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Normative Role Orientations of Yugoslav Journalists: A Study of Journalism Ethics Codes in the SFRY**

IZVLEČEK

NORMATIVNE USMERITVE VLOG JUGOSLOVANSKIH NOVINARJEV: ŠTUDIJA NOVINARSKIH ETIČNIH KODEKSOV V SFRJ

Cilj te študije je raziskati normativne orientacije vlog novinarjev v SFRJ, kot so zapisane v petih jugoslovanskih novinarskih etičnih kodeksih ali razvidne iz njih. Z analizo dokumentov in primerjalno zgodovinsko metodo smo raziskali razloge za sprejem prvega kodeksa, analizirali pojmovanja svobode in odgovornosti ter odnos med njima v kodeksih in ugotovili, kako kodeksi naslavlja resnicoljubnost in profesionalne norme. Normativni temelji novinarstva, kot se kažejo v etičnih kodeksih, so se spreminjali skozi čas ter ob spremembah v družbenem, političnem, pravnem in ekonomskem okolju. Medijska/novinarska svoboda je bila dovoljena le v okviru socialistične usmeritve ter prispevka h graditvi in razvoju samoupravne družbe, vsaj do leta 1988, ko so bile izpuščene vrednoti marksizma in leninizma ter opredelitev novinarja kot družbenopolitičnega delavca. Novinar je bil obvezan delovati po svoji socialistični zavesti in je bil odgovoren do delovnih ljudi, do socialistične javnosti, kodeksa v osemdesetih letih pa sta poudarjala njegovo odgovornost do javnosti. Ob več značilnostih sovjetske totalitarne teorije tiska imajo normativni temelji tudi določeno podobnost s teorijo družbene odgovornosti. Profesionalne norme, povezane z resnicoljubnostjo, profesionalno integriteto ter spoštovanjem človekove osebnosti in dostojanstva, so se sčasoma razvijale ter pridobivale več prostora, razdelanosti in poudarka. Dejstvo, da je novinarska skupnost nekatere profesionalne norme prepoznala kot dovolj pomembne za

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kodifikacijo, nakazuje, da so bili temelji profesionalizacije slovenskega novinarstva položeni že v socialistični Jugoslaviji.

Ključne besede: novinarstvo, etični kodeksi, normativne vloge, socializem, Jugoslavija

ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to investigate the normative role orientations of journalists in the SFRY, as stated or implied in five Yugoslav journalism ethics codes. Application of the method of document analysis and the comparative historical method identified the reasons for adopting the first code and assisted in the analysis of how the codes conceptualised (the relationship between) freedom and responsibility, and how they addressed truthfulness and professional norms. The normative foundations of journalism outlined in these ethics codes were transforming over time and in response to changes in the socio-political-legal-economic environment. Media/journalistic freedom was only permitted within the limits of the socialist orientation and if contributing to the building and development of the self-managed society, at least up until 1988 when the Marxist and Leninist values defining a journalist as a socio-political worker were removed. A journalist was obliged to follow their socialist conscience and be responsible to the working people – the socialist public, yet in the 1980s the codes stressed their responsibility to the public. While displaying several characteristics of the Soviet-totalitarian theory of the press, the normative foundations also somewhat resemble the social responsibility theory. Professional norms associated with truthfulness, professional integrity, and respect for human personality and dignity have been evolving over time, gaining more space, elaboration and emphasis. The fact that some professional norms were seen by the journalistic community as sufficiently important to be codified shows that the foundations of the professionalization of Slovenian journalism were laid in the socialist Yugoslavia already.

Keywords: journalism; ethics codes; normative roles; socialism; Yugoslavia

Introduction

The study of journalistic roles is central to understanding journalism's identity and place in a given society.¹ Through journalistic roles, journalists "articulate journalism's identity and position vis-à-vis society and broader public expectations"² on

1 Thomas Hanitzsch, "Roles of Journalists," in: *Journalism*, ed. Tim P. Vos (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2018), 43.

2 Thomas Hanitzsch et al., "Journalistic Culture in a Global Context: A Conceptual Roadmap," in: *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe*, eds. Thomas Hanitzsch et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 37.

analytically distinct levels.³ In this study,⁴ we focus on normative journalistic roles, dealing with what journalists think they ought to do. Normative roles are found on the level of role orientations, namely, the level of “discursive constructions of the institutional values, attitudes, and beliefs with regards to the position of journalism in society”.⁵ By referring to the ways journalism should serve society,⁶ normative journalistic roles constitute “a framework of desirable practice”.⁷

To better understand journalism in a system distinct from democracy also due to the limitations it placed on civil liberties, including freedom of expression,⁸ we investigate Yugoslav journalists’ normative role orientations. General descriptions of journalism in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) are often associated with the image of journalists as socio-political workers, serving as lackeys of the political authorities, being short on professional freedom by having to be primarily responsible to the Communist Party. However, the impression of Yugoslav journalism as merely “an agitation power of politics”,⁹ practised in a system where a text could only be published if based on the political philosophy and thought of self-management,¹⁰ while deviant opinions were suppressed by preventive censorship and repressive penal legislation,¹¹ does not reflect the true variety of realities in different media and social environments within the federal state over the period of more than 40 years. Only a few authors have discussed the characteristics of *socialist journalism in the SFRY* in any greater depth, revealing differences from the Soviet communist concept of media communications¹² and highlighting the complexity of journalistic roles as they change over time¹³ on the levels of media practices and their normative foundations.

Starting from the premise that ethics codes provide the normative foundations of journalism by both defining and reflecting values and norms on the professional and wider societal levels, our aim is to determine the reasons for adopting the first journalism ethics code in the SFRY, how the codes conceptualised (the relationship between) the values of freedom and responsibility, and how they addressed professional norms, especially those related to truthfulness.

3 Hanitzsch, “Roles of Journalists,” 43.

4 This research was supported by ARRS – the Slovenian Research Agency (grant No. J5-1793).

5 Thomas Hanitzsch and Tim P. Vos, “Journalistic Roles and the Struggle Over Institutional Identity: The Discursive Constitution of Journalism,” *Communication Theory* 27 (2017): 123.

6 Thomas Hanitzsch et al., “Role Orientations: Journalists’ Views on Their Place in Society,” in: *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe*, eds. Thomas Hanitzsch et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 164.

7 *Ibidem*, 168.

8 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 26.

9 Dragoslav Rančić, “Zakaj pripravljamo nov kodeks?,” *Teorija in praksa* 25, No. 5 (1988): 646.

10 Mitja Gorjup, *Samoupravno novinarstvo* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1978), 89.

11 Marjan Horvat, “Prepovedi razširjanja tiskane besede v Sloveniji 1945–1990” (Bachelor Thesis, University of Ljubljana, 1995).

12 E.g., Gertrude Joch Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

13 E.g., Zrinjka Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems: The Case of Southeast Europe* (London, New York: Routledge, 2021).

(Normative) Transformations of Journalism in the SFRY

Research on journalism with respect to its normative transformations is particularly useful for understanding both journalism and society in a given historical period because, as an institution constituted by shared beliefs, norms, rules and routines, journalism denotes a distinct area of social authority and signals institutional autonomy, yet it is also “inherently social and thus inextricably interconnected with other institutions”.¹⁴ The discursive articulation and enactment of journalism’s identity as a social institution may be referred to as *journalistic roles*,¹⁵ which are discursively constituted and “subject to discursive (re)creation, (re)interpretation, appropriation, and contestation”.¹⁶ Journalists and other actors, including those outside of journalism, compete to construct, reiterate and challenge the boundaries of acceptable journalistic practices.¹⁷ The discourse of journalistic roles has thus become “a central arena where the legitimacy and identity of journalism is reproduced, contested, and negotiated”.¹⁸ As a result of this contest, dominant positions “crystallize as institutional norms and practices”.¹⁹ Normative journalistic roles, which pertain to professional aspirations concerning how journalists are supposed to contribute to society,²⁰ have emerged through interchanges occurring among both internal and external actors.²¹ Hence, investigations into these roles provide insights into journalism’s identity and place in society as well as into other social institutions given that journalists “articulate normative roles with social interlocutors either explicitly or implicitly in mind”.²²

The normative position of news media as well as media practices in Yugoslavia were changing over time, alongside changes in the political and economic fields.²³ The limits of free expression were shifted in both legislation and journalism practice. The Federal Press Act of 1960 brought, on top of the rights of correction and reply, the right to express and publish opinions, which in 1963 became a constitutional right.²⁴ Yugoslavia was the only socialist country to forbid any advance censorship in the 1960s, violations of the press laws could only be prosecuted following the appearance of a publication, and even this occurred quite rarely, according to Calic.²⁵ For example, in the 1960s already some journalists from *Tovariš*, a weekly magazine from Ljubljana, used novelistic techniques to reveal the injustices of the system.²⁶ The relationship

14 Tim P. Vos, “Journalism as Institution,” 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.825>.

15 Hanitzsch and Vos, “Journalistic Roles and the Struggle Over Institutional Identity,” 120.

16 Olivier Standaert et al., “In Their Own Words: A Normative-Empirical Approach to Journalistic Roles Around the World,” *Journalism* 22, No. 4 (2021): 921.

17 Matt Carlson, “Metajournalistic Discourse and the Meanings of Journalism: Definitional Control, Boundary Work, and Legitimation,” *Communication Theory* 26 (2016): 349.

18 Standaert et al., “In Their Own Words,” 920.

19 Hanitzsch Thomas and Tim P. Vos, “Journalism Beyond Democracy,” *Journalism* 19, No. 2 (2018): 151.

20 Standaert et al., “In Their Own Words,” 919.

21 Hanitzsch and Vos, “Journalistic Roles and the Struggle Over Institutional Identity,” 121.

22 *Ibid.*, 124.

23 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 99.

24 Slavko Splichal and France Vreg, *Množično komuniciranje in razvoj demokracije* (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1986), 171.

25 Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), 198.

26 Sonja Merljak Zdovc, “The Use of Novelistic Techniques in Slovene Journalism: The Case of Magazine *Tovariš*,” *Journalism Studies* 8, No. 2 (2007): 253, 254.

between the media and the state fluctuated between liberalisation and control,²⁷ and even though media contents on politically sensitive issues may have been limited, “it seems inapt to speak of an ideologically monolithic media.”²⁸

Transformations of journalism were not limited to the era of the major social changes in the 1980s, albeit they certainly were then the most radical and evident. In this period, when public debate on media freedom was intensifying and negotiating the boundaries of freedom had become a prevalent practice,²⁹ the media was democratising the society and also being democratised by it. The role of a journalist as a socio-political worker started to diminish as the media became more commercialised and the increasingly critical positions of the press, especially in political weeklies, were more tolerated.³⁰ At the end of the decade, some media were openly critical of the state,³¹ such as the investigative journalists at the Slovenian weekly magazine *Mladina* who uncovered several scandals of high-level representatives of authorities, such as the building of a villa for the Federal Secretary of the People’s Army of Yugoslavia.³² The media also played an important role in the series of conflicts that led to the break-up of the SFRY, being both an indicator of and contributor to the crisis.³³

Several types of journalists’ normative roles in the SFRY are described in the literature,³⁴ yet despite their variety the role of a journalist as a socio-political worker seemed to be the most prominent over the years, with journalism seen not as a job, but “first of all a political commitment”.³⁵ Still, there was also the role of a journalist as a neutral observer of events as well as some other ‘Western’ journalistic roles, such as supporting the public sphere, the gatekeeper role, and being responsive to the interests of the audience.³⁶ Bogdan Osolnik³⁷ referred to the media’s three vital functions in the self-management society: 1. to supply the citizens and self-managed units with objective and comprehensive social information from a variety of sources; 2. to act as public forums and to criticise negative phenomena and trends in society; and 3. to serve as a means for social education by spreading elementary knowledge for understanding the socio-economic process. According to Robinson, media communications in the SFRY did not follow the Leninist communication theory: Instead of identifying with Leninism, which attaches the media to the party apparatus and makes the journalist a mere transmission belt for the party line, Yugoslav self-managed democracy defines

27 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 125.

28 Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek, *The Rise and Fall of Socialist Yugoslavia: Elite Nationalism and the Collapse of a Federation* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2019), 104.

29 Ljubica Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 68.

30 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 102.

31 Smilja Amon, “Obdobja razvoja slovenskega novinarstva,” in: *Poti slovenskega novinarstva: danes in jutri*, eds. Melita Poler Kovačič and Monika Kalin Golob (Ljubljana: FDV, 2004), 66.

32 Matjaž Šuen, *Preiskovalno novinarstvo* (Ljubljana: FDV, 1994).

33 Tarik Jusić, “Media Discourse and the Politics of Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Yugoslavia,” in: *Media Discourse and the Yugoslav Conflicts: Representations of Self and Other*, ed. Pål Kolsto (London: Routledge, 2009), 21.

34 See: Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media*, 120. Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 101.

35 Gorjup, *Samoupravno novinarstvo*, 82.

36 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 101.

37 Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media*, 119.

him as a socially responsible yet independent recorder of events who should provide independent and nonpartisan sources of comment and criticism in contemporary Yugoslavia.”³⁸ However, the dominant view that journalists were responsible for the social situation rather than being free commentators reporting on this situation was not changed until the congress of Yugoslav journalists held in 1988.³⁹

Research Questions and the Methodology

Ethics codes may be considered key documents while researching the normative role orientations of journalism since they are concerned with normative ethics. Codes define and clarify the values of practitioners⁴⁰ and are recognised as “invaluable as an instrument of self-reflection”.⁴¹ Yet, the rationales underlying a decision to adopt a code can vary from journalists genuinely aspiring to recognise the fundamental values and principles for which they stand⁴² and thus “to understand the reasons behind their actions”,⁴³ to ambitions of political authorities to exercise control over the media through a journalism ethics code as “a system of work discipline”.⁴⁴ Our first research question is: *What were the reasons for adopting the first journalism ethics code in the SFRY?*

Normative role orientations are “an essential element of journalism’s contract with the public: Society grants journalism the authority to deliver us the world; in return, journalists are expected to cater to the communicative needs of their audiences”.⁴⁵ By adopting a code, journalists undertake to provide public service in exchange for some degree of press freedom.⁴⁶ Normative conceptualisations of freedom⁴⁷ and responsibility are particularly important because journalists’ adherence to autonomous professional work within a free media and their commitment to responsible practice suggest their endorsement of the informal “social contract” with the public whereby society provides journalism with guarantees of freedom and, in return, society expects journalism to act responsibly and deliver a range of public benefits.⁴⁸ Our second research

38 Ibid., 120.

39 Bogdan Osolnik, “The intention was to democratise the sphere of communication,” *TripleC* 15, No. 1 (2017): 248.

40 Chris Roberts, “Identifying and Defining Values in Media Ethics Codes,” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 27 (2012): 116.

41 Clifford Christians and Kaarle Nordenstreng, “Social Responsibility Worldwide,” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 19, No. 1 (2004): 19.

42 Louis A. Day, *Ethics in Media Communications: Cases and Controversies* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000), 45.

43 Roberts, “Identifying and Defining Values in Media Ethics Codes,” 116.

44 Slavko Splichal and Colin Sparks, *Journalists for the 21st Century: Tendencies of Professionalization Among First-Year Students in 22 Countries* (Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1994), 49.

45 Hanitzsch and Vos, “Journalistic Roles and the Struggle over Institutional Identity,” 124.

46 Tim P. Vos, “Journalism,” in: *Journalism*, ed. Tim P. Vos (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2018), 4.

47 In our study, the term “freedom” is used mostly in the sense of press/media freedom, which concerns the relationship between the media and the government, and less in the sense of journalistic freedom, which individualises media freedom. For more, see: John C. Merrill, *The Dialectic in Journalism: Toward A Responsible Use of Press Freedom* (Baton Rouge, London: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 34, 35.

48 Stephen J. A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal, Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 326.

question is: *How did the journalism ethics codes in the SFRY address, explicitly or implicitly, the values of freedom and responsibility, which social and/or political values underpinned the codes' statements concerning freedom and responsibility, and how was the relationship between the values of freedom and responsibility conceptualised?*

Values, as agents of journalists' thinking, acting and choosing,⁴⁹ underlie particular journalistic norms found in ethics codes. A norm may be defined as a rule or standard which involves a collective evaluation of behaviour in terms of what it ought to be and a collective expectation as to what behaviour will be.⁵⁰ Written norms are specific guidelines, principles of required or prohibited conduct, grounded in journalists' conceptualisations of values of freedom and responsibility. Our third research question is: *How did the journalism ethics codes in the SFRY address professional norms, especially those related to truthfulness?*

We apply the method of document analysis, that is, "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents".⁵¹ Documents bearing witness to past events give "background information as well as historical insight",⁵² "provide a means of tracking change and development"⁵³ and thereby enable change to be identified. We analyse all Yugoslav journalism ethics codes (adopted in 1965, 1969, 1973, 1982, 1988) as well as a selection of documented discussions within the journalistic professional community related to adopting a code. These codes are relevant because, as Slavković wrote about the 1982 code, they define and explain "in detail the role, function and position of journalists".⁵⁴ Other documented discussions like papers, reports and other written sources of the Yugoslav Journalists' Association (YJA) serve as background material for inferring about the reasons for adopting the first ethics code in 1965.

The research process combines elements of content analysis (information organised into categories related to the research questions) and thematic analysis (recognition of patterns in the data).⁵⁵ The comparative historical method makes it possible to identify and compare common or different characteristics and to discover essential manifestations of studied phenomena at a certain stage and trace their dynamics.⁵⁶ The diachronic perspective of this method permits us to determine transformations in normative role orientations of Yugoslav journalism over time.

49 Jay Black and Chris Roberts, *Doing Ethics in Media: Theories and Practical Applications* (New York, London: Routledge, 2011), 178.

50 Jack P. Gibbs, "Norms: The Problem of Definition and Classification," *American Journal of Sociology* 70, No. 5 (1965): 589.

51 Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, No. 2 (2009): 27.

52 Ibid., 29.

53 Ibid., 30.

54 Dušan Slavković, "Novinar i novinarstvo," in: *Novinarstvo danas: Priručnik za polaznike novinarske škole Jugoslovenskog instituta za novinarstvo*, ed. Zdravko Leković (Beograd: Jugoslovenski institut za novinarstvo, 1983), 100.

55 Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," 32.

56 Aleksei Yuryevich Bykov et al., "Codes of Journalism Ethics in Russia and the United States: Traditions and the Current Practice of Application," *International Review of Management and Marketing* 5, Special Issue (2015): 57.

Adopting the First Journalism Ethics Code in the SFRY

Before adopting the first ethics code in 1965, the moral obligations of journalists were addressed in various sources of the YJA. For example, journalistic ethical norms were discussed at the Fifth Assembly (Third Congress) of the YJA in 1953, when its president Dušan Blagojević⁵⁷ stressed the importance of trust: “To preserve this trust, the entire set of moral norms of journalists’ behaviour while performing their duty has been developed in practice. For journalism as a whole and for journalists as individuals, these norms must be a code which is not to be breached. Each individual violation of these norms harms journalism as a profession”. At the plenary of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in 1954, a document entitled *Moral obligations of journalists* was adopted, with its first sentence demanding that a journalist “serve the truth” and “act according to their conscience and with a deep sense of responsibility”.⁵⁸ However, a journalist would only be able to fulfil their obligations “if they are aware of their relationship and duties to the social community, and if they are always guided by the socialist conscience which they are strengthening through their constant political building”.⁵⁹ A report on the activities of the YJA for 1953–1957 notes that “experiences showed that these moral obligations of ours were only of declarative nature, and hence there is a need to make the principles and sanctions which are to be used more concrete”.⁶⁰

The adoption of a code of ethics was initiated by the 1963 inter-congressional conference of YJA.⁶¹ At the *Information and Journalism* symposium held in 1964, the general secretary of the YJA Miodrag Avramović⁶² said that the “Association believes that it is necessary to adopt a Code of Yugoslav journalism”. According to Avramović,⁶³ the issue of the function and position of journalists could not be defined by a state legal instrument as it is very complex and thus subject to nuanced changes in the socio-political development; including journalists’ social and moral obligations in a normative state document would not correspond to the spirit of the system of direct socialist democracy. This explains why there was only one article in the *Press Act* dedicated to professional ethics, stating that journalists were obliged to follow the principles of professional ethics and social responsibility and to act in the spirit of respecting the truth, human rights, and the development of peaceful cooperation among nations.

For years, honorary courts of arbitration in journalist associations in individual republics as well as the Honorary Court of Arbitration of the YJA took care of

57 Dušan Blagojević, “Uloga novinara kao javnih i političkih radnika u našem društvu,” in: *Srebrni jubilej SNJ 1945–1970: Knjiga 1*, ed. Miodrag Avramović (Beograd: SNJ, 1971), 271.

58 SNJ, “Moralne obaveze novinara,” in: *Srebrni jubilej SNJ 1945–1970: Knjiga 1*, ed. Miodrag Avramović (Beograd: SNJ, 1971), 314.

59 Ibid.

60 UO SNJ, “Izveštaj,” in: *Srebrni jubilej SNJ 1945–1970: Knjiga 1*, ed. Miodrag Avramović (Beograd: SNJ, 1971), 369.

61 Miodrag Avramović, “Izveštaj komisije za kodeks,” in: *Srebrni jubilej SNJ 1945–1970: Knjiga 1*, ed. Miodrag Avramović (Beograd: SNJ, 1971), 540.

62 Miodrag Avramović, “Društvena odgovornost i profesionalna etika novinara,” in: *Simpozijum Informacija i novinarstvo*, eds. Milo Popović and Milka Lasić-Šeat (Beograd: Sedma sila, 1965), 117.

63 Ibid., 121.

exercising professional ethics based on their experience, customs and criteria.⁶⁴ Professional ethics were thus dealt with superficially, unsystematically and inconsistently due to the different criteria; further tolerance of such a practice would harm the efficiency of the system of direct socialist democracy and journalism's integration into this system, which is why professional ethics should be codified.⁶⁵ The need for a code arose from the need to appropriately define "an objectively new function and new position of journalists and journalism in new circumstances of the developed direct socialist democracy after adopting the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; to define social and moral obligations of journalists"⁶⁶

The code was adopted at the Sixth Congress of the YJA in 1965, with Bobić⁶⁷ stating that it "reinforces the autonomous position of journalists, making them independent in their acting as socio-political workers". The Congress concluded that the code is "an efficient means to protect journalists from all those who ruin the principle of publicity and exert pressure on a journalist or interfere with the exercise of their function"⁶⁸

Addressing Freedom and Responsibility

In the 1965 code, the normative conceptualisation of (the relationship between) freedom and responsibility is shown by the explicit labelling of a journalist as "a socio-political worker" who takes part in the building and development of the socialist society; strives for full implementation of the self-management rights of working people and for civilised relations among people; contributes to the development of a socialist conscience and the formation of socialist public opinion. A journalist's professional work consists of researching social processes, phenomena and contradictions; forming their own opinions and views through objective findings; informing the public about them; promoting the broader social exchange of opinions; and contributing to activities that solve societal issues. The code's general provisions require a journalist to inform the public "by acting according to their socialist conscience and by being aware of their societal obligations and responsibilities to the socialist public". Thus, the media holds primary responsibility to the working people of the self-managed socialist society, with their freedom strongly attached to the role of journalists as socio-political workers and allowed only within the framework of the social and political values they are bound to follow, such as socialism, self-management, equality, civilised relations among people, freedom and dignity. The same goes for the more personal level of journalistic freedom and responsibility, with the code stating: "While forming their own views, a journalist relies on the basic generally accepted socialist principles and norms."

64 Ibid., 129.

65 Ibid., 126, 127.

66 Ibid.

67 Drago Bobić, "Nakon donošenja Kodeksa jugoslovenskog novinarstva: suočenje sa praksom," *Novinarstvo* I, No. 2 (1965): 30.

68 SNJ, "Zaključci Šestog kongresa Saveza novinara Jugoslavije," *Novinarstvo* I, No. 2 (1965).

The 1969 code continues to define a journalist as a “committed socio-political worker” who transmits, promotes and introduces a broader social exchange of opinions, and contributes to the activity of socialist forces based on socialist self-management, with their commitments being grounded in the same social and political values as 4 years before. In the general provisions, struggling against nationalistic and anti-self-management tendencies and all the phenomena that hinder the development of the socialist democracy is added to the list, including the fight for the full respect of the freedom, dignity and equality of all Yugoslav nations and nationalities. The character of the media as open tribunes, acknowledged in the previous code, is given greater attention by defining them as “open socialist tribunes” accessible to all working people in Yugoslavia. According to the code, it is a journalist’s societal and professional obligation to inform the working people comprehensively and objectively about social phenomena, needs and relations for them to be able to more effectively perform their self-management role.

The 1973 code incorporates new values like Marxism, Leninism, the politics of Non-Alignment, the unity of Yugoslavia, peace, independence and equality in international relations. A journalist is still seen as a socio-political worker with their “conscious commitment to the ideas of Marxism and Leninism” being emphasised. The subchapter on journalists’ role, functioning and status is extended; the list of what a journalist fights for now includes additional goals, such as: deepening the equality and self-management autonomy of nations and nationalities in Yugoslavia; developing Yugoslav socialist patriotism; strengthening the country’s defence ability; the unity and integrity of Yugoslavia; commitment to consistent Non-Aligned politics, peace, independence and equality in international relations. A journalist always firmly stands against arbitrary behaviour of the bureaucracy, technocratic usurpation, various kinds of nationalistic chauvinism, separatism, hegemony, the penetration of liberal-anarchistic concepts, opportunistic comfort, monopolistic closing and all phenomena that block, jeopardise and undermine the progress and consolidation of the socialist democracy. A journalist is therefore expected to be very active, engaged, and not merely a passive observer of society: in disputes with contrary opinions, they respect the right to free expression, yet “openly and strongly identify and condemn phenomena and tendencies which are hostile to self-managed humane socialism as well as the agents of such phenomena and tendencies”. Media freedom derives from “the self-management socialist orientation of social development” and a journalist’s freedom grows “in proportion to their Marxist, general and specialist knowledge and journalistic professional skill”. Freedom is thus recognised, yet within the limits of affirming the socialism based on self-management. A journalist is still obliged to act according to their socialist conscience while carrying out their responsibility to the socialist public.

The 1982 code maintains the idea of a journalist as a socio-political worker who participates in the building and development of the socialist self-managed society. Apart from the values previously included, other values appear in the general provisions like prohibition on ideologies of hostility, national and racial intolerance and

discrimination, and the fight for fairer societal-economic relations in the world. Media freedom continues to be connected to the self-management socialist orientation of social development, while a journalist's "autonomy in their work grows in proportion to their own political and professional training". Responsibility to the socialist public is replaced by responsibility to comprehensively inform the public.

The 1988 code brings a major normative change by no longer defining a journalist as a socio-political worker and omitting the values of Marxism and Leninism. Yet, a journalist is still expected to strive for the development of socialist self-management, for unity and the federal system of Yugoslavia, for the principle of equality of its nations and nationalities, for civilised socialist relations among people and for the principles of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence in the Yugoslav foreign policy. In line with some newly added values, a journalist is obliged to advocate respect for the freedom, dignity and human rights of citizens, the rule of law, and equality before the law. The code explicitly states that news media are "free, autonomous and researching", and a journalist should take part in the formation of public opinion by communicating autonomous and critical views when searching for the truth. The struggle for the free flow of information across the whole Yugoslav area is defined as a journalist's right and duty. The code also declares that a journalist is held accountable by society, laws and the professional organisation, stressing their responsibility to the public.

Norms on Truthfulness and Professionalism

Already in its general provisions, the 1965 code articulates some professional norms, such as the correction of errors and declares that a journalist "prevents misinforming of the public, struggles against all that is fake, fabricated and unverified to be brought to and kept in the public's attention". A Yugoslav journalist is committed to truthfulness since they "truthfully informs and correctly as well as comprehensively explains events and phenomena". The chapter on the moral/political professional obligations of journalists outlines several norms in two subchapters: 1. *Professional integrity* (norms like source confidentiality and non-plagiarism) and 2. *Respecting human personality and dignity*. The chapter initially requires that "[o]n all occasions a journalist must seek to offer an accurate and objective information to the public", noting that a journalist "would rather give up information than publish information which is wrong or insufficiently verified".

The subchapter on respecting human personality and dignity is set out in more detail in the 1969 code, introducing norms related to respecting privacy and the considerate treatment of sensitive topics like accidents, illness or rape. The code also states that a journalist should not point out a person's race, nationality, profession or religion, particularly not of those who have been arrested, charged or convicted, if this information is not of great importance for the story a journalist is reporting on.

In the 1973 code, several socio-political and professional norms are still intertwined in the subchapters dedicated to professional integrity and respecting human

personality and dignity. The latter is elaborated on more, with some norms added and others explained in greater detail. For example, the facile moral and political disqualification of people is considered to be among the most serious ethical offences. The importance of truthfulness is further underlined by demanding that a journalist “must always think about the truth”. Commitment to truthfulness is already pointed out in the general provisions, stating that the “basic social categories of journalistic work – truth, freedom, responsibility – are at the same time also primarily professionally ethical requirements”. A journalist is bound to inform accurately, to explain events and phenomena faithfully and comprehensively. All that impedes and distorts the correct, true, objective, comprehensive and timely information is a danger to society and a moral offence: not only a deliberate lie, but also all other ways of changing, hiding or distorting the truth.

In the 1982 code, the chapter’s title *Moral-political and professional obligations of journalists* is removed, yet the content mostly remains the same, with the previous values and norms (objectivity, respect for human personality and dignity, error correction, respecting privacy and non-plagiarism etc.) retaining their place in the code. Everything that interferes with and deforms accurate, comprehensive and timely information is to be seen as a danger to society: “Objective informing is an important integral part of a self-management relationship / ... / and a professionally-ethical requirement of the journalist profession”.

The 1988 code has a new structure: it begins with general provisions followed by the main chapter entitled *Rights and duties*, with a few concluding provisions at the end. Journalists’ rights and duties contain several norms related to truthfulness, respect for a person’s dignity and integrity, and protection of human personality and intimacy. The search for truth is declared to be a basic principle of journalists’ work: “By communicating an autonomous and critical view while searching for the truth, which is a basic principle of professional work, a journalist actively participates in the formation of public opinion ...”. Further, “It is a journalist’s obligation to communicate the truth, a comprehensive and verified information to the public”.

Discussion with a Conclusion

The normative foundations of journalism, as outlined in the Yugoslav journalism ethics codes, were transforming over time and in response to changes occurring in the socio-politico-legal-economic environment: at each reference point (the year of a code’s adoption or revision), modifications can be associated with the socio-political and economic circumstances in society, thereby supporting Hanitzsch’s conclusion that normative role orientations are socially negotiated, sensitive to context, and in a constant state of flux.⁶⁹

The Yugoslav constitution of 1963 emphasised that Yugoslavia was a socialist democratic community and revealed a tendency for the Marxist ideal of the state withering

⁶⁹ Hanitzsch, “Roles of Journalists,” 45.

away, while self-management was declared inviolable.⁷⁰ The new constitution introduced the citizens' *right to be informed* and *freedom of the press and other media of information*, and "drastically changed the role of the Yugoslav journalist":⁷¹ instead of being a mere recorder of events, they were expected to function as an interpreter and critic. Two years later, the first ethics code was adopted. The second half of the 1960s was marked decreasing economic growth, increasing regional disparities and higher unemployment; nationalist rhetoric resurfaced, accompanied by problems pushed to the surface by the economic downturn.⁷² The emerging crisis raised questions concerning ethnic coexistence and the distribution of political power and prosperity; social and economic interests were being discussed more and more in categories of ethnic differences.⁷³ Towards the end of the 1960s, the nationalisms in Yugoslavia had increased.⁷⁴ The code of 1969 extended the list of negative phenomena that a journalist should fight against by adding the struggle against nationalistic and anti-self-management tendencies and everything that hinders the development of the socialist democracy. The fight for the full respect of the freedom, dignity and equality of all Yugoslav nations and nationalities was included, while the media, previously described as *open tribunes*, were now defined as *open socialist tribunes*.

In the 1970s, Yugoslavia went into economic recession, yet at the beginning of the decade its international status had been stronger than ever before.⁷⁵ Still, the economic problems and growing development disparities among the regions led to political dissatisfaction and inter-republic disputes.⁷⁶ In the 1973 code, new values appeared, such as Marxism, Leninism, the politics of Non-Alignment, the unity of Yugoslavia, socialist patriotism, peace, independence and equality in international relations. After Tito's death in 1980, secessionist processes in Yugoslavia accelerated, as greatly contributed to by the socio-economic crisis.⁷⁷ The devastating economic crisis was accompanied by other factors leading to the decay of Yugoslavia like the 1981 conflict in Kosovo and the demands of the Albanian population for a change,⁷⁸ and the resurgence of radical nationalist policies in Serbia.⁷⁹ The 1982 code introduced additional values such as the prohibition on ideologies of hostility, national and racial intolerance and discrimination, and the fight for fairer societal-economic relations in the world. In the 1988 code, the Marxist and Leninist values were replaced by the human rights of citizens, the rule of law, and equality before the law – values which are key to any democracy.

70 Jovan R. Bazić, "The Socio-Political System of Yugoslavia as the Systemic Cause of Its Collapse," *Sociološki pregled* 52, No. 4 (2018): 1162.

71 Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media*, 42.

72 Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, 223.

73 *Ibid.*, 226.

74 Dušan Bilandžić, *Zgodovina SFRJ: Glavni procesi* (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1980), 346.

75 Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, 240–42.

76 Flere and Klanjšek, *The Rise and Fall of Socialist Yugoslavia*, 116.

77 Bazić, "The Socio-Political System of Yugoslavia as the Systemic Cause of Its Collapse," 1165.

78 Josip Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2011), 15.

79 Peruško et al., *Comparing Post-Socialist Media Systems*, 87.

The normative conceptualisations of the relationship between freedom and responsibility in the Yugoslav journalism ethics codes add support for Robinson's⁸⁰ observation that Yugoslav journalism cannot be identified with the Soviet media philosophy, as one might expect when considering that Yugoslavia was a socialist country. While displaying several characteristics of the Soviet-totalitarian theory of the press, the normative foundations also somewhat resemble the social responsibility theory from the first code onward, peaking in the period of the major socio-political changes in the late 1980s.

Under the Soviet theory, the mass media is used almost exclusively as instruments of the propaganda and agitation of the state and the Communist Party,⁸¹ while the media's functions in the social responsibility theory include servicing the political system by providing information, discussion and debate of public affairs as well as enlightening the public to make it capable of self-management.⁸² Already in the 1965 code, Yugoslav journalists were expected to research social processes, phenomena and contradictions; to form their own opinions and views through objective findings; to inform the public about it; to promote a broader social exchange of opinions; and to contribute to activities that solve societal issues. Indications of the function of a watchdog against government came later, not until the 1988 code, when journalists had given up the role of socio-political workers and instead chosen to take part in the formation of public opinion by communicating autonomous and critical views while searching for the truth.

Under the Soviet theory, the media is to look at events from a Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist standpoint,⁸³ while journalists are free to express themselves within the bounds and limits of the allegedly beneficent state that protects citizens in doing what is good for them.⁸⁴ The media is required to do certain things, such as increase the political awareness of the masses, to rally the population in support of the leaders and their programme, to raise the level of worker efficiency etc.⁸⁵ In the Yugoslav codes, the idea of media and journalist freedom was conceived in a similar way – permitted within the limits of the socialist orientation and if contributing to the building and development of the self-managed society, at least up until the 1988 code when the Marxist/Leninist values and the definition of a journalist as a socio-political worker were removed. The social responsibility theory sees freedom of expression as a moral right grounded in an individual's duty to their own conscience, while the Soviet theory stresses the duty to the proletariat.⁸⁶ In the codes of 1965, 1969 and 1973, a Yugoslav journalist was explicitly obliged to act in line with their socialist conscience and be responsible to the socialist working people – the socialist public, thereby bringing the

80 Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media*, 119.

81 Fred S. Siebert et al., *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 121.

82 *Ibid.*, 74.

83 *Ibid.*, 124.

84 *Ibid.*, 127.

85 *Ibid.*, 141.

86 *Ibid.*, 96–98.

concept of responsibility closer to the Soviet idea. The codes of 1982 and 1988 emphasised a journalist's responsibility to the public, now no longer labelled as a socialist one. The concept of responsibility to the public, based on a journalist's autonomy and critical stance, assumed a journalist's duty to their conscience in the sense of the social responsibility theory since conscience was no longer defined by the adjective "socialist".

Professional norms related to truthfulness, professional integrity, and respect for human personality and dignity, some of which were already introduced in the 1965 code, were evolving over time, gaining more space, elaboration and emphasis. However, they must be considered in the context of how the relationship between media/journalistic freedom and responsibility was conceptualised, which relativises some of the stronger commitments, such as "always thinking about the truth", on the normative level already, let alone the level of media practices. Nevertheless, the fact that some professional norms that always featured in journalism ethics codes in developed democracies were recognised by the journalistic community as sufficiently important to be codified shows that the foundations of the professionalisation of Slovenian journalism were already laid in socialist Yugoslavia.

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NORMATIVNE USMERITVE VLOG JUGOSLOVANSKIH NOVINARJEV: ŠTUDIJA NOVINARSKIH ETIČNIH KODEKSOV V SFRJ

POVZETEK

Cilj te študije je raziskati normativne orientacije vlog novinarjev v SFRJ, kot so zapisane ali razvidne v petih jugoslovenskih novinarskih etičnih kodeksih (sprejetih v letih 1965, 1969, 1973, 1982 in 1988). Z analizo dokumentov in primerjalno zgodovinsko metodo smo raziskali razloge za sprejem prvega kodeksa, analizirali pojmovanja svobode in odgovornosti ter odnos med njima v kodeksih in ugotovili, kako kodeksi naslavljajo resnicoljubnost in profesionalne norme.

Normativni temelji novinarstva, kot se kažejo v etičnih kodeksih, so se spreminjali skozi čas ter ob spremembah v družbenem, političnem, pravnem in ekonomskem okolju, denimo ob sprejetju ustave leta 1963, ekonomski krizi in porastu nacionalizmov proti koncu šestdesetih let in v sedemdesetih letih ter družbeno-ekonomski krizi, secesionističnih procesih in kosovski krizi v osemdesetih letih. Novinarji so v etične kodekse zapisovali z družbenimi dogajanja povezane vrednote in cilje, denimo boj proti nacionalističnim težnjam in za spoštovanje enakosti vseh jugoslovanskih narodov in narodnosti v kodeks leta 1969; vrednote marksizma, leninizma, enotnosti Jugoslavije, socialističnega patriotizma idr. v kodeks leta 1973; prepoved ideologij sovražnosti ter nacionalne in rasne nestrpnosti ter diskriminacije v kodeks leta 1982; človekove pravice, vladavino prava ter enakost pred zakonom v kodeks leta 1988.

Ob več značilnostih sovjetske totalitarne teorije tiska imajo normativni temelji tudi določeno podobnost s teorijo družbene odgovornosti. Že v prvem etičnem kodeksu iz leta 1965 se je od novinarja pričakovalo, da raziskuje družbene procese, pojave in nasprotja, oblikuje svoja lastna mnenja in poglede na podlagi objektivnih spoznanj; o tem obvešča javnost; spodbuja širšo družbeno izmenjavo mnenj; in prispeva k aktivnostim za reševanje družbenih problemov. Vendar sta bili medijska in novinarska svoboda dovoljeni le v okviru socialistične usmeritve ter prispevka h graditvi in razvoju samoupravne družbe, vsaj do leta 1988, ko so bile iz kodeksa izpuščene vrednoti marksizma in leninizma ter opredelitev novinarja kot družbenopolitičnega delavca. Zadnji jugoslovanski novinarski etični kodeks je kot osnovno načelo poklicnega dela opredelil sporočanje samostojnih in kritičnih stališč pri iskanju resnice. Jugoslovanski novinar je bil normativno obvezan delovati po svoji socialistični zavesti in je bil odgovoren do delovnih ljudi oziroma socialistične javnosti, kar je bliže sovjetski ideji odgovornosti, kodeksa v osemdesetih letih pa sta poudarila njegovo odgovornost do javnosti.

Profesionalne norme, povezane z resnicoljubnostjo, profesionalno integriteto ter spoštovanjem človekove osebnosti in dostojanstva, so se sčasoma razvijale ter pridobile več prostora, razdelanosti in poudarka. Vendar jih je treba razumeti v kontekstu pojmovanj odnosa med medijsko/novinarsko svobodo in odgovornostjo, ki relativizira nekatere močne zaveze, kot je »vedno misliti na resnico«, že na normativni ravni, kaj šele na ravni medijskih praks. Toda dejstvo, da je novinarska skupnost nekatere profesionalne norme prepoznala kot dovolj pomembne za kodifikacijo, nakazuje, da so bili temelji profesionalizacije slovenskega novinarstva položeni že v socialistični Jugoslaviji.