the question that bothers me mostly from the beginning of my interest in journalism. I can remember my professors' words: "You should watch TV news more". I couldn't answer properly then, because I didn't know how to explain what is it that bothers me so profoundly when it comes to news. Then, almost a decade later, same professor gave me a book to read. It was very old, from 1936. The author was man called Dževad Sulejmanpašić, and the books' title was: Journalism: The Destroyer of Humanity. I read the book for few days, and I found answers. I know what is it that makes me feel so bad about journalism, makes me feel ashamed when people ask me on which department at university I work. Sulejmanpašić gave me a lot of reasons for that, and some answers, too.

As him, I would like to be able to retreat to peace, to forget about news and media, and enjoy simple and peaceful life. I would love to stay quiet, not to answer on phone calls, or read notifications from my phone news media's applications. Live in peace without anything to bother you, even your own voice which was first media that distracted person from his inner voice, as McLuhan hinted it. On the other side, Aristotle thought that "the moral being of man can be affirmed only in relation to others, live communication and interaction within social or 'political' institutions, not outside them in the solitude of privacy, the pure interior of soft 'morality' outside these relations as mere 'feeling' or 'voice of conscience', in the helpless appeal to something that is not exactly what it is, but supposedly' - should be - there is no place for a 'bird's eye view' " (Pejović 1988:22). Today, there almost is no free space for solitude, as absence from digital media or our "smartphones" can be understood as "suspicious" (Turkle 2013). However, there is not much difference between our understanding and acceptance between different kinds of media. People are usually afraid of new media, especially if they are technologically more advanced. Concerns about losing our nature, usual style of life, communication, are always present. As my supervisor at the University of Utah once pointed out – The journalism was and always will be bad, mostly. What we can do is to try to educate ourselves and try to understand how media work. Her name is Suhi Choi and she is right, in a way. Her thoughts are similar to Sulejmanpašić's. But, what professor Choi also thinks is that even bad media are good for democracy. That's not the case with Sulejmanpašić opinion. However, I am more with Barbie Zelizer, the scholar who thinks that there is a space for change and there is a space for hope in media which will be useful for society improvement. She criticizes a lot, but also, she gives a different perspective on what journalism could be.

## **Obstacles, characteristics and opportunities in journalism**

When Dževad Sulejmanpašić wrote, newspapers were a kind of “new medium”. But his understanding was enough deep that we can relate it to today’s media. So, why would he think that journalism is destroying humanity. First of all, he found the same thoughts in great writer works, for example in Goethe’s, Kierkegaard’s, Balzac’s, Baudelaire’s and others. He quotes Goethe at the very beginning of his book: “Tell me why you are not looking forward to any newspaper? I do not love them, they serve the time” (Sulejmanpašić 1936:10). When it comes to the qualitative characteristics of journalism, Sulejmanpašić names the following:

1. Printed word as a means of expression,
2. Publishing in newspapers as a medium,
3. Focus on the novelty,
4. Sensationalism in the news,
5. Cacophony of media content that abounds in a variety of topics very often fragmented and unrelated to each other,
6. Truth seeking.

Barbie Zelizer, on the other side, gives us an insight into the core problems, or better to say, challenges for journalism nowadays. There are five most important contextual factors that should be considered if we want to keep journalism as a driving force of society. The author is asking us to reconsider imaginative thinking in journalism to overcome those obstacles. The potential obstacles, but also opportunities for journalism are in following elements:

1. Changing of journalism craft in digital environment – craft is no longer hidden from “public eye”,
2. Broadening political issues, world is connected, journalists have a lot of different political topics that are important to be covered all around the world,
3. Metamorphosis, connections, fusion between “old” and “new” media,
4. Economic pressures, new ways of media financing,
5. Moral consideration and difficulties to take stands about some controversial events,
6. Elite-oriented, irrelevance of journalism norms (created from Western perspective) and taking audience for granted.

## Why is the Journalism destroyer of the humanity, or could it be better?

As we can see, both, Sulejmanpašić and Zelizer have similar ideas about core journalistic elements and functions. They are aware of importance of truth seeking and both are deeply conscious that it is difficult to reach the truth ideal. That is the topic that separates them from plenty of others communication scholars who are focused on data and statistics.

Both of them discuss about prevalent media for news dissemination, both understand political and economic pressures on media, and both still believe in truth seeking media ideal, although Zelizer is more optimistic when it comes to its realization. Zelizer takes both – economic and political pressures seriously, Sulejmanpašić, and that's probably normal for the time in which he wrote, believed that economic pressures are worse. Journalism is dominated by the economic and sensationalism interests, he wrote. Economic interests result in a large number of advertisements and advertising content in the media, and on the other hand, sensationalism causes a large number of media stories whose focus is on crime, catastrophes, drama, conflicts. Party press, as Sulejmanpašić wrote has one “principal evil” in itself. That is that “even in the most spiritual times it did not push the best statesmen forward, but parliamentary speakers” (1936:195). However, the non-partisan press gradually squeezed the political debate out of the media, and its columns began to be filled with the most trivial, but also the best-selling content - crime, scandal, sex, he explains. Zelizer is aware of a web of circumstances affecting journalistic work, not just economic and political pressures, but also technological, user-generated content, social context, educational context. Both of them registered “checkbox journalism” as a big problem connected to media's relation to economy and capitalism. However, perspectives on this journalism practice are different. Sulejmanpašić wrote about blackmailers (“chanters”) who would blackmail rich people that they will publish stories about some of their misbehaviors in media and in that way destroy their reputation. “Many people have various sins on their conscience, small and large. (...) The blackmailer obtains a compromising object, a document, and then asks for a meeting with a rich man. And if he doesn't give money, the chanter shows him a print of an article ready for the press, which reveals his secrets” (1936:66). Zelizer wrote about other similar practice of paying sources to discover details of some stories which mostly were on the very edge on ethic. She mentioned for example situations such as the one when “*New York Times* famously paid 1000 dollars in 1912 to speak with the surviving wireless operator aboard the Titanic”, or “when TV personality David Fros paid former US President Richard Nixon 600 000 dollars in 1972 for an interview” (according to Peters, cited in Zelizer 2017:90).

Sulejmanpašić defines journalism as an “idealless reporting on the ever-changing modifications of the empirical world” (1936: 29). That is why journalism depends on new events every day. In close relationship for both authors are ethic (morality) and novelty as media main value. Asking questions about ethic and morality is usually dangerous, even in everyday life. Fake consensus about different controversial topics is sustainable until “dangerous” questions are asked. Both authors emphasize this. However, Sulejmanpašić sees ethic as morality, including in itself all aspects of human life, from

religion to media. Zelizer explains that there are many problems with idea of one umbrella ethic rules for every media in every country. Media differ in many ways, especially today – there are different ideological framings that they are following, different technical aspects of them, complicated and totally unknown situations that are ethically on slippery way, as does time changes so do ethical codes. So, journalists are forced to make ethical judgments in seconds, almost immediately as the event unfolds. However, there are similarities in Sulejmanpašić's and Zelizer's thoughts. Both of them see journalism profession as hard to consolidate certain moral or ethical rules, because of its limitations such as time, space, pressures. Timeliness is the imperative in journalism, journalists are constantly under pressure to work fast and search for new events. Morality, as Sulejmanpašić hints, requests time and deep thinking, but, as he puts it – there is no time in journalism. It has a "shelf life", but morality has not. "Value requires timelessness, and vice versa: Something has more value if it depends less on time, the less it changes over time" (Sulejmanpašić 1936:46). Zelizer has a similar explanation about the link between journalism and ethics. "Drawing from philosophy, ethics tend to work from top down to establish stable codes of action that negotiate universal and particular means and ends; while earlier invocations tended toward universal standards, more recent ones orient toward situated particularity. By contrast, journalism tends to work from the bottom up, its practitioners needing to negotiate and renegotiate around constantly shifting sources of contingency in practice" (Zelizer 2017:85). According to Sulejmanpašić, journalism is destroying morality. He mentioned the role of newspapers in the preparation of the First World War as an example. "By what measures could we measure, for example, the murderous power of journalism that made the main moral and enabled material preparations for the World War and led it for a full four years?", the author asks (1936: 17). Zelizer has a different opinion. She understands that it is difficult to decide what is ethical in such a short time and complicated context, but she also believes that ethic rules should be changed, and are changing all the time. For example, "pictures of people falling from building earned news photographers a Pulitzer Prize in the 1930s and 1940s but similar photos in 2000s and 2010s, labeled 'distasteful' and 'sickening'" (Hardy, 1946; Schwartz, 2005, cited in Zelizer 2017:90).

Race with time is one of the main reasons why Sulejmanpašić believes that the media cannot write seriously and deeply about things, and most of all why they cannot follow ethical code consistently. Journalistic focus is on reporting about new events, and the novelty is taken as a supreme news value. "All the demands of morality and spirit are ruthlessly sacrificed to its essential characteristic: when they prevent the development of speed of appearance and success in competition, one passes over them without any reconsideration" (1936:23). Time is measured by news, the author believes, and if one day journalism ceased to exist, time would stop flowing. It would be interesting to see the world without news nowadays. People constantly complain that they don't have enough time. But, is this really true? Ratko Božović pointed out that people had invented a different kind of technologies to have more time, and then they use media to "kill the time" (Božović 2015). Zelizer also compares novelty with the "shelf life", explaining that "the news has thus always been associated in some

form with a relatively short shelf life” (Zelizer 2017:63). But, today, it’s even worse for journalists to deal with short time for creating and disseminating news. “Not only do new media alter what is meant by topicality, but the involvement of citizen journalists, bystanders, activists and producers of user-generated content decentralizes and speeds up the process of dissemination, complicating the ability to generate agreement about what is news” (Ibid).

Besides novelty, Sulejmanpašić resents the media focus on conflict, drama, sensationalism and criminal. “When we want to know how criminal this world is, journalists will tell us most readily, because a criminal event and a report about it is one of the darlings of the journalistic word”, says the author (1936:19). Zalizer, Boczkowski and Anderson broaden their critique to all news value followed by most mainstream media, explaining that those values or norms are irrelevant in current time (2022). In their opinion, and according to world of Robert Darnton who was former reporter for the *New York Times*, and the *Newark Star Ledger*, “we really wrote for one another”, explaining that news were made for mostly western, wealthy, white men interested in politics, elites and economy (Zelizer et al. 2022:76). They propose “alternative values” that will completely change existing ones, and will include people who are usually excluded and that means most of the world population, especially those from South. “In Jairo Lugo-Ocando’s view, “To write its own story, journalism in Global South needs to come to terms with the fact that the normative aspirations it upholds do not belong to it. They belong instead to an age and place where the white men went to conquer, steal, rape and enslave in the name of civilization” (2020, 162, cited in Zelizer et al. 2022:67).

The characteristic of journalism is also that it publishes information of various thematic profiles, so within one newspaper we hear about war, earthquakes, murders, robberies, concerts, plays, forecasts, etc. Journalism thus “mixes everything with everything”, and the “the bigger the journal, the less it is capable of ideological truth” (1936: 27). Ultimately, “there is no area of life, neither public nor private, that has not drawn journalism into its spheres of interest, nor does it have, and cannot have, any system in the way it treats these areas” (Ibid).

The author ultimately acknowledges that truth as an ideal is the key reason for the existence of journalism, its *raison d’être*. However, “such information is not one of the essential characteristics of journalism, because almost nothing new is said in the journals with respect for morals and spirit and the true need of the newspaper reader to find out, but the information is brought with primary regard to expansion and circulation of the newspapers”. The truth in journalism comes to the word, says the author, only when it is in line with the interests of economic and sensation, when it does not disrupt agenda of those interests. That is why, even then, before the actualization of the fake news phenomenon, Sulejmanpašić stated that “journalistic information is false in its essence and therefore is not information at all” (1936:25). When it comes to truth in Zelizer (and other 2022) opinion, they understand it similar to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) as a functional truth operationalized in ideal of objectivity. They agreed with them and Deuze when he said that “objectivity may not be possible but that doesn’t mean one should not strive for it” (448, cited in

Zelizer et al 2022:60). However, the objectivity as a norm that we currently have in journalism profession is unsustainable, its “failings as a concept have been so pointedly debated that the term by now should have been put to bed as an anachronism of earlier times” (Ibid 2022:65). And, here we can find one of the main differences between Zelizer’s and Sulejmanpašić’s opinion about journalism role. Sulejmanpašić thought that journalism should not write at all about following topics: morality, spirit, religion, normal mental development, art, civil political and economic freedoms, national spiritual characteristics, private life, political peace in individual communities as well as in the whole world ”(Sulejmanpašić 1936:310). The author denies journalism the right to present any interpretations and states that “the publishing of facts should completely exhaust the function and task of the newspaper” (1936:311). Zelizer and collaborators have different opinion. However, we should have on mind that they are writing from perspective in which, technologically, anyone can publish facts. So, for them, “to reform their relationship with audiences”, journalism “has to meet them where they are, rather than where it would like them to be”. This means that “it had to stretch to accommodate audiences that may fit few of the contours most prized in now inert assumption of public engagement. It has to tell 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” (2022:99). We have to say that our opinion is a lot closer to Zelizer’s.

### **Whether journalism really contributes to democracy?**

Sulejmanpašić would answer negatively to this question. And for better understanding of his reasons, one should know that this author differ journalism as a profession from journalism as a sensationalism newspapers. The second one, which is prevalent in journalism field, as he thinks, works against democracy. Free press, explains him, is something totally different from what we consider free journalism. In his opinion neither democracy nor journalism as profession, exists in its ideal meanings. Oedipus complex is a metaphor which Sulejmanpašić uses to explain journalist impact on democracy. Although journalism was born from democracy, he believed, it turns out to be a bad child which will kill its parent. “In times when the soul and spirit of the people are ruled by forces that are far from respecting morals and spirit, to give universal suffrage, so to support ‘democracy’, means to let the people rush into failure, which means killing democracy itself” (Sulejmanpašić 1936:191). Zelizer is milder in criticism, but she also pointed out that causal relationship between journalism and democracy “has been more presumed than debated and challenged” (Zelizer 2017:64). Journalism as a child who has to be protected is also mentioned in Zelizer’s book. In her explanation, journalists act like parents to their news kids. “Seeing journalism as a child helps legitimate journalists’ need to remain invested in their craft. Without journalism to organize and process the news, the assumption in that current affairs would remain unruly and incomprehensible, much like the action of a child without guidance or care” (2017:21). It happens

all the time that scholars, journalist and politicians mix the cause-and-effect relationship between democracy and journalism. Sulejmanpašić supposes that journalism, as its worse form (means sensational journalism) destroys democracy. On the other hand, Lippmann, as mentioned by Zelizer, thought that “critics” (of journalism), “and the apologists expect the press to... make up for all that was not foreseen in the theory of democracy” (Zelizer 2017:65). However, we are closer to Zelizer’s opinion that there are several different factors which shows that this relationship cannot be taken for granted, and that it depends on various context factors such as economy, capitalism (as McChesney pointed too in his 2013. book *Digital Disconnect*), social context. She concluded that “different kinds of democracies develop different kinds of journalism, and they in turn produce different kinds of links between two institutions” (Zalizer 2017:68). She sees the problem in this connection in theoretical and practical dimension. First, journalism exists in non-democratic regimes too, at least some form of it, but journalism theory about link between two institutions “rests on circumstances that are not wholly representative of conditions beyond the West” (Ibid). Her associates and she made a conclusion that most scholars assumed wrongly that journalism is there to help citizens to be a part of democratic process. They “had the large democratic hopes for the power of news, ignoring most of journalism’s functioning in non-democratic society”, authors concluded. However, “for the most part, the solution has been to abandon citizen for elites. Under this view, the democratic deficit of citizenry is not all that important because democracy really functions as an elite representative system” (2022:18). And secondly, as a practice, “journalism has taken on many forms which are both more and less connected to democracy: journalism has been more partial, biased and conflicted and unevenly related to different types of governance” (Ibid: 69). Proof of weak connection between journalism and democracy, according to Zelizer is its failure even in countries of its theoretical roofs – United States and United Kingdom. She sees this failure in reporting on refugee crisis, when the lack of coverage, delayed coverage and prejudicial coverage showed that “equality” in journalism doesn’t mean equality for all<sup>45</sup>. In the end, Zelizer offers great insight in real connection between journalism and democracy and broadens our understanding of this relationship: “But retiring the concept of democracy in the study of journalism might force scholars to recognize that democracies are not as clear-cut as theories would have them be, that democracies are not as integrated with journalism as has been assumed, that space for other kinds of governing structures needs to be crafted alongside the news, and that, as the power of the national-state wavers, the real nexus between government and journalism may lie elsewhere. We need to think more forcefully about effects of other systems that go beyond government per se, such as

45 The refugee „crisis“ is portrayed very differently when it comes to Ukrainian and for example Syrian refugees (not mentioning refugees for Yemen, China, Palestine, Myanmar that almost didn’t get any attention in Western media). Zelizer wrote about this: “Much coverage focused on refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan – in that order – arriving in Europe. The second-largest current humanitarian crisis – that of Yemen – received little attention, while crises in South Sudan, Myanmar and Bangladesh were mentioned almost not at all (Egeland, cited in White, 2015, 1-2), to say nothing of invisible ongoing humanitarian disasters elsewhere (Zelizer 2017:74).

There are media stories about this discrepancy in reporting about refugees from different places. An example from The Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/29/american-opinion-afghan-ukraine-refugees/> (24.5.2022).

religious fundamentalism or capitalism” (2017:83). As an institution, journalism is closely related to other institutions, and one institution’s “dynamic have a domino effect on other institutions” (Zelizer et al 2022:7).

But, does the journalism destroy democracy? Professor Suhi Choi, mentioned before, is probably right – even bad journalism is good for pluralism at least. There are some factual proofs of this statement. The following example given by Zelizer is one of the greatest: “Ironically, Trump’s declaration ‘that he had singlehandedly put immigration at the center of US political debate and media coverage for the first time in years’ was one of his ‘few objectively accurate claims’” (Orme, 2015:102, cited in Zelizer 2017:76). But still, we have to see if journalism did learn something from Trump’s presidency era. If it did, “it will have concluded that it should always be opposed to political elites, regardless of political orientation, and that this oppositional stance also needs to embrace marginalized and oppressed social groups” (Zelizer et al 2022:29).

### **Whether journalism works against religion, “pure” mind, spirituality?**

Arguments that Sulejmanpašić uses to explain how journalism can affect religious and psychological life are similar to those he uses to explain its impact on democracy. He implies that religious life is inseparable from morality and vice versa. For him, to be religious person, to believe, means to be into truth. But, as he already emphasized, he doesn’t see the truth in journalism which is driven by sensationalism and economic capital. To believe also means to be in peace, consistency with your inner thinking, and journalism is all opposite from this. It depends on moments, news and novelty. In his opinion, journalism steals people’s attention from timeless or eternal ideas. So, he claims that for „journalism is not needed to explicitly fight against religiosity, because by its very existence and embracing the soul and spirit of man, it makes him impossible for religious feelings” (1936:82). When it comes to “pure mind”, Sulejmanpašić defines it as a “person’s ability to have a prior mind ideas which would be independent from empirical experiences”. Mind, he thinks, should be “focused on ideas”, and ideas “cannot be proven by experience”, and those are reasons he thinks journalism is guided by different values that religion and pure mind (Ibid). Cacophony of different journalism topics in newspapers disperses people’s attention and so affects negatively their spiritual life, thinks Sulejmanpašić. According to him, spirituality is the “ability to find your own original form or viewpoint of world in the countless possible forms in which you already could put your own opinion” (1936:99). This means that spirituality presumes certain level of independence and freedom of mind. But, as Sulejmanpašić pointed it, journalism destroys our ability to think freely because it imposes our mind with ready-made thought patterns. For the same reasons, it works against science and art, too. There he saw the phenomenon that Bourdieu later named as “fast-thinkers” production (Bourdieu). “Therefore, pseudoscientists and pseudoscience meet with journalism easily and gladly, through journalism they come to cheap fame, but still ‘fame’ that can be quantitatively greater than any of valuable scientist who does not want friendships with journals”

(1936:120). That's how journalism destroys art too, thinks the author. But, differently from science and art – football and movies are journalism's favorites. Sulejmanpašić calls them “darlings” of journalism profession. In his opinion, broadcasting football on television only corrupts children and youth, and thus “wide fields of uncultivated children's souls, where they should be sown and sprout flowers of all kinds of ideals, a soccer ball swirls and chases, which does not allow anything else to be sown, and therefore nothing sprouts ” (1936:258). As for the media of the film, he wrote about that “it is an excellent tool for mass formation of human souls in the desired direction that can escape the reach of unwanted criticism” and that it does not belong to art, because art is such that it spoils profits, and leads to morality and spirit, and therefore its connection with film has failed” (1936:263).

### **How does journalism profit from wars?**

Sulejmanpašić believed that journalism had a great impact in war crimes in First World War. Journalism, as he claims, profited from it. In journalism role during First World War, he recognized agenda theory, not naming it that way, but still explaining that long before war, journalism “was already creating events with its news, by creating all the consequences for them, even when they were not happening, as if they were happening. On the contrary, it destroyed those events that didn't want to happen, by not reporting on them” (Ibid). Same was noticed by Zelizer when she discusses different portrayal of wars and refugee crisis in world mainstream media. In some cases media declared showing pictures of mass executions were unethical and harmful, but in other cases they showed them (as in case showing killings committed by so called Islamic state). “Responses to the ethical nature of this images wavered with the climate at hand, with decision for and against showing graphicness varying according to moral, political and social considerations: for instance, the visual depictions of the victims of Nazi concentration camps in 1945 were displayed with a graphicness, frequency, primacy and salience that was not repeated in other mass atrocities that followed in Rwanda, Bosnia and Sudan, among others” (Zelizer 1998, cited in Zelizer 2017:92). Several times, Zelizer mentioned biased reporting about refugee crisis, telling that “stories on the refugees crisis reverted to their pre-photo levels, and there was ‘a return to media coverage focused on refugee numbers rather than human interest’ (Bunyan, 2015, 13), and little attention to the complexities of refugees experience (Halabi, 2016)” (cited in Zelizer 2017:74). Good question would be how many media, except Al Jazeera ever problematized the phrase of “migrant crisis”? As Zelizer explained, in August of 2005, Al Jazeera commented that “there is no ‘migrant crisis’. There are a very large number of refugees fleeing unimaginable misery and danger” (Malone, 2015, cited in Zelizer 2017:75).

## Public good or what journalism really could be?

McChesney named journalism as a public good, saying that “if the market underestimates and corrupts journalism, it will produce uninformed citizenship, and the result will be corruption and misery” (McChesney 2013: 78). About media as a public good wrote Sead Alić, Ratko Božović, Fahira Fejzić Čengić and others theorist from our regions.

In the very end chapters of his book, Sulejmanpašić shows hope about journalism, to be precise – real journalism as he named it, to distinguish journalism from sensational journalism. He believes that journalism should change its values. “By the way, it is a general rule that a journalist should, from the abundance of events at his disposal, choose in the first place those in which good people and good deeds are seen” (1936:314), claimed Sulejmanpašić. As we saw in previous text Zelizer and her associates also believe that changing values, either in reforming or revolutionary way should be done. Those opinions are in a line with ideas of constructive journalism. That’s the concept deeply explained by Karen McIntyre and Cathrine Gyldensted (2017). This is “an emerging 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” (20). One of its forms is also restorative and peace journalism, to which both Sulejmanpašić and Zelizer strive. McIntyre and Gyldensted explained that peace journalism “requires a journalist to look at conflict not as a two-party battle where the focus is on winning and losing but rather as a challenge and an opportunity for human progress (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, cited in McIntyre & Gyldensted 2017:23). On the other hand, “proponents of restorative narrative avoid instances when journalists ‘parachute’ in and out of a city to cover a disaster or tragedy; rather, they encourage news that covers the deeper roots of such conflicts as well as the recovery effort that follows them” (Ibid 2017:23).

Similar, Zelizer, Boczkowsky and Anderson explain the need for changing journalistic news values. One way to change the perspective is to write from human, rather than from elite perspective. If journalists don’t rethink their news values and norms that became canon or even ideology, “the gap between norms and practices will continue to expand, making norms both increasingly abstract and deeply entrenched” (Zelizer et al 2022:108). For example, the recent tragedy in Texas primary school<sup>46</sup> should not be reduced to political discussion and accusations<sup>47</sup> as it was, but more on victims, roots of the problem, options and solutions that could end this repeated shootings in United States. Zelizer and collaborators recommend that “conflict reporting, for example, would replace the oft-

46 Available on: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/25/us/uvalde-texas-elementary-school-shooting-wednesday/index.html> (26.5.2022).

47 More available on: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/25/politics/supreme-court-second-amendment-guns-new-york-brun-uvalde/index.html> (26.5.2022).

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/26/politics/greg-abbott-uvalde-texas-school-shooting/index.html> (26.5.2022).

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/25/politics/joe-biden-texas-executive-order-police/index.html> (26.5.2022).

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<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/uvalde-texas-residents-react-beto-orourke-abbott-press-conference> (26.5.2022).

<https://www.foxnews.com/media/jesse-watters-law-enforcement-upfront-texas-school-shooting> (26.5.2022).

heralded aims of balance or impartiality in the journalism of wartime with guides to better practice: training in trauma and loss, workarounds for anxiety and depression, guidelines for sustaining physical endurance, the development of detailed insurance arrangements or safety protocols for multiple kind of contingencies” (2022:108). Writing in 1930s, Sulejmanpašić also proposed his ideas for recovering journalism as a profession which should work in best public interest. He also proposed new law for media practice which in brief gives the recommendation about avoiding writing in sensational manner. And in their book *The Journalism Manifesto*, Zelizer, Boczkowski and Anderson claimed that journalism have two paths if it wants to save profession – reformation or revolution. They concluded their *manifesto* with Freud’s thoughts, and so will we. “When Freud bore down on repetition as the tool by which to move out of trauma and toward recovery, he might have been offering a light to journalism’s eventual transformation. Though it is not always the case, the consequences of trauma can be accommodated, mitigated and sometimes controlled. But to get to that point, they require to be recognized, named and understood” (2022:114). That’s actually open call to think about Sulejmanpašić’s, McLuhan’s and similar author’s thoughts. We cannot change journalism if we don’t want to admit that it’s in crisis. “Transformation may thus be upon us, if journalism can only recognize, name and understand why it has arrived at its current crisis and what is eventual resolution might involve” (Ibid). But, to find the solution, we first have to see that there is a problem, actually a lot of them, and take off pink glasses of haughtiness and arrogance, so in the end – the truth can set us free, as holly books pointed out.

## Conclusion

In this paper thoughts of Dževad Sulejmanpašić and Barbie Zelizer were compared. First mentioned theorist wrote back in 1936, and Zelizer is one of the most credible contemporary journalism scholars. Sulejmanpašić is more critically-oriented and Zelizer is more optimistic-oriented towards journalism and its societal role. However, focus in this paper is mostly on similarities in their opinions and perspectives. Although Sulejmanpašić criticizes journalism, or to be more precise sensational journalism so strongly that he named it as a destroyer of humanity, he also gives some positive ideas that can help us to improve journalism profession. In that, he is very similar to his contemporary colleague, Barbie Zelizer, who explains how journalism could be changed to survive and impact society more positively. Sulejmanpašić laments on sensationalism in journalism, but also on novelty as its main value, on cacophony of same news and all kind of different themes mixed in same media; and Zelizer, on the other side, explains that there are obstacles for nowadays journalism, but that they could be overcome. Both authors recognize political and economic pressures on media, although Zelizer is aware of different circumstances that affect media news production. However, we have to bear in mind that Sulejmanpašić wrote in different social context. It is important that both of them emphasize economic pressure on media and its consequences on media content and its quality. That is also the reason why both authors focused their writings on media ethic. Ethic

rules are, for Sulejmanpašić, always actual and can be applied in every situation and time because ethic has no expiration date. Zelizer explains that media nowadays have to change their ethical codes depending on media type, on social, political and economic context in which they produce content. Still, both of them are very aware of importance of ethical media reporting, and both of them believe that that kind of reporting is *condition sine qua non* of media credibility and credibility of the profession. Suljemanpašić prefers breaking media stories, and explains that media role should be finished with reporting on facts. On the other side, Zelizer explains that reporting “from heart” is one of the ways for journalists to be distinctive comparing to other communicators in digital media environment. From Sulejmanpašić’s perspective, journalism destroys freedom of thinking by imposing its own simplified conclusions, and that’s why it destroys democracy too. Zelizer also criticizes media reporting on freedom explaining that “refugee crisis” has shown that freedom doesn’t mean the same concept for all people. Both authors whose thoughts were compared agreed on need for changing media news values.

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## Sulejmanpašić i Zelizer: Oživljavanje novinarske profesije

### Sažetak

*Iako je Sulejmanpašićeva knjiga „Žurnalizam – razarač čovječanstva“, jedna od najoštrije intoniranih kritika novinarstva koju smo čitali, vjerujemo da je ona i svojevrsni poziv na promjenu, vapaj za revitalizacijom profesije.*

*Zanimljivo je da je autor još 1936. precizno secirao novinarsku stvarnost, te napravio razliku između senzacionalističkog novinarstva illi, njegovim riječima, žurnalizma; i profesionalnog novinarstva, odnosno kako to Sulejmanpašić kaže, novinarstva. Ovime, osim što kritikuje žurnalizam kao takav, podložan senzacionalizmu i trivijalizaciji, autor nam ostavlja i prostora za drugačije viđenje novinarstva, za maštu i vizionarstvo. Diskutuje o utjecaju žurnalizma na različite sfere ljudskog društvenog i psihološkog života, a taj utjecaj je iz njegove perspektive uglavnom negativan. Iako su lekcije kojima nas uči Sulejmanpašićevo djelo duboke, a argumenti tako snažni da ih je uopšte teško osporiti, želimo vjerovati da za novinarsku profesiju još uvijek ima nade. Zato u ovom radu poredimo različita, ali ipak u dijelovima slična promišljanja o budućnosti novinarske profesije, koje su ponudili Dževad Sulejmanpašić 1936. i Barbie Zelizer, 2017. godine.*

*I dok Sulejmanpašić naglašava i savršeno prepoznaje sve nedostatke profesije, Zelier daje preporuke i osmišljava novinarstvo koje će u modernom digitalnom ili online kontekstu, služiti čovječanstvu umjesto da ga razara. Zajedničko obome teoretičara jeste spremnost da osmišljavaju nove pravce za razvijanje profesije, umjesto da idu dobro poznatim, posve utabanim i beskorisnim stazama.*

**Ključne riječi:** Sulejmanpašić, Zelizer, novinarstvo, digitalni mediji, profesija, kredibilite.

**Napomena:** Ovaj rad na bosanskome jeziku će biti objavljen u predgovoru novog izdanja Sulejmanpašićeve knjige.



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