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## ETHICS OF NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHY

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**Abstract.** *Newspaper photographs, visual text that speaks more powerfully than written text, have been unfairly neglected in theory and practice by media scholars and professionals. The author's starting point is the assumption that the image itself is a powerful medium in which people openly and naively believe under the slogan 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Its role in Serbian printed media is regulated by the decrees of the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia. Although the instructions are clear, they have been routinely violated in practice. The modern, digital age has brought the opportunity for photographs to be easily downloaded from the internet, while the programs for image manipulation have become more powerful, more accessible and easier to use. These opportunities represent a threat to the status that news, documentary photography has. The ethics of news photography is particularly important because the visual elements represent something the audience notices first and are therefore crucial for whether and how the written word is going to be adopted. Therefore, the participant of the study is the ethics of photography in print media in Serbia. In the analysis of three daily newspapers (Politika, Blic, Kurir), from May 12 to 14, 2014, without add-ons and program guides, the semiotic method was used, as well as the method of quantitative and qualitative analysis of all the published photographs, except advertising. The authors evaluated the ethics of photography in comparison to the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia. The aim was to determine to what extent there is a violation of any of the decrees relating photography. The hypotheses on which the study is based on: ethical violations can be found in all the papers, mostly in the tabloids, the least in the serious press. The most common violations are failing to emphasize the nature or the author of the illustrative photograph. There are more serious violations such as disrespect for the presumption of innocence and the right to privacy. Nonetheless, there are more ethical violations on the front page than within the newspaper.*

**Key words:** *Newspaper photograph/photography, print media, manipulation, ethics, The Journalist's Code of Serbia.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fear for the existence of print media at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century caused by the development of new technologies and the emergence of on-line publications, as well as the global economic crisis, is accompanied by the threat of extinction newspaper photography as visual text that is often more eloquent and powerful than written. The French daily *Libération* tried to notify the importance of the photograph at the end of 2013, by removing all the photographs from one of the issues. The editors explained their decision on the front page saying: 'Libération owes eternal gratitude to the photograph, whether it came from the photo journalists, fashion photographers, portraits or conceptual artists. Our passion for photography has never been questioned – not because it is used to beautify, shock or illustrate, but because photography takes the pulse of the world ... This is not a funeral service, we hereby do not bury photography art, we pay tribute to it which it deserves<sup>1</sup>.' Regardless of the form, photo news or photographs that illustrate the function of the written text, the pictures in the newspaper are the ones which have a decisive influence on whether the text will be read or not. The attention of the readers starts from photography, proceeds through headers and charts, if any, to the text (Veselinovic 2005).

However, under the pretext of reducing costs, the number of journalists and photo journalists in the world losing their jobs is increasing<sup>2</sup>. In the era of multi-tasking, the media employers have realized that it is easier to train journalists to shoot and edit videos for online editions, which can be used for traditional, printed editions, as well. Such a decision could be problematic because it potentially undermines professionalism in journalism, an important requirement for the establishment and sustainability of a democratic society. The print media are particularly sensitive because "informative press, in competition with other media, is considered a pillar of public life because it represents the most important source of information, it gives us reports about matters of public interest, more thoroughly, by offering a greater range of opinions, has the greatest influence on the public agenda, and, more than others, performs a controlling function and encourages citizens to participate in political life" (Matic 2012). Despite its importance, the circulation of print editions of newspapers are declining in the developed parts of the world, and this phenomenon is accompanied by lower income from ads which, ultimately, leads to a general crisis of the print media.

When it comes to declining circulation and the crisis in the print media, Serbia is not far behind the developed world. According to Matic, the sale of national daily newspaper in 2007-2011 decreased by 19 percent, and the market is increasingly dominated by low-cost semi-tabloid and tabloid newspapers, while the serious newspapers have the worst circulation. Commercialization and tabloidization of journalism are becoming the standard, and examples of non-compliance with ethical standards are increasing (Matic 2012). The newspaper photograph is not exempt from the process of the collapse of Serbian quality printing.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from: <http://www.media.ba/bs/vijesti-i-dogadaji-vijesti/francuski-liberation-uklonio-sve-fotografije-iz-stampanog-izdanja.>, Accessed 30 April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> One example from recent history is an event from 2013, when the American newspaper *Chicago Sun Times* fired the entire editorial team of 28 members, including the photographer John White, winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

## 2. NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS

Newspaper photographs,<sup>3</sup> as an important part of the contents of the press, first appeared in 1880 in the New York Gazette Daily Herald. Since then, the space for photographs is constantly increasing in all kinds of press, especially since the 1920s, when magazines in which photographs dominated appeared. Although the role of photographs in the beginning of newspaper editions was usually to "fill a place in the newspaper", today it is quite different. Words alone cannot convey bias and perspective of the person who wrote it. Photographs can be seen and understood as unaltered truth. They connect the reader with the story and help him identify with it. Photographs make newspaper more credible. "A photograph is a witness to the event, confirms that it really happened, and it contributes to the authenticity of the text. A photojournalist "catches" a certain moment of the event, gives it durability, so the newspaper photograph is a kind of document as well" (Hrnjić 2007).

The improvement of the equipment, inventions such as the *Ermanoks* and *Lajka* camera which, due to the smaller size and ease of use, were easier to work with, all contributed to the blooming of photo journalism at the beginning of the last century. The photographer did not have to have a long preparation and supply of equipment, which resulted in the people who were the subject of a photograph preparing and setting the scene for a photograph. With the new equipment, the act of shooting could be immediate, and thus open the possibility that the image represented the real situation. Its documentary value has increased. "Its ability to accurately reproduce external reality – an ability that it owes to its technology – gives it the hallmark of documentation so it represents a procedure in which social life is reproduced in the most loyal and objective way" (Freund 1981, 6). During its development, and nowadays, at the beginning of the new millennium, photojournalism, as well as visual text, follow the same requirements faced by media professionals: to be informative, objective and shows life as it is.

However, to record and publish a newspaper photo that will fulfill these requirements is not an easy task. It was explained by the French semiotician Roland Barthes. According to him, a newspaper photograph is a message that consists of a transmitting source, transmission channel and receiving environment. The transmitting source is a newspaper editorial board, a group of technicians, some of whom take pictures, others who select, stack and process them, while the third group provides them with titles and comments. The receiving environment is the audience who reads the newspaper, and the transmission channel are the newspapers, a collection of equal messages whose center is a photograph, whose frame is also determined by the text, the title, the graphics processing and the name of the magazine. Whether a newspaper article will be read and how it will be perceived, largely depends on the graphic text in the equipment which includes images (Barthes 1993). For every photo you see in the paper it is important to know who the photographer was, when, where and, most importantly, why the recording was made. The decision on what to shoot and where a photograph will end up in the newspaper does not depend only on the photographer, but his editors and media owners.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the story told in the picture is much more convincing than the one told in words only. Milanka Todić, studying the history of print advertising photography in Serbia, claims that the rhetoric of the image is not only more

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<sup>3</sup> A newspaper photograph is a photograph made by the photojournalist of the newspaper in which the photo was published, or other national or foreign editorial board or agency or a freelance photojournalist. Its aim is to clarify, illustrate newspaper articles or to independently provide certain information.

convincing, but also more seductive than the text itself (Todić 2010). Therefore, the role of a photojournalist is large, the ethics in his work cannot be questioned, and the trust of readers must not be betrayed. "When working as a photojournalist, a photographer promises viewers the authenticity and veracity, playing the role of an impartial observer who is not involved in the events that unfold in front of his lens" (Colby and Briggs 2005, 701). The power of photography lies in the fact that people often unquestionably believe the real picture of reality, under the slogan, the old Chinese proverb that "a picture is worth a thousand words", and are often unaware of her manipulative nature. In doing so, its power to awaken emotions in people is great. Although the photographers are expected to meet the objectivity as the most important criterion of the journalistic profession, by means of photography it is possible to try to manipulate the reader, and history continuously records such cases.

### 3. THE ELUSIVE (MANIPULATIVE) NATURE OF A PHOTOGRAPH

History testifies that manipulation with photographs has existed since this medium was invented, but they have become common and usual business with the appearance of the program for photomontage<sup>4</sup>. The emergence of technology that allows digital imaging and digital photography is an important stage in the development of the media and visual culture in general. Some compare it with the invention of photography itself according to its relevance. Its use is simple, and the power enormous. Changes in photographs may be so faithfully made that the human eye cannot detect the intervention.

The media audience generally knows that the photos can be processed by computer programs, but little is known about the extent of the intervention. The goals of editing photographs can be different. Some forms of manipulation might be acceptable to simply make photos more beautiful, to sharpen colors, to brighten the photograph. However, some aspects of the manipulation cannot be tolerated. From photographs you can add or remove content that fits into the idea of editors on how a scene should look like. When the changes are drastic, and photographs differ from real representations, it is a serious violation of ethical standards. The paradox lies in the fact that all these changes can be easily and quickly made thanks to the modern software programs so that it seems to photographers and editors that there is no big change.

Of course, manipulative techniques are used not only by those who govern and publish photographs, but also by photographers who produce them, with the selection of what will be in the frame, setting the scene, adding logos and other contextual elements, choosing camera angles or lighting. For example, a person illuminated from below will look daunting, and the same person, with the same expression, seems much more attractive illuminated from the side. A person recorded from below is given importance or their importance is devalued if the image is from the upper angle. A photographer creates an atmosphere and provides the emotional context of the photograph. In this way, a photograph is an anchor for potential meanings, while others are discouraged.

What will be the ultimate meaning attributed to the photograph depends on the readers and their understanding and experience. The interpretation of a single image is a combination of the content of the photograph, its context, and experiences, prejudices and preferences

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the programs used for photoshopping that are used by professionals and amateurs can freely be downloaded from the Internet, including: Adobe Photoshop, Sumopaint, Pic Monkey, Picfull, Image Tricks.

of the viewer. Although it should show the real world, the photograph can be variously interpreted. Roland Barthes calls it the “polysemy” of a picture. The meaning of a photograph is conditioned by culture, ideology, knowledge and experience, photographers, editors, and whoever looks at it. “It is possible to argue the claim that the authenticity of the photographs is less confirmed by the nature of the image itself than does the structure of discursive, social and professional practices that construct the photograph...Not only do we know that some photographs may be the subject to manipulation, but also our experience and understanding of the world of signs are also subject to transformation” (Wells 2006, 101–102). The act of observing photographs may not be fair and impartial. Interpretation of the photographs is focused on the intentions of the creator, but it will ultimately depend on the different experiences, education, and the social and cultural norms that characterize the environment of the observer.

In order to avoid the “polysemy” of a photograph, relying on one’s personal value systems, primarily those of journalists and editors, and to protect the readers from manipulation, associations of media professionals create a code of ethics and the state creates laws regarding the application of photographs in newspapers.

#### 4. CODE OF ETHICS AND THE PHOTOGRAPH

Photography, as part of the media content, is subject to the attention of professional codes worldwide. In *The Declaration on Principles of Treatment of Journalists* (1954) and *Munich Declaration on the Rights and Obligations of Journalists* (1971), journalists are asked to use only honorable means of obtaining and taking photographs. The codes that deal specifically with photojournalism are rare, such as the Code of Ethics of the National Association of photojournalists of the United States, which in 1999 was adopted in order to improve photo-journalism, starting from the fact that “... no report is complete if the meaning of words can be further strengthened and clarified. Whether you are showing some event, illustrating stories or helping explain some public issue, we believe that the images are necessary for accurate information to the public and to help everyone, regardless of age, to understand the topics discussed in public better” (Niksić and Davičo 2004, 156).

In Serbia, a special code that applies to photojournalism does not exist, but the issues of the importance of the use of photographs in the media are dealt by the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia<sup>5</sup>, as a group of professional and ethical standards of journalists. In parts of the Code, which insists on the veracity of reporting, the independence of journalists from pressure, the respect of authorship, and guidelines that are directly related to the photograph, the following rules are highlighted:

Without the consent of the author, changes of the content photographs are unacceptable. Any interventions by editors, graphic editors or designers are forbidden. If this occurs, the journalist has the right to refuse to sign the authorship of such a photograph. The editor is obliged to hear the request of journalists and not to sign the photograph if the journalist believes that their security is threatened. In this case, the use of a pseudonym is considered to be reasonable.

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<sup>5</sup> The Code was adopted in 2006 after a public debate with the participation of journalists, media representatives and media experts, and was adopted by two largest journalists' associations in Serbia, the Association of Journalists of Serbia and the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia. Available at: [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_15730-1522-14-30.pdf?090217150730](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_15730-1522-14-30.pdf?090217150730). Accessed on 30 April 2014

The difference between a documentary photograph and a photoshopped picture must be made clear. Readers must not be misled intentionally. Drastic interventions in the digital processing of a documentary photograph are intolerable. Only minimal adjustments in the field of color, contrast, sharpness, which do not affect its contents, are allowed.

Archival records must be marked appropriately. Photographs with text, that has not occurred at the event which they illustrate, must be designated as archival. It should be clearly stated for each photograph not created directly at the event that it is used for its illustration.

In parts of the Code which refer to the responsibility of journalists and the respect for authorship, preventing forgery and plagiarism is insisted on. Among other things, the use of other people's photographs without proper citing of sources is considered plagiarism and is one of the most serious violations of professional and ethical standards. Photographs must have the signed name of the author or the owner of the photograph. Copying photographs from other media is forbidden. Photographs cannot be leased to other persons, organizations, institutions and the media without permission. The journalist must not sign someone else's text or photographs. The Draft amendments to the Law on Copyright and Related Rights<sup>6</sup>, drafted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Intellectual Property, which would be found before the Parliament of Serbia during 2014, violate this provision of the Code. According to the current Law on Copyright and Related Rights,<sup>7</sup> adopted in 2009, the photograph is considered a copyright act. According to planned changes, a photograph published in the media becomes a public good. Daily and other news, having the character of media information, would not be considered authorship.

The Code insists on the duty of journalists to respect the rule of presumption of innocence and to protect the privacy and identity of the victim or the suspect, offender (non-publishing of photographs, among others), even in case of guilty pleas, and until the court's verdict. The Code does not allow reporters to abuse their possible ignorance of the power of the media. The violation of the right to privacy is also forbidden in terms trespassing for the sake of getting photographs and videos.

In the section of the Code which talks about using honorable means, journalists are required to use only honorable means in the process of collecting information, including taking photographs. The media must not publish material acquired by using hidden cameras.

The Code also prohibits the disclosure of more inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content that may have a harmful impact on children. The journalist is obliged to respect the rights and dignity of children and persons with disabilities, victims of crime and other vulnerable groups. When it comes to the protection of children, it is very important that the reporter does not publish images of the environment in which a child can be exposed to risk. In reporting on the private lives of public figures and journalists, a certain line should be drawn as well. Data from the private lives of public figures are published if it is in the interest of the public to know.

Although the provisions of the Code of Journalists of Serbia are clear and comprehensive, in practice, they are routinely violated, according to research. The analysis of the ethics

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: [http://www.zis.gov.rs/upload/documents/pdf\\_sr/pdf\\_ap/Nacrt%20zakona%20o%20izmenama%20i%20dopunama%20Zakona%20o%20autorskom%20i%20srodnim%20pravima%20za%20javnu%20raspravu.pdf](http://www.zis.gov.rs/upload/documents/pdf_sr/pdf_ap/Nacrt%20zakona%20o%20izmenama%20i%20dopunama%20Zakona%20o%20autorskom%20i%20srodnim%20pravima%20za%20javnu%20raspravu.pdf). Accessed on 30 April 2014

<sup>7</sup> Available at: [http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_autorskom\\_i\\_srodnim\\_pravima.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_autorskom_i_srodnim_pravima.html). Visited 30 April 2014

of headlines in Serbian press at the end of 2009, ethical violations were found in all four analyzed newspapers, especially in the tabloids and semi-tabloids (Vujovic and Stojanovic 2012). A comprehensive survey conducted at the end of 2011 that included the entire content of six newspapers, yielded similar results.<sup>8</sup> When it comes to respecting the ethical principles that are directly related to photojournalism, serious research in Serbia does not exist, although there is scientific and professional justification.

##### 5. ETHICS OF NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS – CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPERS (*POLITIKA, BLIC, KURIR*)

The subject of the study is the ethics of photography in Serbian print media. In the analysis of three daily newspapers (*Politika*<sup>9</sup>, *Blic*<sup>10</sup>, *Kurir*<sup>11</sup>), from May 12 to 14, 2014, without add-ons and program guides, the semiotic method<sup>12</sup> was used, as well as the method of quantitative and qualitative analysis of all published images, except advertising. The authors have been evaluating the ethics of photography in comparison to the Serbian Journalism Code of Ethics. The corpus consists of 1204 photographs published in the analyzed period.

The aim was to determine to what extent there is a violation of any of the decrees relating to photography. Hypotheses on which the study is based on include the following: ethical violations can be found in all the papers, mostly in the tabloids, the least in the serious press. The most common violations are failing to emphasize the nature or the author of the illustrative photograph. There are more serious violations, such as disrespect for the presumption of innocence and the right to privacy. Nonetheless, there are more ethical violations on the front page than within the newspaper.

In the analyzed period, in all three newspapers, a total of 1204 photos was published. The smallest number of photos was published in *Politika* – 288 (23.9%), followed by *Blic* with 447 (37.1%), and *Kurir*, with the largest number – 469 (39%) of the published photos. Based on the number of published photographs, conclusions can be made about the tabloidness degree of a newspaper. As a rule, serious press publishes a small number of photographs, unlike semi-tabloids and tabloids, where the visual content dominates.

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<sup>8</sup> The author of the study is Bojan Cvejic, a master student of journalism at the Faculty of Political Sciences. The study was a part of his master's thesis and was published at: <http://rs.ejo-online.eu/2217/etika-and-kvalitet/izbledela-ethics-domestic-press>. Accessed on 30 April 2014

<sup>9</sup> *Politika* is a daily newspaper with a long tradition. Founded in 1904, it is considered to be a serious and influential news and political national newspaper that follows the current and the most important topics in the country and the world. *Politika* is a newspaper characterized by a high level of professional journalism.

<sup>10</sup> *Blic*, a daily newspaper, first appeared in 1996, and today is among the most popular newspapers in Serbia. It is considered a semi-tabloid.

<sup>11</sup> *Kurir*, a newspaper founded in 2003, is considered a tabloid. It publishes sensationalist articles, and is often criticized by journalists' associations and the government.

<sup>12</sup> Since it is concerned with visual texts, the semiotic method is necessarily applied, and it has opened the possibility for a partial subjective evaluation of the content of photographs.

**Table 1** Ethical violations in newspaper photographs published in *Politika*, *Blic* and *Kurir* (from May 12 to 14, 2014)

Ethical violations	<i>Politika</i>				<i>Blic</i>				<i>Kurir</i>			
	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total
Total number of published photographs (May 12-14)				288				447				469
Unstressed distinction between a documentary photograph and a photoshopped image		1		<b>1</b>	3	2		<b>5</b>	20	10	10	<b>40</b>
Unstressed illustrative role of a photograph	52	56	55	<b>163</b>	86	130	91	<b>307</b>	119	100	136	<b>355</b>
Failure to specify source/authorship of a photograph	63	29	27	<b>119</b>	82	122	104	<b>308</b>	115	93	130	<b>338</b>
Disrespect for the presumption of innocence					5	2	1	<b>8</b>	6	11	2	<b>19</b>
Disrespect for the right to privacy and identity protection					4	3		<b>7</b>	5	16	10	<b>31</b>
Photographs taken with hidden camera					4			<b>4</b>	4			<b>4</b>
Inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content	1	2		<b>3</b>	10	11	12	<b>33</b>	12	9	6	<b>40</b>

When it comes to *ethical violations*, the largest number in all three analyzed magazines refers to the unstressed illustrative purpose of a photograph, the photographs for which it cannot be clearly said that they have occurred immediately on the scene or do not have a direct connection with the accompanying text. During the reporting period, such photographs were published in *Politika* 163 (56.6%), *Blic* 307 (68.7%), and *Kurir* 355 (75.75) (Table 1). These results point to the practice of newspapers to use photographs from archives.

The next ethical violation in terms of frequency is failure to specify the source or authorship of pictures. During the reporting period, such photographs were published in *Politika* 119 (41.3%), *Blic* 308 (68.9%), and *Kurir* 338 (72%) (Table 1). It should be noted that in *Blic* this offense dominated, more often than not stressing the illustrative role of a photograph. This result justifies the suspicion that the practice of unauthorized downloading images from the internet is very common, especially in semi-tabloids and tabloids.

The unstressed distinction between a documentary photograph and photomontage is present in all three analyzed magazines. In *Politika* there was one such photograph (0.34%),



in *Blic* there were five (1.1%), and in *Kurir* 40 (8.5%) (Table 1). The authors have considered those photographs which clearly show evidence of photomontage which is not indicated in the magazine. The example is the publication of photographs of Serbian pop artists with a beard, which was photoshopped onto their faces, as a parody of the singer with a beard in women's dress, Conchita Wurst, the winner of Eurovision 2014, whose success has caused great controversy the world over (*Kurir*, May 12, "Our female singers have grown a beard," page 26 and *Blic*, May 12, "Conchita's not a monster" pages 20-21).

When it comes to violations of the prohibition of photographs taken with a hidden camera, this rule ignored was ignored by *Blic* and *Kurir* with four such photographs (0.9% and 0.6%) (Table 1). An example of violation of this provision of the Code is monitoring and secretly recording the arrival of the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolic, to work for several days, in order to indicate his being late, despite the newly adopted measures of the Government of Serbia on new hours. A series of these photographs were published in *Blic* through the column "Topic of the Day" (*Politika*, May 12, "Nikolic does not care about Vucic's schedule" Pages 2–3).

To a much smaller extent, but with more serious ethical violations, there is a violation of the provisions of the Code relating to the prohibition of publishing inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content. In *Politika* there were 3 photographs that are in conflict with this requirement (1%), in *Blic* 33 (7.4%), and in *Kurir* 40 (8.5%) (Table 1). Examples of violations are daily publications of pin-up photographs of naked girls and models: in *Blic* under the section called "The World" and in *Kurir* on the pages of the section "Sport". Among these photographs are those that show violence, armed conflicts and bloody bodies. A disturbing photograph of bloody body of a victim in Ukraine appeared in *Politika*, even though it is considered serious press (*Politika*, May 12, "Donetsk and Lugansk voted for independence", page 3)

When it comes to disrespect for the presumption of innocence and the breach of the right to privacy and protection of identity, there were no such violations in *Politika*, but there were a few in *Blic* and *Kurir*. By publishing photographs of the accused for various offenses, *Blic* violated the presumption of innocence through 8 (1.8%), and *Kurir* through 19 (4%) photographs. The right to privacy and identity protection, most often the victims, *Blic* breached 7 (1.6%), and *Kurir* even 31 (6.6%) times (Table 1). Such examples are common on the pages of the section "Recent Events" in both newspapers, when in addition to the names of the suspect and the victim their photographs can be found, which are, as a rule, unsigned. When reporting on court proceedings concerning the events in the Belgrade zoo, when a wolf attacked a child and caused him grievous bodily harm, *Blic* published the picture of the accused director Vuk Bojovic and a few photos of the event extracted from security camera images in which the figure of the child was not hidden (*Blic*, May 12, "Five lies of Vuk Bojovic", page 15).

When it comes to the front pages, the authors started from the hypothesis that there were more ethical violations on the front than on the pages within the newspaper, on the assumption that newspaper editors want to attract the attention of readers with sensational content, which can be, in principle, in conflict with ethical principles.

In the analyzed period, on the front pages of *Politika*, *Blic*, *Kurir* a total of 56 photographs were published. The smallest number of photographs was published in *Politika* - 11 (19.6%), followed by *Kurir* - 22 (39.3%) and *Blic* with 23 (41%) of the published photographs.

**Table 2** Ethical violations in newspaper photographs published on the front pages of *Politika*, *Blic* and *Kurir* (12-14 May 2014)

Ethical violations	<i>Politika</i>				<i>Blic</i>				<i>Kurir</i>			
	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total	12 May	13 May	14 May	Total
Total number of published photographs (12-14 May)				11				23				22
Unstressed distinction between a documentary photograph and photoshopped image									3	1		4
Unstressed illustrative role of a photograph	1	4	2	7	8	2	8	18	8	6	7	21
Failure to specify source / authorship of a photograph	1	2	1	4	7	1	6	14	9	6	7	22
Disrespect for the presumption of innocence					1			1	1	2		3
Disrespect for the right to privacy and identity protection					1			1			1	1
Photographs taken with hidden camera					1			1				
Inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content					1	2	3					

When it comes to the role of unstressed illustrative photograph on the front page, in *Politika* such photographs were published seven times (63.6%), in *Blic* 18 (78.2%), and in *Kurir* 21 time (95.5%) (Table 2). In all three newspapers the percentage is higher than the result of the analysis of the entire content.

Failure to specify the source or authorship of the photographs on the front page of *Politika* was found on 4 (36.4%), *Blic* on 14 (60.9%) photographs, in both papers in a small percentage compared to the overall content. In *Kurir* the percentage is higher – 22 photographs (100%) (Table 2).

The unstressed distinction between a documentary photograph and photoshopping, is represented only by *Kurir* in 4 photographs (18.1%), which is four times higher than the percentage of the overall content (Table 2). An obvious example is the insertion of a photoshopped image of the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlovic, into the photograph recorded on construction site, while in the text inside the newspaper it is clear that the Minister was not there that day. The photoshopped image was supposed to represent the illustration of her unannounced inspection of the site over the past week (*Kurir*, May 13, “Minister, the construction site is still empty”, page 1).

In the analyzed sample, only one photograph was published recorded with a hidden camera, in *Blic*, but the percentage (4.3%) is higher than the total content (Table 2). The example, that has already been mentioned, about a wolf’s attack on a child in the Belgrade zoo, could be found also on the front page (*Blic*, May12, “Five lies of Vuk Bojovic”, page 1).

Inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content on the front page were published in *Blic* – in 3 photographs (13%), which is almost double compared to the results of an analysis of the total content (Table 2). An example of such a violation is publishing the photographs of a boy with visible scars and deformities of the face after a surgery (*Blic*, May 14, “Stefan, with a new face, arrived home”, page 1). On the same front page two photographs of the TV presenter Una Senić in her underwear were published, (*Blic*, May 14, “Una Senić addicted to the striptease pole”, page 1). Surprisingly, there were no such photographs on the front page of *Kurir*.

Disrespect of the presumption of innocence by publishing photos on the front page, is present in the newspapers *Blic* and *Kurir*. Such a photo was published in *Blic*, but the percentage (4.3%) was more than two times higher than the results obtained from the analysis of the total content. In *Kurir* three photographs of this kind were published, and the percentage (13.6%) was more than three times higher than the results obtained from the analysis of the total content. The right to privacy and identity protection by publishing photos on the cover was disrupted only in *Blic* by publishing only one photo, but the percentage (4.3%) is twice as high as the results obtained from the analysis of the total content. An example is the publication of photographs of the murder suspect and the victim at a family celebration, and their full names are mentioned in the related text (*Blic*, May 12, “A drunkard killed a wedding guest with three hits” page 1). Therefore, the hypothesis that there are more ethical violations on the front than on the pages within the newspaper is partially confirmed.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The research results support the hypothesis that the majority of ethical violations referring to photographs could be found in tabloids and semi-tabloids, which, when it comes to the number and types of violations of the provisions of the Code, do not differ significantly. In all the analyzed categories, the leading newspaper is *Kurir* when it comes to the number of offenses, all of which are, to a lesser extent, found in the newspaper *Blic*. In *Politika* there were no examples of non-compliance with the presumption of innocence, the violation of the right to privacy and the right to identity protection, as well as photographs taken with a hidden camera, and other offenses were present in a significantly lower percentage compared to the other two newspapers. The largest number of violations in all three newspapers refers to the unstressed illustrative role of photographs and the failure to specify the source/authorship of a photograph. It is followed by the publication of inappropriate, disturbing and pornographic content, a lack of respect for the right to privacy and identity protection, as well as disrespect of the presumption of innocence. Among the analyzed newspapers, *Kurir* stands out with the number of obvious and unstressed photoshopped images. When it comes to the front pages, the hypothesis that there are more ethical violations on the front than on the pages within the newspaper is partially confirmed. Furthermore, there are at least twice as many of photographs with content that is inappropriate or disturbing, a lack of the presumption of innocence and disrespect of the right to privacy, on the front pages in relation to the total content of tabloids and semi-tabloids. This confirms the initial assumption that newspaper editors want to attract the attention of readers with sensationalistic content.

However, the most worrying fact is that out of the entire corpus of photographs in the analyzed period, only 11.6% are ethically unproblematic photographs that fulfill the requirements of the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia. The largest percentage of these photographs were published in *Politika* (26.7%), followed by *Blic* (8.9%), and least *Kurir* (4.9%). Concerning fact is that the analysis detected a large number of examples with multiple breaches of the provisions of the Code in a photograph. These data indicate a poor picture of photojournalism in Serbia, and, ultimately, the poor condition of Serbian journalism. These breaches usually take place on an average weekday, with no major scandals in the public and major events. Crises would bring more examples of violations of the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia.

In Serbia, there is a Journalism Code of Ethics governing the use of photographs in print media since 2006, which is, in the opinion of media professionals, very clear and comprehensive. There is also the Press Council<sup>13</sup>, whose role, among other things, is to monitor compliance with the Code in print and online media. However, none of these marks and decisions are binding. Therefore, it is necessary to regulate the use of photographs in print media by regulations that will follow the development of technology and experience in local and international practice in Serbia. The modern era imposes the necessity of visual literacy of the media audience.

News photography must not be ignored. Photojournalism leaves tracks of the settlements that disappear, of the people who make history or participate in the creation of our social life, fragments of a time. The product of the camera, the images, represent a civilizational shift, not only because in the manner of modern communication we do not remember but record, but also due to the fact that every moment can be a document.

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<sup>13</sup> The Press Council was established in 2009 at the initiative of journalists' associations and has the role of an independent, self-regulatory body, which brings together publishers, owners of print and online media, news agencies, and professional journalists, resolves complaints from individuals and institutions on the content of the media. The responsibilities of the Council is the mediation between complaining individuals and institutions, and the editorial board, as well as the presentation of public warnings for violation of the ethical standards established by the Code of Journalists of Serbia. The Press Council is engaged in training to act in accordance with the Code of journalists and works to strengthen the role of the media in Serbia. Available at: <http://www.savetzastampu.rs/>. Accessed on May 20, 2014

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## ETIČNOST NOVINSKE FOTOGRAFIJE

*Novinska fotografija, vizuelni tekst koji moćnije govori od pisanog, nepravedno je zanemarena u teoriji i praksi medijskih teoretičara i profesionalaca. Autorke u radu polaze od pretpostavke da je fotografija, sama po sebi, moćan medij jer mu ljudi, pod sloganom da „slika vredi više od hiljadu reči“, otvoreno i naivno veruju. Njena uloga u srpskim štampanim medijima regulisana je odredbama Kodeksa novinara Srbije. Iako su uputstva jasna, u praksi se svakodnevno krše. Savremeno, digitalno doba, donelo je mogućnost da se fotografije jednostavno, i često nekažnjeno preuzimaju sa Internet mreže, a i programi za manipulaciju slikama postaju sve moćniji, dostupniji i lakši za korišćenje. Ovakve mogućnosti predstavljaju pretnju za status koji ima novinska, dokumentarna fotografija. Etičnost fotografije je posebno značajna jer su vizuelni elementi nešto što publika prvo primeti, a često i presudni da li će, i kako, biti usvojena pisana reč. Stoga je predmet istraživanja u radu etičnost fotografija u srpskim štampanim medijima. U analizi tri dnevna lista (Politika, Blic, Kurir), od 12. do 14. maja 2014. godine, bez dodataka i programskih vodiča, korišćena je semiološka metoda i metod kvantitativno-kvalitativne analize sadržaja svih objavljenih fotografija, osim reklamnih. Etičnost fotografije autorke su procenjivale u odnosu na odredbe Kodeksa novinara Srbije. Cilj je bio utvrditi u kom stepenu dolazi do kršenja svake od odredbi koja se odnosi na fotografiju. Hipoteze od kojih se u radu polazi su: Etičkih prekršaja ima u svim novinama, naviše u tabloidima, a najmanje u ozbiljnoj štampi. Najčešći prekršaji su nenaglašavanje ilustrativne prirode i nenavođenje autorstva fotografije, kada je o težim prekršajima reč, o nepoštovanje pretpostavke nevinosti i prava na privatnost. Etičkih prekršaja ima više na naslovnim stranama nego unutar lista.*

Ključne reči: *Novinska fotografija, štampani mediji, manipulacija, etika, Kodeks novinara Srbije.*