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Semi-Investigative Journalism in Slovenia: Research of Scandals Coverage in the Daily Newspaper *Dnevnik*

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SUMMARY

This paper adds the case of Slovenia to the vast body of studies on investigative journalism around the world. It explores how investigative journalism has developed in Slovenia since the late 1980s and tries to establish whether conclusions about the disappearance of quality investigative journalism are still up-to-date. A critical discourse analysis of news items covering three institutional scandals covered by the daily newspaper Dnevnik *in 2008 showed that journalists dealt with relevant topics; however, the topics were investigated and covered in a kind of semi-investigative journalistic practice, for which it is typical that in one or more phases of the news production process, journalists do not meet all the criteria for their work to be classified as investigative journalism. Usually, uncovering scandals is not a result of a journalistic investigation, i.e., journalists start to investigate when a scandal is already uncovered by official sources. In cases when journalists uncovered a scandal on their own, further phases of news production turned out to be problematic. A case study of the Meta Rupel scandal revealed that 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. Despite deficiencies in investigation and coverage, these stories can not be dismissed as pseudo-investigative or sensationalistic, as they made positive contributions to the public good. Reasons for semi-*

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investigative journalism were attributed to economic and political influences, as well as organizational limitations within the media and usual journalistic routines.

Key words: investigative journalism, scandals, corruption, news sources, Slovenia

Introduction

Institutional scandals, such as corruption of public officials, are one of the typical topics of investigative journalism. Discussing political corruption in the Anglo-Saxon democracies, Heywood (1997: 4) emphasized that since the early 1970s politicians have been exposed to a much more intense media spotlight than before, which is partly a result of *Watergate*. This might be understood as a sign of the media becoming more mature and dedicated to their watch-dog role, however such an explanation would be oversimplified and even misleading. According to Heywood (ibid.), corruption has also stayed in the public spotlight in recent years because it makes for good news stories, as scandals are "one proven means to stimulate public outrage and corporate profits" (Lull & Hinerman, 1997: 28).

Media coverage of scandals may coincide with requirements for quality investigative journalism; by uncovering institutional scandals, journalists may fulfil their role in democracy to act as representatives of the public and watchdogs over abuses of power. On the other hand, investigations cost money because of staff time and research outlay, yet may not uncover anything to publish. Pressures on the media to provide content which sells well, attracts advertisers and provides owners with profits may stimulate a different approach to scandal coverage. The widespread perception in media and academic circles is that investigative journalism has declined in quality and quantity (Franklin et al., 2005: 122).

Existing research studies pointed attention to constraints on investigative journalism practices in different parts of the world, surfacing from various pressures. To name just a few: in Sweden, for example, investigative journalism is to a large extent an idealized concept without significant importance for daily journalistic practice, mainly because of the more commercialized media where journalistic ambitions and values are less appreciated and rewarded (Nord, 2007). In Norway, on the other hand, Rolland (2006) argued that commercial news criteria stimulate investigative journalism more than they restrain it. In China, investigative journalism had grown in the 1990s, yet later it declined because of tightened government control (Tong, 2007). In France, Chalaby (2004) described investigative journalism development as rather recent, and it is still practiced on a limited scale. In Croatia, Modrić (2004) argued that investigative journalism is still in its infancy. Irish investigative journalism emerges sporadically on the mediascape, usually causes a controversy or sensation, perhaps even lawsuits, and then vanishes almost as quickly as it appeared, Marron (1995) observed.

The main goal of this paper is to add the case of Slovenia to the vast body of studies on investigative journalism in numerous parts of the world, i.e. to explore how investigation journalism has developed in Slovenia since its attainment of independence in 1991, and particularly, what is its current state, considering that even though democracy has been well under way for almost two decades now, democratization of society brought about commercialization of the media and tabloidisation of journalism. Harsh competition in the media market and the need to produce profits caused cost-cutting in the media, thus probably allowing little or no place for expensive journalism practices.
In the first chapter of this paper, the concept of investigative journalism will be explained through its basic characteristics, followed by a short review of the development of Slovenian investigative journalism in the second chapter. Findings of the textual analysis of coverage of institutional scandals in the Slovenian "serious" daily newspaper *Dnevnik* in the year 2008 will be presented in the next chapter, and then discussed in the context of their discourse practice and social practice dimensions.

Theoretical background

Even though there is no simple or unanimous definition of investigative journalism, at least its basic characteristics may be defined. According to Šuen (1994) and Košir (1994), investigative journalism is a particular type of journalistic discourse which reveals illegal and/or immoral acts that individuals or institutions are trying to hide; these acts are of relatively great importance for society; a journalist plans an investigation thoroughly, uses special techniques and methods of obtaining information, and writes an investigative story in a typical structure and style. As Franklin et al. (2005: 122) suggested, an investigative journalist's intent "embraces the need to (justifiably) defame some person or an organization to expose a scandal and/or speed up institutional or legislative reform".
Choosing subjects to investigate is one of the most crucial aspects of investigative reporting, argued Anderson and Benjaminson (1976: 17). Investigative journalism draws attention to "failures within society's systems of regulation and to the ways in which those systems can be circumvented by the rich, the powerful and the corrupt" (De Burgh, 2000: 3). It is necessarily concerned with matters such as corruption and illegality, which are difficult to discover, prove and reveal to the public (Kieran, 2000: 156). Anderson and Benjaminson (1976: 5) defined investigative reporting as "reporting of concealed information" about the activities of public officials, such as corrupt politicians; activities of corporations, political organizations, charities and governments; financial frauds, etc. Its aim is to bring corruption, hypocrisy and lawbreaking to public attention. Randall's definition of investigative journalism's topics similarly referred to subjects involving "wrongdoing or negligence for which there is no published evidence" (2000: 99), the stakes are usually high, and someone is trying to keep the information secret.
One part of the definition refers to the starting-point of an investigation, i.e., what or who is the source of information that provokes journalistic investigation and/or coverage of a scandal. As Košir (1994: 13) pointed out, cases of quality investiga-

tive reporting showed that journalists by themselves, frequently by means of unofficial sources, get on the track of scandals and start to investigate them. There are a number of possibilities about how to obtain clues and information which then lead to the beginning of an investigation. The objects for investigations may come in several ways, such as tips from contacts, by accident, a seemingly routine story that subsequent information indicates is far bigger, a journalist's own observation, etc. (Randal, 2000: 101). Whatever the way; attracting and encouraging tips, developing and cultivating sources and evaluating and using the information they provide, all require forethought and preparation, as Anderson and Benjaminson (1976: 25) suggested.

After getting the first information, a reporter plans and conducts an investigation carefully and thoroughly. Highly active discovery of information requires of a journalist to contact sources outside the newsroom, to conduct searches of government or business records or documents, to make investigations of government or corporate wrong-doings. Even if an investigation begins with an anonymous tip about illegal or unethical behaviour, it requires diligence to uncover (McManus, 1994: 98). Information about a scandal, received by an informant or in some other way, should therefore serve as a starting-point and should be further investigated and proved before being presented to the public.

Investigative journalists also have duties to the public in terms of presentation, as Kieran (2000: 172) emphasized. Their professional standards are not expected to be essentially different than those of "traditional" journalism. Journalistic discourse in general lays claim to truthfulness and accuracy (McNair, 1998: 5), and the task of an investigative journalist is to "discover the truth and to identify lapses from it" (De Burgh, 2000: 9). *Argumentation* is important for journalism in general, and for investigative journalism in particular, due to the sensitive nature of topics being investigated and covered. Namely, the plot of action in an investigative story is aimed at searching for guilty persons, the so-called "negative heroes" (Košir, 1994: 16). It is, in fact, impossible for investigative journalism to avoid accusations about alleged perpetrators, as its primary goal is uncovering scandals. Therefore, proofs are indispensable. Slander, libel and unfounded accusations are regarded as grave professional offences, according to the *IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists* (1964/1986).

An *argument* makes a proposition or a series of propositions about something, and attempts to persuade or convince the reader that the propositions are true (Tolson, 1996: 29–32). Each *proposition* is potentially supported by two other elements, namely *evidence* (data) and a form of *justification* (warrant). A journalist is supposed to report as an eyewitness to an event, where his/her knowledge derives from the firsthand experience, or to attribute a proposition to a source. In this case, the *attribution rule* requires a journalist to give the source for every fact in a story, whenever it is not obvious, and thus let the readers know how much credibility to put into each proposition (Meyer, 1987: 50). A journalist should identify the source whenever feasible, as the public is entitled to know the source (Code of Ethics of the Slovenian Journalists, 2002). However, a journalist may also consent to the anonymity of a source if information cannot be acquired otherwise. According to the *IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists*

(1964/1986), a journalist "shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence".
Transparency of sources is important, but evidence is not to be equated with what a source stated. The attribution rule should not lead journalists to avoid going behind the sources and making an independent check. Attributing material to a source does not prove the truth; it merely places responsibility for information with the source (Mencher, 2000: 52). Evidence comes in various forms: relevant documents, records and reports, eyewitness's testimonies, unofficial sources' information, etc. In any case, it is particularly important that journalists look "behind the interpretations of events provided for us by authority and the authoritative" (De Burgh, 2000: 3). News sources are indispensable, but journalists sometimes go astray when they rely on human sources only and neglect to ask for proof of assertions that sources make, as Mencher (2000: 52) emphasized.
Journalists are supposed to provide balanced accounts (McNair, 1998: 68). There are three rules applying to balance (Meyer, 1987: 50–52): *the get-the-other-side-of-the-story rule* (including other points of view whenever they exist); *the equal-space rule* (conflicting groups should be given equal space); *the equal-access rule* (all interests in a community should have an equal opportunity to have their views made known through the media). A story should contain as much relevant information as is available and essential to afford an average reader an understanding of the facts and their context (Day, 2000: 83). Before publishing information involving serious allegations, a journalist should try to get a response from those affected (Code of Ethics of the Slovenian Journalists, 2002).
On the basis of the definitions presented in this chapter, the following criteria may be taken into account when classifying news items as investigative journalism: (1) selection of a topic referring to concealed illegal/immoral acts in public affairs; (2) revealing these acts by journalists and as a result of a journalistic investigation; (3) further investigation of the scandal even after it has been uncovered, i.e., until some denouement is reached; (4) coverage according to professional standards of presenting evidence, source transparency and balanced reporting.

Investigative journalism in Slovenia

Until 1991, Slovenian journalists were primarily responsible to the socialist state. Deviant opinions were suppressed by censorship and repressive penal legislation. In such political circumstances, journalists were not supposed to surveil and criticize those in power; on the contrary, they were supposed to act as socio-political workers. In the late 1980s, however, certain media began to directly criticize the government (Amon, 2004: 66). The weekly magazine *Mladina*, in particular, was using investigative reporting methods to produce articles on relevant topics such as the building of a villa for General Mamula and the privatization of *Mercator Investa* (see Šuen, 1994). For a while, it seemed that democracy had brought fresh air into the Slovenian media (Merljak Zdovc & Poler Kovačič, 2007).
But, from the beginning of the 1990s onwards a different image of Slovenian investigative journalism was paving its way. In the period of democratization and commercialization of the media and society, studies (e.g. Košir, 1993) revealed an

increase in unethical coverage, derived from a false understanding of democracy and the newly gained constitutional freedom of expression, as if it was an absolute right; as if it meant unlimited freedom without responsibility. The 1990s brought about several distinctive phenomena in investigative journalism development.

One of them could be described as the rise of *pseudo-investigative journalism* (see Poler Kovačič, 2003) and it was noticed mainly in the political and economic columns of the so-called serious or semi-serious press. Its main characteristic was that reporters selected topics which seemed worthy of investigation, yet both their investigation and coverage were lacking professional standards. Much pseudo-investigative reporting was merely a leak written up without an independent investigation into the leak or the interests of the leaker. A journalist had received a document, an anonymous letter or references to rumours; and rather than use such information as a starting-point for further investigation, he/she decided to publish it immediately. Later on, the story was presented as an investigative item mainly because it revealed some (supposed, yet not proved) irregularities that someone (usually a public person) was trying to hide.

Typical of the second phenomenon was equating *plain sensationalism* with investigative journalism, mostly in the Slovenian tabloids (see Kalin Golob & Poler Kovačič, 2005). Media scandals sometimes do represent one form of vigorous investigative journalism (Lull & Hinerman, 1997: 28), so they cannot be automatically dismissed as nothing more than sensationalism. However, their potential to serve as forums for public awareness and debate of controversial issues was not implemented in Slovenian journalism after 1991. Some tabloid writers began to present themselves as agents of investigative reporting, even though what they offered was often irrespective of truth and credibility of information. The selected topics, as well as the disputable veracity of evidence and/or the methods employed to obtain evidence, produced grounds to believe that labelling such stories as investigative journalism was abuse of the term and manipulation of the public.

An appearance of the so-called *mobi journalism practice* in 2007 (see Poler Kovačič & Erjavec, 2008) also raised some new reflections about investigative journalism development in Slovenia. Namely, when the commercial television station *Kanal A* started producing a daily tabloid news program, *Svet*, the producers advertised it to be the first in Slovenia offering "citizen journalism" intended for "ordinary people" to send their stories by mobile telephones directly to editors. Citizen journalism is supposed to be concerned with important issues (for more about citizen participation in news, see Nip (2006)), and information sent in by audience members could be a useful starting-point for further investigations, so this program was expected to bring some new approaches to investigative journalism by offering an additional channel of relevant topics and information gathering. But research by Erjavec and Poler Kovačič (2009) revealed that this espionage-denunciative practice mostly exploited new media technologies for commercial purposes without conducting real investigations and uncovering important topics. Typical of these stories was the so-called confirmation bias (Stocking & Gross, 1992: 227): journalists were using a theory-confirming strategy, i.e. they selected cases and sources confirming their "theory" which was constructed in advance.

And finally, there has been almost no research in Slovenia proving the existence of legitimate investigative journalism. Since Šuen's book "Investigative Reporting" in 1994, in which he presented some cases of quality investigative journalism in Slovenia from the late 1980s, there have been only a few studies and they were mostly concerned with deviations from what is usually understood as legitimate investigative journalism (e.g. Poler Kovačič, 2003; Zupančič Kastelic, 2003; Dolinšek, 2004; Merljak Zdovc & Poler Kovačič, 2007). Colarič (2003) researched the investigative reporting of Miro Petek, at that time a journalist in a daily newspaper *Večer*. His articles from the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000s could be labelled as investigative journalism. While he was investigating suspicion of corruption in 2001, he was assaulted and beaten almost to death.

Media representations of institutional scandals in *Dnevnik*

Research Questions

A short review of Slovenian investigative journalism development from the late 1980s onwards, indicates the disappearance of quality investigative journalism. To establish whether these studies' findings are still up-to-date, we are going to focus on the present period in our research, trying to establish whether cases of quality investigative journalism are to be found in the contemporary Slovenian press covering institutional scandals, which are a typical topic of investigative journalism. Theoretical reflections about the concept of investigative journalism gave rise to four research questions:

RQ 1: *What are the topics of institutional scandals coverage?*
RQ 2: *Are scandals uncovered as a result of a journalistic investigation?*
RQ 3: *Do journalists continue to investigate scandals even after they have been uncovered, i.e., until some denouement is reached?*
RQ 4: *Are professional standards of presenting evidence, source transparency and balanced reporting met?*

Method

Textual analysis of the journalistic discourse will be performed, however from the perspective of a *critical discourse analysis* (see Fairclough, 1995), which means that a more interpretative approach will be adopted if compared to mere "content analysis". As Richardson (2007: 38) suggested, the analyst is supposed to examine texts in terms of what *is* and what *could have been* but *is not* present in a text.
The analysis will be carried out on different levels, with a particular emphasis on the *macro* analysis of the organization of meaning across a text as a whole. According to Van Dijk (1988: 30–32), the analysis of textual structures begins with an explication of notions like theme or topic, i.e. what the discourse is about, globally speaking. The analysis of the thematic organization is based on the so-called semantic macrostructure, and macrostructures are characterized in terms of *macropropositions*. Unlike propositions which are typically expressed by clauses or sentences, macropropositions are expressed, indirectly, by larger stretches of

text. Each topic of a text can be represented as a macroproposition. In this way, macropropositions convey the main ideas of a text, i.e. the "upshot, gist, most important information, and hence the theme or topic" (Van Dijk, 1988: 32). Longer discourses usually contain several topics and thus have a macrostructure consisting of several macropropositions. Discourses have not only an overall meaning or topic (Van Dijk, 1997: 12), but also an overall form in which these global meanings fit it. Topics are crucial for text, as Van Dijk (1997: 10) emphasized. The study of the macropropositions made in news items will enable us to get an insight into the topics chosen for journalistic investigation and coverage, and thus have a comprehensive view of journalistic investigative themes. In this way, RQ 1 will be addressed.

Further, analysis of *news sources* will be performed in order to address RQ 2, RQ 3 and RQ 4. As Sigal observed, for journalists "most news is not what has happened, but what someone says has happened" (1973: 69), which makes news source analysis crucial, as it will enable us to reflect on the *agenda-building* process (e.g. Weaver & Elliott, 1985), and to answer the question of who established the initial definition or *primary interpretation* of the topic in question, thus framing what the problem is all about (see Hall et al., 1999: 254–255). On the basis of news source analysis, we may arrive at a conclusion about whether scandals were actually a result of a journalistic investigation, which is supposed to continue until some denouement is reached, and whether professional demands of presenting evidence, source transparency and balanced reporting had been met.

The findings of textual analysis will be discussed in the light of *discourse practice* and the *social practice context* in which the texts have been produced. Such an approach follows the model of critical discourse analysis which attributes three dimensions to every discursive event, i.e. text, discourse practice and social practice (Richardson, 2007: 37).

Data

The analysis will include news items covering institutional scandals investigated by the daily newspaper *Dnevnik* in a one year period, i.e. between the beginning of January 2008 and the end of December 2008.

An *institutional scandal* develops when actions that disgrace or offend the dominant morality or legislation are performed by persons who make up the institutions of politics, education, business, military, religion, etc. These people are motivated not only by their professional objectives, but also by their private desires that conflict with prevailing moral and/or legal standards. Their acts become scandalous because they represent not only themselves, but the institutions in which they are professionally situated. Scandals relativize the image and the integrity of institutions by putting a human face on the transgression (adapted from Lull & Hinerman, 1997: 20).

Dnevnik was selected because of the following reasons: first, even though it is hard to attribute the status of serious press to any media in Slovenia today, *Dnevnik* at least comes close, along with some other media (e.g. *Delo*), if compared to the majority of media in Slovenia. Secondly, it explicitly promotes itself as being

devoted to serious quality journalism (Oglaševanje v Dnevnikovih medijih). Our pre-supposition was that, if anywhere, quality investigative items are to be found in the serious press which covers relevant topics, supposedly acts in the public interest and respects professional standards. And thirdly, since investigating can be a lengthy and expensive process, our pre-supposition was that larger media are more likely to be able to afford engaging in it. As Berkowitz (2007: 551) observed, much of investigative reporting takes place at large national or regional newspapers, where resources are greatest. National coverage enables larger circulation and attracts more advertising money. In 2008, *Dnevnik* was one of the most-read Slovenian "serious" daily newspapers.[1]

There were four scandals that met the criteria and were included in the sample. All four were referred to as "the biggest stories of Dnevnik in 2008" by a journalist making a list of the most successful achievements in *Dnevnik* in 2008 (Upelj, 2009). *Dnevnik* was particularly proud of these stories which "happened because of Dnevnik" and which "revealed something new to the public and (maybe) changed our society for the better" (ibid.). One scandal will be excluded from further analysis, because it is in fact a scandal investigated by and uncovered by Finnish journalists, while *Dnevnik* was mostly just reporting on it.[2]

One of the remaining three scandals was chosen to be presented in a detailed case study, i.e. the one having the most potential to be labelled as investigative journalism. In this case, the first information announcing a scandal was obtained and published by *Dnevnik* (*Scandal 3*), while in the case of *Scandal 1* journalistic investigation began only after the scandal was already made public, and in the case of *Scandal 2,* a promising investigative theme was soon overshadowed by another scandal which attracted far more attention. These two scandals will be described only in brief, although textual analysis will be performed on news items covering one part of *Scandal 1* and all news items covering *Scandal 2*. In the conclusion and discussion chapter, common conclusions will be drawn from all analyzed news items, i.e. eight items covering part of *Scandal 1*, 35 items covering *Scandal 2* and 20 items covering *Scandal 3*. The research sample for analysis therefore consists of 63 news items altogether.

Results

Scandals 1 and 2: What Were Their Topics and Who Uncovered Them?

In the so-called "The Clean Spade Scandal" (*Scandal 1*), the journalistic investigation began only after the scandal was uncovered by official sources, i.e. statements made at a news conference held by the *General Police Directorate* (February 12th 2008), where it was announced that the police ordered detention for seven persons because of suspecting them of taking part in bribery to get certain jobs in the construction business for which there were public tenders. The macroproposition of *corruption of powerful Slovenian directors and governmental officials* was not constituted on the basis of an original journalistic investigation. Instead, the official sources were the ones that openly built the agenda. Of our interest here might be only one minor stage of this scandal, i.e. the disclosure of information which the police got by bugging Hilda Tovšak, the chairwoman of the board of the

building company *Vegrad*. According to *Dnevnik*, Tovšak was talking to Borut Petek, an ex-secretary in the cabinet of the prime minister, and while discussing a tender for building the airport tower at the airport *Brnik*, Petek confirmed to Tovšak that her company will get the job, and the prime minister was supposedly informed about it. There were eight news items covering this stage of the scandal, which was referred to as 'The Petek Scandal'. The main macroproposition here was actually "a scandal within the scandal", namely, *the assumption that the police were trying to cover up relevant information which was obtained by secret bugging*. Petek filed a lawsuit against three journalists from *Dnevnik* because of untrue statements based merely on speculation. The main scandal, as well as the one which was uncovered by *Dnevnik* is still under legal proceedings.

Then there was a scandal which was referred to as the "Leaking Diplomatic Mail Scandal" (*Scandal 2*). *Dnevnik* published records of a conversation between the political director in the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* Mitja Drobnič and the highest officials of the US Administration, which took place on December 24th 2007 in Washington. From the document it was evident that members of the US Administration gave instructions to Slovenian diplomats on how to act when the independence of Kosovo was proclaimed, and also about some other matters of foreign policy during the Slovenian presidency of the European Union. According to *Dnevnik*, the document was not labelled as "secret", and its veracity was confirmed by two diplomats who asked for anonymity.

However, the macroproposition of *the dependence and the obedience of Slovenian foreign policy* in the first news item, published on January 25th 2008, which was understood as particularly scandalous because of the Slovenian presidency of the EU, was soon overshadowed by the question of how (and from whom) journalists got the document. The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* launched an internal investigation to find the leaker. The scandal culminated when the internal security service of the *Ministry,* accompanied by the secretary general, entered the office of the diplomat Marjan Šetinc and confiscated his computer because of his phone conversations with journalists from *Dnevnik*. Later it was revealed that the *Ministry* inspected the phone calls made by their employees to find the leaker; the *Information Officer* found these proceedings to be against the constitution and fined the minister. Immediately after the first item was published, the media's attention was redirected to construct a new macroproposition, i.e. *the Ministry's (illegal) proceedings while searching for the leaker of the document*. This macroproposition remained topical in all the following 34 news items, while the first one got less and less attention with every new item, even though there was no real closure of this scandal. The media coverage in this case began as "investigative journalism" and raised expectations that a good example of investigative work was going to develop, maybe with new elements discovered and published in the so-called "follow-ups" (see Obad, 2004: 142). However, the further course of events at the *Ministry* totally occupied journalistic attention, and no further investigations on the "original" story were conducted, no resolutions searched for and no conclusions made.

Scandal 3: A Case Study of the Meta Rupel Scandal

This scandal goes back to 2006, when *Dnevnik* revealed that Meta Rupel, the wife of the minister of foreign affairs, Dimitrij Rupel, was using the official car with a driver to go shopping. The scandal had no epilogue at the time, but it continued in 2008 when it was uncovered that the director of the criminal police Aleksander Jevšek stopped the investigation by a dispatch. To perform research about the case as a whole, both stages will be analyzed, i.e. 15 news items from 2006 and 2007 as well as five items from 2008. To get a better insight into the complex course of events, the results will be presented in chronological order; from uncovering the scandal through its development to its decline, and then again to its revival. Therefore, *macropropositions analysis* and *news sources analysis* will interweave; when defining each of the macropropositions in the story as it was developing in time, sources offering evidence to support them will be analyzed.

Uncovering the Scandal

The most relevant item for our research was the first one, published on December 12th 2006, which uncovered the scandal. The minister's wife was photographed in front of her house, carrying bags from a supermarket. She was accompanied by a driver from the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* who drove her in an official car. The so-called "summary category" of the structure (see Van Dijk, 1988: 55), i.e. the headline and the lead, as well as the major part of the "story category", i.e. "main events", suggested the macroproposition that *the wife of the minister Rupel uses an official car and driver for her private matters*, thus connoting corruption. Evidence offered to the readers was incontestable; the exact date (December 12th), time of day (leaving home at 11.20, returning two hours later) and place (Grudnovo nabrežje in Ljubljana) were indicated, and the ultimate proof published, i.e. a photograph of the car (with the registration numbers of the plates visible) and the minister's wife carrying bags with groceries. A journalist's (a photographer's) closeness to the event was used as "a rhetorical guarantee for the truthfulness of the description and, hence, the plausibility of the news" (Van Dijk, 1988: 86).

While describing the event, the journalist went into detail, such as: "*the chauffeur politely opened the door for her*", and "*the minister's wife was carrying a broom and a dustpan, the washing powder Ariel and a pack of paper towels, while the chauffeur was carrying a box of milk and several bags from the Maximarket store in Ljubljana*". (S 1) A journalist tried to justify the publication of such detailed information with the statement received from the *Ministry*, namely, that the car is intended for official matters only, but it can also be used by the minister's wife when she is performing tasks which she is obliged to do by protocol. The list of products which were bought was then to serve as evidence that it was really a case of unjustified use of an official car, as the products listed were not of that kind that could be used at official diplomatic occasions. In this way, the appeal to "common sense" was implicitly included, as *we all know that such products are for personal and not official use*. Through appealing to the supposedly unifying force of common sense, rapport between author and reader was established (see Mautner, 2008:

43); this argumentative device is often part of tabloid journalism, where common sense is more important than expertise (see Luthar, 1998: 15).
Even though it seemed that the evidence offered to prove the offence of the minister's wife (and thus of the minister himself) was sufficient, the journalist added new elements to his argumentation: the last part of the "story category" of this relatively short news item (altogether 25 lines), the so-called "previous events" category, offered a new macroproposition – *the excessive wastefulness of the minister Dimitrij Rupel known from the past already.* Namely, according to the report (S 1), there have already been occasions of the minister overspending the taxpayers' money, such as one in Brussels, where he was staying in a hotel which cost almost one thousand euros. No source was attributed to this statement; however it included a very detailed citing of data (e.g. "In the luxurious room where he was staying he had at his disposal an eider-down made of goose feathers and bedclothes made of one-hundred percent Egyptian cotton"). Both macropropositions supported one another, once again implicitly appealing to common sense: *the minister is already known as the one who over-spends the tax-payers' money, what else can then be expected of him*! And inversely: *the minister's wife was caught spending the tax-payers' money which is just one more proof of how the minister misuses his official position*!
A very important stage of each investigative journalistic process, i.e. how and from whom a journalist got the hint for the story, should also be considered here. A journalist's first source in this case was an unnamed "*government representative*" who "*confided in us a while ago*" and "*did not forget to emphasize the high ethical standards which were set by the government of Janša when it began its mandate, and that this action of the minister and his wife is not really consistent with*" (S 1). The anonymous source's moralizing statement in a tabloid-like manner connoted the minister's immorality, his transgression of moral norms set by the institution which he represents. Thus, the *institutional* scandal was established: the minister's actions of abusing his official position are scandalous not only for himself as a person, but also for the institution which he represents, i.e. the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* which is part of the *Government of the Republic of Slovenia*. In this way, the following macroproposition appeared: *government representatives are dedicated to ethical performance on the level of words, while they actually deviate from these very norms and act immorally*, which connotes their hypocrisy, so they are not to be trusted.

Developing the Scandal

Three days after the scandal had been uncovered, the *Ministry* gave a statement in which they informed us about their decision not to answer questions about this topic any more (S 3). A new macroproposition appeared, and it was included in the main title already: *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is Breaking the Law and Wrapping Itself in Silence*. Namely, according the *Mass Media Law* (2006) as well as the *Access to Public Information Law* (2006), journalists are entitled to have free access and re-use of public information held by state bodies and public power holders. In the following days, the coverage continued by journalists using legal possibilities to get additional information about the circumstances of the event.

Dnevnik appealed to the *Office of the Information Commissioner* whose competency is to decide on the appeals against the decision by which a body has refused or dismissed the applicant's request for access. In a few days, the *Commissioner* made a decision that the appeal was founded and that the requested documentation is to be delivered to *Dnevnik*. Journalists also reported the scandal to the *Commission for Preventing Corruption*. Further, several documents were cited in news items, such as the *Mass Media Law* (S 3), the *Preventing of Corruption Law* (S 4) and the *Access to Public Information Law* (S 7). Several official sources were also cited, such as the *Police Directorate Ljubljana* (S 4) and the *Commission for Preventing Corruption* (S 5). Beside constant repetitions of what had been established by observation made in front of the minister's house, citing numerous official sources and documents, some news items referred also to reports from other media, for example: "*as POP TV reported*" (S 8); "*as the public relations representative of the police stated on behalf of the STA* agency" (S 12).

Throughout all news items covering the scandal, the illusion of objectivity was reproduced by strongly emphasizing the "verbal reactions" category, i.e. "asking the comments of important participants or prominent political leaders" (Van Dijk, 1988: 54), such as the minister of the public administration who is also the author of an ethical code, the Government's press spokesman, other ministers, etc. According to the *get-the-other-side-of-the-story rule*, the *Ministry* was repeatedly asked about the event and the usual practice concerning the use of official vehicles. Meta Rupel was also given a chance to comment; however, she refused to talk to *Dnevnik* (S 2).

Besides official sources in high positions who were transparently named in the story, there were several references to unofficial sources in some of the following news items, but their contributions could hardly be estimated as relevant, yet alone crucial for the investigation. For example: "*Namely, some ministers whispered to us that their wives also buy things which they 'need to attend receptions', however they do not send them an official car with a chauffeur because of it*" (S 3), connoting the moral condemnation of Rupel's offence by "other ministers", which is to be understood as additional proof of the minister's transgression, as he is now (unofficially) condemned also by some of "his equals", i.e. ministers in the government.

The use of unnamed sources was efficiently creating an image of investigative journalism in this case; however, no legitimate reasons for their use could be found. For example, eight days after the first publication, a news item appeared which mainly repeated old information, but its "previous events" category offered some new information which contributed to establishing a pattern of the minister's continuous offences and were thus supposed to serve as additional evidence, supporting the macroproposition of *the excessive wastefulness of the minister Dimitrij Rupel known from the past already*. As the report stated: "*quite a few of the former co-workers of Dimitrij Rupel from the time when he was the mayor of Ljubljana confided in us that such rides were not rare at that time*" (S 6).

The use of unnamed sources is justified when a source has a legitimate reason to ask for confidentiality (e.g. being afraid for his life or security, or of losing a job), but journalists should consider the sources' motives and credibility before they

grant them anonymity (Smith, 1999: 127–130). When a journalist uses information from an unidentified source, the audience is being deprived of the ability to make an independent judgment about the information's credibility (Seib & Fitzpatrick, 1997: 104–105). This is the reason why some newspapers require journalists to explain in their stories why sources were granted anonymity, so that the readers can draw some conclusions about how credible secret sources are (Smith, 1999: 131). In the case of the "Meta Rupel Scandal", it was not explained by *Dnevnik* why secret sources were used, and it was not even at least implicitly clear. Doubts about the justifiability of using them became even more obvious considering some inconsistencies made by a journalist. In the first item, a journalist referred to *one governmental representative* (S 1). The next day, she was summarizing this same report and was referring to *some governmental representatives* (S 2). In the second item, the transgressions were described as *frequent* (S 2); but, according to the news item published almost a month later (S 9), the unnamed sources said that the minister's wife *regularly* had the car at her disposal for her private matters. Inconsistency of the statements attributed to secret sources raised doubts about the credibility of these sources' statements.

Decline of the Scandal

As well as establishing the image of an investigation being done, the use of anonymous sources had some other implications, such as establishing the so-called "normalization cycle", identified as news bias by Bennett (1996: 39–41). For example: "*according to our information, the Prime Minister still intends to warn the minister that such rides are unacceptable and that he expects that they would no longer happen in the future*" (S 2). Authoritative voices of officials did not respond by confirming the offence regardless of evidence, and so there was no need to tell the readers that they would act in their interest – as usually happens in cases like this (ibid.). So the unidentified sources were used to exercise the task of reassuring the public that justice will be served in some way; they confirmed that at least some measures against the transgressor would be adopted, so things will return to "normal" again, and the conclusion that "the system worked" could be drawn. Thus, the normalization cycle began to be re-established in the second item already, thus announcing its decline long before it was even fully developed. And further, the unnamed sources' information connoted the success of *Dnevnik* who revealed the scandal for which the transgressor would be at least be given an informal warning and prohibition of future similar acts, if not punished in a more formal way.

On January 5th 2007, i.e. on the day when the *Information Commissioner* ordered the *Ministry* to deliver the requested documents to *Dnevnik*, the event was for the first time explicitly labelled as "a scandal" (S 8). At this point, some denouement was expected. But, after the documents had been delivered, it was ascertained that information in them was incomplete. A journalist, Meta Roglič, who was the author of the majority of news items on this case now openly appeared as a participant in the story, i.e. one of the sources in an item written by another journalist. Her comment was put in quotation marks and she was described as "being disappointed in the documents" (S 10). In the following days and months, the story be-

gan to fade. No conclusions were made; there were no visible effects or consequences. The last item in this first stage of the scandal was published on March 16th 2007, reporting on the meeting of the parliamentary committee for foreign politics, whose president rejected the proposal made by an opposition member of Parliament to discuss the case at the committee meeting (S 11). At that point it seemed that the scandal was at its end.

Revival of the Scandal

In the following 21 months, there was no coverage of this scandal, but on December 19th 2008 it broke out again. This second stage began by two documents being published (S 12): a dispatch by which the director of the criminal police stopped the investigation in February 2007, and the decision of the district state prosecutor who closed the case in December 2007. The media attention now turned from the primarily disputable case of using an official car to a new macroproposition, i.e. *the chief of police abuses his official position when stopping the investigation*. However, new information revealed by the documents was not obtained by *Dnevnik* as part of their investigation, but was published by the *Commission for Preventing Corruption*. Thus, *Dnevnik* merely reported on the case and was not actively involved in uncovering it. The majority of the text was structured in the "verbal reactions" category, extensively citing official sources who commented on the case, i.e. sources from the *General Police Directorate* (a statement from the public relations representative, made for the press agency STA), the *Commission for Preventing Corruption* (a statement from the chief of the prevention sector), and the *Ministry of the Interior* (a press release).

A day later, an item was published presenting a reconstruction of how the police investigation of the Meta Rupel case was stopped in the beginning of 2007. When describing the course of events, a journalist, Rok Praprotnik, was writing in an affirmative form, instead of using words, word combinations or a particular journalistic styleme expressing that something is still unproven or unofficial (see Korošec, 1998: 33–41). The "presumption of innocence", meaning that no one is guilty until legally found so, was ignored. The journalist's value judgments were included in the "report", for example: "*In December 2006, the criminal police seriously started to investigate the Marjetica Rupel scandal*" (S 13), whereas the word "seriously" was an opinion, not the proven fact. Representing the investigation as "serious" emphasized the weight of the offence made by the chief of police when stopping the investigation; namely, if the investigation was not "serious", stopping it would not be so damaging.

After the documents were published, *Dnevnik* seemingly re-opened its own investigation. But, its image was constructed mostly by referring to sources such as "*according to our data*" and "*as we have found out unofficially*" (S 13), again without any explanation as to why secret sources were used. Besides, information leaked by unnamed sources did not offer any substantial evidence; it merely described how the suspension of the criminal investigation presumably took place.

Dnevnik did not launch this second stage of the scandal, as information about stopping the police investigation was revealed officially, i.e., it was the *Commission for Preventing Corruption* which informed the public about the controversial

documents. The question which appears here is whether a more detailed journalistic investigation could have enabled journalists to get access to the controversial documents in the first stage of the scandal already, i.e. more than a year and a half previously. Namely, according to the *Commission for Preventing Corruption*, they received an anonymous letter at the end of 2007, in which a group of policemen informed them that some police chiefs did everything in their power to stop the investigation (S 12). So there were sources out there that were prepared to leak information, but journalists obviously did not reach them.

Discussion and conclusion

Our first research question was concerned with what were the topics of "the biggest stories of Dnevnik" in 2008. News items covering institutional scandals in this period dealt with relevant themes such as: *corruption of powerful Slovenian directors and governmental officials; questionable independence of Slovenian foreign policy; illegal proceedings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; hypocrisy of government representatives; abuse of tax-payers' money and abuse of official position*. But, the analysis revealed that these topics were investigated and covered in a kind of semi-investigative journalistic practice, for which it is typical that in one or more phases of the news production process, journalists did not meet all the criteria for their work to be classified as investigative journalism. On the other hand, these stories cannot be dismissed as pseudo-investigative journalism or even sensationalism, as they make some positive contributions to the public good. The following findings support recognition of this phenomenon in investigative journalism development in Slovenia:

First, in the *information gathering phase* of news production, it was found that uncovering scandals usually is not a result of a journalistic investigation made on journalists' own initiative, even though this is a demand found in most definitions of investigative journalism. Instead, journalists start to investigate a scandal when it is already uncovered and made public by official sources, such as the police for example. So it is the official sources that set the agenda, while journalists join later and merely report on what has already been revealed, or perhaps add some new information; however mostly information which has little or even no relevance to the story. The process of so-called *agenda building*, i.e. who sets the media's agendas, is of a great importance as it puts the media in the role of receiver (see Pincus et al., 1993: 30). Editors' and journalists' agenda-setting decisions are thus influenced by official sources. In cases when journalists do uncover a scandal on their own, such as was the case in the "diplomatic mail" scandal, further phases of news production, described in the paragraph below, turned out to be problematic.

Second, the *information and sources selection phase* as well as the *news coverage phase* revealed a deficiency of journalists' work regardless of who uncovered the scandal in the first place and how. According to Feldstein (2007: 500–501), it is *originality* that most investigative reporters consider a key component of their work. Unlike reactive beat reporters on their daily deadlines, investigative journalists are expected to be more proactive, to investigate beneath the surface, to dig up original information and not simply act as a megaphone for someone else's

agenda. It cannot be denied that journalists of *Dnevnik* were persistent and active while gathering information and trying to get to the bottom of the scandal. These certainly are features of quality journalism. Still, turning to official institutions and sources, as well as citing documents and statements published in other media, is not enough for their work to be attributed the label of an investigation. As Randall pointed out, investigative reporting "is not a summary of piecing together of others' findings and data" (2000: 10). But, journalists in *Dnevnik* cannot be reproached with not following standards of balanced reporting. The "verbal reactions" category was used repeatedly, citing sources from different sides and thus producing a strong image of "objective" journalism.

In the cases researched, the image of investigative reporting was established mainly by references to secret sources, while the necessity of their use was not explained by journalists, neither was it implicitly clear from the texts. Doubts about the credibility, motives or even existence of these sources were also raised due to some inaccuracies and inconsistencies when citing these sources. Instead of being merely an instrument which is to be used by journalists only in exceptional circumstances, so that they could achieve the goal of serving the public interest when it cannot be served by using transparent sources, the use of secret sources became an "end in itself", intended to serve as "proof" that a journalistic investigation took place. And the existence of an "investigation" in one form or another, having relevant results or not, being connected to the scandal or not, pointed to the label of "investigative journalism".

This semi-investigative journalism comes close to what Feldstein described as the "ventriloquist muckraking model" (2007: 503–505) for which it is typical that the agenda is set by a source who provides the journalist with information; the process is initiated by the behind-the-scenes source, who may have leaked the story as a way to manipulate events; among them there are business rivals, disgruntled former employees and vengeful ex-spouses; they have various motives which may overlap: idealism, revenge, political ideology, personal or bureaucratic ambition, etc. For example, while sources in the middle ranks of the public sector may be motivated by outrage at organizational deviance and leak information to journalists in the public interest, others may leak information to further their private interests (Flynn, 2006: 264). However, as our research was limited to textual analysis only, it could focus on the sources as they were recognizable from journalistic texts, thus ignoring a no less important dimension of who or what was hiding under the label of non-transparent sources.[3]

In semi-investigative journalism, secret sources appear relevant not merely or even not primarily in the process of uncovering the scandal. Instead, their role may be decisive in the further stages of investigation and coverage, after the scandal has been already made public. If passing information on to journalists from such sources is followed by a critical and thorough reflection on the sources' concealed motives, a further investigation of various aspects of the story and questioning of other relevant sources, then there might even be nothing wrong with the picture where journalists are not actual initiators of the story. As Schlesinger and Tumber (1999: 259) noted, journalists can take an initiative by challenging the so-called *primary definers* and force them to respond. But, when journalists become pri-

marily instruments of their sources, then semi-investigative journalism turns into pseudo-investigative journalism.

However, semi-investigative journalism is not to be equated with pseudo-investigative journalism mentioned earlier in this paper. In pseudo-investigative journalism, all phases of news production are lacking professional standards. The pseudo-investigative stories present themselves as investigative only due to a proper topic chosen for coverage, while in all other aspects they have extreme deficiencies. An analysis of a series of articles on, presumably, mafia importation of medications (Poler Kovačič, 2003) presented a case very typical of pseudo-investigative journalism: at first sight, articles seemed to be an attempt at investigative reporting because of the topic, i.e. anomalies in public health care, including money laundering and bribery of doctors and state officials. However, analysis of all phases of news production uncovered an a priori assumption of guilt, the use of stereotypes as the basis for choosing or creating "evidence", uncritical acceptance of "investigations" carried out by others, reliance on rumours, very evident disrespect for the presumption of innocence, etc. These stories did not contribute to the public interest at all, not even in a single element. On the contrary, they were misleading. Namely, the analysis revealed that even a seemingly well chosen topic was actually false, as it had no grounds in real life, but presented a total fabrication, constructed to serve some political interests as well as the media's economic interests. A question can be raised here of whether such stories can be attributed a status of "journalism" at all, being basically irrespective of truth.

In the case of the Meta Rupel scandal, some elements of investigative journalism could be established, especially in the first stage: journalists revealed information about an inappropriate (at least immoral, if not illegal) act of a public official; they started their own investigation based on a secret source; they offered evidence; they even used a special method of obtaining information, i.e. waiting in ambush and secretly photographing. However, further investigation and coverage revealed some inconsistencies and inaccuracies; secret sources were used without any cogent justification, while most of the reports were based on easily obtainable official sources. The story was left to fall into oblivion, even though events were not clarified, and it was reopened a year and a half later not due to continuous journalistic investigation, but because of the anti-corruption commission's findings. It was mostly references to unnamed sources which constituted the *appearance* of investigative journalism in this second stage of the scandal, even thought these sources' information did not make a relevant contribution. In sum, the case of the Meta Rupel scandal may be attributed the status of semi-investigative journalism, fulfilling some, but not all the criteria necessary to be named investigative journalism.

Why is there no "pure" investigative journalism, not even in a national daily newspaper which explicitly presents itself as being serious press, devoted to high professional standards, and which emphasizes uncovering corruption and abuse of power both at corporate and government levels as one of its main goals? Even seemingly serious media with large circulations are today not immune to economic as well as political influences. As Barnett (2004: 17) stressed, the traditional Fourth Estate function becomes much more difficult when the corporate in-

terests of media businesses are better served by protecting rather than exposing the establishment. Difficulties with "proper" investigative journalism at *Dnevnik* might well be explained by Barnett's observation. In 2007, state-owned and state-controlled companies virtually ceased to advertise in *Dnevnik*, despite the fact that its circulation steadily increased over a long period of time (see Hrvatin B. & Petković, 2008: 76–77), while *Delo*, its main competitor, had no problem with these same advertisers, although its circulation slumped. The loss suffered by *Dnevnik* in one year was estimated at 1 million euros. Representatives of the newspaper company *Dnevnik* claimed that the withdrawal of advertisements was an attempt to punish them for their political stance being inconsistent with that of the ruling party (ibid.). The question is whether such a loss of advertising money is something that a newspaper can actually afford in the long run, despite its dedication to social responsibility and its declared independence.

Furthermore, good investigative journalism is expensive, while corporate centres tend to resist expenditure which has no immediate return. According to Hrvatin B. et al. (2004: 44), publishers as well as media owners in the post-socialist states, in general do not encourage investigative journalism. In Slovenia, reasons for semi-investigative journalism being the most that could obviously be achieved at the moment might be attributed to the publishers' demands for news which sells well, while more time-consuming and expensive practices are not desired or encouraged. Organizational limitations (lack of staff and other resources) and the usual journalistic routines (such as deadline pressures) are sometimes combined with journalists' own ambition to be the first to publish a scandal (see Merljak Zdovc & Poler Kovačič, 2007). Newsroom influences place heavy constraints on journalists responsible for news selection and coverage (see Sheridan Burns, 2003: 9).

The social practice dimension of our analysis also raises questions about the influence these texts may have on society (Richardson, 2007: 42). As Košir (1994: 12) pointed out, media scandals often have no denouements and no effects, yet from a media scandal thoroughly investigated and proved, the audience is entitled to expect some consequences, a certain solution, and not merely a shift from one (unsolved) scandal to another, which would be attractive enough to draw the audience's attention. Otherwise, a media scandal becomes an end in itself as a means of political struggle and/or gaining profits. But even quality investigative journalism does not always achieve this ideal. Usually, the scandal continues as long as the public remains interested in the story, so the terms of closure actually rest with the public (Lull & Hinerman, 1997: 13).

The impact of investigative journalism (or its lack) is to be ascribed to various factors in society. Uncovering scandals with no denouements speaks about the society even more than it does about journalism. According to Gans (2003: 79–81), most watchdog news has no visible effects: reporting may be too brief to obtain enough attention-getting information or the effect can be aborted because no influential audience is paying attention. Even the best investigative journalism is unlikely to have results if large quantities of money are at stake, or if major expenditures of political capital are needed, or if a shift in political power arrangements is threatened. But, as Protess et al. (1987: 184) suggested, journalists uncover problems, while officials directly responsible for the particular domain in

which a problem is uncovered may feel obligated to take some action – they must either attempt to justify the problem or act to solve it. In this sense at least, the journalism of *Dnevnik* had an impact in all analyzed cases, and thus positively served the public.

ENDNOTES:

[1] According to the *National Readership Survey* for 2008 (Valicon, 2009-01-23), the tabloid *Slovenske novice* is the most-read Slovenian daily paper, while the free newspaper *Žurnal24* holds the second place; the "serious" broadsheet *Delo* takes the third position, and *Dnevnik* the fourth one (reach of one issue = 8.6% of population, i.e. 147.000).

[2] The so-called "Patria Scandal" came to the centre of public attention after the Finnish television station YLE broadcast the show "The Truth about Patria" on September 1st 2008, in which the investigative journalist Magnus Berglund revealed the supposed corruption in the business of the Slovenian *Ministry of Defence* buying the "patria vehicles" from the Finnish company Patria. According to the broadcast, the prime minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša, was supposedly one of those involved in the bribery. Journalists from *Dnevnik* were extensively reporting on the story and also revealed some relevant information, such as the delay in the delivery of the vehicles and the interest that would consequently have to be paid, and the Slovenian police ignoring the Austrian Interpol sending notes on suspicious money transactions. But, it was the Finnish journalists who began to investigate the scandal; they were the first to uncover certain facts as well as suspicions, and thus stimulated other media to start their own investigations. The other media, including *Dnevnik*, did not contribute to the main investigation in any meaningful way, at least not yet so far, as the scandal is still very much in the spot-light of media attention, and also the police and the criminal proceedings.

[3] In order to go beyond what is revealed in the texts, the next phase of this research will combine textual analysis with in-depth interviews.

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Poluistraživačko novinarstvo u sloveniji: Istraživanje izvještavanja o skandalima u dnevnim novinama *Dnevnik*

Melita Poler Kovačič

SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad uključuje slučaj Slovenije u široko područje studija o istraživačkom novinarstvu koje postoje svuda na svijetu. Istražuje kako se istraživačko novinarstvo razvilo u Sloveniji od kraja osamdesetih godina i pokušava utvrditi jesu li zaključci o nestanku kvalitetnog istraživačkog novinarstva još uvijek važeći. Kritična analiza diskursa informativnih članaka koji pokrivaju tri institucionalna skandala prikazana u dnevnim novinama Dnevnik u 2008. godini, pokazala je da su novinari izvještavali o važnim temama, ali da su o temama pisali na poluistraživački novinarski način, za koji je karakteristično da u jednoj ili više faza procesa produkcije vijesti, novinari ne udovoljavaju svim kriterijima koji su potrebni da bi se njihov rad svrstao pod istraživačko novinarstvo. Najčešće otkrivanje skandala nije rezultat istraživačkog novinarstva, jer novinari najčešće započinju istraživati tek kada su službeni izvori već otkrili skandal. U slučaju kada su novinari otkrili skandal samostalno, daljnje faze produkcije vijesti postale su problematične. U studiji slučaja skandala Meta Rupel otkriveno je da je slika istraživačkog novinarstva uglavnom uspostavljena na temeljima tajnih izvora koji su korišteni bez čvrstih dokaza, dok se većina izvještaja temeljila na lako dostupnim službenim izvorima. Unatoč malom broju istraživačkih članaka, ove priče ne mogu se odbaciti kao pseudoistraživačke ili senzacionalističke, jer su pridonijele javnom mnijenju. Razlozi ovakvog poluistraživačkog novinarstva leže u ekonomskim i političkim utjecajima, kao i u organizacijskim ograničenjima unutar medija i uobičajene novinarske rutine.

Ključne riječi: istraživačko novinarstvo, korupcija, skandali, novi izvori, Slovenija