

Social exclusion as a consequence of media reporting

- Serbian and Albanian Ethnic Stereotypes -

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Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to show what is the influence of media nowadays in structuring of everyday life and our perception of other people.

General hypothesis is that media reporting, especially in conflict area can contribute social exclusion in contemporary European societies. Research shows that the media often presents the other party involved in conflict in selective and negative manner. There is a significant probability that media in this way contribute to discrimination of members of different ethnic groups and/or minorities – or in the least fail to explicitly deprecate it – thus taking part in their social exclusion from the majority society.

We will start with the short briefing about the role of media in Kosovo crisis and in dissolution of Yugoslavia in general. Then we will address ethnic stereotypes presented in national widespread printed daily news in Serbia and Kosovo. We will mention recently finished project and research of Center for peace studies in *Ethnic stereotypes and national myths as obstacle – Serbian and Albanian relations*. This paper refers to some findings from this mentioned project.

In the next part, we will explain the concept of peace journalism and war journalism and describe basic differences between two approaches.

In the last part, we will suggest ways of media reporting that can contribute to social inclusion using concept of peace journalism.

Kosovo crisis in media

Kosovo is the last part of SFR Yugoslav which declared independence since Yugoslav dissolution. Since 1990 media have played key role in formulating public opinion and sustaining heterogenization of ethnic communities. Roots causes of Yugoslav crisis attracted attention of both domestic and world media.

Hammond argues that in Yugoslavia we have witnessed a long-running media campaign to demonise the Serbs, who have been portrayed as the new Nazis, running concentration camps and committing genocide. Many journalists have openly taken sides in Yugoslavia's civil

wars, abandoning even a rhetorical commitment to objectivity. Media coverage of Yugoslavia has been all comment and no context: this has allowed a series of bloody civil conflicts to be portrayed as one-sided aggression. Like Western politicians, reporters have taken a moralistic stance, vilifying the Serbs and calling tougher military action against them. When that military action came, in Kosovo in 1999, in place of reporting we had propaganda.¹ More than decade after, Kosovo is still unpredictable and conflict area, with new types of violences. Kosovo still attracts media attention. The way of reporting is not changed, but the main problem is that they still build the public opinion. Futhermore, media has a lot of means to direct public opinion in one direction. Using diffrent attributes for opposite sides in conflict is the simplest way to infuence to the ordinary readers and recipients of news.

Ethnic stereotypes

In the 1920s the journalist Walter Lippman introduced stereotypes as scientific constructs when he defined them as ‘pictures in our heads’, where the pictures refer to shared beliefs about the members of particular groups.² Stangor and Schaller define stereotypes as mental representations of the characteristics of a particular social or cultural group that are shared among the members of a society.³ This definition corresponds to social or cultural, as opposed to individual, stereotypes.⁴

Functions od stereotypes

1. Our knowledge about environment has tendency to be categorized. Everybody belongs less or more to certain groups, have characteristics that affect its behavior. (Lippman)
2. Stereotypes have a role of justification because of hostile relation to other groups. (Dolard)
3. Stereotypes have function in keeping positive picture about ourseves. (Tajfel i Turner)

Following the violent/war approach of reporting and writing only one side of story, media in Serbia and Kosovo continue with propaganda. Recently presented results of project *Ethnic stereotypes and national myths as obstacle – Serbian and Albanian relations* included media analysis of mainstream dailies in Serbia and Kosovo (*Blic* in Serbia, *Koha ditore* in Kosovo)

¹ Philip Hammond, *The media and the Kosovo crisis*, <http://emperors-clothes.com/articles/hammond/mediaandkosovo.htm>, 12. 04. 2012.

² Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1922.

³ Charles Stangor, Mark Schaller, *Stereotypes and Stereotyping*, The Gilford Press, New York, 1996

⁴ Cynthia Hudley, Sandra Graham, *Stereotypes of achievement striving among early adolescents*, *Social Psychology of Education* **5**: 201–224, 2001.

show how that type of reporting lead to social exclusion. During research, we were looking for ethnic stereotypes and national myths in articles related to topic. Research included two periods. There were days after 17th March 2004, when Albanians, revolted by incident in the river Ibar, where three Albanian boys died, started to revenge on Serbian people lived in Kosovo. The second period is days after Kosovo declared independence. I will mention some of the most frequent ethnic stereotypes.

Ethnic stereotypes in *Blic* and *Koha ditore*

In Serbian printed media *Blic* Albanian are extremist, terrorists, secessionists, “Siptar”⁵ nationalists, gunmen, evil-doers, armed, they hate Serbian community. Auto stereotypes, picture about Serbs themselves is not so different. A lot of critics are directed to Serbs during protests that represented dissatisfaction because of March unrests and declaration of Kosovo independent. Serbs in their own media became criminals, hooligans, losers, bands, vandals and violent people.

But, Serbian people remain a victim of historical circumstances. In the resent wars Serbs are charged for ethnic cleansing, holocaust, genocide. Serbian officials would say that Serbs were always slaughtered.

“At the end of 20th century and beginning of 21st century this people was charged for ethnic cleansing, but at the places where they accused for that there are no more Serbs. There are no Serbs in Krajina, in Slavonia, and there will not be more in Kosovo. **Last rests of this slaughtered people in this moment are destructed**; their villages, homes and churches are burnt. Everybody should be clear that there are no Serbs without the Patriarchate of Pec, Decani and Gracanica. In Kosovo is going on St. Bartholomew's night and pogrom of a people and their dignity.” (20.03. 2004, pg. 6, *No Serbia without Decani*)

It is not written so much how Albanians perceive Serbs, but it could be concluded that eyewitnesses named them roughly.

⁵ Siptar is common name for Albanians lived in Kosovo. Some authors believe that is derogatory name for Albanian, but there are analysts who think that is not truth, that is only name for Kosovo Albanians. It used to be name of Albanian land - Siptarija

“**Siptari** shot at the building, and then entered. We heard how they run and demolish doors. They shout: *Skije*, which is discriminatory name for Serbs.” (20. 03. 2004, pg. 2, *They wanted to burn us*)

During March unrests 2004, revenge of one side caused revenge of other side. So, we have violence in Kosovo, violence in Serbia. Albanian revenge produced killing of Serbian civilians, burning Serbian churches and monasteries. As response to that, demonstrators in Serbia tried to destroy mosques in Belgrade and in Nis.

Serbs in Albanian daily in Kosovo Koha ditore are violent, nationalists, kill Albanians, take arms to protect their people in Kosovo. Alliance for future Kosovo considers that Serbs are the most responsible for violence at the north of Kosovo.

“Thousands Serbian demonstrators have blocked the roads of main towns of Serbia reacting towards the violence in Kosovo, **calling the killing of Albanians** and asking for weapons from their government.” (18. 03. 2004, pg. 4, *Thousands Serbian demonstrators start an offensive to destroy mosques in Nis, Belgrade*)

Serbs are presented as criminal gangs, and also people who do not want to be integrated in Kosovo society.

“**Serbs are misusing** the good will of Albanians to create an equal society for all. This is proofed by recent events. It's not that they can't but **they don't want to be integrated in Kosovo society**. Their will also after five years remained a **will for violence towards Albanians**. This can't be tolerated anymore.”(Koha ditore, 18. 03. 2004, pg.4, *PDK: five year efforts for integration of Serbs are about to fail*)

“These structures and **criminal gangs** are stimulating illegitimate actions and murder of Kosovo citizens.”(Koha ditore, 18. 03. 2004, pg.4, *AAK blames Serbian parallel structures*)

Both dailies presented what demonstrators shout during protest.

“Kosovo is Serbia, Let's go to Kosovo, Kosovo is heart of Serbia, Kill Albanians, **Kill, slaughter, to not exist Albanians anymore.**” (*Koha ditore*, 20. 03 2004, str. 7, *Around 10 thousand Serbs protest in Belgrade*)

Koha Ditore, using the words of Serbian officials gives the Serbian view about Kosovo Albanians.

“Tadic evaluated that such incidents won’t bring any good to Serbia, but only will be equaled with the role of **Albanians vandals** in Kosovo.”(Koha ditore,19. 03. 2004, pg.6, *In Belgrade and Nis mosques are burnt*)

Albanians from Kosovo do not give themselves so much attributes, but we can conclude that they are devoted, religious.

“We are dealing with a new image of Kosovo, an image we never had before, and this is the damage to religious objects. **Kosovars are well-known as nation who preserved religious monuments, in even harder times than now.**” (20. 03 2004, pg. 3, *Surroi: From this situation we should go out with a new consensus between Kosovars*)

Empirical analysis has shown that negative stereotypes about other side is the most presented, both in *Blic* and *Koha ditore*.

Peace journalism

The model of peace journalism was set out by Professor Johan Galtung, a founder of the academic subject of Peace Studies and the set of analytical and fieldwork methods known as Peace Research.⁶ The model is developed by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick. They gave one of the definitions of peace journalism. Actually, it is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict. Some authors as Blaesì consider that PJ is “constructive conflict coverage”. These models suggest alternative ways of conflict reporting that can contribute to process of de-escalation, peacebuliding and reconciliation instead of escalating, exaggerating or ignoring conflicts.⁷ Shinar will define PJ as a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage

⁶ Jake Lynch, Annabel McGoldrick, *Peace journalism*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 6

⁷ Burkhard Blasi, *Peace journalism and the news production procces*, Conflict and comunication online, Vol.3, Number 1/2, 2004

of conflict that aims and contributing to peacemaking and peacekeeping and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals and audiences towards war and peace.⁸

Peace journalism:

- Uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concept of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting;
- Provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism – the ethics of journalistic intervention
- Builds an awareness of non-violence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting.⁹

Briefly, in practical terms, peace journalism tends to take an analytical approach to conflict, seeking opportunities to identify parties, goals, needs and interests.¹⁰

Peace vs. war journalism

Media in reporting about conflict often seek wars, elites that lead and outcomes in which is one side is winner, and the other loser. There is another way of reporting that follows conflict and its transformation.

In general there seem to be two ways of looking at a conflict: the high road and the low road, depending on whether the focus is on the *conflict* and its *peaceful transformation* or on the meta-conflict that comes after the root conflict, created by *violence* and *war*, and the question of *who wins*. Media even confuse the two, talking about 'conflict' when they mean 'violence'. The *low road*, dominant in the media, sees a conflict as a battle, as a sports arena or gladiator circus. The parties, usually reduced to two, are combatants in a struggle to impose their goals.¹¹

There are two different ways of thinking about, looking at, describing and ultimately writing up the same set of events; two angles, two discourses, maybe political messages, left

⁸ Dov Shinar, *Epilogue: Peace journalism – A state of the Art*, Conflict and communication online, Vol.6, Number 1, 2007

⁹ Jake Lynch, Annabel McGoldrick, *Peace journalism*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 5

¹⁰ Jake Lynch, *A course in Peace journalism*, Conflict and communication online, Vol.6, No.1, 2007

¹¹ Johan Galtung *High Road, Low Road Charting the course for Peace Journalism*, Track Two Vol. 7 No. 4, December 1998

and right. Both are based on reporting facts, and are based on underlying cognitive and emotional assumptions rather than one being idealistic and normative and the other realistic and descriptive.¹²

Taking into consideration characteristics of war journalism, widespread among journalists, Johan Galtung compare two approaches of reporting in conflict areas.

Peace/conflict journalism vs. War/violence journalism

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Peace/conflict orientated | 1. War/violence orientated |
| 2. Truth-orientated | 2. Propaganda-orientated |
| 3. People-orientated | 3. Elite-orientated |
| 4. Solution-orientated | 4. Victory-orientated. |

Peace orientated journalism means making conflict transparent and focuses on conflict creativity, humanization of all sides. Opposite, war/violent means making war secret, focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage). People orientated means focus on people peace makers, focus on suffering all sides, and elite orientated means focus on “our” suffering, give name to their evil-doers. Furthermore, solution orientated means focus on structure, culture and the peaceful society. Victory orientated means focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society.

Critics of PJ

The concept of peace journalism is widely discussed. Is the PJ possible? PJ means changes of how contemporary media works. Hanitzsch argues that task of journalism cannot be engagement in the peaceful settlement of conflict since this the task of politics or the military. He considers even PJ can contribute to peaceful settlement of conflict, its influence is limited.¹³ According to the Grundmann, if we follow PJ principle, the implementation of peace would be the task of the media. He also considers that PJ in practice is idealized conception. We cannot make news for peace.¹⁴ The BBC correspondent David Loyn was one of the well known practitioners who criticized Galtung approach. He argues that peace

¹² Johan Galtung, *Peace journalism as Ethical Challenge*, asteriskos, 2007, ¾, 7-16

¹³ Thomas Hanitzsch, *Situating peace journalism in journalism studies: A critical appraisal*, Conflict and communication online, Vol.6, Number 2, 2007

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 486

journalism philosophy compromise the integrity of journalists and confuse their role as neutral disseminators: „Our task is always to seek to find out what is going on, not carrying any other baggage. If there is conflict resolution we report on it in context. We do not engage in it.”¹⁵

On the other side, many scholars consider that media because of existential reasons have to insist on commercialization of conflict. PJ neglects the role of editor and other journalists. Editors decide what they will publish considering different factors, but not always listening their reporters. It is shown that there is a problem with itself name. Journalists do not like the name “peace journalism”, they think that this name means they are not able to challenge the dangers of war.¹⁶

One of the most common remarks is that PJ pays too much attention factors which impact on reporting, and too little to the process of producing news. Model of PJ have to be dedicated to the reality in contemporary media.

Conclusion

Taking all above into consideration, we can say that that Serbian and Albanian dailies reported about the same events differently. Empirical analysis has shown that dailies Blic and Koha ditore did not use principles of peace journalism. Even there are a lot of critics of PJ, and some of them are very reliable to our everyday life, we consider that there is a structural framework in which the PJ is possible. According to the Burkhard Blasi the production process can be described as complex interaction of six factors: 1) structural aspects of media, 2) conflict situation on-site, 3) personal features of individual journalist, 4) the political climate, 5) lobbies and 6) the audience.¹⁷ That means we should have in our mind deadline, editors politics, the possibility to access information, geographical and administrative barriers, relations between journalist and local population. It is important to have in mind the different interests of conflict sides, but also other countries, NGO, companies.

¹⁵ David Loyn, *Witnessing the truth*, openDemocracy.net, 20th February 2003

¹⁶ Notes from lecture of PHD candidate Zoran Cirjakovic, 23rd January 2010

¹⁷ More about structural aspects in which is possible PJ see, Burkhard Blasi, *Peace journalism and the news production process*, Conflict and communication online, Vol.3, Number 1/2, 2004

So, as consequence of war/violent journalism we have more incompatibilities between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. And then we have more excluded ethnic groups in both communities. Before Kosovo one-sided declaration of independent and in past decades of 20th century we have a lot of examples of social excluded Albanians in villages where Serbs were majority. Now, Serbs are minority in Kosovo, and they are grouped in north of Kosovo. During the Kosovo crisis, war in 1999 and after Kosovo independent Serbs became social excluded groups in Kosovo. Media contributed to that situation when one side is always presented as victim or winner. The main issue is that media became a means of war.

If journalist wants to avoid being one of parties in conflict, he needs:

- Avoid treating a conflict as if is the only going on in the place and at the time that violence is occurring. Instead try to trace the links and consequences for people in other places now and in the future.
- Avoid assessing the merits of violent action or policy of violence in terms of its visible effects only. Instead try to find ways of reporting on the invisible effects.
- Avoid letting parties define themselves by simply quoting their leaders restatement of familiar demands or positions. Instead enquire deeper into goals: How are people on the ground affected by the conflict in everyday life?
- Avoid blaming someone for “starting it”. Instead try looking at how shared problems and issues are leading to consequences which all the parties say they never intended.
- Avoid victimizing language like destitute, devastated, defenseless, pathetic and tragedy which only tell us what was has been done to and could be done for group of people. Instead report on what has been done and could be done by people.
- Avoid imprecise use of emotive words (genocide, massacre) to describe what has happened to people. Instead always be precise about what we know. Do not minimize suffering but reserve the strongest language for the gravest situations.¹⁸

To conclude, peace orientated, truth and people orientated and solution orientated media reporting can contribute to less social excluded groups in our societies. If we expose untruths on all sides, focus on suffering on both sides, giving voice to voiceless, not only to state officials, we will have examples of social inclusion. If we give name to all evil-doers, focus on peacemaking, highlight peace initiatives, we will prevent more conflict and more social

¹⁸ Taken from Dos and Don'ts, Peace Journalism Manual

exclusion. Peace journalism could be way of media reporting that can contribute social inclusion.

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