

# Newsroom Convergence in Slovenia: Newswork Environments of the Media Organizations *Delo* and *Žurnal media*

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## SUMMARY

*Newsroom convergence is a gradual global process of increasing cooperation, collaboration and combination of technologies, staff and spaces between formerly distinct editorial teams of print, television and online media that has its evolutionary origins in the United States and Great Britain. However, after theoretically reconsidering the notion of newsroom convergence, doing participant observation in two Slovenian media organizations for a month, and conducting 29 problem-centered interviews with their chairmen, editors and journalists, the author suggests that newsroom convergence is not a universal, linear and technology-driven process and concludes that models of newsroom convergence vary from country to country, from medium to medium, and derive from politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts. Delo and Žurnal media originate from different newsroom traditions, play different roles in the Slovenian media ecosystem, have varying shares of the media market and differ in demography of news staff and size of news production. As a result they have adopted specific newsroom convergence models with different spatial organization and hierarchal structures that reflect a diverse relationship between journalistic norms, market norms and technology.*

Key words: newsroom, convergence, integration, newswork, newsroom organization, newsroom structure, print media, Slovenia

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## Introduction

Structural and organizational changes in newsrooms and transformations of newswork have been emerging since the mid 1990s, for at least some form of convergence between formerly separated staffers, newsrooms and departments, as a result of the gradual advancement of information and communication technologies and simultaneous uncertainties in media markets worldwide (cf. Pavlik, 2000; Stone and Bierhoff, 2002; Deuze, 2007; Klinenberg, 2005; Singer, 2004; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). In this context Deuze (2007: 141) suggests that journalism is “coming to an end” as boundaries between journalism and other forms of public communication are vanishing: the internet makes other media rather obsolete; commercialization and cross-media mergers have eroded the distinct professional identities of newsrooms and their publications whether in print, broadcast or online. What are the specifics of newsroom convergence in media organizations of politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts and what are the consequences of current reorganizations of newsrooms in Europe and United States for newswork?

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon of newsroom convergence and diverse newsroom traditions in different countries, affecting news production processes, there is no common understanding of newsroom convergence and uniform approaches to these structural and organizational arrangements among scholars, media management, editors and journalists. Theoretical reconsiderations and empirical research have shown that scholars do not agree on the nature of journalism transformations in different countries resulting from newsroom convergence (cf. Bierhoff et al., 2000). Consulting groups of news media management in their surveys, for example, *Innovations in Newspapers: 2008 World Report*, where Erbsen et al. (2008) stress that the structural and organizational changes allow for the creation of a highly movable and multi-skilled workforce if media organizations overcome “a great deal of resistance” among journalists by “changing the mindset” in the newsroom. Cautiousness and skepticism among journalists regarding newsroom transformations is emphasized in the 2008 study *Project for Excellence in Journalism*, suggesting that the realities in the contemporary news industry are downsizing, lay-offs and having to do more with less staff, budget and resources. However, the survey *News Barometer 2008* concludes that vast majority of newspaper editors from all over the world are overwhelmingly optimistic about the future and believe that an integrated multimedia newsroom will be the norm in the coming five years (cf. Zogby, 2008). This swift scan of different approaches toward structural and organizational changes in newsrooms among different actors from several countries calls for a context-oriented approach, especially considering historically distinct newsroom traditions, which are mostly neglected in theoretical reconsiderations and the empirical research of newsroom convergence.

The aim of this article is thus to provide a synthesis of the contemporary debates on newsroom convergence and to question its implementation in two Slovenian media organizations with different newsroom traditions: *Delo, d.d.* and *Žurnal media, d.o.o.* These two case subjects were chosen because they represent an opportunity to approach the contemporary phenomenon of newsroom convergence

through the prism of different print media traditions: they originate from media systems of politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts and have had rather distinct paths in the evolution of the organization and structure of the newswork environment. The goal is to ascertain how news workplaces are reconstructed and reorganized in these rather different media organizations, and therefore, to approach this problem in-depth this article tries to answer three research questions: (1) How has newsroom convergence been implemented in these two Slovenian media organizations? (2) What do different newsroom traditions bring to the implementations of newsroom convergence? (3) How are the notion of newsroom convergence and the consequences of it understood and characterized by chairmen, editors and journalists in these two Slovenian media organizations? In order to obtain the answers to these research questions I participated as an observer in the *Delo* and *Žurnal media* newswork environments for a month and conducted problem-centered interviews with chairmen, editors and journalists across all media formats of both media organizations. The theoretical framework of this ethnographic study, which is presented in greater depth below, is set in the first two parts of the article, where the newsroom as an organized and structured newswork environment is reconsidered through the prism of history and technology, and newsroom convergence as a concept and phenomenon is theoretically synthesized.

### **Newsroom: Traditions and Transitions**

Newsrooms have evolved in workspaces with traditional top-down managements, linear hierarchies and clear divisions of labor in order to standardize news processes, homogenize news products, retain control at all times and steer a new course if context changes (cf. Esser, 1998: 395). In these terms, there is a resemblance between news media organizations and factories, as well as between newsrooms and assembly lines, as Bantz et al. (1980: 64) put it almost three decades ago. In this context, writes Hardt (2005: 235), the history of journalism in the United States and Europe is foremost a history of industrialization. The transitions in journalism range from the waning sovereignty of the journalist as an intellectual worker to an increasing dependence as a newsworker and include the increasing standardization of news sources and the processes of gathering, selecting and framing news in transforming the technological environment and under a dominant definition of journalism as a customer service (cf. Hardt, 1990, 1996, 2005). A newsroom can be defined as the social, formal and economic entity that employs newsworkers in order to produce news content (Turow, 1984; Shoemaker and Reese, 1991; Esser, 1998). In general, it is goal directed, composed of different parts and bureaucratically structured: members perform specialized functions in standardized roles, responsibility is divided, authority is structured and seniority is rewarded (Esser, 1998: 376). The effects of technological, historical and societal factors on media organizations build newsroom traditions in the realm of structural relations, organizing processes and logistic possibilities. At the same time, a newsroom is a constantly evolving space predominately shaped by the relationship between newswork and technology (cf. Hardt, 1990, 2005; Pavlik, 2000; He-

mingway, 2005), as well as, by the conflict between two sets of norms: journalistic norms and market norms (cf. McManus, 1994; Underwood, 1995; Klinenberg, 2005; Deuze, 2007). There are, however, fundamental differences between countries and newsroom traditions, deriving from different evolutionary paths in journalism history – although, writes Esser (1998: 375), “from just looking at the final product one would hardly assume it”.

Newsrooms have been distinctly organized in different countries with politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts, in particular in terms of the division of labor and editorial control, conclude Donsbach and Paterson (1992) in their transnational survey among journalists. However, writes Esser (1998: 377), Donsbach and Paterson were not able to give a precise picture of how newsroom organizations in respective countries look, or what the historical origins of differences are, or how they are to be evaluated in the context of respective journalistic systems. Esser (1998) fills the gap by acknowledging that German and Anglo-Saxon newsrooms traditionally operate quite differently. In Great Britain and United States, newspapers historically favor centralized newsrooms with a high degree of editorial control, high division of labor, swift communication among people in the newsroom past the hierarchal structure and great effectiveness under time pressure. On the other hand, in Germany and elsewhere in Central Europe, a holistic understanding of journalism prevails, which means that every individual journalist gathers, selects and frames news and prepares news reports, commentary and analysis; these activities are thus, in general, not part of the division of labor as in the Anglo-Saxon newsroom tradition. Therefore, newspapers in Central Europe, and Slovenia in this matter, historically tend to decentralize their newswork by having one central work space and maintaining many branch offices which produce complete sections of the paper, where the division of labor is smaller, editorial control is lessened, members of the newsroom primarily communicate strictly up the hierarchal structure, and in the case of time pressure the news team copes with more difficulty than in newsrooms of Anglo-Saxon tradition.

In the last decade, the borders between newsroom traditions of Anglo-Saxon countries and those of Central Europe, including Slovenia, have been blurring as journalists and editors see powerful signs of news industry transformation in their work spaces, which have been in some cases, according to Klinenberg (2005: 53), “completely redesigned so that journalists can move freely between print, television, radio and online outlets and meet the demands of the new media environment”. This sort of restructured and reorganized newsroom is named differently by different authors: “combined newsroom” (Pavlik, 2000), “multimedia newsroom” (Deuze, 2004, 2007), “integrated newsroom” (Giner, 2001; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008), “convergent newsroom” (Friend and Singer, 2007) and “new newsroom” (Klinenberg, 2005). Despite differences among them regarding the question of what is newsroom convergence, these authors understand the general concept of the integrated newsroom similarly: it is regarded as a part of the process that derives from the notion of convergence and is described as an increasing cooperation, collaboration and combination of technologies, staffs and space between formerly distinct editorial teams of print, television and online media.

Although in practice these changes vary from medium to medium and organization to organization, and come in different shapes and sizes (Deuze, 2004), they primarily derive from two common interrelated sources identified earlier: the relationship between newswork and technology, and the conflict between journalistic norms and market norms. In the case of newsroom convergence these sources are: digitization of production in journalism all over the world and turbulent financial situations on global media markets, characterized by fragmentation, falls in newspaper circulation and stagnation of television audiences, in order to fulfill often opposite goals – improving the quality of journalism and rationalizing the news production process (cf. Klinenberg, 2005; Quinn, 2005; Singer, 2004; Deuze, 2007; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008).

### **Reconsidering Newsroom Convergence**

In the field of journalism studies, convergence as a concept is primarily used to document the emergence of new newsrooms, the changes in work routines and organizational structures connected to these new production arrangements, the redevelopment of news formats across all media and the impact of these phenomena on journalistic work (cf. Deuze, 2004; Duhe et al., 2005; Singer, 2004; Klinenberg, 2005; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). However, there are differences among the authors regarding newsroom convergence and two branches of approaches can be identified: linear approaches to newsroom convergence and non-linear approaches to this notion.

The first branch regards convergence as a continuum from “no convergence” to “full convergence” (cf. Giner, 2001; Zollman, 2001; Aquino et al., 2002; Stone and Bierhoff, 2002; Daily et al., 2003). These approaches identify “degrees”, “levels” or “steps” that individually comprise a series of tasks and processes leading to changes in the “convergence continuum” and assume that sooner or later all news media organizations reach the end-point of a completely integrated newsroom where the integration of the different parts of the news-making process is achieved. According to Stone and Bierhoff (2002), media organizations would eventually become “information engines” and create more synergy in five areas: efficiency, profitability, usership, improved journalism and user satisfaction than they would produce with each medium publishing on its own. A critique of this linear understanding of convergence in journalism has been voiced in recent years (cf. Deuze, 2004; Duhe et al., 2005; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008), stressing that the “convergence continuum” tends to ignore that “convergence does not have to be a linear process, that it may fail, or that it leaves some parts of the organization untouched” and “rests uneasy with its assumption of inevitability and with its presumed consensus among stake-holders and media practitioners involved on what convergence means to them or their work or involvement in the company” (Deuze, 2004: 140).

The branch of non-linear approaches regards newsroom convergence as establishing different levels of development and making convergence an open process with many possible outcomes for different actors (chairmen, editors, journalists and other media workers) and their work. A cross-section of theoretical reconsid-

erations and empirical research in this branch of approaches (cf. Majoribanks, 2003; Singer, 2004; Klinenberg, 2005; Deuze, 2007; Avilés nad Carvajal, 2008) reveals that newsroom convergence challenges traditional aspects of journalistic work in order to increase the productivity, efficiency and profitability of news media organizations: first, newsroom convergence advocates multi-skilling and multi-tasking; that is gathering, selecting and producing content via several platforms; second, it speeds up the news production process and tightens deadlines in the almost around-the-clock news cycle; third, it challenges journalistic routines and the practices of newspaper, radio, television and online journalistic culture. Through this prism Avilés and Carvajal (2008) suggest that there are two prevailing models of newsroom convergence: the cross-media model and the integrated model. The former is linked to a resource and organizational strategy, where multimedia production based on synergies is the desired ideal, aimed at strengthening the media organization as a heterogeneous news provider on the whole, regardless of media platforms. The latter aims to create a homogeneous newsroom culture transcending traditional media boundaries and to fully integrate the newsroom where newswriters gather and select information and produce journalistic content intended for distribution across all media.

This article adopts the non-linear approach to newsroom convergence and in this regard it uses three theoretical dimensions in its case study analysis in order to deal with the research questions set in the introduction: first, aspects of newsroom convergence and implications on journalistic work in *Delo* and *Žurnal media*; second, internal and external factors influencing the implementation of newsroom convergence in both media organizations; third, attitudes about convergence of different actors (chairmen, marketing executives, editors, and journalists). Therefore, newsroom convergence will be discussed not as a technology-driven process, but rather as an interaction between technology and journalism, and as innovation toward specific goals in particular news media organizations of politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts – that is why “each convergence project might have a different outcome” (Avilés and Carvajal, 2008).

## Methodology

There is a lack of theoretical investigations and empirical research dealing with newsroom culture, structural and organizational transformations of newswork environments and their implications on journalistic work in Central Europe. In this regard, this article tries to fill this gap to a degree by investigating newswork traditions of two specific case study subjects from Slovenia with distinct origins from different societal contexts, different roles and varying shares of the Slovenian media market and both of which are striving towards newsroom convergence: *Delo, d.d.* and *Žurnal media, d.o.o.* The multi-perspective divide between both media organizations and the complexity of the notion of newsroom convergence calls for a case study method which deals with a main question of what can be learned from a specific case (Stake, 1995), which is regarded as a valid tool to analyze a complex issue in a specific context (Yin, 2003), and which has been used before as a methodological tool to describe changes in journalistic professional roles and im-

plications of newsroom convergence (cf. Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). In order to focus on the dimensions of the specific cases and to deal with research questions, I used two ethnographic sources: participant observation and problem-centered interviews.

Participant observation as a qualitative research method tries to accomplish the goal of gaining an insider's look in small-scale social settings in the present time (Neuman, 1991/2006: 378; Flick, 2006: 215). In each media organization I played a role of "observer as participant" (cf. Gold, 1958) for a month. This rather short period of time was enough to identify the parts of the media organization affected by the implementation of newsroom convergence, gain official documents and other data regarding the implementation of newsroom convergence and to agree with chairmen, editors and journalists across print and online media platforms to conduct problem-centered interviews. The latter were orientated to the problem of implementation of newsroom convergence into the organization and structure of newsroom environments, and were modified with respect to differences among both media organizations and characteristics of print and online platforms (Flick, 2006: 161). When interviewing 2 chairmen, 3 print editors-in-chief, 2 online editors-in-chief, 7 print and online editors and 16 journalists of different media platforms from *Delo* and *Žurnal media* I used four strategies: the conversational entry, general and specific prompting and ad hoc questions (ibid.). This research technique was used to gather data on the informants' perceptions beyond the official declarations and thus to offer more in-depth information on perceptions that surveys generally show.

This case study analysis "emphasizes contingencies in 'messy' natural settings" (Neuman, 1991/2006: 158) and examines three dimensions of both cases: aspects of newsroom convergence and the implications on journalistic work in *Delo* and *Žurnal media*; internal and external factors affecting implementation of newsroom convergence in both media organizations; and attitudes about newsroom convergence of different actors, such as chairmen, editors, and journalists. In the next two parts, on the basis of former research, participant observation, analyzed official and other documents, and conducted problem-centered interviews, first, both case subjects *Delo* and *Žurnal* are presented; especially their newsroom traditions and transitions; second, findings are established with the synthesis of collected data and information gathered during qualitative research and then delivered through three identified dimensions of newsroom convergence.

### **Case Subject 1: *Delo*, d.d.<sup>1</sup>**

*Delo* is the biggest Slovenian print media organization in terms of news staff, news production and readership of their periodical publications; therefore, in advertising discourse its serious daily *Delo* is regarded as the "central Slovenian newspaper". It was established in 1955, a decade after the end of the Second World War in a socialist political, economic and cultural system, when journalists were regarded as "socio-political workers" (Amon, 2004; Poler, 1996; Poler Kovačič, 2004). Its newsroom was based on a holistic understanding of journalistic work in Central Europe as a result of the influence of the Austro-Hungarian

print tradition in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (cf. Vatovec, 1967; Amon, 2004). *Delo*'s newswork environment was decentralized with less division of labor among newswriters than in its American counterparts of that time; having one central newsroom, among newswriters named "the desk", and maintaining many branch offices which produced complete sections of the daily *Delo*, its supplements, and other periodical print outlets. According to research (cf. Erjavec in Poler Kovačič, 2004: 5, 18, 21) the routinization of Slovenian newspaper journalism increased in the 1990s due to transition changes, especially the economic changes in society and the privatization and commercialization of print media organizations, which have raised changes in the process of journalistic work. However, *Delo*'s decentralized organization of the newswork environment has not changed. Furthermore, transformations of the workplace were adopted only on a small scale in the 1990s, when *Delo* started publishing a new tabloid daily, *Slovenske novice*, and a weekly, *Nedelo*, and in the 2000s when the online newspaper *Delo.si* started publishing and when an online video news producer, *Studio Delo*, was built (cf. Milosavljevič and Vobič, forthcoming). The Editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Delo*, Darijan Košir<sup>2</sup>, stresses that print outlets have been produced in separated workplaces with almost no cooperation and that the online newspaper "has been growing in a ghetto inside a print media organization". In 2008 *Delo* set up a project group for establishing an integrated newsroom for approximately 230 newswriters and started to plan the integration of distinct editorial teams for print and online production into one integrated multimedia newsroom by October 1 2009.

### Case Subject 2: *Žurnal media, d.o.o.*<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned earlier, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the fall of the socialist system, all print media organizations were privatized. However, there were no foreign investors present in the Slovenian newspaper market until the 2000s. In 2003 *Žurnal media* was established by the Austrian media corporation *Styria International AG* and started a free weekly newspaper *Žurnal* (cf. Milosavljevič and Vobič, forthcoming). Despite following the holistic understanding of journalistic work, *Žurnal media* moved away from the traditional Central European organization of the newsroom. They adopted a more or less Anglo-Saxon model of a centralized newsroom and coordinated it with the marketing office – editor-in-chief and marketing executive working almost hand in hand. In 2007 *Žurnal media* built a new newsroom and started a free daily magazine-type newspaper *Žurnal24*, covering less stories than the daily *Delo*, and an online newspaper *Zurnal24.si*, again separated from the marketing office. This new newsroom brought all print and online multimedia production teams of approximately 80 newswriters together into one workplace, but due to imaginary walls between the teams this resulted in separated news production for different print and online outlets. In December 2008 *Žurnal media* has taken its first steps toward an integrated multimedia newsroom by making organizational changes in the workspace.



## Results

Despite the fact that *Delo* and *Žurnal media* have based organizational and structural characteristics of their newswork on different newsroom traditions, both print media organizations look forward to gaining from newsroom convergence. At *Delo* and *Žurnal media*, chairmen, editors and journalists do not use the phrase ‘newsroom convergence’, but exclusively operate with phrases, such as ‘integration’ and ‘integrated newsroom’, describing increasing cooperation, collaboration and combination of technologies, staffs and space between formerly distinct editorial teams of print and online media. At first glance it seems that *Delo* and *Žurnal media* are going into the same direction, however, after doing participant observation for a month and conducting 29 interviews with chairmen, editors and journalists from January 7 till February 3, 2009, it became clear that the integration of the newsroom – despite similar factors and goals of both media organizations – has different aspects and implications in the case of *Delo* and in the case of *Žurnal media*. First, they have adopted different newsroom convergence models with specific spatial organizations and different hierarchal structures reflecting distinct divisions of duties and responsibilities; second, there is a different mindset of editorial and journalistic staffs toward the concept of the integrated newsroom.

### Different Organizations, Similar Goals, Different Models

*Delo* and *Žurnal media* are different media organizations. For example, their initial newsroom organization and structure, the number of media outlets produced and their type, as well as the size of their staff and area of initial workspace were all different. However, according to the problem-centered interviews conducted, both media organizations have similar goals: optimizing journalistic resources, speeding up the online news production process and increasing cooperation among print and online editorial teams. To achieve these goals they have chosen similar paths, but different newsroom convergence or integration models.

#### ***Žurnal media*: Dispersed Integration and Bi-pyramidal Hierarchal Structure**

In December 2008 *Žurnal media* reshaped its centralized newsroom of 750 square meters into an integrated newsroom of approximately 80 journalists, editors and other newswriters. They have built a “superdesk”, where daily editors of the free magazine-type daily *Žurnal24* and online newspaper *Zurnal24.si* sit together with a photo editor and deputies of the editor-in-chief of both print outlets, and dispersed online journalists among print journalists according to the sections *News*, *Regions*, *Sports*, *Scene* and *Magazine*. “All we had to do is to move some desks around and set up two new computers. The integration cost € 2,000. It was easily done over the weekend, to build an idea took half a year,” says Dietmar Sternad, chairman of the board of *Žurnal media*.<sup>4</sup> This dispersed integration was formed by an integration project team that was assembled in spring 2008. In addition to the chairman, the members of the team are editors-in-chief of print outlets and the online newspaper. “We want to unite our strengths around the most important

daily stories. By integrating *Žurnal24* and *Zurnal24.si* we do not want to produce one news product. On the contrary, we want two distinct products both gaining from cooperative team work, sharing information, and above all respecting the main characteristics of online journalism: that is, fast news production and providing up-to-date news and print journalism with added value to the facts gathered through the day,” says Goran Novković, editor-in-chief of *Žurnal24* and *Žurnal*.<sup>5</sup> The organizational structure of the integrated newsroom resembles a bi-pyramidal hierarchal structure with two levels editorial decision-making: on the first level there are online and print daily editors with equal power and responsibility on a daily basis in cases concerning both platforms and editorial teams; on the second level there are a print editor-in-chief and an online editor-in-chief with equal power and responsibility if decisions on the first level cannot be reached. “We do not have one boss in the newsroom. Duties and responsibilities are divided among platforms. However, despite the fact that print journalists and online journalists have to cooperate, there is still strict division between them,” says daily print editor Borut Hočevar.<sup>6</sup>

#### ***Delo*: Integration Circles and Pyramidal Hierarchal Structure**

In October 2009 *Delo* plans to move approximately 230 journalists, editors and other newswriters of all outlets and of both platforms from separated workspaces into one newswork environment with an area of approximately 2400 square meters. According to chairman of the board, Peter Puhan, the costs of building an integrated newsroom in the first floor of *Delo* tower, buying common CMS software for both platforms, and adding required hardware, will reach three million euros.<sup>7</sup> “*Delo* wants to integrate daily news processes in order to overcome spatial and process obstacles toward more profound cooperation among editorial teams, editors, and journalists – now they work in different floors with almost no cooperation whatsoever,” says editor-in-chief of daily *Delo* Košir. He is head of the integration project team that has met regularly from autumn 2007. According to Košir they do not want to homogenize the news product, but only build a common internal “information engine” for both platforms, turned on 18 hours a day. *Delo* wants to strengthen coordination, collaboration and cooperation of the print and online news production process and at the same time nurture specifics of all outlets and both platforms (cf. Košir, 2008). The integrated newsroom is to be organized in four integration circles: the first circle is the “editorial core” with editors-in-chief of the serious daily *Delo* and the daily tabloid *Slovenske novice*, their deputies, photo editor and section editors of national news, international news and business, together with “leading journalists” of both dailies; the second circle is the editorial team of the online newspaper combining the now separated staff of *Delo.si* and *Studio Delo*; the third circle is the editors and “leading journalists” of the remaining sections of *Delo*, *Slovenske novice* (sports, culture, local news), and *Nedelo*; the fourth circle is the “support offices” (photographers, cameramen, proofreaders, technical editors) for all outlets and both platforms. Within this spatial organization a strict hierarchy in decision making processes is to be set and responsibilities divided. On top of the pyramidal structure, stresses Košir (ibid.), is the editor-in-

chief of the daily *Delo*, who closely cooperates with the editor-in-chief of *Slovenske novice* – they are to be primarily responsible for preserving the process and content autonomy of every outlet of the media organization and to simultaneously achieve a continuous open dialog and close cooperation among all staffers. Power and responsibility are further divided among the editor-in-chief of the online newspaper, section editors of both dailies, editors of supplements and their editorial teams – similarly as in the current *Delo* decentralized newsroom

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By reorganizing and restructuring their newsroom, *Delo* and *Žurnal media* plan to increase cooperation, collaboration and combination of technologies, staffs and space between formerly distinct editorial teams of print and online media, but still nurture the media organization as a heterogeneous news provider across the platforms. However, they have built different structural and organizational models of an integrated newsroom: first, *Delo* has a mono-pyramidal hierarchal structure on top of which is *Delo's* editor-in-chief; *Žurnal media* has a bi-pyramidal hierarchal structure with the editor-in-chief of print outlets and the editor-in-chief of online newspaper on the two tops; second, despite building an “editorial core”, *Delo* plans to nurture clear spatial division among different print and online outlets by setting up separated desks in a common workspace and organizing it in four integration circles. *Žurnal media* built a “superdesk” for daily editors of print and online outlets, and set up a dispersed integration by mixing online and print journalists by putting those who cover common themes shoulder-to-shoulder.

### **Similar Internal and External Factors**

Problem-centered interviews with members of both project teams have shown that despite a number of differences between *Delo* and *Žurnal media*, similar internal and external factors underlie the project of integrating their newsrooms. Internal and external factors overlap with each other and have fluid categories, far from being watertight capsules of reasons, but should be understood as being marked by multiple leakages or spillovers. I operate with these categories in order to more clearly present what led chairmen and editors toward organizational and structural changes. In their words, the two most important external factors stimulating these alterations in newswork are: uncertainties in media markets and the integrated newsroom as a global trend of organizational and structural transformations of newswork. The most important internal factors for chairmen and editors-in-chief of both print media organizations are: the initial organization of the newsroom, the lack of cooperation and coordination between editors and journalists of different editorial teams and platforms, especially between print and online, and continuously striving to rationalize the news production process across all platforms.

#### **“Trend” at *Žurnal media*, “The Only Solution” at *Delo***

“It is a trend and we adopted it,” says editor-in-chief of *Zurnal24.si* Milena Kalacun Lapajne and suggests that research shows that the integrated newsroom is the

right decision for the future growth of *Žurnal media*: “We visited numerous print media organizations in Europe and United States, compared their integrated newsrooms to our needs, and shaped a specific concept.”<sup>8</sup> According to chairman Sternad, *Žurnal media* already had integration in mind in 2007, when its print media organization moved to a new common newswork environment and organized it as a centralized newsroom. The latter was, says print editor-in-chief Novković, a “relieving circumstance” that made a transition toward an integrated newsroom easier for everybody involved in news production, foremost because they only had to change seats and not move to a new space. *Delo* on the other hand did not adopt an integrated newsroom, because it is trendy, but because it is the “only possible solution” to the problems deriving from a decentralized newsroom organization, says *Delo* editor-in-chief Košir. “I do not imagine working like we do now any much longer. Print editorial teams are scattered across floors, there is lack of communication between these little gardens, and cooperation and coordination between print and online has also been clumsy,” stresses Košir. Furthermore, Košir emphasizes that the integrated newsroom is an opportunity to institutionalize cooperation and coordination between staff of both platforms and at the same time fuse two online news productions: *Delo.si*, which provides mostly online textual news; and *Studio Delo*, which provides mostly online video news, and to establish one editorial team and one online news production process in a common workspace.

#### **“Better Human Resources Solutions” at *Delo*, “Richer Work” at *Žurnal media***

According to *Delo*'s chairman of the board, the integrated newsroom is a response to uncertainties in the print media market. “We want to be competitive and we have to evolve. The integrated newsroom offers better human resources solutions and lower costs, which is welcome in the present financial crisis,” acknowledges chairman Puhan. Moreover, according to Košir, an integrated newsroom is a basis for better newswork and wider coverage: “By using human resources more intelligently we could cover more events and report on more issues.” At the same time, the editor-in-chief of *Slovenske novice* asserts that integration primarily means “taking bigger advantage of people”: “From the trade unionist's point of view integration is a catastrophe, because people have to work more for the same amount of money,” says Marijan Bauer.<sup>9</sup> *Žurnal media* chairman Sternad puts it differently: “Rationalization at *Žurnal* does not mean working more, but working differently. We just want to use the people we have and the resources we have to get more quality information for both platforms. It is not more work, it is richer work.” Print editor-in-chief Novković stresses that integration simultaneously brings cooperation and competition. “Through cooperation print journalists, who are mostly young and flexible people, get to know specifics of online journalism; online journalists, who are mostly students and inexperienced, get to know traditional journalistic practice. We all win,” says Novković. At *Delo*, on the other hand, the news staff is more diverse in terms of age, journalistic experience and

status within the organization, therefore establishing new routines and transforming newsroom culture is a much harder task, many interviewees acknowledge.

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These overlapping internal and external packs of reasons reflect the contextual complexity of institutional implementations of organizational and structural changes, whereas newsrooms are constantly evolving workspaces predominately shaped by the relationship between newswork and technology, as well as by the conflict between journalistic and market norms. Furthermore, the *Delo* and *Žurnal media* newsroom integration projects are top-down implementations of ideas that by themselves do not bring smooth transitions and a homogenous mindset among those involved in the news production process.

### **Different Organizations, Different Mindset**

When interviewing chairmen, editors and journalists, considerable differences in mindset emerge between the media organizations investigated: at *Delo* considerable skepticism concerning newsroom convergence is present among workers, especially print journalists; at *Žurnal media* chairmen, editors and journalists of both platforms are more consensual and optimistic.

#### **Optimism at *Žurnal media***

“At the very start journalists built an imaginary wall,” responds Novković to the question of how did journalists take the integration: “Later, after numerous meetings and one weekend seminar, skepticism was gone. I see the first positive results of closer cooperation and coordination among print and online journalists, but there is still a lot of work to be done.” Print and online journalists confirm such progress; many of them are enthusiastic about cooperating with journalists from the other platform. For instance *Žurnal24* print journalist Ksenja Koren says: “It is great to break the news. I did not have this chance before the integration.”<sup>10</sup> Irma Hus, daily online editor and online journalist, stresses: “Our print journalists have become an important source of information after the integration. They send information to the newsroom via short messages or e-mail, and give us suggestions for further work. This stimulates us to call our own sources and upgrade the story.”<sup>11</sup> However, on the basis of interviews with *Žurnal media* journalists, three main barriers regarding implementing an integrated newsroom can be identified: first, lack of information and guidelines on how to cooperate with editors and journalists of the other platforms, which is mostly expressed by print journalists; second, different statuses of print and online journalists within the newsroom, where the former are underestimating the latter, which is mostly expressed by online journalists; third, two content management systems (CMSs) – one for print, one for online. “I do my work for the print edition and when I stumble over online colleague, we start working together on recycling the print story for the online newspaper. We cooperate, but we do not know how exactly. This is a process and we will figure it out eventually,” says print journalist Manca Borko.<sup>12</sup> When responding to a re-

proach on providing too little information on integration to journalists, M. Kalacun Lapajne, a member of the *Žurnal media* project team, responds: “The project team has weekly meetings with all editors, who afterwards have to inform their journalists on specific subjects of integration. Maybe that is the problem, but it is very hard to have meetings on a weekly basis with 80 people.” For online journalists, on the other hand, the main obstacles toward building a cooperative atmosphere inside the integrated newsroom are feelings of subordination and incompetence posed on their behalf by print journalists. “This is a normal situation at media organizations. However, by putting them together, changing the online news production process and preparing print journalists for future models of journalism, we want to overcome this division,” says Novković. Deputy of editor-in-chief of *Zurnal24.si* Irena Kolar says that online journalists at *Žurnal media* are not “only copy-pasters” anymore, but such prejudice is still present.<sup>13</sup> “There are clashes between print and online journalists on individual levels when trying to cooperate, but we find quick solutions in ad hoc meetings,” says Novković. A common barrier toward successful integration identified by both “groups” of journalists is that *Žurnal media* does not have one CMS, but two separate ones. Thus, print journalists have problems publishing their stories online due to limited access; online journalists, on the other hand, have problems following the print news production process through the day and speeding up online production of common stories. “It is one of the biggest problems. This is one of the tasks we still have to do – we need one system or two systems that talk to each other,” acknowledges chairman Sternad.

### **Skepticism at Delo**

The situation at *Delo* is more turbulent, despite one CMS being planned. “However, we have already overcome initial fears: first, people now know that an integrated newsroom would not be a factory hall, but a workspace pleasant for everybody. The second fear was that print journalists will have to work for an online newspaper – now they know that in one way or another the online newspaper is going to be part of their work – regardless of the outlet,” says editor-in-chief Košir. However, *Aktiv novinarjev Dela* (‘Working Group of *Delo* Journalists’) and *Sindikata novinarjev Dela* (‘Workers Union of *Delo* Journalists’) have reservations toward the project of an integrated newsroom, saying that the editor-in-chief and the board have not yet presented enough information and convincing arguments for such structural and organizational changes. “It seems tempting from above, but up-close it is not so pretty. The board probably wants to rationalize news production and initially fire some of the staff,” stresses the president of working group of *Delo* journalists, Peter Kolšek.<sup>14</sup> Such a position toward the project of an integrated newsroom is taken by numerous interviewed journalists, but the head of the project team, Košir, says otherwise: “This project is completely transparent and very well communicated within the organization. At many meetings, assemblies and gatherings I have said that rationalizing and firing are not the reasons for integration. If later on we find out that the staff is too big, we will not hesitate to rationalize our production.”

Many of the interviewees, particularly online editors and journalists, point out that there is a status polarization among *Delo* journalists, which derives from a generation gap, differences in journalistic experience and prejudices about working for a print or online platform. “The biggest problem is that most of the *Delo* journalists have not yet embraced the internet as their news platform. At *Delo* a conservative mentality prevails, resulting in feelings of threat and resistance against new media. This derives from mistakes made by previous boards that regarded the internet as a marginal project,” says *Delo.si* editor-in-chief Erika Repovž.<sup>15</sup> For instance, one of the more experienced journalists, Kolšek, does not regard *Delo* online journalists as journalists: “They are just students doing the work of copying clerks.” The large majority of editors and journalists interviewed acknowledge that such divisions within the working collective are one of the biggest barriers on *Delo*’s path toward integration. “*Delo* is a mastodon. It is a large corporation with a conservative mentality. It is hard to picture older journalists moving to a common workspace and embracing new technologies in their newswork,” stresses *Delo.si* journalist Katja Štok.<sup>16</sup> Print journalist Kolšek has reservations about a prospect of multi-skilling – gathering, selecting and framing news for multiple media platforms: “I am too old for such games. I would have to think about finding a new job.” Multi-skilling in this regard is going to be optional, says editor-in-chief Košir: “We do not want to pressure older journalists who are good at what they do. But, when hiring new journalists, handling a camera and editing video for example will be pre-conditioned.” A similar position regarding multi-skilling is taken at *Žurnal media*, where they have two atypical media workers, who shoot video, do a *vox populi* at the same time and afterwards edit a video for the online newspaper. “The concept of everybody doing everything is on a slippery floor, whereas we have to be careful not to become too similar. Homogenization is one of the biggest dangers of integration. *Žurnal media* wants print and online as two products in the media market,” says print editor-in-chief Novkovič.

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Editors and journalists at *Delo* and *Žurnal media* have common reservations about restructuring and reorganizing the newsroom, such as rationalization and multi-skilling, and identify similar obstacles on the path toward realizing the integration project: particularly divisions within journalists on the basis of age, experience and media platform. It seems that at *Žurnal media* a vast majority of those involved in the news production process believe that the integrated newsroom is the right direction in the organizational and structural evolution of the newsroom and newswork. At the same time, at *Delo*, editors and journalists are pessimistic in general, fearing that the integrated newsroom might bring more disadvantages than advantages to their work.

## Conclusion

The newsroom in the United States and Europe is a workspace with top-down management, linear hierarchy and a clear division of labor. It is organized and structured in such a way as to standardize news processes and products, retain

control at all times and steer a new course if the context changes. Due to the advancement of information and communication technologies and the turbulent media markets worldwide, since the mid 1990s at least some form of newsroom convergence has been significantly emerging globally (cf. Pavlik, 2000; Stone and Bierhoff, 2002; Deuze, 2007; Klinenberg, 2005; Singer, 2004; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). This gradual process of increasing cooperation, collaboration and combination of technologies, staffs and space between formerly distinct editorial teams of print, television and online media, that has its evolutionary origins in the United States and Great Britain is regarded by some as a signifier that “the Anglo-US model of journalistic values and newsmaking practices has become a universal standard for the remainder of the world” (Preston, 2009: 1). Despite the one prevailing evolutionary path of newsroom organization and structure and the blurring of borders between the Anglo-Saxon and Central European newsroom organization traditions, this case study in Slovenia indicates that convergence is not a homogenous process in newsrooms worldwide. Participant observation in two Slovenian print media organizations and problem-centered interviews with their chairmen, editors and journalists imply that newsroom convergence models do not vary just from country to country, but from medium to medium and come in different shapes and have different outcomes in different organizations (cf. Deuze, 2004; Klinenberg, 2005; Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). *Delo* and *Žurnal media* originate from different societal contexts and distinct newsroom traditions, play different roles and have varying shares of the Slovenian media market, as well as differing in demography of news staff and size of news production. Furthermore, both media organizations, despite similar internal and external factors, adopted specific newsroom convergence models that reflect diverse relationships between journalistic norms, market norms and technology, but are both closer to the integrated model of Avilés and Carvajal (cf. 2008) than their cross-media model.

On the one hand, in October 2009 *Delo* plans to organize a common workspace in four integration circles with an “editorial core” in the middle and at the same time nurture clear spatial division among different editorial teams. The project team constructed a mono-pyramidal hierarchal structure, on top of which is the editor-in-chief of the daily *Delo*. By doing that, *Delo* wants to replace the traditional decentralized newsroom with its one central newsroom and many branch offices that produced complete sections of the daily newspaper *Delo*, its supplements and other periodical print outlets that brings numerous disadvantages in contemporary print media organizations – primarily the almost complete absence of cooperation and coordination between editors and journalists of different editorial teams and platforms. According to the chairman of the board, in response to the turbulent print media market, *Delo* plans to optimize human resources, rationalize the news production process over both platforms and enhance synergy effects between outlets with a common CMS, but still cultivate a heterogeneous newsroom culture and nurture the specifics of print and online publications. Journalists, on the other hand, complain that they have not enough information, fear that rationalization might go hand in hand with layoffs, and are skeptical that integration cannot overcome initial deep divisions within journalists on the basis of age, experience and the media platform they produce news for.



On the other hand, in December 2008 *Žurnal media* integrated its initial centralized newsroom by building a “superdesk” and dispersing online journalists among print journalists of different thematic sections, directing them to cooperate and coordinate. This rationalization does not mean more work, says the chairman of the board, but different, “richer” work. The structure of this dispersed organization resembles two parallel hierarchical pyramids with the editor-in-chief of print outlets and the editor-in-chief of the online newspaper at each top. The initial centralized newsroom organization at *Žurnal media* is regarded as relieving circumstances that reduced the financial costs of integration and eased the process of transition among editors and journalists. The latter are optimistic about integration and its consequences, overcoming initial fears of more workload for the same salary, despite, as most of them say, lack of information about how to cooperate and coordinate with journalists of the other platform and without one common CMS. According to the three-member integration project team, *Žurnal media* does not want to homogenize their news products, but to nurture the specifics of both platforms and at the same time overcome prejudices about print and online journalists in order to act with one brand in the media market.

*Delo* and *Žurnal media* are examples of overcoming newsroom traditions and blurring the borders between the Anglo-Saxon countries and those of Central Europe in the context of newsroom organization and newswork culture. Moreover, the traditional holistic understanding of journalism is challenged to a certain degree in Central Europe, because the development of a common “information engine” across platforms within media organizations neglects the traditional concept of every individual journalist gathering, selecting and framing news, as well as, preparing news reports, commentary and analysis. But at the same time and inside this common frame, the research in this case study indicates that newsroom convergence is a complex phenomenon that demands further theoretical investigations and empirical research with a context-orientated approach in other countries of Central Europe. Newsroom convergence is not exclusively a technology-driven process, but rather is an interaction between technology and journalism, and is innovation toward specific, often conflicting, journalistic and market goals in particular news media organizations within politically, economically and culturally specific social contexts. Preston (2009: 19) similarly says that institutional roles and other features of organized news services have always been changing in line with broader socio-economic and political developments, of which technological changes are but one dimension. Thus, print media organizations in Central Europe, due to the prevailing decentralized newsroom organization model and its changing roles in dynamic media markets, present case subjects that might, through empirical research, bring fresh aspects and implications to the notion of newsroom convergence. The newsroom as a workspace is in a continuous transition process and the integrated newsroom does not represent its end, or as *Žurnal media* daily print editor Hočevar says: “the integrated newsroom is an experiment. It is important to be flexible if further change is needed.”

**ENDNOTES:**

- <sup>1</sup> The media organization *Delo, d.d.* is owned by the biggest Slovenian brewery, 2 Slovenian banks, 2 state-owned funds, 2 investment companies and other stockholders. According to a survey, *Nacionalna raziskava branosti (NRB 2008)*, serious daily newspaper *Delo* has 155 thousand readers each day; the Sunday edition of *Delo*, named *Nedelo*, has got a readership of 150 thousand; the tabloid daily newspaper *Slovenske novice* has got the biggest readership among Slovenian dailies: 350 thousand daily readers. According to a survey *Merjenje obiskanosti spletnih strani (MOSS – Jesen 2008)*, the online newspaper *Delo.si* and its video »supplement« *Studio Delo* had a reach of more than 230 thousand distinct users in three weeks of measurement in autumn 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Darijan Košir, 16 January, 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Media organization *Žurnal media, d.o.o.* is owned by the Austrian media corporation *Styria Interational AG*. According to *NRB 2008*, the free weekly magazine-type newspaper *Žurnal* has got 368 thousand readers each week; the free magazine-type daily newspaper *Žurnal24* has got a daily readership of 212 thousand readers. According to *MOSS – Jesen 2008*, the online newspaper *Zurnal24.si* had a reach of more than 285 thousand distinct users in three weeks of measurement in autumn 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Dietmar Sternad, 20 January, 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Goran Novković, 29 January, 2009.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Borut Hočevar, 27 January, 2009.
- <sup>7</sup> Interview with Peter Puhan, 16 January, 2009. During the process of writing this article *Delo* has gone through reconstruction of managerial system. Puhan lost his position and became a member of newly established board committee. President of board committee became Andrijana Starina Kosem.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Milena Kalacun Lapajne, 28 January, 2009.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview with Marijan Bauer, 12 January, 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Ksenja Koren, 19 January, 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Irma Hus, 22 January, 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview with Manca Borko, 21 January, 2009.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview with Irena Kolar, 3 February, 2009.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Peter Kolšek, 14 January, 2009.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Erika Repovž, 9 January, 2009.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview with Katja Štok, 7 January, 2009.

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## **Konvergencija redakcija u Sloveniji: Okružja rada u medijskim organizacijama *Delo* i *Žurnal media***

**Igor Vobič**

### **SAŽETAK**

Konvergencija redakcija je postepeni globalni proces povećanja suradnje i kombiniranja različitih tehnologija, osoblja i prostora između prije toga međusobno odvojenih uredničkih timova tiskovina, televizije i Internet medija koje se razvilo u Sjedinjenim američkim državama i Velikoj Britaniji. Unatoč tome, nakon teoretskog razmatranja pojma konvergencija redakcija, nakon što je promatrao kao sudionik u dvije slovenske medijske organizacije mjesec dana i proveo 29 intervjua povezanih s problemom s predsjednikom, urednicima i novinarima, autor sugerira da konvergencija redakcija nije univerzalan, linearan i tehnološki vođen proces i zaključuje da se modeli konvergencije redakcija razlikuju od zemlje do zemlje, od medija do medija, i proizlaze iz politički, ekonomski i kulturalno specifičnog društvenog konteksta. *Delo* i *Žurnal media* potječu od različitih uređivačkih tradicija, imaju različite uloge u slovenskom medijskom ekosistemu, imaju različite udjele na medijskom tržištu i razlikuju se u demografiji osoblja koje radi vijesti i veličini produkcije. Kao rezultat toga oni su usvojili specifične modele konvergencije redakcija s različitim prostornim organizacijama i hijerarhijskim strukturama koje odražavaju različite odnose između novinarskih normi, tržišnih normi i tehnologija.

Ključne riječi: redakcija, konvergencija, integracija, organizacija redakcija, struktura redakcija, tiskovine, Slovenija