

A Continuous Battle: Relationships between Journalists and Politicians in Slovenia

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Abstract

This article deals with the relationship between journalists and politicians in post-socialist Slovenia, where journalists report increasing political pressures from editors, management and politicians. If socialism supported, even required, an intimate connection between party leaders and journalists, what are some “new” expectations that state or party officials have from journalists? Moreover, what is the self-professed role of journalists in the process of a democratic transition, and what “new” journalistic values are being adopted and challenged the most? On the basis of media political economy and 51 in-depth interviews (30 journalists and 21 politicians) we argue that there is a complex and multilayered relationship being formed between Slovene journalists and politicians. The Slovene case study can tell us more about the troublesome relationship between political-economic elites and journalists in the transition to democracy in a new country that has only recently become a nation-state.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, journalism, socialism, politics, Western media model

Introduction

In June 2011, the former-Yugoslav republic of Slovenia celebrated its 20th anniversary of independence. During the time of its independence, the Slovene political and economic systems were dramatically transformed – along with the regulatory regime of the media. However, as most local scholars argue, while the media significantly contributed to the collapse of socialism, and to the building of democracy, they rarely established themselves as independent forces – as a genuine “fourth estate” (Basic Hrvatin, 2011; Splichal, 2008). Some scholars blame journalists for negatively framing politics, and for contributing to decreasing levels of political engagement (Erjavec and Poler, 2010). Some also point to the political elites that continue to use the media for their own purposes (Splichal, 2001). This article is a corrective to the lack of in-depth analysis on the relationship between journalists and politicians in Central and Eastern Europe, as we consider the following research question: What kind of relationship is being developed between journalists and politicians? Is there significant difference in this relationship between the former-Yugoslav republic and the transitional, post-socialist context?

There have been some surveys of journalists conducted in Italy, Germany, Great Britain, and the USA that, for example, found Italian journalists substantially more likely to report political pressures from editors, management and politicians than their colleagues from around the world (see, van Dalen, Albæk and Vreese, 2011). Recently, based on their statistical research, Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) confirmed the obvious: that perceived political influences are related to objective indicators of political freedom in specific countries. But the lack of any qualitative research on the relationship between media and politics in either journalism or media studies is as obvious as it is a challenge to scholars across research fields and disciplines. This article aims to fill this gap in the literature by carrying out a qualitative analysis of the complex relationship between politicians and journalists in post-socialist Slovenia.

We use a political economy of the media approach and draw on in-depth interviews with both journalists and politicians of various parliamentary parties. The combination of methods allows us to engage in a comprehensive analysis of the complex relationship on two different levels: on a macro-social level, we will unveil key characteristics of the Slovene media scene; and on the micro level of interpersonal relationships we will interpret the links between media and politics.

In the first section of the article, we introduce a theoretical framework for thinking about various connections between media and politicians. The second section of the article explains the macro-social level of the relationship between journalists and politicians in Slovenia. The third section briefly introduces our methodology, and focuses on the analysis of main results from the interviews. The last section discusses our findings in the context of their broader social and theoretical dimensions.

Theoretical background

Both local and international scholars researching post-socialist and transitional media in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Jakubowicz, 2005, 2008; Mancini and Zielonka, 2012; Sparks and Reading, 1998; Splichal, 2001) agree that the media are captured by a variety of political and business actors. Central and Eastern European political parties lack members, dynamic organization, and programs. Consequently, they need the media in order to connect to the volatile, alienated, and confused electorate in the region. This gives the media powerful leverage over the parties, but it also makes the political parties eager to control the media for their own ends. Weak civil societies across the region have left media relatively free from public scrutiny, but it has also made them easier for political parties to control. Ownership of the media was in the hands of the state but is now predominately in the hands of multinational and local tycoons. Contrary to some expectations, privatization of the media itself is no guarantee of journalistic freedom from political pressures. Commercial, private owners are eager to grant specific political party officials a role in determining editorial appointments and media content – at a cost. Furthermore, much of the media content is geared towards entertainment and not towards providing information (Volcic, 2011). The overlap between journalism and other professional activities, such as PR, is widespread and frequent. Scholars also agree that journalists are too weak to resist political and economic pressures. Ongoing legal and regulatory reforms have created uncertainty and a lack of security (Gross, 2008).

This situation in Central and Eastern Europe demands rethinking the patterns of relationships between politicians and journalists. The existing literature emphasizes the interdependency of these two sets of actors who need each other's resources to achieve their objectives (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). The relationship between political antagonists and the news media in democratic capitalist societies can be described as a “competitive symbiosis” in which each side of the relationship attempts to exploit the other while expending a minimum amount of cost (Wolfsfeld, 2003, p. 84). Recognition of the mutuality of interests has drawn the two groups closer together until they have become “inextricably linked” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, p. 473). Within this broad framework of “symbiosis”, however, conflict remains central and routine: indeed, two characteristics of the relationship ensure that conflict is endemic. The first feature of the relationship is journalists' and politicians' divergent perceptions of the fundamental purposes of political communication. For journalists, the relationship provides opportunities to educate, enlighten, and inform members of audience. For politicians the purpose is to persuade voters to embrace their point of view (p. 485). The roles of information and propaganda seem destined to collide. A second source of conflict has to do with a consequence of the relationship: how do journalists and politicians “agree” on being governed and regulated by rules and conventions? Conflicts and antagonisms are common to both sides. What kind of relationship currently exists between Slovenian journalists and politicians?

One wonders whether well-established theories commonly applied to politics and the media can be used for analyzing the peculiar circumstances described above. There has been a long debate about the usefulness of the dichotomy between “socialist” and “Western” media systems, and we continue to be challenged by a number of conceptual dilemmas. For example, there exist internal differences between “Western” media models and varying levels of political pressure on journalists. Hallin and Mancini (2004) write about the “ideal types” of media: the “liberal” model (in Britain, Ireland and North America), the “democratic corporatist” model (in northern continental Europe) and the “polarized pluralist” model (in the Mediterranean countries of southern Europe). There is a growing body of literature that points to “the polarized pluralist model” or “Mediterraneanization” of the media in Central and Eastern Europe (Wyka, 2008). However, we need to ask if “the polarized pluralist” model – which suggests that media mirror political divisions chiefly along party lines – really dominates in Slovenia (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Media context in Slovenia

In Slovenia, the laws are in flux and often contradictory, the administration is relatively sizable but inefficient, and the justice system is weak, ineffective or in some cases even corrupt. In this climate of profound, chaotic and never-ending transition, informal rules tend to dominate over formal ones. State structures are easy targets for political and economic manipulation and business relations are nontransparent. In the absence of durable institutional arrangements, political, economic and media actors stick to socio-cultural patterns of clientelism.

Local scholars embrace the notion of clientelism in order to describe particular patterns of social organization between political, economic, and media elites (Basic Hrvatin and Petkovic, 2008). During the transition times, a network of connected political, economic, law, and media elites was formed, that all remain closely linked together. Key interest networks have been created, regardless of any party affiliation, except following their “particular interests” (Zerdin, 2012, p. 14). Zerdin identifies these key players in Slovenia and shows how they control access to public resources that are shared by others only in exchange for favors. They pursue a neo-liberal project: while privatizing most spheres of society, they also control large parts of the media (*ibid.*). It is crucial, as Zerdin argues, to point to the dominance of external media owners in Slovenia, whose primary investments lie in business and who value their control of one or more media outlets primarily in terms of

pursuing their interests. Zerdin specifically documents the connections between the elites through following the media ownership of Delo: the largest single shareholder in Delo by 2004 was the Lasko Brewery, which had 25 per cent of the shares.

The privatization of Slovene media happened in a corrupt and non-transparent way: political elites arranged for their cronies to buy up shares, without issuing public calls. Most of the privatization was non-transparent and made use of creative financing to influence the transfer of stock to companies which consisted of little besides a mailbox, and had neither employees nor products or services. The transfers were arranged with low interest loans from banks in which the Slovene government had a controlling interest. Once media were transferred into the hands of “loyal” owners, government politicians steered lucrative advertising by state-related companies towards those media. This has been characteristic of both the center-left and center-right governments (Erjavec and Poler, 2010).

The nature of most media communication enterprises is itself blurred. Powerful networks, who own and use the media to support their private businesses in the realm of politics and shape laws and administrative decisions, are quick to promote their interests in the media, business, and politics (Basic Hrvatin and Milosavljevic, 2010). For example, members of media governing boards “are chairpersons of the largest Slovenian companies, owners of advertising agencies and chairpersons or supervisory board members of the largest banks” (Basic Hrvatin et al., 2004, p. 477).

Due to political-economic-media clientelism, no media law is adopted without politicians taking into account the interests of powerful business/economic groups (*ibid.*). For example, politicians have, while collaborating with media owners, passed mass media acts (1994, 2001, 2006) that allowed media concentration. Consequently, despite the fact that media appear to be owned by a diverse group of individuals and companies, at a closer look, their main owners are “a few influential persons related through capital and management functions, whereby the owners of one newspaper sit on the supervisory boards of other newspapers” (Basic Hrvatin and Kucic, 2010).

Another manifestation of clientelism is the political-economic control over advertising money (Erjavec and Poler, 2010). In Slovenia, advertising money is often distributed according to the political loyalty, as companies owned by the state are among the biggest advertisers in Slovenia. In order for specific media to receive advertising money from state companies, or companies that are closely connected to specific political parties, they have to publish promotion stories about leading politicians. Stular (2011) documents how the editor of a magazine *Faces* was forced to publish a promotional story about Janez Jansa, a leader of a right-wing political party, in order to get advertising money from a state company.

Clientelism also has an impact on the journalists’ identity and work. The identity of professional journalists is imprecise, not least because very frequently they are a part of volatile clientelistic networks. They often fail to differentiate their journalistic profession from other activities, for example, public relations or party activism. Some journalists are involved in corrupt activities while others are subjected to economic or even physical threats. This context has also created uncertainty and a lack of security. Because journalists’ salaries are relatively low in most cases, they take up other activities that they can make more money from (Basic Hrvatin and Milosavljevic, 2010).

Methodology

On the basis of in-depth interviews we attempt to explore how journalists and politicians themselves evaluate and interpret their relations. In-depth interviews enable a researcher to go deeper, to open novel problem dimensions and provide a clear, accurate and inclusive argument based on a personal experience (Burgess, 1982). Our two main questions to all our informants were simple and clear: a) how do you evaluate the relationship between politicians and journalists in Slovenia; and b) how do you interpret this relationship.

We conducted 51 in-depth interviews with 30 journalists and 21 politicians in the fall 2011 and spring 2012. We interviewed influential journalists from all seven dailies (*Delo* (5), *Dnevnik* (4), *Vecer* (2), *Finance* (2), *Zurnal24* (2), *Primorske novice* (1), *Slovenske novice* (1)), three from public television (*TV Slovenia*), and three from commercial television *POP TV*, three from *Slovene Press Agency* (Slovenska tiskovna agencija, STA), two from the left-orientated political magazine *Mladina* and two from the right orientated magazine *Reporter*. Since no quantitative study on Slovene journalists exists, we were not able to provide quantitative context for the content of our study (there is not even official statistics about the number of journalists in Slovenia), but we selected this sample because we wanted to interview journalists from the most influential print and television media (Nacionalna raziskava branosti, 2011), covering national and local politics. The interviewed journalists were established in their profession, were well-known in covering politics, and had worked in journalism for more than 15 years. In terms of gender and age, there were more women journalists than men interviewed, and there were more “younger” journalists (from 37 – 45 years old) than “older” (from 46 – 61) included in our study. From the beginning of this research, there were no significant differences in gender or age of journalists in terms of professional standards, values, and evaluation of the level of autonomy. The responses pointed equally to the awareness of the political influence that the journalists experience. Hence, despite what one might expect,

regarding gender, age, position and professional experience, journalists' evaluations of the relations between media workers and politicians did not differ.

We interviewed three representatives from all parliamentary political parties (9 governmental and 12 oppositional politicians) and one "independent" politician, a representative of all those politicians who have left their political parties. It was important to conduct interviews with politicians themselves – not only to detect their own arguments, but also because the works of parliamentary parties has a crucial influence on a Slovene wider social life (Dezelan, 2009). Our political informants were either leaders of their parties, or leaders of their parliamentary groups. They were between 43 and 62 years old and mostly men (18). Interviews were conducted individually, lasted from one to two hours, and were in-depth. There were seldom any problems in getting informants to share their opinions. However, since most of the journalists expressed a willingness to participate in the study given their anonymity was guaranteed, we labeled all our informants using letters, and words that could identify them were omitted and replaced by ellipses.

Results

The results of our analysis will first present the journalists' arguments, followed by the politicians' views on journalism. Within each specific category, we first focus on the evaluation of the relationship between journalists and politicians. Second, we analyze the means of influence.

Journalists about the Politics

All the interviewed journalists interpreted the relationship with the politicians as difficult, complex, "full of tensions", and unbalanced. In the words of one, the relationship is characterized "by a continuous battle, and one needs a tough skin to resist and survive." We can classify their responses according to the degree of harmony: from trust towards anger and hate. The relationship of trust here is defined by mutual understanding of "hidden" rules of similar (political) belonging, of family connections, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. The anger/hate relationship is characterized by suspicion, caution, cynicism, and furthermore, humiliation and fear the journalists feel.

Firstly, more than a half of interviewed journalists (16) reported that they do form trustful relationships with both, oppositional and governmental politicians. These links can be formal and informal, which is due to political and personal proximity. Slovenia has "a small society syndrome, with private connections dominating the politics... where you know everyone and where we do each other favors..." (Journalist B). This statement of mutual acquaintance and connection between journalists and politicians suggests clientelistic linkages regardless of political party, in which both sides help each other. The interviewed journalists perceived the connection with the politicians as a given fact, with some of the journalists being pleased about their good relationship with politicians. They reported wanting to look after their mutual benefit. A typical citation from the interviews goes like this:

Look... I am a personal friend of many politicians. Some of them I know from my childhood, we grew up together. You know, Slovenia is just so small – everyone knows everyone. We are like a tribe [laughs]. Therefore, I have better access to information. Otherwise I do not agree with him, because he is very nationalist-oriented, but his information is useful. Namely, he reveals political and economic games in the backstage. And that's worth gold in our business. Thus, he gets publicity, I get information. This is our trade. You know, like everything in this life. (Journalist A)

Secondly, however, twelve of the interviewed journalists also expressed anger about the expectations and attitudes politicians have towards them. While the interviewees felt exploited, only three claimed that they would fight for journalistic autonomy and the improvement of their position. Others said that they would prefer to change their profession, often mentioning "going PR", where employees receive higher salaries. For example:

They treat us like their servants. I do not know how we could have fallen down so badly... that we are subordinates now to politicians. To all of them, regardless of their right or left orientation: in fact, they are all the same. They don't differ in any crucial way – they are all after their own interest. Maybe there is a difference in religion: the right worships the Catholic Church and the left doesn't. They do not want a professional relationship, but our subordination. I'm angry because of this humiliation, and it does not get us enough money. I'm going to rather sell myself and start to work in PR. (Journalist C)

Some journalists (5) appeared rather disappointed and claimed that it is almost impossible to achieve journalistic professional autonomy in Slovenia due to clientelism. They argued that Slovene journalists would

never be autonomous, because in small Slovenia journalists are closely connected with political and economic actors, which are often the same. In the words of one:

Honestly, I feel that we are all dependent too much on each other. Media tycoons and their editors depend on politicians. I just feel I can't breathe here, sometimes. We don't have our own autonomy... yes, we have a code of ethics, and journalistic union, but deep down, everyone knows we are not protected. But it is inevitable. In this little Slovenia, the politicians are connected with the capital and the media. If our newspaper wants to survive, we must comply with the will of politicians. (Journalist F)

In order to explain these continuous, but diverse interferences of politicians in journalistic autonomy, the journalists cited different examples of pressures or even censorships that they witness daily. In what follows, we briefly reveal the main mode of politicians' influence on journalists.

Indirect and Direct Political pressures on Journalists

More than a half of the interviewed journalists (17) claimed that it is through the pressures on media owners that politicians intervene within journalism. They argue that media owners directly interfere with the individual work of journalists and define the way journalists can report about politics. They claimed that media ownership translates into specific power that is used to promote stories that then advance the interests of the owner or his/her friends:

Owners don't care about higher goals, such as serving the public . . . are you joking? That is a fairy tale for naive journalism students. Those who continue to invest in the media . . . like insurance business and oil magnates turned politicians . . . do it for reasons other than journalism and informing. Their media are just platforms for pursuing their business and political interests. They are directly indulged in our work. Not every day, but too many times. (Journalist G)

Some journalists (6) argued that politicians intervene through clientelistic networks by replacing "disloyal" journalists with loyal ones. They cited examples where editors were replaced and journalists were dismissed for specific political reasons, or were threatened with reductions in salary, dismissal, or redeployment to less favorable posts if they did not support the official line. For example, the respondents reported that the people who sit on supervisory boards of Slovene newspapers are under the control of economically and politically powerful elite. They pointed out that after changes in any government, most of the supervisory and management board members are replaced by "loyal" ones. These new members remove editors and new editors remove disloyal journalists. Every new government in Slovenia attempts to influence media, or interfere within the media spheres, with for example, replacement of leading media editors and reports. As they remembered, during the reign of a right-wing party of Janez Jansa (2004 – 2008), 571 journalists wrote a petition against the censorship, political pressures, and replacements of editors and journalists that his regime supported. The entire programming council of RTV Slovenia had been replaced, as well as the chair of the Board of Management at Delo, two further members of that board, four members of the Supervisory Board of Delo, the director of Vecer, the program director of Radio Slovenia, the editor-in-chief of Vecer, and, the editor-in-chief of Delo. A famous example that the journalists cited is that of a respected and well-known Delo journalist, Ervin Milharcic, who was downgraded from his editorial position, allegedly because of "the lack of education":

This was a typical indirect political disciplining strategy of intimidation. Ervin lost his job, one of the greatest Slovene political journalists. Why? Because he still dared to be critical of the right-wing government. Since the politicians changed the supervisory board, they had a power to replace him. He was replaced by a chick with a high school education, who reported for a tabloid all her career. Therefore, 571 journalists wrote a petition against this practice. We pointed out that we experience changes to our reporting without our consent, that we witness non-publication of assigned articles, restrictions on the coverage of politically sensitive subjects, and deprival of access to government officials for those who write about the government in unflattering ways. (Journalist C)

According to the journalists, politicians intervene through clientelistic network also by advertising. In order for specific media to receive advertising money from state companies, or companies that are closely connected to the government, they have to publish promotional and flattering stories about leading politicians. For example, journalists are forced to publish a promotional story about leading politicians in order to get advertising money from a state company. A typical statement by the journalists was: "I can present you modus vivendi of influence that politicians exert on journalists through advertising: we have to write about leading politicians, such as Janez Jansa, positively, if we want to receive any advertising money." (Journalist D)

Some journalists (4) also cited “indirect” intervention when politicians influenced journalists through editors: critical articles and reports would not get published, or would have had to be re-written/changed. One journalist stated that, “twice, I was called into my editor's office, because of my investigative reporting on an insurance company. I was questioned, and felt interrogated. He accused me of being biased in my writing, and consequently decided not to run the story, and to give me no raise.” (Journalist C)

Other journalists (3) recalled some indirect, subtle individual pressures from politicians, for example “soft” threats with an aim to “intimidate me: if I don't report ‘positively’ about the government, I would not get invited to the conferences, or would have no access to the crucial information.” (Journalist D)

Political Attempts to Corrupt Journalists

In addition to more or less rough interventions by politicians in the media, politicians have tried to incorporate journalists in clientelistic networks with “bribery”. Some journalists (18) emphasized concrete “bribing” attempts. It is not so much about money, as it is more about “little favors” that a journalist is being offered, if one is “on the right side”. For example: “You receive a favorable bank-loan, a job for your son, or a fellowship for your neighbor.” (Journalist M) It is a type of a corruption, and all the informants said they have never been involved in it themselves, but that they all know “someone, who did it”. Typical statement: “Politicians are so eager to get into the media, and it is important for them to appear in the media. They would do anything to get coverage, so to offer bribes is common for many of them.” (Journalist P)

According to the respondents, there are numerous “services” that journalists get offered for exchange of either reporting positive news about a political or economic actor; or for not covering negative information about politicians. The obvious question is why no one questions this illegal practice, or reports it to Anti-corruption Agency? The journalists interviewed saw it as a generally accepted practice. “There is no sense to fight again it, really. We are too small of a society and whether you like it or not, it's the rule of the game.” (Journalist F) One can conclude that there is a culture of apathy present among Slovene journalists, who believe things can't change for the better, and do not want to resist the dominant model.

Politicians on the Relationship with Journalists

Politicians were, unlike journalists, much less willing to express their views, which can be primarily attributed to the politicians' wish to conceal their practice of influencing the media. The majority of politicians (18) defined journalists as a homogenous professional group, but they also saw journalists as strongly divided according to their political orientation and belonging. There is a difference in how both the representatives of governmental and oppositional parties evaluated the relationship: governmental politicians hold more positive views about journalists and claim that the relationship is “quite ordinary”, “OK”, “sometimes normal, sometimes problematic”, in a sense that “there is a mutual dependency between us: journalists need information from us, and we need to get this information out with their help.” (Politician B) The oppositional journalists understand the relationship as more “hostile”, blaming the journalists for being politically motivated, and “angry”. This shows that politicians, especially those in power, construct clientelistic network and control journalists:

I feel mainstream journalists are being hostile towards my political party and me. They are much nicer to other political parties. Most of them have political interests, you know. Or they are driven by some old personal stories and traumas, and that makes them angry, and not able to do their job professionally. (Politician H)

There are different types of relationships that politicians claim to have with journalists. In what follows, we briefly focus on two main common themes that dominated the interviews.

Most of the interviewed politicians (19) continued to see journalists as politically biased and even corrupt. Again, opposition politicians were more critical of today's journalism: “We lack balanced, responsible journalism. There are no ethical standards for most of them; publishing unverified information and even lies is not unusual. Journalists get the concept of freedom of speech wrong and think they can write anything they want.” (Politician G) Journalism in this narrative is seen as political propaganda, and as continuation of socialist traditions: “Journalists here not only describe and report on politics, but they interpret it, or they themselves enter politics, while they still remain journalists.” (Politician I)

The interviewed politicians brought up different conspiracy theories about journalists as serving old communist elites that oppositional politicians share. The politicians saw journalists as corrupted and bribed by left-wing political parties, who continue to dominate Slovene political spectrum. As one of them says,

Things have changed a little bit, but we are far from achieving balanced journalism. There is some freedom today, but there are still a lot of obstacles in order to tell the truth. Many institutions are not open, and journalists remain to be affiliated with old political elites, so their reporting is often superficial. (Politician H)

Some opposition politicians (4) indicated that they also want to control the journalists and media, although they condemned the influence of left-wing government on the majority of Slovene media. They said that they would ensure the balance when they become a member of government. This indicates that they also wish to intervene in the media market, when they will have political and economic power. A typical statement was:

Look, the media market today is in a hard situation. We have a worse condition now when we did in the time of Yugoslavia. There is too little patriotic journalism. As soon as I become a member of the government, I will try to change this situation. It is crucial that we, together with key players who advocate privatization, achieve a more balanced capital media market. (Politician C)

Discussion and Conclusion

In Central and Eastern Europe, on one hand, there are common post-socialist media characteristics: close ties between politics and the media (Jakubowicz, 2005), the blurring of lines between political and business interests (Splichal, 2008), commercialization, the professionalization of journalists, insecure journalistic labor markets, and the development of post-socialist forms of public service broadcasting, to name just a few (Erjavec and Poler, 2010). On the other hand, there are plenty of different patterns in media transitions across the region as well, characterized by various scales of foreign investment, wide variations in journalistic salaries and in respect for journalism ethics, different levels of journalistic corruption, and varying regulatory regimes (Volcic, 2011). As it has been argued, media ownership in post-socialist context has been employed as an instrument for political influence. Political exploitation of the media results in bias (see more in Gross, 2008; Ryabinska, 2011).

Our study went a step further and attempted to explore concrete relationships between journalists and politicians. We argue that there is a complex and multilayered relationship being formed between Slovene journalists and politicians.

The journalists identify different types of relations they have with politicians. There exist close loyalty networks among journalists and politicians that can be seen as examples of clientelistic relationship. Journalists end up being pulled into the clientelist orbits, while embracing advocacy skills rather than fair reporting. Many profess their close ties with politicians, but argue that these do not necessarily manifest in expectations of positive reporting. There are direct and indirect political interventions that journalists themselves experience. Our study found out that politicians regardless of political party affiliation intervene in journalistic reporting in several ways, using clientelistic network (which is composed of politicians, media owners, and members of supervisory boards of media, editors, advertisers, state companies, or companies that are closely connected to political power). Some journalists choose to ally with economic and political elites operating in an informal mode of "dirty togetherness" (Mancini and Zielonka, 2012, p. 5). Others are passive bystanders trying to keep their jobs under very difficult political and economic circumstances. Most of our interviewed journalists passively accept their subordinate role. A key reason can be found in the fact that the Slovene public widely accepted the idea that the individual should not be proactive, since "it doesn't matter". In Slovenia, there is a culture of apathy being developed, where it is commonly accepted that after the collapse of socialism, "we can't change anything" (Smrke, 2012).

We argue that in Slovenia, journalists and politicians do not form a professional relationship, described by Wolsfeld (2003, p. 84) as a "competitive symbiosis". Why? Slovene journalism is defined by clientelism, by structural and regulatory political influences that are supported by the network of businessmen and lawyers. The relationship is co-created by journalists who agree upon their subordination. Clientelism became a parallel system and forms dominant relations, at least in some important segments of society. In order to achieve clientelism, it was necessary to institutionalize concentration of power in both the media as well as in politics and economics. It was also necessary to establish the dependency of journalists on political and economic power. Of course, clientelism remains an unofficial, parallel system of relationships: not only because of the constitutional and other official and legal provisions, but also because the public trust into what media publish needs to be maintained. Clientelism then also has cultural characteristics, where personal connections go beyond formal, universalistic rules.

We return to our overall question: Under what conditions are clientelism and the subordination of journalists to politicians and capital realized and achieved? Firstly, we point to an insecure professional situation of journalists. A weak and insecure financial situation is one important reason for journalists to turn to powerful political and economic figures for financial support and patronage (Bric, 2010). The majority of Slovene journalists have existential problems (*ibid.*). When journalists lack job security and are not well paid, the influence and pressures are even more effective. Younger journalists especially, claimed that there is a small

group of older journalists who benefited enormously from privatization. The rest of them, they say, are in a vulnerable and financially weak position. There is also a lack of solidarity among journalists. All of this leads to a lack of professionalism and the low journalistic standards.

Secondly, there is a concentration of the media market (Kreft, 2007). Since 1991, new laws governing the media have been passed in 1994, 2001, and 2005, in each case-giving rise to more controversy, and more power to economic and political interferences within media. A typical sign of establishing the conditions for parallel clientelism are legal conditions: through various financing schemes, systems of appointments or replacing their most responsible employees, the establishment of clientelism as a parallel system is made possible.

Thirdly, we point to media ownership, where companies interested in important concessions of state or local authority are able to buy media stocks, giving them a privileged position according to the principle: "I enable you media influence, you enable me a great business" (Kreft, 2007).

In our study, we expand the definition of Hallin and Mancini (2004) and their colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe (Wyka 2008), which defines the media system in Central and Eastern Europe as "polarized pluralist" or "Mediterranean". This model is characterized by the exercise of the freedom of the press, the development of commercial media, the strong role of the state, as owner, regulator, founder, co-financier, and media politicization. A key feature of this media system is political parallelism, which is distinguished by the degree and nature of links between journalists and political groups. In some dimensions, the media system reflects the dominant political divisions in society. But in Slovenia, media outlets hardly mirror Slovene political parties. Namely, despite the fact that the clientelistic network is ideologically-politically specific, described by local scholars as either "left" or "right", it is also "mobile" and "common": many individuals transfer from one to another following their own individual interests, and members of both ideological networks have common economic interest (Kreft, 2007). In Slovenia, there are two main networks: the so-called "energetic network" and "road network", in which politicians from various political parties are united on the basis of common interest for control over the profitable sectors of energy and road-construction (Zerdin, 2012). Thus, this does not amount to the political parallelism known in such countries as Italy or Spain. Therefore, the situation in the Slovene media scene could be described as "partiality and imbalance based not on political loyalty, but on interests only", since the individual journalists have ties to interest networks regardless of political parties affiliation. Media remain more or less subordinate to these networks.

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