

Editorial

Social and Journalistic Changes

Journalism is among the most influential knowledge-producing institutions of our time. Renderings of reality are produced and published day in and day out, with unparalleled penetration. People obtain knowledge of the world outside their immediate experience largely from the mass media, where journalistic content predominates. Journalistic ways of depicting reality, journalists' models and modus operandi influence other social institutions – politics, market actors, educational institutions and so forth. Questions concerning the quality of the knowledge produced by journalists and the changing role of journalism and journalists in our society were in the focus of interest of journalism researchers, who participated with their papers in this number of *Medijska Istraživanja*.

Journalism does not grow in a vacuum. It is the fruit of the interaction between different actors and systems, and such differences in social structure and context have to be taken into account when analyzing journalism. And one of journalism's new circumstances is new information and communication technology. In this number, three authors (Igor Vobič, Mato Brautović and Marko Milosavljević) contributed papers on topics concerning digital and/or online journalism. The interest for online journalism raises the question of how relevant the new network is and will be as a vehicle for journalism and public communication. The Internet clearly offers new means of expression for individuals and groups in society, and as such it can offer an important contribution to future social communications. On the other hand, we notice strong tendencies towards commercialization and commodification of information and communication in the new media, and therefore a possible threat to the independence, reliability and civic-mindedness of journalism and public communication.

Commercialism is also a key element of changes in life-style magazines, researched by Katarina Štular, and in radio news programs, researched by Peter Čaks. In the first case, the commercial pressure was shown in the hybrid messages which were a product of the unethical practice of producing commercial texts which had been paid for and then published in the form of news. In the second case, the commercial pressure initiated "factism", i.e., an excessive quoting of facts supplied by official sources that do not offer a reader a sensible meaning due to a lack of interpretation.

Commercialization interferes with requirements of quality journalism also in investigative journalism. Thorough media investigations of scandals such as corrup-

tion are usually expensive and time-consuming, which was recognized as one of the reasons why investigative journalism around the world is in decline, even though it is of a great importance for every democratic society. Institutional scandals coverage in a “serious” daily newspaper was researched by Melita Poler Kovačič. She revealed that scandals were investigated and covered in a kind of semi-investigative journalistic practice; disclosing scandals was usually not a result of a journalistic investigation, the image of investigative journalism was established mainly by references to secret sources which were used with no cogent justification, while most of the reports were based on easily obtainable official sources. But, despite deficiencies in investigation and coverage, these stories made some positive contributions to the public good.

The supranational context in which journalists work also demands a new approach to journalistic production and journalism studies. Many researches in the field of media and journalism studies have been looking for an answer to the question whether news media and journalistic practices within the European Union (EU) live up to the ideals of the EU-public sphere in the content of national elite news media. The answer that was offered was more or less uniform and expected: national elite news media contribute negatively to the democratic deficit in the EU. According to the institutional relations that already exist at the national level between elite news media and political institutions, all national elite news media in the EU focus primarily on their national representatives and EU-related political bodies at the national level. Therefore, Karmen Erjavec and Emil Erjavec in their paper called for a more bottom-up approach to media and journalism studies of the EU topics coverage that attempts to uncover the role of news media as agents of or an explanation for social conflict and change. They also called for a more critical and analytical journalistic treatment of the EU topics.

The major change in the Balkan context was caused by former Yugoslavia’s wars. For decades, media have been one of the crucial producers and reproducers of dominant nationalistic ideology in this area. Nada Zgrabljic Rotar and Josip Čerina presented an analysis of media coverage of landmine accidents. Using a content analysis of the news coverage on mine accidents, they found an insensitive and unethical reporting and called for more educational and informative articles on this topic.

Guest Editors

Karmen Erjavec & Melita Poler Kovačič