deScripto is becoming better and better. This is not only my impression as the publisher, but also from the many positive comments, letters and E-mails we received after the publication of the last number. The fact that we have started a cooperation with local universities in South East and Central Europe, has not only had an influence on the improved quality of deScripto but also promotes better cooperation between the University of Vienna and universities in the region.

I would like to thank this time especially Nada Popovic-Poricic, Dean of the Faculty of Media and Communications at Singidunum University in Belgrade. She is not only a great professional, and as a former Minister in Serbia is also a person with great experience, but also a person that understands very well the needs of modern media communication. I am happy that I met her and that we started our partnership on different projects. Also, many thanks to Mirjana Stefanovic for coordinating the work in Belgrade, Selma Koric from my SEEMO team in Vienna, for coordinating the work in Vienna, thanks to all students from the Faculty of Media and Communications at Singidunum University in Belgrade and to all students in Vienna for working on this issue. Thanks Sarah Hayes for proofreading and our Art Director Zoran Spahic for the layout. And for course, thanks Thomas, for being a great editor-in-chief of deScripto.

For SEEMO the work is continuing as usual. Independent of the world financial crises, we are doing our best to support media and press freedom in South East and Central Europe. Our SEEMO Media Handbook 2008 in two volumes, with about 1,000 pages in each volume, is proof of this. But also some other publications we are doing, like the new SEEMO book-edition we started with our SEEMO partner in Belgrade Dan Gad, under the name The Greatest Investigative Journalism. The first book “Garut” by Endi Heqim from Bosnia and Herzegovina is only the beginning, with an edition in Serbian-Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin, but our plans are to continue with co-publishing the books in this SEEMO edition also in other languages. From May 2009, SEEMO will have also a new web page, we will open a Facebook community for SEEMO and of course, we will continue with SEEMO Conferences in the region, like the WAZ-KAS-SEEMO South East and Central Europe Media Forum that will be held this year in Tirana.

Thomas A. Bauer, Editor-in-Chief
Interview with Axel Schindler, CEO of the Newspaper Group Bulgaria

State of the Media

INTERVIEW

Relations Philosophy

“Vienna is Special” - City’s Communications and Public Relations

Bulgarian Civil Society Battles to Limit Data Retention

BGNES - Bulgarian Private News Agency

MEDIA COMPANY

Balkan Comic Artists Getting Back Together

One Culture, One Voice

Cyber Basement

Music as Communication

Pretty Blonds Speaking the Lines Learned by Heart

Public Relations in Serbia

Artistic Projects course

Students’ projects within the Management of Cultural and Artistic Projects course

BOOK REVIEWS

Golden Decades of Bulgarian Electronic Industry

Decentralisation and Regionalisation in Serbia

The Body of War

World Association of Newspapers’ World Digital Media Trends 2008

COMMUNITY MEDIA

Media Scene for the Bulgarian Community in Vienna

SEEMO AWARDS

Dr. Erhard Busek and SEEMO Award

SEEMO Award for Human Rights presented to Sposenka Holub

Book Presentation: Bildung für Europa, Politische Ansprüche und Anregungen für die Praxis

Photo Exhibit Review: Contemporary Serbian Photography in Vienna

CONFERENCES

Private News Agencies, Belgrade, Serbia

PRIVATE RELATIONS

In Focus

“Vienna is Special” - City’s Communications and Public Relations

INTERVIEW

State of the Media

This issue of deScripto is a joint project of
In cooperation with the University of Development Centre, Sofia in November 2008. This SEEMF will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 5-6 December 2008. The theme of the conference is “New Challenges of Human Rights Reporting in South East Europe.” The conference is organised in cooperation with the European Commission and the South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMO). The first SEEMF was organised in Bratislava in 2007.

SEEMO has several international and national governmental organisations and institutions as project partners, like the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Central European Initiative (CEI), SEEMO has an ongoing project cooperation with a number of organisations, media schools and media companies. In the past five years, SEEMO has co-organised several media monitoring projects in South East Europe. In December 2008 SEEMO will organ-ise the conference Public Broadcasting in South East Europe in cooperation with RTV Slovenia.

Since 2003, the South East Europe Media Handbook (SEEMO) has been available. In 2007, after careful deliberation, the SEEMO Board named the journalist, writer and fighter for human rights. In 2006 SEEMO Board Members chose Abdalhamid Odeh, a journalist and a member of the Turkish-Muslim minority living and working in Western Thrace, Greece, for the SEEMO Human Rights Award. In 2007 the SEEMO Board named the journalist, writer and fighter for human rights Zofia Rakowicz from Montereberg, who was a journalist and a human rights activist in Serbia, as the 2007 Winner of the Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe.

In 2007 SEEMO decided together with CEI to start as of 2008 the CEI Award for Outstanding Investigative Journalism, a prize of 5,000 EUR. This Award was given in 2007 to Drago Hedlić from Croatia. The Jury based its decision on the integrity and personal courage demonstrated by Hedlić in carrying out his work on war crimes committed against civilians in the eastern city of Osijek in 1991. According to the Jury, “writing about war crimes is not something that makes a journalist popular.”

Since 2008 SEEMO has also the Award for the Best Photograph in the Human Rights Field. The first winner of this award (2009) was Majlinda Bregu (Shqiptar, Skopje). For the photograph “Zafarë” (“Prison”), her contribution to the human rights struggle in the region; the SEEMO Ethical Committee gave the Photograph a certificate of distinction. The photograph was published in the Albanian newspaper Fshati, for his photograph “Utopija” (“Lithurgy”).

SEEMO also nominated several leading journalists from the region for important international awards. In May 2002, Bosnian Herzegovinian journalist Zeljko Kopanja from Nezavisne novine, Banja Luka, received the Concordia Award in Austria after being nominated by SEEMO.

SEEMO Board members (since 2007): Radomir Ljutic (President, Editor-in-Chief, E-MAIL: info@seemo.org, WEB: www.seemo.org)

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The age of hypermodernity has been facing the significant inflation of the culture of ‘screen’. Never before were people in possession of so many ‘screens’ as today, not only to ‘see the world’, but to be live their own life. We are living in a world within the world where the event becomes spectacle. A network of screens has transformed our way of life, our attitude towards information, time and space, travel and consumption. To be is to be ‘glued’ to a screen.

Emancipation begins with questioning the opposition between viewing and doing; with understanding that the obviousness that constitutes the relationship between viewing and doing constitutes the part of domination and oppression structure. It begins with our understanding that ‘to be viewing’ also affirms or transforms such distribution of positions. A viewer acts as a student or a scientist, he is selecting, making comparisons, interpreting.

Communication has taken over huge amount of space in our ‘modern’ societies. Communications has become, as Philip Breton says, a new utopia; the more appealing and more acceptable as ‘big’ ideologies like socialism and liberalism are in crisis. It is a utopia of a man ‘without his interiority’ reduced to his image in the society which due to communications became ‘transparent’. An apologia of planetary universalism without any substance, a naïve enthusiasm of ‘virtual worlds’ and ‘global village’ have strengthened a terrifying demand to discover the same roots, demand for identical, a rejection of all other ways for those roots to be reached... Today we see clearly to which extent the media focused all their powers on information, that it makes them a powerful tool of disinformation.

Liberalism of the world of media whose interest does not necessarily overlap with public interest led to evolution of populism. Authorities in the world of communications who give rise to a utopia of ‘a planetary world’ could, in near future, become a backbone of authoritarian regimes which control people; all the more so as they spend their time nailed to computers and also as their communication is technically transparent.

A diffusion of communication utopia recently unfolded with a relative lack of criticism. Liberalism and power of media are accepted as a sign of our political maturity. There are indeed authors like Régis Debray and Jean Baudrillard who tried to criticize the media society, but their criticism makes for a few isolated voices.

I believe that a criticism of communication utopia should avoid a false debate between technophiles and technophobes, or a type of debate which is for or against media and new networks. Problems are much more complex to come down to such simple alternatives. A difference should be made between the means and their application, and especially, the significance which is given to them by society. Information technology would play a lesser role in society if less importance was assigned to a certain concept of rationality. That raises the question as to why our
Media Landscape: Serbia in Transition

Society is built through intermediation, which becomes increasingly mediatised. Mediatisation changes the mechanism of social trust.

By Thomas A. Bauer

Serbia over the last years has become a significant example, maybe also a model for an active transition. The political way of and for change was not easy to be done but has now happened irrevocably. There are many areas where that move of change can be observed. One of those areas is the media. Since media is not just a system of devices or of organisation, but much more a social system of intermediation: it is a cultural, political, educational and economical platform of building a society. If there is something relevant within a transition process, then it is the active movement of change of social relationship. What is changing through transition is not only the macrocosm of basic institutions (market, politics), what is changing is the microcosm of social relations, increasingly developed and organised through media and usage of media. The young and vivid media scene in Serbia, I suppose, is somehow the continuation of a talent, Serbia always has been famous for: ambiguous poetry and poetic ambiguity. This special character of intellectual refraction takes care for strong ties to tradition in times of revolution and also provokes with strong tones for revolution in times of stagnation. The media landscape in Serbia is a landscape of social and cultural change.

In a media society, social change in first line is media change. Media is a source of experience that constructs experience becoming knowledge because of the structure of sharing different perspectives and because of its repeatability. Since knowledge, always being a cultural good, in context of social usage of media increasingly becomes a media good, it turns becoming an economic factor.

What counts, is the fact that media do not produce knowledge, but distribute and construct in another social-cultural constellation than the one knowledge is usually produced or distributed. Media do not construct a hierarchical distance and the social rituals they are effecting, are rituals of personal or individual usage. In reference the principle of trust that has always been important in communication of science and knowledge, the social construction of (publicly negotiated) knowledge refers to other (new) constellations of credibility, or of criteria for objective significance. Along the social change there is a level of media change, which is obviously and firstly a change of technology - but in sum it is more: media change it is a change of culture (and social meaning) of getting connected to society or to communities, or to any time to any one in any topic in any manner. It is a continuous changeover of relations aiming to be related to a meaningful environment.

This new mechanism of trust in media might have to do with the in same time decreasing importance of institutions (cultural critical evaluation), when media understanding as (special) institutions or such that just replace traditional ones, shifting over them to be
come media-like institutions: media religion, media politics, media education, media economy and so forth. But trust in the media also could emerge through the social construction of ubiquity. Increasingly media get used by people that generate knowledge or conversation and also by people that search for knowledge or conversation - both supposing that media are the framework of reference of all, for all, and in relation to all. Media are supposed to be the measure of reference in order to value what one thinks one should know about supposing that any other also could know from there. This concentration of generalisation makes media to become the agencies of the generalisation of social presumption and central agency of social connectivity. As this means a change on all levels of the concept of social change: a change in social relations, a change in the structure of the discourses, a change of values of the traditional social practice, and - last not least - a change in using technologies for the construction of social relation, the concept of social change related to the contemporaneous societies, is a change of the principle of social intermediation.

Such a situation can be described best as mediatisation or mediatisation of social (and personal) life (especially when getting reminded through reflections of Cultural Studies that not the technical structure makes media being a media, but only the use of it. The use of media structures (technology) intends the particular process of intermediation and makes media working as an agency of news, mobility, connectivity, flexibility, belongingness etc., of all what man makes realising and verifying as a social being. Media technology of the modern type work in exactly that same: as the technical device media is the dispositive (Foucault) of just this generalised presumption: media connect and intermediate people - to people, to all thinkable environments, events and experiences.

Referring to the interest of fideality as the key interest of the concept of social change, the conclusion is: there is a lot to think about and to research within that context - of course, first of all about the quality of media technology, which - again - is not only a question of technological functionality or aesthetics, but also of the cultural aesthetics and ethics. In order to keep the social and the cultural balance in that process of development, a technologically competent world of devices and markets needs on the other hand a culturally competent user society. Media literacy therefore should not only be a subject for advanced schools, it has to become a general main subject in societal learning programmes, since the world understands, who understands the media (Luhmann). Societies with an elaborated general media literacy level and with a high developed concept of mediatisation (mediatisation) will have much more chances to play a significant role in marking the benches of social change.

Struggling with Funds and Interests

While in the past media were controlled by politics and the ruling ideology, today this control is exerted by finances and the principles of the market economy. Many media discoveries came months, years, even decades after that in which they had happened, and they still attracted huge attention. We have not done everything we could, we have not learned enough.

Media here do not have funds to finance major investigations

A journalist and teacher of investigative journalism, Branko Cecn, comments on that matter: “Serbian media do not make enough profit to be able to engage into developing investigative teams, or to let journalist spent three months on a single investigation. However, media are not doing much to overcome that obstacle. Not every story takes months to write, sometimes it can be done much faster. After all, all media discoveries came months, years, even decades after that which had happened, and they still attracted huge attention. We have not done everything we could, we have not learned enough. Only when we do, will we have the right to complain”, notices Cecn. Another important issue is status of journalists as professionals. Describing in short the findings of research in this area, Cecn summarises: “Journalists are underpaid and unprotected, both...
Lack of legal response to the findings of investigative reporters is number one complaint

Problems become more serious when some media choose to distort and manipulate facts. That causes confusion among the audience - viewers, listeners and readers.

“Is investigative and pseudo-investigative journalism. In some printed media we can read texts that at first glance look like serious pieces of investigative journalism but the stories are completely made up. And then you can hear ordinary people saying: “They are all the same”. That is why there is no real public reaction to investigative discoveries”, says Ccecen.

The effects of investigative stories

Branka Grkovic story uncovered a major flaw in Criminal Law. Has it been removed? No. There is no political discussion, no political interest for the Parliament to go after it. Have anything happened after I published the story, I would be able to say: “Thanks to my text, someone realized something and something happened”. But it did not, concludes Grkovic.

Lack of legal response of the government and judicial institutions to the findings of investigative reporters is the number one criticism of Serbian journalists. According to the law, prosecutors are obliged to act upon any revelation that a person, official or an institution has broken the law. Reactions from public prosecutors on information from media are still exceptions rather than a rule. As general public gets overenthusiastic with news and revealed scandals, the lack of public response to the journalistic discoveries becomes more and more obvious.

Investigative journalism in Serbia faces more obstacles than it has incentives. It is easier to find a good investigative journalist than someone optimistic when it comes to the future of that profession. However, with examples such as Grkovic or several international awards winner TV series “The Insider” the future does not look so grim. It improves in small steps. The question remains if it is fast enough!

Interview with Branka Stankovic, the author of the investigative TV series The Insider

By Aleksandar Shundric, Student, FJK

The Insider (Insider) series by Branka Stankovic is one of the rare cases of television investigative journalism on Serbian television. The three-member team is led by Stankovic in search for evidence related to the most sensitive topics for the Serbian society including football mafia, money laundering, organised crime and corruption. Last year Branka Stankovic received the 2008 Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe awarded by SEEMO. In the course of her work, Branka Stankovic introduced new and improved standards of investigative journalism and has addressed in her TV series the important issues that have been either concealed or sidelined by the authorities.

In an interview for deScripto Branka Stankovic says that “things are going to change, but it takes a lot of persistence and faith in what you’re doing to accomplish that”.

Stankovic further explains: “When you keep in mind that whatever you are doing it is in public interest then you do not let anything be an obstacle in your work. I think that as the investigative team proved that. We have encountered various difficulties in our work - people “closing the doors”, threats of violence. However, we publish everything. As a viewer you can make your own conclusions if someone is hiding something and also why that someone never give interviews nor answer questions”. They are arrogant to journalists and act like they are protected from everyone. We had a minister who spit on and even kick a journalist and everyone just laughs! That’s unacceptable. Journalists should not withdraw when faced with such behaviour of politicians or powerful people.

Otherwise, what difference media legislation makes. Who is going to enforce it? The whole system has to change in Serbia so that journalists can have a role as everywhere else in the democratic world. Public is to control government not the other way around.

Have authorities undertaken any activities as a result of your findings? Any arrests being made or policy changes implemented?

Stankovic: The prosecutor’s office reacted several times during the broadcast of The Insider in which we revealed the details about the ways money was taken out of Serbia during UN sanctions and citizens of Serbia were being robbed. There are few more examples of arrests. Police and the Prosecutor’s office reacted after the aired our findings about football mafia and cigarette smuggling.

Several indictments followed the broadcast and some people were arrested. However, I still see that as an attempt to trick the public into believing something is being done to resolve organised crime. I don’t think any of those are related directly to The Insider.

It Takes Faith and Persistence

It is not enough to get facts through the donations of various institutions. It is easier to find a good investigative journalist than someone optimistic when it comes to the future of that profession. However, with examples such as Grkovic or several international awards winner TV series “The Insider” the future does not look so grim. It improves in small steps. The question remains if it is fast enough!

Media legislation has been progressing along with the work of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance.

Stankovic: There are some positive steps, but that’s still minimal in comparison to normal, democratic countries. In Serbia, people still don’t know faces of certain business people and politicians who are virtually “owners” of Serbia. There are people who acquired all sorts of properties and companies around the country and public doesn’t know who they are and where their money is coming from. They choose to stay anonymous and simply respond in a casual tone: “I never give interviews nor answer questions”. They are arrogant to journalists and act like they are protected from everyone. We had a minister who spit on and even kick a journalist and everyone just laughs! That’s unacceptable. Journalists should not withdraw when faced with such behaviour of politicians or powerful people.

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Insider. If it were, then surely many of those for whom we, the journalists, proved to be involved in crime, contract killings, corruption, smuggling, would have been arrested by now.

I believe the authorities are reacting to The Insider primarily because of its wide viewership. As citizens throughout Serbia are relishing its content after each episode, it would have been too much of form to ignore it and take no action. It is not up to a journalist to prosecute and arrest, but it is to reveal every doing that either government or certain individuals are trying to keep away from the public.

Therefore, if we dig out evidence and disclose it publicly, the prosecutor should react. That, unfortunately, is not happening yet.

Do you consider the public and the media react appropriately to your discoveries?

Stanković: I don’t. Quite the opposite. Number of media outlets, especially newspaper and tabloids, are trying to cover up whatever The Insider discovers. Or else the journalists working for such media use false information to confuse the public and falsify the essence of what we reveal to the public.

The question is why? Why would any Serbian journalist mind disclosing this kind of information in the first place? Isn’t it in every journalist’s interest for a story to be investigated thoroughly? The answer is yes. But, many journalists here aren’t really journalists. They are paid by certain individuals to protect the interests of criminals, business people, politicians...This is something to be ashamed of. Of course, there are also professionals, but just take a look, at the Serbian media today - all the lies and propaganda - and you will soon realise that the professionals are in the minority.

The only comforting thing is that all remains written and one day many of those will be ashamed of lying to their readers and viewers. In my opinion, those journalists should be fought against just like every other type of criminals in this country.

More Doors Still to Be Opened

Interview with Rodoljub Sabic, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection

R odoljub Sabic is the first appointed Commissioner for Information on Public Importance and Personal Data Protection in Serbia. Since the passing of the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance in 2006, the Commissioner played a vital role in the implementation of this important legislation piece. It is my duty to help in enforcing the right to a free access of information of public importance to everyone, and that goes for journalists and the media as well. I try to do my best in the current working conditions, which are modern, says the Commissioner in an interview for deScripto.

Sabic continues: “As for the assessment of what has been achieved until now, it is depends on what we take for a parameter. In comparison to how government and public companies acted upon their duty as prescribed by the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance four years ago, the situation has certainly improved. Nevertheless, in relation to what could and should have been done, there is little to be happy about. We could and should have done more. Therefore, there are a lot of government bodies that deal with the public’s right to know in a correct way, but there are still those that do not.”

In terms of concrete results, how would you describe the current status?

Sabic: If we are talking about lack of response by certain government agencies, the problem is not severe from the point of view of quantity (number of cases) but the principle matter. In over two thirds of all cases, responsible government bodies submit the information they previously refused to disclose after just initial intervention of the Commissioner. In the other 30 percent of cases I had to issue an official request by the Commissioner for the information/documents to be handed out. In the majority of cases, government bodies obey the request with more or less enthusiasm.

Out of 6,000 cases that we have addressed so far, there are between 100 and 200 of those where responsible government agency refused to obey the Law. That number seems small. Nevertheless, it is unacceptable for anyone, and especially for public authorities not to obey the Law. This problem should not be underestimated. Decisions of the Commissioner are law-binding, and the authorities are to obey them accordingly. In case they do not, the Government of Serbia is legally required to enforce the execution of the Commissioner’s orders. That has not been a case yet. I have already labelled that lack of response from Government as an indirect breaching of the Law. I believe it is necessary for the Government to change its attitude towards this issue regardless of how small the number of such cases is.

Deconstructing Stereotypes

Interview with Boban Stojanovic, the activist of the Queeria Centre for Promotion of Culture of Non-Violence and Equality

I n November 2000, the Queeria Centre was established as the first youth branch, a working group within a political party, Social-Democratic Union, to publicly promote the rights of sexual and gender minorities. In 2006, the group registered as NGO - the Queeria Centre for Promotion of Culture of Non-Violence and Equality. Today, the Queeria has become a well known brand in the Serbian media scene and the best recognized activities in the promotion of queer culture. In December 2006, the Centre received funding for its web platform from the Ministry of Culture under the programme that supports minority media in Serbia thus becoming the first Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) organisation supported financially by the government.

The corner stone of the Queeria approach is the inclusion of all interested in supporting the affirmation of queer rights and culture. Their strategy is somewhat unusual in comparison to typical human rights advocates. “We believe that in order to be successful advocate for the rights of others, we first have to be free ourselves. An individual should not rely solely on institutions and policies to protect their rights. Normative optimism is the ideal that requires discard of all criticism. To base laws on good, but the laws come and go, so do governments and politics. Being free, being who you are is what attracts others to reconsider their position. When you are free and comfortable with yourself, you set other people free”, says Boban Stojanovic, one of the founders of Queeria Center in an interview for deScripto.

“*Our position is the queer position. Some of our activists belong to the gay and lesbian population and some do not. While we do express our choice and affiliation where we believe it’s important, we don’t believe in the correctness or incorrectness of the cultural concepts, we do not subject to authority and we do not accept any forms of isolation - physical or emotional. The position of gay person in Serbia is the position of the condemned, stigmatized and discarded. There exists a certain consensus in Serbian society around concepts of human rights and unsustainability of the violence but in practice gay people are associated within the context of the morally problematic group. Our solidarity goes with anyone who does not conform in violence to express their selves and represents no physical threat to the society*, says Stojanovic.

How would you describe your approach?

Stojanovic: Our work is based on market principles - we are developing more than one 'brand' and we consider the needs of the society around concepts of human rights and unsustainability of the violence but in practice gay people are associated within the context of the morally problematic group. Our solidarity goes with anyone who does not conform in violence to express their selves and represents no physical threat to the society*.
our target groups such as media, the gay community outside of big cities and out of Internet reach. Many human rights organisations speak the language that’s not easily understood by the wider audience and mostly preoccupied with the problem of violence. We respect that but are aware that such language and approach is somewhat devoid of what I would call “the joy of living”. Therefore we are searching for new approach to human rights and advocating against violence and homophobia.

What are some of your major strategic points?

Stojanovic: We live in a society where authorities are addressing human rights of those indicted by the court in Hague, right wing politicians have adopted the language of non-violence, and fascists are adopting political correctness. That leaves us with no room but to look for new strategies. Our first position - show no fear. People who spread hatred towards LGBT count on inciting fear. We want to live free, joyful and happy in spite of discrimination of the gay population, in spite of violence against based on our personal characteristics or choices, we talk about sick partner in an intensive care whom we cannot visit because it is the privilege of the closest family members. If people do not identify with a problem, there will be no empathy, thus no support and no change.

Taking up the public space is a key to our strategy. Any public space: workshops, public discussions, press statements, talks shows... If we don’t use it, someone else will.

And, of course, our favourite ‘weapon’ - playing with the stereotypes. One cannot identify with a homosexual person through costumes are tight shirts, tight underwear, gasping and obsession with sex, so - what’s the problem? All of that has been a part of gay culture for centuries, so you cannot say that we are “trees without roots”.

Between the Rock and a Hard Place

Privatisation of the Local Media in Serbia

Journalists point to issues such as the absence of a media register, lack of transparency of ownership structures and suppression of the research-oriented journalism as a result of a commercially driven privatisation process.

F or quite a few decades one of local newspapers in Vojvodina - a renowned weekly Subotice novine performed successfully on the local market with the assistance of the local authorities in Subotica. On 19 June 2006, it was sold for the first time in an auction. Nine potential buyers took part in the auction. During the auction the price increased 75 times (the starting price was 12,000 EUR, but it reached the price of 860,000 EUR). The office building in the centre of Subotica, whose value is more than 280,000 EUR, was also included in the property of the sold newspaper.

The journalists of Subotice novine expressed an interest in participating in the auction. They were engaged with developing the business plan and the strategy for further development of this media outlet. They accepted an offer from the regional entrepreneur Rajko Stojnic with an 85 percent share. The only partner with the obligations included in the privatisation contract was a journalist. One of them, Stock Market. Just like the previous owner, the entrepreneur Rajko Stojnic had an 85 percent share. The only partner with the obligations included in the privatisation contract was a journalist. One of them, Drago Vlajc, Student, EMK.

Fourteen journalists and two reporters registered after the newspaper was sold. They accepted an offer from the regional daily Dnevnik, which in part belongs to the WAZ media concern, to further develop a new weekly media outlet in Subotica called Suboticko. As of June 2006, Subotice were printed regularly on commercial purposes, thereby jeopardising the professional standards for the circulation rate of its rival newspaper and falling short of fulfilling its obligations included in the contract.

The national daily newspaper Politika reported in one of its June editions in 2007 that the privatisation agency annulled the privatisation contract because the buyers did not respect the clauses of the contract. The owners were accused of unlawfully pilfering money obtained from selling the newspaper and falling short of fulfilling their obligations including payment of salaries to the employees of the outlet. Furthermore, they have put the office building under mortgage, which they were not entitled to. That way they gained even bigger financial benefits against the law. After nine-months of delay and court proceedings, the employees of Suboticko finally received their salaries.

On 18 October 2007, Subotice were sold for the second time. This time it was sold for 100,000 EUR on the Belgrade Stock Market. Just like the previous owner, the new buyers got the entire property of this media outlet including the two-storey building in the centre of Subotica. Yet, this time the buyer had to take on the responsibility for around 70,000 EUR of the national daily newspaper Politika reported in one of its June editions in 2007 that the privatisation agency annulled the privatisation contract because the buyers did not respect the clauses of the contract. The owners were accused of unlawfully pilfering money obtained from selling the newspaper and falling short of fulfilling their obligations including payment of salaries to the employees of the outlet. Furthermore, they have put the office building under mortgage, which they were not entitled to. That way they gained even bigger financial benefits against the law. After nine-months of delay and court proceedings, the employees of Suboticko finally received their salaries.

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prove to be competitive in the market.

Its was poorly managed and did not guarantee to keep all the journalists that returned to the newsroom in full employment. At the same time, the owner of Suboticke novine would make a profit out of doing the printing job for all the editions of their previous competition. In November 2006, the agreement came to fruition. In the statement that followed on the online edition of Radio-television Vojvodina, one of the journalists Zlatko Romic stated that the editorial staff accepted the offer to return to Suboticke novine because both outlets were poorly managed and did not prove to be competitive in the market.

### Lack of vision and clear objectives in the privatisation

In spite of the verbal agreement to keep all the employees in Suboticke novine, three journalists soon lost their jobs. One of them is Zlatko Romic, considered to be one of the best reporters by his colleagues in the newsroom. The reporter Milco Novak and advertising officer Stipan Stipanic were also dismissed. Furthermore, salaries have decreased by 30 percent and are also running late for three journalists soon lost their jobs. One of them is Zlatko Romic, considered to be one of the best reporters by his colleagues in the newsroom. The report...

### Law on Media Concentration could help overcoming most of the issues

Dragan Janjic, former editor-in-chief of BETA news agency, who recently held a position of the assistant to the Minister of Culture, believes that the law that would prescribe on 30-30-40 ownership structure principle (that is, local authorities would have 30 percent of the ownership of the local media, the employees would also have 30 percent of the shares, and the 40 percent would be on the market) would resolve the complicated situation of the media, allowing for more efficient privatisation. Some local authorities refuse to accept this proposition as the Law on Local Self-Governance allows them to have larger share in the ownership structure in the local media which leads to another set of confusion.

"Privatisation of the local media is a delicate process because of the various challenges brought to the journalist profession by poorly managed or non-transparent process", says Prof. Dr Boban Tomic, journalist and media theoretician, who analysed and studied this issue in his PhD thesis.

 "%First, there is a danger of shutting-down the media. For example, if the local media is not sold on the public auction due to the lack of interest among buyers, media loses its working licence. On another instance, if it is sold successfully, new owners could decide to completely give up on media activities and take it to another business direction. The Law provides the opportunity to do that after two years of privatisation. In both cases, local media gets shut down and journalists are left without job. That makes a lot of impact on the public interest of people in local communities", Tomic explains.

Journalists also fear the "tycoonisation" of the media, which means that business people with shady backgrounds (and probably connected with criminal and unethical business structures) will buy local media using their influence or cash. The local media is a property acquired through the media but also the social prestige of owning your own media outlet. Tycoons would certainly use the privatised media for their own "business interest". Privatized in such a way, "reformed" media would certainly have to comply with new rules for the "journalist standards" and of the "businesslike" behaviour.

Another set of challenges brought by privatisation of local media is a significant change in conception and broadcasted programme/content. In some instances, new owners accommodate to the commercial outlook of their programmes which become focused more on entertainment and less on public information.

Journalists around Serbia have invested some efforts to suggest to decision-makers to enable the workers in the media business to buy out shares in their media and thus make the ownership structure more transparent. As journalist Jasmina Lukac wrote in the daily Danas (in the article "Will there be any buyers at all?" published on 1 June 2006), the media would remain the property of journalists, which would be an additional stimulus in doing the job well. However, those efforts have received little or no response yet.

Local media around Serbia are in a dead-lock as far as privatisation process is concerned. Preparation for privatisation is going slowly and there is an obvious lack of interest on the side of the buyers. The local authorities are either not interested or scared as far as the media influence, one supports or supervises the preparation process for selling remaining media outlets. All that led the privatisation process to move from its initial phase down to some sort of a "zero position."
Editors to be Held Responsible

Interview with Nadezda Gace, President of Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia

Serbian media are operating on a market basis. So editors believe that in order to sell they should produce flashy headlines to be noticed on newsstands. But, it is not only scandals that sell and editors should think about the responsibility that media have towards society.

The Serbian media landscape has rapidly developed and diversified in comparison to the 1990s primarily due to privatisation of the media and the growth of private investment in media outlets. Today, the majority of public media consumption has been centred on a few commercial television stations with national coverage - Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), TV B92, Pink, and Fox. Serbian readers are mostly consuming dailies such as Blic, Novosti, Politika, Press, Danas, and tabloid Kurir, all of which are privately owned.

Judging by the opinions of journalists and the public alike, the quality of journalism does not meet the professional standards of developed and democratic societies. The majority of journalists are poorly paid, working in modest conditions and does not meet the professional standards of which are privately owned.

No critical approach to the work of journalists and the media in general does not exist in Serbia. The majority of media outlets pay more attention to scandals that sell and editors should think about the responsibility that media have towards society.

There has been a lot of talk in Serbia about the influence of politicians and tycoons on the media. It is widely believed that some of the most powerful politicians and businessmen have control over the majority of media outlets. Asked to comment on that, Gace points out that in the west, print media are allowed to make a choice regarding their political affiliation. In Serbia, it has not been clearly defined yet. She also referred to the survey conducted by NUNS a couple of years ago. The majority of citizens believed that journalists are not corrupt. Another fact was worrying. People expressed their belief that only journalists lie more than journalists.

Although it is difficult to prove, Gace assumes that such tabloids are “made to be with the aid of the remnants of the old state secret services that are well connected to political leaders”. “These remnants are still very powerful, because brothers-in-arms have a stronger relationship than any other.”

Issues are not raised to be solved, but to be used by politicians to deal with each other.

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Serbian Media Going Online

Increased Number of Internet Users Speed Up the Development of Media Web Presentations and Online Media Outlets

By Ana Koncar, Marko Herman, Students, FMK

The Internet arrived in Serbia in 1995 when EUnet was the first company to sell dial-up connections on the market. Over the next seven to eight years it didn’t change much. Few wireless and satellite providers were operating but were way too expensive for many users who relied on dial-up until late 2002 and 2003, when first fast cable providers came on the market. Although it wasn’t a quantum leap in speed, it allowed users to have stable connections that didn’t rely on the quality of Telekom Serbia’s infrastructure. Two years later, at the beginning of 2005, Telekom introduced an ADSL service as an alternative to the cable connections.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, in the beginning of 2006, 47.6 percent of households in Serbia were owners of a computer (a desktop or a laptop), and 33.2 percent of households were regularly using the Internet. Less than a half of Internet users, only 15.5 percent of households have broadband Internet access, but the number of broadband users has almost doubled in comparison to the year before. The latest development is that new ADSL speeds that are available to the users give us good reason to think that broadband access will spread even more widely. Also, it is worth mentioning that 74.3 percent of households have at least one mobile phone, and that around the third of them use their phones to access the Internet.

When you analyse the way the Serbian media responded to this rather fast development of broadband Internet penetration, you could see that they reacted rather later but also that things are moving in a direction which is beneficial to all. The best example is use of video materials on media websites. In the early days, only TV stations used some of their material online, and some of them streamed their programmes. Now, many media websites, those of traditional media going online, and those of media started online, use video materials to illustrate their stories. And sometimes, this video material is being produced for the websites, although it’s mostly something freely available online.

Also, broadband connections allowed the users to more easily send their own contributions which are becoming more important for media. So when we talk about new media in Serbia, we talk about how the traditional media grasped the possibilities the Internet brought them, but also how the web only media and citizen media developed in recent years.

Traditional media in the new environment

Although the national television network, which is now transformed into the public service network existed for much longer (radio for around 102 years and TV for half a century), it is best to follow its development from the point of dissolution of former Yugoslavia at the beginning of 1990s, when it started broadcasting under the current name - Radio Televizija Srbije (RTS). During the reign of Slobodan Milošević, RTS was censored and known for manipulation and limited freedom of expression. As a response, a radio station with a different news concept was established by a group of young people under the name Radio B92. Over the course of the following years this became a well-established national TV and radio station B92. A year ago, B92 also established a cable channel B92 INFO, along with the new version of their online issue for mobile devices.

One of the first to use the Internet and to try to sell and provide their content freely was Danas (www.danas.rs) daily. This media outlet started as the opposition to the Internet for anything more than a simple print media organisation to realise that the Internet will influence them greatly. This realisation leads newspapers in several directions. Some refused to use the Internet for anything more than a simple presentation of their content on their websites, in their radio and TV schedules.

None of the daily newspapers have implemented a real web 2.0 oriented platform and citizen journalism is only in its infancy.

Periodicals

Weekly and monthly magazines showed mostly less understanding for the Internet. They usually provide content that is widely available online (mostly in other languages), and try to appeal to the readers by additional content and nicely designed “packages”. Therefore most periodicals’ websites are Internet advertisements for their print editions rather than the much freely available content. For instance, the weekly periodical with a good reputation - Vreme (www.vreme.com), publishes some of the stories and offers web subscription for those who want to read it all online.

On the other hand, another important weekly – Ekonomska (www.emporda.rs) published such a website and created a full web portal related to economic and political issues. Content from their printed issues is available for reading online and only requires a free registration. Their online content is much richer than the printed version.

Looking at weekly and monthly periodicals, it’s even harder to find those with websites. It seems that mostly only

Relevant links:
http://www.rts.rs/
http://www.rts.rs/page/blog/sr.html
http://www.rts.rs/page/live/sr.html
http://www.radiobeograd.rs/
http://www.b92.net/
http://blog.b92.net/
http://www.b92.net/kultura/
http://www.b92.net/radio/uzivo.php

Today, both RTS and B92 have a dominant influence on creating public opinion in Serbia and both have developed online news platforms with increasing number of visitors. Only a year after B92.net was started, in 1996, it was proclaimed as the most visited and the most influential website in the region. The contents of both websites are similar: mostly news, both allow streaming of video and TV program, and both influence public opinion. Both have blogs mostly written by well known public figures, as well as comments sections and forums. And both sites have much more cultural news than their radio and TV schedules.

Millions of people confirm their trust in these stations on a day-to-day basis, and with the possibility to react to their content on their websites, in their forums etc. the trust in the two most relevant (new) media is far from being questioned, and it’s getting bigger by the day.

Newspapers online

Daily newspapers are probably the first printed media organisations to realise that the Internet will influence them greatly. This realisation leads newspapers in several directions. Some refused to use the Internet for anything more than a simple presentation of their content on their websites, in their radio and TV schedules.

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MEDIA LANDSCAPE: Serbia in Transition

Connect with page 25

Between the “Internets” and the handouts-for-free

By Vlada Jetic, Student, FMK

The title of this article deliberately burrows the expression from George W. Bush and his “take” on how the Internet may be and should be, which was delivered in public debate as late as 2004. This is in order to introduce the perspective from the very start – what we will observe here is not a unique “misunderstanding” of what the Internet may be, and something inherent to Serbia only; but, it is fair to say that in Serbia society, more than in most of the other places it may be comparable with, the very idea of the Internet is still “under construction”, and during this process is a subject of numerous misconceptions and manipulations.

We need those wires. And cables.
A lot of cables

The wider awareness about the potential of the Internet in Serbia came fairly recently (some would say that we are still waiting for that to happen). This “ skips” from the global mainstream is being explained by the distinctive local history of 1990s, which for Serbia would be marked by the
domestication of the Internet in Serbia came fairly recently, and also used a bit of web 2.0 trends by implementing a blog which is written by some of the staff members as well as other figures relevant to the local urban scene. Similarly, RLN (www.rln.org) has a website developed with much attention. And although not much of their content can be read online, they allow the download of the PDF version of the magazine.

Web magazines
Today, there are more interesting web magazines in Serbia than websites of traditional printed media.

Personal magazine (www.personalmag.rs) is one of those examples. A very informative IT related magazine run by one of the well known Serbian bloggers. Another good example is Benchmark (www.bench-mark.rs), which follows the tradition of well known American technology websites with thorough hardware tests and a network of websites for different audiences. They also have a discussion forum with a lot of users and recently started a blog on which posts are written by staff members and readers. And related to IT is a web/PDF magazine called PC geek (www.pcgeek.com). They created a combination of a website with fresh gaming news each day and articles about games for online reading as well as a monthly PDF issue which can be freely downloaded and is often distributed on DVD supplements of printed IT magazines.

Connecting IT and gadgets with other topics of interest to Serbian Internet users is done by Domino Magazine (www.domino-magazine.com). They publish stories on many different topics and are one of the rare examples where users can generate content which is published in the same manner as the content written by magazine staff. Since it’s the first magazine of that type in Serbia, the concept still has to prove itself. Another good web magazine is Popboks (www.popboks.com). It is created to resemble printed magazines that write about pop culture. Since local magazines market doesn’t have an issue that can satisfy the audience which craves such content, Popboks is rather successful and almost only relevant issue. They didn’t implement any web 2.0 trends, but have a stable publishing policy and fresh content every day so readers come back.

Since most Internet users in Serbia are high school or faculty students, it’s only logical that there is also a specialised web magazine called Studentski zet (www.studentskizet.com). They cover topics related to education as well as topics of general interest. And magazines presented here are only a tip of the iceberg. There are many more good examples, and also a lot of bad ones.

Media 2.0

The Serbian blog scene is a world in itself. Since most magazines, whether traditional or web oriented, didn’t pay much attention to readers’ needs, they started writing for themselves. Yes, blogs did start as personal diaries, but nowadays they are a form and a concept of publishing different topics. The best place to start exploring Serbian blogsphere is Blogadi (www.blogadi.com). This is an aggregator with blogs sorted by topic. Not all blogs are Serbian, but all of them are written in one of the similar languages spoken in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Most of the blogs are personal, or written from a personal perspective, and couple of good examples are Blogovraka and Artmistakes.com.

There are also blogs related to specific topics which are rarely written from a personal perspective. Or when personal perspective is there, it is the perspective of a virtual character. One of such blogs is designdoktor.com with not too much posts, but with content relevant to those interested in design topics. Similar to that one (by concept) is futurama.com (Gossip Girl), where a virtual girl writes about local and world celebrities. This is also one of the rare blogs to implement a micro blog (www.twitter.com/trzane) with short celebrity information into its content. And that web 2.0 trends do have a good ground in Serbia prove a couple more micro blogs that are not personal. Kursna lista (www.twitter.com/kursna) and Vremenska prognoza (www.twitter.com/vreme) provide their followers with new currency exchange rate, and weather information.

Reportage on web radio noviradiobeograd.com

New Kids on the Cyber Block

When on one occasion I read about audiophile shelter on the Internet, full of free spirit that wasn’t felt on the Serbian media scene since the beginnings of B92, I was very interested in listening to New Radio Belgrade. And when I first tuned to their programme the intention of those editing and broadcasting (streaming) the station – to offer the alternative and a place in the (cyber) community where listeners can enjoy all the things that didn’t find their place in the dominant media. Although it was experimentally streamed before the official start, on 6 October 2008, the shaking up of the sleepy Serbian scene started, as the Editor-in-Chief Milutin Petrovic put it. This date isn’t randomly selected. 6 October is the day after the famous 5 October 2000 revolution, when Slobodan Milosevic regime was thrown down. Although people expected that changes would be very deep and implemented in all areas of social and political life in Serbia, most people feel that many things remained the same. Therefore, 6 October is often referred to as the day that never happened. That is why this date was symbolically chosen for the birthday of New Radio Belgrade as a reaction to the lack of interest of other media to improve Serbian (primarily music) scene.

After only couple of months of broadcasting, NRB is one of the most popular Internet radio stations in the country. The audience is won over by the fact that this is a radio without traditional genre forms that strives to improve the culture of dialogue, promote reconciliation and tolerance, establishes contacts with Serbia’s neighbours, as well as to positively “provoke” sleepy musical, general and cultural public scene. Through almost 30 different shows, (mostly) young staff addresses the topics related to popular science, culture, sport, social minorities, and at the same time clearly broadcasts the message that they are against any form of government controlled arts, stereotypes and prejudices.

New Radio Belgrade clearly represents refreshment for Serbian media scene. Although they were challenged by many problems such as lack of offices from which the programme could be broadcasted, inability for listeners to access their stream, errors that prevent the official forum to work properly, listeners’ comments are mostly positive. And staff members don’t give up in spite of the problems. Even more, they plan to expand broadcast to TV and radio frequencies.

*New Radio Belgrade

Relevant links
http://www.noviradiobeograd.com/
http://www.last.fm/user/NewRadioBelgrad
violent appropriation of ‘public’ by advancing ‘private’ (in all possible meanings), several lost wars is never ‘officially’ took part in, reverting to the political ideas and social values of previous centuries, and finally by the international isolation and embargo on anything and everything. Including the Internet? Well, in some respect, yes. During 1990s Serbia was “allowed” to have a narrow ‘tube’ or two (I cannot resist quoting senator Stevens here, to properly accompany G. W. Bush) to connect with it the rest of ‘The Network’. After all, it was the Internet which still was below the radar of regime’s media police but which immense potential to connect and communicate ‘tremendously contributed’ to ‘democratic changes’, right? Anyway, the results of such policies from the side of both the regime in question and ‘the international community’ is that Serbia entered 21st Century pretty much disconnected, with analogue modems here and there just to make the picture more grim. And after several additional years required by the new establishment to ‘reposition’, Serbia finally entered the world of ‘wider tubes’ sometime in 2004, but again, ‘not for real’ - the service was and still is significantly lagging behind the average bandwidth of Europe today.

And the prices... Serbian state-owned Telecom remains to be a so-called ‘last mile’ monopoly - one of the few left in the world of telecommunications. It may not necessarily be a bad thing - where this monopoly from the side of society or a state is being lost and the “free market” completely took over, we already saw quite a few challenges to the idea that all information going through “the tubes” should be treated equally, and some businesses trying to grab the piece of other businesses at the expense of ‘network neutrality’ - which would be, without any doubt, at the expense of ‘democracy’, the right to public speech, ‘truth’, ‘transparency’ and other ‘pillars of the society’ - such an attempt should be defined, prevented and punishable by the law of any contemporary society. On the other hand, there is no guarantee nor mechanism set in place not to see this position being exploited by the state monopolists in a similar manner. If a national public service like Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) sees no problem in being backed by the budget, funded from the mandatory subscription and by selling a commercial space all at the same time, there is no reason for the state-backed telecom company not to try to do the same. This is especially true with the forthcoming financial crisis, which everybody is getting more and more worried about, but which seems that nobody really understands, which gives a tremendous opportunity for (any) state or business to bring decisions which it does not have to explain or argue at all - so, ‘recession’ and ‘crisis’ may become some sort of ‘magic’ words, and something you are not really expected to discuss.

Back to the story of the Internet - the result of such a recent history combined with the existing monopoly in Serbia that the prices of Internet access remained very high compared to the Europe and the region, and extremely high compared to the average local income. Obviously, infrastructure-wise, Serbia is still one messy place - it is not easy to get the connection at all, and once you get it you find yourself paying merciless, compared to everybody else around; but, if compared to the situation before 2004, there is at least something in terms of connectivity, and it is getting more and more wide-spread, if you are lucky enough to be in Belgrade or a few other (for businesses and politicians more interesting) places. The first serious landmark number was reached in the spring of 2008, when, according to some surveys, Serbia had 250,000 broadband users. Some sources state that we are operating with the number of around 500,000 already, some would mention much more, but the statistics would come from different sources of which none should be considered as absolutely confirmed and ‘objective’, in a scientific way. This kind of disorientation is illustrative of the lack of a more mature social infrastructure in the field, as still we wait for clear government policies (and then to fight with the consequences of it), still most of the government and businesses and other institutions have sloppy and dysfunctional websites, still e-mail is not something widely considered as a valid sort of communication, and still there are no means of online electronic payment and related services emerging. And yet, some of us enjoy the marvel of the lack of over-regulation in the field, and hope it will stay that way.

Broadening “the tubes”

So, it can be said regarding the infrastructure, however expensive, slow and slightly it may be, that it became available for quite some number of people now; what is with the culture of using, which would be ‘the second stage’ in introduction of a certain new social paradigm (of technology, of media, etc)?

According to the previous government and the Secretary of the former Ministry for Capital Investments, Dragana Djuricic, the fact that Serbia is still at the very bottom of the European list of ‘penetration’ of computers and internet is not the fault of government but of citizens themselves. She was quoted saying the following, at the SEE Broadband 2007, a regional ‘broadband conference’ of the countries of South East Europe held in Belgrade: “The reason for not using the Internet enough is definitely not the price because (in the survey probably commissioned by government) only 9.6 percent of households consider the price of broadband Internet too high. Most of the households - around 94 percent - say they don’t want the broadband Internet, don’t need it or don’t know how to use it.”

Traditional media in Serbia at the moment do not see the Internet as a friend or an ally... Combination of misunderstanding and fear would guide owners, managers and editors of ‘big media’ into the campaign against the Internet.

But why would all those people think that they and/or not to be connected, how would they decide about it? And why would the government say that it has nothing to do with its society’s attitude towards what is being considered a global ‘revolution’ in communications? The culture of using and promoting the usage of the Internet, as we all know too well and as is the case with anything else, does not happen ‘by itself’. It is not that millions of citizens will wake up one morning, ‘feeling the média’, and consequently the entire public sphere, into either rather pretending that the Internet is not really happening (or that “the whole thing is overblown” and does not deserve much attention) or into the very campaign against the Internet, presenting it as not just insignificant and meaningless phenomena, another fashion-of-the-moment to fade away tomorrow, being replaced by something else, but also potentially very dangerous place to be.

It did not do us exactly, and it is understandable that a lot of people may go through the period of distortion and confusion. Obviously, there is some kind of ‘half-a-generation split’ happening among the population in their 20s and up. There is already some research on the possibly growing cultural differences and the phenomena of ‘mainstream reading’ and ‘miscommunication’ between those involved in transformation and those who are not; but there is also something which should be viewed as coming from the entirely different angle. It is the willingness to understand, the trust to ‘others’ and especially ‘younger others’ from the side of skeptics, and an honest and (however ‘painful’ it may be) realistic attitude towards what is already happening...
and what is emerging as 'ubiquitous', which elevates the idea of Internet, or any-thing 'new', to the tipping point, making it not 'the phenomena' of the avant-garde and 'experimental' practice of one society anymore, but a common, not-a-big-thing and default social infrastructure. The 'ubiques' have to become transparent, to the point it makes them almost 'invisible', but before we can consider that people finally ac-cept it - but never, ever, we should forget the material practices and material charac-ter of it.

It is not that Serbia is late in this que-ue to reach the 'tipping point' - as we have seen, even in the very society in which this 'paradigm shift' of media was introduced, the Internet as a concept and a tool there is still both enormous-wide-spread use of the Internet among the population and a gen-eration of 'resistance' to it, involving some of the 'big media' as well, and symbolically represented in the term 'Internet as 'int-errets' by the former president, or the even more amusing idea of the Internet as 'the series of tables' as explained by senator Stevens. The recent electoral victory of President Milosevic is attributed to the success of his media and fundraising campaign relying heavily on The Network. This replaces this symbolic resistance with symbolic acceptance, clearly demonstrat-ing that it is not the matter of opinion but of recognising the material practice to ac-ccept the new power of the Network, finally di-amining the remnants of the genera-tion of 'sceptics' and rendering any 'off-line' approach to oblivious. It is important to ad-d that it is not just the idea of the Internet-as-technical-infrastructure for the exchange of digital archives and communica-tion, and for creating virtual social net-works, which relates to that change, but al-so different other social processes, the dai-ly practices and modes of organisation (and of collaboration and communication exchange) in what we traditionally called 'real life', which both become visible or emerged as we started to use the Internet more, changing significantly not what we think about or do 'online', but our understanding and material practices of 'offline', as well.

If the Internet is mentioned at all, it would be in specialised columns and TV shows, or small pieces of news reporting from 'out there', where we follow the activities of 'them', a group of people who are 'different', and who decided to spend time 'there'. It will almost never be about 'us' and 'here'.

Regarding traditional media in Serbia, there is no doubt that both 'online' and 'offline' aspects of this change are happen-ing as we speak - most, if not all 'the big media' would have or are in the process of building the extensive digitized and net-worked presence. There is a vast network of 'smaller' media, which are already ex-tensively based on the 'online' approach, and the world of print media increasingly resembles the looks and practices, 'the in-terface' and 'the content' of their online siblings. But, the shift in culture, 'the tip-ping point' or the symbolic acceptance still does not appear to be around the corner - despite all the practices we are undoubtedly witness the realising happening. The 'official' atti-tude of the 'official media' remains at best in denial, and at worst quite defensive. If for this is already being said that it pre-sents the 'expected' phase in this process of media (and social) transition, and some-thing most of the societies experienced or are about to experience as the one (for some social groups) quite painful aspect of 'evolving' towards the networked society, then in Serbia this process may be more bold and more the 'caricature of itself' then elsewhere and before, as the conse-quence of the historical and political cir-cumstances outlining it.

The politics of fear

A small survey made to illustrate this claim was done researching the excellent media archive of Eltarg Media Documentation, who provided a support to FSKM in data-mining media for this issue of deSpecto. It did confirm what is already suspected and 'perceived' from the experience - the tradi-tional media in Serbia would rather ignore mentioning the Internet at all (being in de-nial), by never mentioning the online sources from which they predominantly aggregate news and information from, and, even more importantly, by avoiding any discus-sion on the Internet and its omnipresence in the life and work of the growing number of people. In other words, you will not find many reports or discussions from, or about, the Internet in the traditional media of today. It appears as if nothing really im-portant in the 'offline' aspects of this change is happening - which is still considered quite normal to accept that public communication and journalism, culture and politics, entertainment and sci-ence, and everything really, still happens on the pages of printed media or on the other side of TV screens. In most of the cases, if the Internet is mentioned at all, it would be in specialised columns and TV shows, or small pieces of news reporting from 'out there', from some distant and still curious and dubious, not-that-significant-at-all place of 'internets', where we follow the ac-tivities of 'them', a defined to 'specialised' places and addressing the audience already aware of the Internet and its ever expanding extent - it did so for all the aspects of 'us'. Also, this is not to say that there is no positive and affirmative coverage of the Internet, and that there are no specialised magazines and columns dedicated to promoting all things Internet, albeit most of it would be promoting the products and services, quite possibly con-nected with vendors or distributors and acting as advertising, without real criti-cal 'scepticism', discussion about the Internet, besides on the Internet itself. However, most of those would be con-fined to 'specialised' places and addressing the audience already aware of the Internet and its ever expanding extent - it did so for all the aspects of 'us'.

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Now press ‘enter’ if you dare

This is not to say that some of the things mentioned in the headlines do not happen. Of course that there is a lot of ‘criminal’ behaviour online - but, more-so-in-the same ratio as in ‘real life’, and it is expected - as the Internet and related digital commu-nication tools expanded our reach much beyond the possibilities of our body, or beyond the place we live in or the social circles we can be the part of. In the general picture, the ‘popular’ press, the one addressing just ‘the people’, in the situation where there is no immedi-ate knowledge and experience of the top-ic, is still producing more fear and confu-sion than critique and curiosity; without having a clear social consensus reflected in the media, that The Network is here to stay, with all of the gains and losses it may bring, it is quite possible that almost 50 percent of the citizens will continue to say: Internet? No thanks, I don’t think I really need it... No matter how much is invested in infrastructure, or not, from this point on it is the culture which decides on the further progress in the field. And this is why traditional media should play a very important role. Once they are clear about what that role is supposed to be...
The Art of Rationalisation in the Age of Crisis

Interview with Milos Rancic - a linguist, computer programmer, Wikimania Serbia, Ebert media archive

By Vlada Jeric, Student, FMK

Milos Rancic is the expert in linguistics and one of the founders of Wikipedia in Serbia, one of the fastest growing local language Wikipedias with more than 70,000 entries so far, and a computer programmer working in Ebert media archive. In an interview for deScripto, he talks about roles of traditional and Internet media, Wikipedia projects and other issues related to the development of the Internet scene in Serbia.

The small research I did using your media database confirmed that the 'traditional' mainstream media would rather not mention 'Internet' at all, or report on it in a context of paedophilia, identity theft, terrorism... As somebody who worked on "internets" for almost 15 years now, would you agree with that?

Rancic: Well, considering Wikipedia, we are aware of it for quite some time. A lot of media were being very negative, some even in a hilarious way, I can remember Press daily and how much we were laughing, but some were more serious in their accusations, like NIN weekly, who actually called Wikipedia "the Orwellian project" - which is interesting, in a way that the consequence was that NIN itself became regular, quite a few a Wikipedia people who used to read it before. The most positive experience so far we had with NIN weekly - there are always problems with being precise in modern terminology, but the overall approach would be positive. I have to say that I do not follow mainstream media that much, or at all - I haven’t been watching TV for years, for example... It was just a few days ago I tried this new 3G feature on my mobile phone, so I watched TV on this tiny screen for some minutes - interesting - but in general, television appears to me as some sort of the 'amusement park' of today, and I occasionally I sit in front of TV I just can stop watching, everything appears so unusual, to say... I guess I grew estranged from it.

Quite a few of the local journalists and different "experts" would still feel the need to speak in public about Wikipedia as unreliable, insufficient, amateurish, even 'dangerous' or 'damaging', although we all know for quite some time now, backed by all the relevant surveys and analytics, that it is completely the other way around. Where, according to your opinion, does this need come from? Why do those people not accept it for what it is, and not try to benefit from having Wikipedia, instead?

Rancic: You just reminded me of a thing I was contemplating for some months now. Let’s think of the profession of being a journalist, for example. Today, it is a very demanding job to be one, and even for some ‘simple’ tasks, like covering the events around the city on a daily basis (for example, the daily shows like "The Belgrade Chronicle" are covering millions of different things) - it requires, besides acquiring the information itself, a high degree of diverse knowledge on different topics. What I realized is that it is precisely the Wikipedia which provides the education of the future journalist in an adequate way, as it makes you to 'broaden' the scope of your education, it teaches you how to search for 'sources', it learns about the methodology of searching for 'relevant' information, and the methodology of 'digesting' and representing the information in an understandable and transparent way, and in a style which would be not that much different from journalistic one - we can say that a lot of young people who decide to write for Wikipedia are by that very act showing the interest in journalism, anyway. My personal experience is that the average Wikipedia (which would be a prominent member of community or an administrator) has a broader scope of education than the average journalist.

In the previous issue of deScripte dealing with local media landscapes, published in 2006, still there was some criticism from Wikipedia coming from the people considered to be the experts, similar to what would be a popular misconception of the Internet in general, claiming that it is 'unstable', 'unreliable', 'over-simplifying', and repeating other common stereotypes?

Rancic: It is quite clear that the 'rules of working' are much 'harder', defined in more details and more transparent in Wikipedia than in all of the local encyclopaedia projects... and we had a flood of "new encyclopaedias" recently...

Rancic: Yes, right. In Wikipedia, there has to be a relevant source, and preferably more sources, referenced, then the 'tone' needs to be neutral, and you can not play on the 'authority' card - in a lot, a lot of the other projects it is just one 'authority' figure which is referenced, somebody who wrote on something for which there are no other sources, no confirmations, and in that respect it is very stipulated that state that Wikipedia doesn’t come up to the standards of any general encyclopaedia. I am not really following all the new and different projects developing around, so still I take as the examples and references the never limited Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia, then The Military encyclopaedia and a Little Promete Encyclopedia (so-called Made encyclopaedia, true (jargon, Promete, Beograd, 1978, which used to be a very popular and referenced one).

Rancic: Personally speaking, compared to Promete edition, for example, almost every entry in Wikipedia is just plainly better. And, one more thing - Wikipedia isn’t to a 'wonder' anymore, so that the people would be expected to speak and comment on it, nor we from the local branch of Wikipedia feel much need to campaign and 'popularize' it around - most of the people I meet these days know precisely what Wikipedia is, and are in general quite positive about it. People use it. It is to stay.

So we hope that those 'early adopting' problems marked with suspicion and fear will fade out, replaced by focusing on the "real" problems of Wikipedia, on about how it works and in which direction it develops. What kind of problems should be discussed regarding Wikipedia today?

Rancic: The real problem of Wikipedia, and I am talking about the 'big' one here, the one in English, would be that it is still ‘thin’ in those fields where, in general, there is not yet a critical mass of people who are also prominent sources, and in average that would be social sciences. Wikipedia is ‘thinnest’ there. For example, as somebody educated in linguistics, I can say that Wikipedia is pretty ‘thin’ in the field - of course, the main things and basic terms are there, but compared to, for example, astronomy, which is covered in tremendous detail now, it is not much. But people around astronomy are familiar with computer technology and computer culture for decades. Wikipedia in Serbia would have slightly different problems, which would be similar for all the communities from the smaller-in-population languages, and that is that the certain individuals can still influence a lot; a good example of that would be socio-linguistics, where I launched the initiative together with professor Jelena Filipovic from the Faculty of Philology and students contributed with three entries each, so the field is decently covered, I would say better then in the Wikipedia in English. But, in general, this is what I see as the real problem, still there is the lack of people from certain fields who are also prominent in using and understanding computer networks, and it is reflected in Wikipedia.

What is the mainstream journalism re-publishing from Wikipedia (as a consequence of it being 'open' for public use), what kind of 'content' in average is of interest to the press?

Rancic: Oh, I don’t know what they (the mainstream media) did recently, I’ll need to search the Ebert media database to update myself on it (laughs)... But we’ve seen everything - really everything - people doing the ‘real piracy’ - popular daily papers taking and using the photographs, for example, or quoting the verbatim pieces of certain articles, and if all what they should do is to attribute it, but they don’t even do that, it just shows... Well, a loud attitude. Bad taste. But with some news agencies we have a wonderful collaboration. For example, local NIN is re-publishing the news-stream from the Beta News Agency, and it works great. I see the potential for cooperation with traditional or mainstream media, and I don’t think Wikipedia presents any kind of threat to traditional journalism. Well there to the public demand to have an extensive and permanent, 24-hours per day coverage (and also the space to sell ads), especially in smaller and mid-sized environments, like this one here - and I don’t think that the traditional local news services are in any state of immediate danger to be extinct. We can provide the service some self-organized entities can not - they produce the news which are systematically covering all fields, deliver on regular basis and in time, and without much if any oscillation - in other words, I don’t see any treat to Beta, Tanjug, Agence France-Presse or Reuters. But with daily newspapers, it is different; it becomes obviously an obsolete thing, to say.

Well, the local numbers disagree - the circulation of traditional press is not growing, but not shrinking, yet, and just 30 percent of regular hardcopy readers do read the online version of the daily's here and there. On the other hand, all the newspapers have online editorial boards and are 'competing' to build extensive web-sites and archives, and the concept of the newspapers-for-free, introduced by 24 sata, provoked some response by the biggest and most traditional - Politika daily re-publishing Wikipedia ‘broadens’ the scope of future journalists’ education; it teaches you how to search...
cently begun handing out Polita.zip, a free digest of the 'real' issue. But agree that it seems that this sort of publishing is fading away, mainly because of the decline of the Internet and - I also think that we haven't even begun to explore the full potential of mobile phones in this respect, for example - so the monopoly to find, produce and disseminate information or a piece of news is definitively lost for daily newspapers. It is already over. Where the potential of professional journalism remains may actually be in the journalism itself, not just in standing in between the news and the public, but in communicating, criticism, analysis, contextualising, predicting, joining the dots - in interpreting the news, to say. The 'news as the information' is present, in real time, in all the formats and media: we may use, but as a fast and short, bold and dry, somewhat disconnected 'piece of data'. Journalists should be the people who are there to 'interpret' the data, to analyse what it means and what are the possible consequences of it.

Rancic: There are a few paradigms there. One is about the content, and what the nature of that content is. Another is the question of media, in a technological sense. When I am not behind the computer (and that is almost never), I am following the news on my mobile phone. The point is, the technology of such access to news is not in that widespread use, where you can imagine that the people will grab newspapers or radios, because slowly they find their way to toilet. Me, I take my mobile. I've done that ever since I got a first mobile, which was able to do so. But this technology seems to be still emerging, and I am sure once it takes over people will feel no need to revert to carrying a bunch of papers around. The previous year may be described as 'sounding the technology of paper-like devices': computer display. That means that soon we will read from such displays, and you'll have only a few displays around, which will show any content from any source on your demand, so for journalists I do not see the option of not publishing online. What would be a revenue model for journalism is one entirely different story - I don't see the option of not publishing online. What would be a revenue model for journalism is one entirely different story - I don't know, probably advertising... And also, when occasionally I go through a paper copy of the newspapers, most of the times I find myself reading the news I read yesterday online; since I already read the yesterday news yesterday, I go online and read the news of today. But I think that aggregating news is not that easy, and I think news agencies like Beta are much more powerful than the Internet, to say; I think that aggregating news is still not that easy, and I think news agencies remain 'stronger' in aggregating the news.

Simply there is no need for that many programmers. Society does not require that much. Especially when software becomes dominant, it will prove that there will be no need to have, I don't know, 15 or 150 different and competitive pieces of software to do the same one thing you want, what for? Why would you need it? On the other hand, it doesn't mean that there will no job for programmers, a lot of things are there to be done, but still it will require less programmers. And the similar is with journalism; there I expect even more of a specialisation.

Rancic: There is something which is not reflected in the statistics. Statistics can be often misleading. Belgrade is significantly different then the rest of the Serbia. Belgrade is not that much behind in Internet then most of the cities its size, in average, but everything south of Belgrade is almost completely disconnected. The other thing is, you know, our position here, the position of the society, it is still like that the "pirated" software is one perfectly acceptable thing - and this is also my personal position - of course, there are other problems with it, as it is based on the technology which is "closed', the code is not open, and precisely because of it being based on that kind of technology you could have a lot of problems. But I am sure it was proven to be the case. On the other hand, people use what is available, they do with what they have and nobody should condemn it - but the global trends are slowly being replicated here, as well. On this small laptop of yours you now have Ubuntu, I see. More people I talk to are considering to switch to Linux, or at least try it.

Regarding the government policies, I don't see any of this reflected in the tax. There I see nothing happening really. I see some initiatives, even from local government, but the people are there to "interpret" the data, to analyse what it means and what are the possible consequences of it.

Back to the story of local media and the Internet. The latest horror story I found in December spreading around traditional media was that the 80 percent of computer users in Serbia are found to be infected with some sort of malware.

Some of EU Member States, or in some cases the certain municipalities, already require by law using of free and open-source software, and the trend is to go towards an open licensing approach regarding the 'content'. What is your assessment on the current situation with using open-source software in public services and in providing e-government services on those principles here? It may be a bit far fetched, as still Serbia is lagging behind what EU or regional average in basic categories considering using of computers and digital networks. I think that there is a lack of people who are there to "interpret" the data, to analyse what it means and what are the possible consequences of it.

Rancic: It is obvious that there is a campaign against the Internet among politicians are able to recognise as "technology". But, there is another aspect is the technology as in engineering. And I think that there is a lack of people who are there to "interpret" the data, to analyse what it means and what are the possible consequences of it.

But it would always appear de-contextualised from the real source of problem, which would be the security issues of Microsoft products and the lack of education by the users, and it would somehow be attributed to the very idea of the Internet and computers themselves, as being inherently problematic and dangerous.

Rancic: Well, infrastructure remains to be the problem. I myself had to pull a very strong "connections" in Telecom in order to be "switched" from the notorious Pulse-code Modulation (PCM) telephone line in my previous apartment to something which would allow internet data. But, ok, it's the way it is, and that was not the priority to upgrade the lines there. Some parts of Belgrade still have a lot of issues regarding connectivity. Then I moved to the city centre, and ended upgrading the improved connection using the fiber from the apartment next door, as my last line was not "smart" and couldn't be used for data. So infrastructure is definitely still something to deal with.

Regarding the promotion of the culture of using the Internet, I agree that any sort of coordinated activity from the side of government and institutions is not to be expected. There are some new people around now, and we see. I had the opportunity, by chance, to meet most of the people who were officially in charge of the Internet by now. It has to do with the Computer Center of the University of Belgrade (RCUB), and with Faculty of Electrocommunications. This was the profile of the people who were involved, they would evolve, they would be more modulated and wouldn't be used for data. So infrastructure is definitely still something to deal with.

Similar chances you have to meet one on the Internet, then - it is not much different, really. But you need to rationalise. I started this small survey with the premise that Internet infrastructures, like any other infrastructure, are not static, they are constantly changing, and not just becomes in the Internet itself, but it is being growingly replaced by the Internet - and that the society entered the phase in which the wider social acceptance of the Internet depends more much on promoting and researching the culture of using it, living with it, working with it. It's only this way that it may be come both ubiquitous and transparent, a common thing, something which should be taken as default. Would you agree?
Devastating Status of Roma Media

Interview with Dragoljub Ackovic, the Vice President of the Roma Parliament

Media that talk about Roma people the most are those who have a sensationalistic approach towards the Roma population, for example reporting on Roma persons who stole a chicken, or got into fight half-drunk, or an under-aged Roma child smoking. On the other hand, they don’t have the opportunity to write about Roma men or women who have brought important changes or have developed something or saved the ship from sinking.

Over the last years, the Serbian public have witnessed a number of awareness raising campaigns promoting the rights of minorities and marginal social groups, as well as number of appeals focusing on the alarming status of the Roma population in Serbia. Still, the prejudices about Roma citizens are visible within the Serbian media. Their language is rarely heard on Serbian radio and TV stations even in areas with a larger Roma population. As for the Roma media, the status is as difficult, since the number of media outlets in the Roma language is decreasing. Dragoljub Ackovic, editor of the Roma programme in the Radio Program I of the national broadcasting service Radio Television of Serbia since 1978, the founder of Roma news agency Romantimes and one of the founders and the Vice-President of the International Roma Parliament considers shutting down of media in Roma language ‘to be systematic’. Since 2006, the Republic Broadcasting Agency has been implementing new broadcasting legislation and has been licensing radio and television outlets on local and national level in Serbia. Several Romani media were not awarded a license and have shut down in the process. In an interview for deScripto, Ackovic explains why:

“There were, in fact, a lot of problems in the area of electronic media to be solved such as large number of illegal radio and TV stations. However, I believe that none of the Roma media should have been denied a license because there were not that many. In Belgrade, two Roma TV stations were shut down - Amaro Drom and Khrlo e Romengo. The radio station under the same name as the latter has been shut down as well. Now, when you shut down three out of four Roma media on the territory of Belgrade, one has to wonder if that has been done on purpose. I believe it was. Even more so as some of these outlets even received a penny from the public budget, but all were supported by private funds.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion Presidency is currently held by Serbia under Deputy Prime Minister Borisav Djilas. He recently spoke very affirmatively about the development of Roma media. When I asked him why they shut down three media stations, he had no answer. I do not think he even knew about it. I do not think he even knew about any similar initiative ever. Last December Poljanka daily was publishing feuilleton and that was good. But, not enough.

Do you think that treating Roma people as a minority in the media is helping or hindering their status?

Ackovic: The minute you start dividing people into a majority and a minority, there is a problem. Receiving the treatment of a minority in the media can only be harmful for us. What is the difference between TV show on Serbian culture and TV show on Roma culture? You can’t divide the culture, and life for that matter, on a majority and a minority in any period of time.

How effective could media be in resolving problems of Roma population?

Ackovic: You will be surprised to hear that it is the media who created most prejudices about Roma people. Also, encyclopedias very much produce stereotypes and then influence generations of readers.
Meditating the Past

(Don’t) look back in anger

Born in a Cross-Fire Hurricane

Almost 17-years ago, at the very start of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which will become inextricably linked with terms such as “ethnic cleansing,” “genocide,” and “war crimes,” a child, not more than two years old, was taken from a village near Tuzla where the father happened to have been away on business along with his older sister and mother. The latter two have never been found, nor have they so far been identified among the remains exhumed from any of the mass-graves which Bosnia and Herzegovina is littered with. Yet, the child survived, and, through ways, which can at best be described as “murky,” ended up being raised by an older couple in Belgrade, coming to know herself as Mila Jankovic. In her teens, the awareness of adoption and her origins prompted an identity crisis and some trouble at home, which led to employing the Red Cross to try matching up Mila’s DNA with any of the samples volunteered by the survivors of the war. This is how Mila found her biological father, Mahemed, alive and living in Germany, having fled there in 1995. She also learned of her birth-name: Senida Becirovic. One article reports her nearly fainting upon seeing it inscribed into the commemorative monument to “THE MISING.” In the traumatic events that took place afterwards, however, hers is the first name that can safely be taken off that board.

Or perhaps not so fast. For, as we are to learn by just scanning the headlines dealing with the story, Mila/Senia is still split in two by war, and she is not the only one. So are the formed nation-states and citizens within them divided; people who were, after decades of living together under the communist system of Tito, separated by separatist propaganda, machine guns, bombs, bullets, wire, organically inflicted wounds, and borders drawn in red ink. Long after charting desirable territories on the map and besieging of cities, the war-mongering regimes dismantled, respective dictators safely in their cliffs, it is in the realm of seeing that the struggle for interpretation, and thus identity, is waged.

The Sarajevo’s popular daily Dnevni avaz once broke the story of reunion as “How Senida Became Mila.” Its Serb and Croatian counterparts followed, each with a piece of their own. “They told me: You are not Mila, your name is Senida,” read the headline in the Croatian Jutarnji list. “Mila Mila Thun Senida,” countered Belgrade-based Vreme novosti.

While Dnevni and Jutarnji could afford to state explicitly that it was the Bosnian Serb forces that stormed the village and snatched Senida, the reportage in Vreme plays it down. Perhaps so as not to disturb the Dickiesian aspect of things, it emphasizes the mercifull “soldier savour” angle, and speaks rather of her being “weeping by the whirlwind of war,” as if she is swooped into a new home and into a new name by a force of nature, or of fate; or by an overused, worn-out metaphor.

Years ago in a Belgrade’s quarterly Genex, a political sciences professor and media theorist, Snjezana Milivojevic, examined why “the media are the ideal site of opening up the facts of the past and critically examining them,” upon which “it is discovered that the past was and is an ideological battlefield.” The past may seem to us dead and buried, but its ghosts are haunting by the very way we speak of it, or, rather, the way we don’t. And if a story of a most innocent war-survivor yields such disparate press accounts, the polarity which severs the public each time a controversial fig-ure or a past event re-emerges into the media spotlight can easily be imagined. Instead of the victims or the missing, it’s the war crimes and the fugitives charged with them that have become the symbol of Serbia’s division.

A House Divided

“I’d name Ratko Mladic supreme commander of the army,” said Milenad Obradovic, of the extreme right-wing organization Ozbos last year, in a Question and Answer session with the private TV B92. “There’s a long lineage of Serbian heroes, embodying sacred Serbian values. Novak Djokovic (top-world tennis player), Ratko Mladic—” he enumerated, a defiant smirk on his face. In his world, and that of many of his competitors, arguing otherwise is considered treason, “anti-Serbian,” Wartime Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladic happens to be indicted by the Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for crimes against humanity, genocide, and other atrocities committed during the 1992-95 war in BiH.

Instead of the victims or the missing, it’s the war crimes and the fugitives charged with them that have become the symbol of Serbian’s division.

Still on the loose and widely believed to be hiding in Serbia, Mladic is by all sides agreed to be “the most wanted fugitive.” But whether this makes him a national hero or a barbaric murderer depends not primarily on the nature of the acts committed (or solely on one’s daily paper of choice). The facts have to be weighed up, debated, and, ultimately, obstructed, by tactics ranging from the often employed cry, “But what of the crimes committed against us?”, abstract historical justifications, to the detached lingo of jurisprudence. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that one could have seen in January 2009, on the same network, Oliver Anicic, an esteemed professor and ex-dean of Belgrade’s Law faculty saying that, no, he would not report Mladic to the authorities even if he knew his whereabouts. He also argues against extradition to “foreign courts” on the basis that the much-disputed, constantly criticized (sometimes rightly so) Hague tribunal is “illigimate” and “unjust.” His words echoed the attitude of the previous Serbian gov-ernment, which has considered cooperation with the ICTY often only under severe international pressure. But he went even further, wondering “Imagine if Martin Luther was extradited into the hands of the Inquisition. Would be receive a fair trial?”

Sitting next to him, prominent human rights activist Natasa Kandic seemed stupefied. “Is that the kind of message you want to send to Law students?” All this, and more, in a primetime politi-cal talk show aptly named State of the Nation. If you can guess the right percentages of the public opinion division divided according to race, start text-messaging now, for you may win some money. The question of the day was delicately phrased as “Would you report Ratko Mladic for a million euros?”, that being the sum Serbia has offered to anyone who provides information leading to his arrest. The spokesperson for the polling agency explained the stagger- ing 65 percent of “No” answers by the way the question was put to the polled. “It sounds a little like, ‘I’d sell him out for a million bucks.’ You don’t get a clear message from the officials what he is in- volved in, but you know he’s there.”

The article follows with a high-government official in charge of cooperation with the ICTY declarly denying the “battle already lost,” since “the attitudes are already formed.”

Possibly still the most reviled person in Serbia, thanks to her relentless efforts to unearth the evidence of atrocities, coupled with the equally relentless demonisation campaign waged on her by late strongman Slobodan Milosevic’s media, Natasa Kandic of the...
Humanitarian Law Centre is well-aware what an attitude-shaking effect a mere media event can have. It is, after all, who got the reliable evidence to both the Hague’s and Belgrade’s war crime prosecutors, the infamous “Scorpions” video-tape. Initially presented at the Milosevic trial, just a month ahead of the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, the Serbian public has been confronted with a video showing members of a Serbian paramilitary unit executing Muslim men in plainclothes, by forcing them to lie face-down, hands tied, in a roadside ditch, before shooting them in the back.

The showing of the tape was simultaneous with the Serbian war crimes prosecution charging the soldiers identified from the video. Two years later, in 2007, it secured convictions for four of them (the verdicts almost invariably rendered in opinion and commentary pieces either as “unapologetic” or “nowhere near harsh enough”). Citing a government-ordered survey, the prosecution claims 72 percent of the population was informed about the tape. Its value as a source of coverage ever since, the total number of segments and articles devoted to it in the past year, is a mere calculation of numbers. The Independent Association of Journalists (NUNS) published in its publication Donje (No.25, July 2008 – September 2008), a scathing critique of the media coverage following the arrest, pinpointing the exact moment when “Radovan Karadzic fell into oblivion” behind media-friendlier Dabic. Along the same lines, the war crimes prosecution offered its critique: “Each medium re-joins about it from its own angle, but what is unfortunate is that often they are more eager to deal with side-details... than with facts that brought an indictment upon those people.”

“My experience is that the outrage following the presentation of the ‘Scorpions’ tape is one of the rare events in the history of the media in Serbia when a material event has generated a media event, which in turn generates a discussion about the form of media coverage,” says Pavicevic, editor of TV B92’s main news programme. “The day after the ‘Scorpions’ tape came out, the killing of Srebrenica’s young men was only on the cover of independent daily Danas, while the highest-selling Vecernje novosti reported about it on page 17,” the prosecution says.

Since then, Serbia has experienced a surging proliferation of tabloids, mainly of an openly nationalist persuasion, but what else? What say the watchdogs themselves? “The key change since the fall of Milosevic in 2000 is that war-crimes committed by Serbian forces are, for the most part, no longer being denied,” says Milos Milic, editor of TV B92’s main news programme. “But the nationalist part of the public often counts with unconfirmed reports on Serbian victims, the goal of which is to equate crimes against war-suffered as the genocide - in States so-called with genocide.” Milic estimated that most of the media report neutrally on crimes committed by Serbs, but lacking analysis and investigative methods.

Serbs, titles daily deal with Hague-indictors in much the same way they do with celebrity gossip, the sudden arrest last July of Radovan Karadzic, former Bosnian Serb political leader, was followed, after the first couple of days of “hard news,” by a sure fire formula: wearing T-shirts with Mladic’s picture printed on is “a diabolical thing which you use to express a diabolical thing.” Arguing that the media in Serbia are actively engaged in “politics of oblivion,” Sijezana Milicevic in Genoves is quoted: “Forgetting is a normal human activity... but a nation-wide act of forgetting is something else: a silent agreement to forget the shame.” The stance of most political subjects in Serbia is similar when it comes to our war-crime past. The most prevalent phrase is: “let’s look not back but forward,” in other words, let bygones be bygones.

To feel compassion towards a victim not of one’s own ethnicity, especially toward those made victim by one’s ethnicity, it turns out, is to be engaged, self-consciously, in a political act.

Paradoxically, the media in Serbia are living in a ‘political’ media landscape, where various panel discussions, workshops, plays, ballets and opera performances are performed. “I don’t know of anyone from this ‘Second Serbia’- she writes ‘second’ and ‘other’ being one and the same in the Serbian-‘who ever named something First Serbia’. It’s a basic minority defends a majority.” Reaching up for a collection of essays published at the end of 1990s wars, she adds, “Here it is.” The book was indeed titled “The Other Serbia,” and came about as a response to the leading Greater Serbia cause. Needless to say, the anti-war force had lost the battle. Ever since, along with Kandic, Pavicevic is more famous for the abuses that are hurled at her then by her statements.

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"Alleged satisfied patients, presumed lovers and soap-opera elements attract readers and viewers. Which is fine in terms of circulation, but it is a duty of journalists, nowadays mostly forgotten, to inform and not to entertain.”

That’s why I am skeptical of the new attitude that has permeated all media, that of “courageous investigative programmes dealing with war crimes” or “boring investigative journalism”, since such programmes are “a more complex examination of these issues” borne out of this cooperation, it still reserves a critical glance at how the media have reported the “Scorpions tape” affair. “The footage was shown on 1 June 2005 as part of a live coverage from the Milosevic’s trial in Hague on TV TVR2. By the time for the evening news, however, it was only B92 and another local TV station that deemed it top story. The day after, the killing of Srebrenica’s young men was only on the cover of independent daily Danas, while the highest-selling Vecernje novosti reported about it on page 17,” the prosecution says.

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And so is this ‘Other Serbia’ itself, it seems: liberal columnist Tivoli Pavlovic argued that the term “lies in the (otherwise) Right” much more than those in who are this supposed Other Serbia.” Thus, pundits Djordje Vakadinovic of the conservative think-tank New Serbian Political Thought, when asked which parties comprise the pro-European, liberal option, decreed that it is “All those who coincide with the current interests of American foreign policy.”

“What happened,” says Pavicevic, “is that these two positions became so entrenched that they exhaust themselves in arguments, and never do the arguments leak outside, to the people.”

Niksic, a then-war reporter, has covered the war in BiH for several foreign media outlets, remembers the different approaches in Serbian media to the stories she had witnessed at the time. “Sometimes only the dateline was the same in these articles.”

“What can seem to have been the failure, according to Pavicevic, is ‘the lack of an original language, except in a handful of authors, a language which you use, here, to speak about the crimes committed here. By no means does it mean that you should speak more plainly, but that you should think better.”

Enjoy the Silence
On 15 January 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution by which 11 July is designated, in the whole of European Union, as a day of remembrance of the Srebrenica massacre. President Boris Tadić, who had attended the Annual Memorial, called in 2007 on the Serbian parliament to adopt The Resolution of Srebrenica, but came under heavy criticism from all sides of the aisle. The right called for condemnation of all crimes, committed on all sides, rendering the whole thing meaningless, while the Liberals, supposedly a voice of the ‘Other Serbia’ in the parliament, hinted how the resolution was not condemning enough. The matter of the resolution has yet to be resolved.

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Arguing that the media in Serbia are actively engaged in ‘politics of oblivion,’ Sijezana Milicevic in Genoves is quoted: “Forgetting is a normal human activity... but a nation-wide act of forgetting is something else: a silent agreement to forget the shame.” The stance of most political subjects in Serbia is similar when it comes to our war-crime past. The most prevalent phrase is: “let’s look not back but forward,” in other words, let bygones be bygones.

While this may suit the majority of the population, Damnjanovic warns, it can erase the identity of the victims. While Natasha undauntedly piled up facts about the crimes, there should have been other realms for the reconciliation processes to occur. “It’s obvious that can not be conducted without the political elites declaring it an interest of the society,” says Damnjanovic.
Between Urban and Rural, Global and National

How Mainstream Media Construct National Identity in Serbia

The building of a civil society and the principles of citizenship in the post-Milošević Serbia have made the information programme much more flexible and less partial, so that, at least formally, different political options get approximately equal media space. However, since in Serbia in this moment there is a polarisation between the retrograde forces of the retro-nationalism and the corpus of pro-European options more ready for a dialogue on Euro-integration, this bipolar discourse can also be recognised in the media content not strictly related to politics. Observing the most popular media content in Serbia at this moment we can discover how strong this dichotomy is, and how, through different approaches to creation of these contents, different constructions of national identity intended for the media consumers are developed.

We could easily predict what kind of media image awaits us this year right at its very beginning. Traditionally, the New Year’s Eve programme on Serbian television, apart from an air of festivity, has a certain patriotic note. On the public broadcasting TV channel, precisely at midnight, about a hundred accordionists started playing Serbian folklore dances, and in this way, with the national music, wished the citizens all the best in 2020. As for the music programme, the prevailing sounds were those of traditional folk music, but also those of the newly composed commercial folk. On the two most popular channels, the public broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia and Pink TV that insists on entertaining programme, mostly the same performers participated in the shows recorded beforehand.

Far behind were televisions that offered significantly less content that could be considered “national”, so B92 television had only 5 percent of viewers that night. On the other hand, almost four million citizens watched a part of Pink TV’s “Grand Folk Festrivi”, a very popular TV show in which, in the prime-time, commercial folk music by both anonymous and popular performers is aired. In the New Year’s Eve prime-time B92 aired one of the final evenings of the “Operation Triumph” reality show, with participants from all over ex-Yugoslavia. Although people-meters may not have registered a big whole-evening viewer rating, people at the “Operation Triumph” management have to be satisfied with the fact that during New Year’s Eve over one million people voted for their favourite contestants at the “Musical Academy”. Since this year, the most expensive and the most ambitious reality show has been shown in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Emotion production succeeded in gathering almost all of ex-Yu republics in what is the most complex TV project in this region, something that no one before had accomplished. Students of the “Academy”, scrutinised by domestic and foreign experts, learn to sing, to dance, to act on stage, overcome stage fright and become favourites of the public from all over the country and the region while at the same time performing next to international music stars. This project is particularly interesting in terms of the internationalisation of media in the region, and together with the increasing trend of popular TV series, made in ex-Yugoslavia states co-production, announces the tendency of an inevitable international and cultural media dialogue.

The peak time in the New Year’s Eve programme belonged to the episodes of the most popular TV series in Serbia at the moment. Judging by their titles (“Peasants”, “Village’s on Fire while an Old Woman is Combing”, “My Relative from the Country”), it is obvious that the intention is to bring back small remainders of the urbanised society to the “rural parts” well known from popular TV series, made in ex-Yugoslavia states co-production, and to the viewer rating, readily accepted by public. The current series “Village’s on Fire while an Old Woman is Combing”, “My Relative from the Country”), it is obvious that the intention is to bring back small remainders of the urbanised society to the “rural parts” as well. Viewer rating of this series is measured in millions.

By creating an appealing and likeable image of Serbia, not perfect but easy to become fond of, and by having access to so many homes, the media construct a national identity that is, according to the viewer rating, readily accepted by public. The current series “Village’s on Fire while an Old Woman is Combing” arouses...
nostalgia also in the city kids who had spent the most beautiful moments of their childhood in some relative’s countryside home.

The image of a village in this series actually depicts real Sumadija (central part of Serbia) and Serbia in general, “the way it is”, in other words, the way it is presented by those who create “reality”. The way people talk, their faces, clothing... it is all completely authentic and easily recognizable since it had already been shown and seen in the media that way, and thus became familiar to the public. The public now recognizes it as real. Those people coming from the series are warm and sincere, but also critical, even envious towards their neighbours.

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If this suits the rural type of construction of national identity imposed on us in the media, we certainly have to take into account also the population for which other type of content is placed; content that produces a different national identity considered real by that kind of public. Some of them may identify with characters from the “Ritter Fruits” series or from the films like “Običnii for Escobar” that present an urban environment in which the main character is usually a guy who becomes a criminal because of the ill-fated circumstances but at the end he falls in love and changes from the core. That kind of content, the same as the “rural series” arouses big media attention and gets sympathy from the viewers.

If we are not rural, then we are urban, but in any case it has to be in the way the media present us, while we only have the possibility to choose which image to incline to. Who are we actually? The community is divided into two fractions. Two ways of thinking are formed; both created and placed by the media.

On the one hand, there is an idea of a quasi-urban part of elite disgusted by anything domestic and turning to someone else’s, rejecting its own roots and everything related to the past. It is argued that we should look to the future and invest in it but we shouldn’t by any means be ashamed of our roots. It is a good to approach the world, of course, our goal is to become a true part of it, but in doing so we could definitely use some of Radu’s wisdom (Radu is the protagonist of the aforementioned serial “Village’s on Fire...”) and some of that almost philosophical tranquillity with which one bears all up’s and down’s, fortunes and misfortunes of his little ordinary life.

We should think seriously about the way we try to present ourselves to the world, how to catch everybody’s fancy, and do we, in trying to do so, lose ourselves? What is the message we send to the world? Can’t we be part of a community? How does the world see us based on what we convey?

Belonging to a nation is determined by the national will, sentiment and consciousness. Undoubtedly, the national will is a mover towards the European integrations, but to do so, it is necessary that every individual has national consciousness. The national being is expressed through mentality, through typical reactions to everyday life situations, through the general human values are accepted and expressed. We should join Europe, we should join the global world, and we should accept its values but without losing ourselves. We should walk proudly towards Europe, with sincerity and simplicity, neither ashamed of our patron saints and festivities (days and celebrations dedicated to family’s patron saint) nor of our popular wisdom. We should present all this to the world and, eventually, being along even that life attitude of “an old woman that is combing while the village’s on fire” in that sincerity and simplicity we will be recognized, accepted and esteemed.

And what if it was not that simple, what if the media placed just a likeable and appealing image of what we could be, of what we could identify with? What if it was just a simulacrum of our national identity, created by the media? When we adopt that imposed image, we become exclusively self-oriented, oriented towards our immediate surroundings, our little needs. In doing so, we are given amnesty for the possible guilt of not reacting to the wrong moves of the individuals we had given the power and the right to lead us. They deprived us even of the right to feel anger and rage for the narrow-mindedness. They lull us into a narcissistic image. They emphasize spite as a prevailing national characteristic. They pacify possible individual efforts, they suppress individuality. They develop xenophobia in us, the fear of everything outside our little world. Do they do it on purpose and influenced by those who actually want an old woman to be combing while the village’s on fire?

Do the productions that basically represent the story about us just try to sell the well-branded product with the secure market i.e. viewer rating? It is obvious that the domestic media production fails to show that the people in their immediate surroundings live the same problems and similar and simple lives just like the people in Serbia.
Seeking not Facts but Power

Anonymity - a Ruler From the Shadow

The phenomenon of the flood of cataclysmic statements of unnamed sources or journalists spreads throughout entire newspapers, especially before important political events, like elections, with the sole purpose of contaminating the public with sensationalistic and tabloid ‘news’.

Many assume that the reason is the low prices, which could not cover expenses. Those who want to explore a little further usually hit a wall, because they cannot find information regarding owners or people in charge. For example, a daily newspaper Sputnik (Zemounovci) existed for a couple of weeks around the 2000 elections, and then closed down. There was not at any point a name of anyone responsible, someone who could be addressed or held accountable. Recently a magazine called Green (Thunder) was started, whose goal was to “strike the socio-political, sports and celebrity issues” as it proclaimed. And all that in the midst of the climax of the financial crisis? The answer lies in the symbolic construction of the balance of power and dominance.

Anonymity is a master in disguise, a ruler from the shadows. It provides for a mythical, almost god-like position of unlimited power. Under the guise of anonymity, journalists and their sources appear to inform the public, while they actually confuse them and make them incapable of judging and interpreting information in the texts. A source that is neither named nor described, as it should, is put in a place of power in a way that they can prevent information that will certainly have an effect on the public, without being held accountable. They can lie, as they can tell the truth, but that is of no importance to the story. The important thing is that their information is talked about and that the medium maintains its popularity.

The primary goal of anonymous sources has always been to influence the public, to draw the attention from certain events and issues to another direction, or to prevent critical analysis by shading a different light on the whole story. When passions flare up even a serious analysis becomes an analysis of a passionate response to that event, not of the event itself. That is when responsibility of the tabloid is conveyed on ‘serious’ media which later strengthen the whole debate and prolong the anxiety. The public are not given the chance to pay attention to new and verified information. Instead, the whole story, that used to be a gossip, is given a connotation of a myth, as it should, is put in a symbolic space that is dependent on media can provide them with an everlasting existence.

This raises serious questions; what are the ‘serious media’ doing? Why are they helping to sustain the institution of a powerful Anonymity? Are they so naive or are they part of the same machinery? It seems to me that the answer is again in the balance of power and dominance. Media have started to compete with the truth. They strive to grab total control over society because a society that is dependent on media can provide them with an everlasting existence. Economics and existence, as principles of media society and an unnamed source are an institution of unlimited power. Completely free of responsibility and liberated from the truth, the media can publish all they want, in order to show they exist. They create their own reality, media reality, which is parallel to social reality and bring it into question. The dominant discourse is created by tabloids and based on this dominant discourse the public builds its picture of reality. Therefore, in the world of pictures that are too big for us to observe completely, or too blurry to make out, our reality becomes simplified. In the world of pictures that are too big for us to observe completely, or too blurry to make out, our reality becomes simplified. Therefore, in the world of pictures that are too big for us to observe completely, or too blurry to make out, our reality becomes simplified.
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and various kinds of hate-speech. In terms of calculation through the means of sensationalist tabloid newspapers achieve their high circulation, people are represented through entertainment roles - fashion models, TV celebrities and pop and folk singers.

The next big group of roles contains the ones related to the private sphere - mothers, housewives and wives. The analysts had to include the categories "without a role" on the list, as well as "the body-object", for women depicted regardless of any social context, anonymously and exclusively as "a decoration", which didn't have the equivalent in the group of the male photos. There we see omnipresent gender inequality, sexism and misogyny in the print press, especially on the covers and in the daily tabloids. Visual portrayal of the stage performer is either sexist - woman as the body-object or the promoter of the fashion industry, or role models which, in their highest value and preoccupation - are pornographic. Moreover, a large part of their photographed and written material consists of the pornographic image-photographs which concentrate on the nude or half-nude female body, especially in medium close-ups, implying pictures of naked or half-naked female bodies followed by stereotypical sexist comments, thus representing women and their sexuality as yet another available good on the market.

Printed tabloid media use the genre of "photographic pornography" varying from "soft", not as depicting and not so exposing, as seen in tabloids, to "hard core" photography present in pornographic magazines (definition of pornographic photography implies pictures of naked or half-naked female bodies - in detail, medium close-ups, entire figure - which concentrate on the sexuality made available to a viewer).

The number of photos involving women in the daily print media is considerably small, media analysis show. However, it gets considerably higher in the fun pages, and in the entertainment newspapers. The analysis of the social role of women on these photos shows that there is a tendency to create stereotypes of the roles of women. Tabloids tend to be selective in the women roles they illustrate with pictures. Most commonly, women are represented through entertainment roles - fashion models, TV celebrities and pop and folk singers.

By means of well tested representation techniques, the tabloids are confronting these two politically and socially different options. They promote the "Serbian warrior manhood", conservative paternalistic and patriarchal ideology and political intolerance, specifically represented in the tabloids which are simplified as narratives one may find in porn movies. In addition, tabloids frequently use pornography as the emotionally-based foundation of the pre-rational thinking, raw instincts and discrimination and control over women, all part of violent, exclusive and warriem patriarchical culture which contests the civil society and its political pluralism, civil liberties and rights, and political pragmatism, primitivism and political pragmatism, compromise and pacification of "wildlike" masculinity. From an ideological standpoint, misogynous pornographic material validates the ideological values and gender identities of the authoritarian patriarchy.

Tabloid newspapers achieve their high circulation through the means of sensationalism, political exclusion, celebrity gossip and various kinds of hate-speech. In terms of calculation through the means of sensationalist tabloid newspapers achieve their high circulation, people are represented through entertainment roles - fashion models, TV celebrities and pop and folk singers.

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After midnight during October, B92 broadcast live from the evening hours, examinees were asked to rate the quality of B92’s programming. Since B92 operated by cameramen, and to see how viewers would not want to discuss their privacy in public. We can easily say something that the only competence comes from what is said and shown on TV, and it is not to be doubted. The way things have started, it looks as if in some time there will be a new single person who would not want to discuss their privacy in public. We can easily picture a situation where there will be a sign on every TV station that reads: “Come on, open your soul to us.” Anyway, hasn’t everyone ever wanted to give an interview for television and become somebody? Isn’t that so?!

As number of viewers of B92 programmes increased, the ratings given by the examinees were going down. The percentage of people rating the quality of programming of B92 with the highest mark (5/5) went down by 3 percent in the evening hours, and 6 percent for programmes broadcast after-midnight hours. Likewise, the number of people who gave the station a rating of 2/5 increased by 3 percent for the evening, and 7 percent for late-night hours. Results further show the same for afternoon hours which received lower marks for quality in October compared to April survey.

In October, the number of viewers who were giving the highest ratings for B92 programming decreased by 13 percent. So the shift in the programming made to adjust to the Operation Triumph brought some new audience but lowered overall quality of the programming of B92 as seen by the people surveyed by CeSID. Big Brother was certainly among the most popular and also most logistically complicated television shows. Dragoslav Mihajlovic, the on-line editor of projects such as Big Brother and Operation Triumph notes that such shows require use of high technology: “This was the first time so many video cameras have been used in a live broadcast”, says Mihajlovic. “Video recordings were filmed either by ‘live’ cameras, operated by cameramen, or remote controlled cameras. There were also innovations regarding audio technology because microphone were worn by participants and they were also placed around the house.” What is an ‘inconvenience’ according to Mihajlovic is the unpredictability of the participants’ reactions in the show. Control is to some extent possible by means of assignments given to participants, but sudden, unpredictable events are always behind a corner.

“Never know when someone will be so psychologically and physically stressed they might turn the whole house upside-down. Then you have to be ready to act quickly and in the best way possible, which requires expert professional training and strong nerves.” Big Brother can be explained, closest to possible as a live feature programme. It is dramatically very complex because it involves monologues, dialogue, suspense and all other elements of drama.

Big Brother was as popular as it was for the same reasons as Latino-American soap operas are popular. There are significant correlations between these two types of TV shows. They both represent substitution for a real life to their consumers, and at the same time give them an opportunity to characterize certain people as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, which is a basic need of most people”, explains Mihajlovic. He says that the process of selection involves experts in psychology who create a psychological profile of applicants with their physical and mental (in)abilities.

There is also a team of scenario writers. They observe relations inside the house and create a story by choosing which information they make public and which they don’t. There is always a risk of breaking some moral code during that selection, and it is up to the production company whether to misuse some information or not.

“There was no misuse in Big Brother. Dramatic flow was dictated by human intervention events were”, claims Mihajlovic. That is why some people get angry and think that they have not been represented truthfully. They claim to have been manipulated, and that their statements have been taken out of context, and that they were portrayed as completely different people. According to Mihajlovic the only ones facing danger while taking part in reality shows are celebrities. They have to pay close attention to their behaviour because one wrong move is enough to demystify their persona and wreck their image.

“Truman, say something, God damn it! You’re on TV! The whole world is watching you!” shouted his ‘father’ at the moment when Truman realises that his whole life is a hoax concocted in order to draw from him un-staged emotions and actions. Television rarely puts up with silence (even if that silence speaks more than a thousand words), and even more so today when it represents a kind of a confession booth, bed patients lie on during a session with their psychiatrist. Truman realises at that moment that he does not possess any privacy because he shares it with a multitude of people all over the world. All those who participate in any reality show are doing the same. It is obvious that today, the line between private and public keeps getting thinner. It almost disappears. So does critical thinking. Lost somewhere in between Big Brother and 48 Hours Wedding. It is replaced by the attitude that the only competence comes from what is said and shown on TV, and it is not to be doubted. The way things have started, it looks as if in some time there will be a new single person who would not want to discuss their privacy in public. We can easily picture a situation where there will be a sign on every TV station that reads: “Come on, open your soul to us.” Anyway, hasn’t everyone ever wanted to give an interview for television and become somebody? Isn’t that so?!
Turbo Traditionallity in the Form of Modernity

Turbofolk and Media

Turbofolk is a burning of the people, Every encouragement of that burning is turbofolk,
Igniting Homo sapiens’ lowest urge, Music is the favourite of all muses, The harmony of all arts,
I didn’t invent it, Turbofolk is the favourite of the masses, The cacophony of all tastes and smells,
Turbofolk is not music, Turbofolk is the favourite of the masses, The burning of all tastes and smells, I didn’t invent it,
I gave it a name, Turbofolk is the favourite of the masses, The harmony of all arts.

There are different descriptions of turbofolk as from the point of everything to nothing. “For some, it’s just another musical genre, a successful entertainment profit-making business... for others it is a lifestyle or a project of mass political manipulation or an authentic sub-culture... You can also hear claims that turbofolk simply doesn’t exist (and never has),” explains Radovan Kapure, the author of the television series All that Vfolk.

Those who consider it a musical genre outline that it started with the words: “Turbofolk” (Rambo Amadeus, Belgrade musician and composer)

The new values were promoted not only through music, but also through almost all media content (videos and shows), which promoted the image of turbofolk performers.

With their provocative moves on the stage and the equally provocative way in which they dressed, they set the standards of behaviour and clothing, promoting “pink” culture during Serbia’s “black days”.

However, turbofolk, which is present in other countries in the Balkans these days, cannot be understood if its values are not contrasted with the values that characterise folk music, its predecessor. It is only then that we can realise that those values were even more twisted by the crisis and the war that our society went through during the 1990s. Turbofolk promoted luxury, glamour and money - in a word, good life - which itself was a paradigm considering the situation the people were in. The new values were promoted not only through music, but also through almost all media content (videos and shows), which promoted the image of turbofolk performers.

The effects of the new style on the Serbian youth

The image of female singers, who were a lot more present in the media than their male colleagues, was often connected to their provocative clothing and lifestyles. Scantly dressed on the stage, with lots of makeup, they mostly played on the sex card rather than good songs. The basic characteristic of their style was minimal clothing (mini skirts and clearance), high heels and lots of shiny details (unless the entire outfit was extremely shiny). With their provocative moves on the stage and the equally provocative way in which they dressed, they set the standards of behaviour and clothing, promoting “pink” culture during Serbia’s “black days”.

Reference to ‘pink’ comes from the name of the television TV Pink that was the first one to promote turbofolk music and turbofolk lifestyle in their programming, thus exploiting this form of entertainment largely to attract viewers.

Soon after its appearance, turbofolk culture attracted lots of young people in Serbia and in the region of the Balkans. Young people liked their style and they identified with some of its elements. Inspired by the lives of music stars, most members of the female gender visually looked alike and followed the same styles, but also started forming a society of so-called “sponzoruse” (“gold-diggers”). An abundance of long-legged blondes, with too much makeup, wearing short skirts, “hugged” by fake fur, actively walked the streets of the city hoping to be “cashing” a wealthy man. The knight in shining armour from fairy-tales was substituted by a perspective “businessman” driving a BMW, and the castle with a luxurious villa. They thought they deserved to live in luxury and hedonism, and they naïvely likened themselves to their music star idols that dominated the music scene and set new life values and standards. That is how the old values, which were in force up until then, stumbled and were eventually swept away by the “pink tsunami”.

It’s not just the music that promoted those values; they were also present in music videos, music shows and other visual representations of turbofolk performers. That is how almost all forms of mass media participated in the education of the young people and the promotion of the new “elite”, consisting of businessmen and turbofolk singers. Therefore, when we speak of turbofolk, we can’t fail to mention the role of the media, which significantly contributed to turbofolk’s incredible success.

The media played a crucial role in exploiting this musical genre, because it is characterised exactly by the multimedia nature of being broadcast on radio and TV, but also being represented in weekly tabloids. However, the media breakthrough of turbofolk enabled the opening of private TV stations in Serbia, especially and TV Pink and TV Palma, stations that based their programming on folk music.

The entire nation was being “bombard” by long Sunday shows broadcasting that sort of music. The most popular shows of this variety were ZAM, Minamakovacij and Jedna pesma jedna ajla (One Song One Wish), whereas the radio was dominated by:...
The Art for Social Change

Interview with Belgrade street-art diva TKV

By Nikola Herman
Student, FMK

Every morning I go out to balance to have my morning coffee and the first thing I see are six huge billboards attacking me. On the highest one (50 meters high) there is a yogurt advertisement, with a half-naked woman looking at me seductively", Belgrade street-artist TKV begins her story on how she decided to start with this form of art.

While briefly reminiscing on the outdoor advertising in the 1970s when it was mostly about former Yugoslavia state symbols, flags, coats of arms, TKV notes that already in 1980s there was a significant influence of New York graffiti scene on the streets of Belgrade. In the 1990s, disintegration of the state, total isolation, poverty and the state repression, as well as material and existential insecurity made this form of expression less achievable. The first tags didn’t appear until the middle of the decade, a time when a very small scene was mostly about former Yugoslavia and removed in two days.

Street artist TKV explained it to us. She started doing street art in 2004, which has involved the years into a lifestyle style, way of communicating, and reacting to her surroundings.

"The point is you have to express yourself. Urban space gives great possibilities to express yourself and free you from restraints and rules that would usually be imposed. It offers thousands and thousands of informations, and you're able to respond to it somehow. The only question is what form you will choose, and street art is the form free from all censorship. The place and the subject matter depend solely on the artist. I choose my work space strategically, but sometimes the theme of the work determines its place. It doesn’t matter to some artist, and they can work wherever, but some do think about aesthetics."

"I make the art for the social change. To give a value to something uninteresting, and communicate with the audience who can be basically anyone, regardless of the gender, age, education level or anything else", she explains.

On street art and billboards...

"Many corporate businesses use the street iconography for advertising their products. That is a far-reaching technique. For example, if a street artist signs his name on the Coca Cola billboard which has this iconography incorporated in its advertisement, that signature is automatically considered to be an intrusion, which is a paradox, because that’s exactly what is represented on the billboard. That signature becomes overwriting and removed in two days. There are street artists around the world doing nothing but billboard interventions."

"Despite the fact that our society offers a lot to react against (not necessarily with street art, though), people rarely do so. That’s why the street art scene is in poor. You can blame it on the mentality, but you must consider the paint prices, which are doubled because of the import taxes. One of the other reasons, perhaps, could be the fact that street art is illegal. Still, regardless of that, spray painting on the streets is not considered a major felony in Serbia. The whole state is in the certain state of confusion, which impacts the artists and the scene, as well. There are special police departments in some countries dealing with that issue, while in Serbia the only thing questioned is the price of taking it off."

On "The scene..."...

"It all started in New Belgrade (a part of Belgrade) between the blocks of buildings. The first Hall of Fame was there, in block number 70. The whole atmosphere was reminiscent of the New York graffiti. Yet, the hot spot has moved to the city centre nowadays. The Belgrade art scene has developed hugely compared to the nineties, which created the necessity to leave the graffiti and extend to the whole city. The parts of the city where it was the most present were Belgrade districts of Donzel and Vinka, but currently one of the most “crucial” places is a passage called Beazistan, located in the heart of the city centre. However, the graffiti Hole of Fame is located in the warehouse of former state oil company, right across the Ada Ciganlija city lake, which is now not in the city centre. Right behind it is the wall of the hip-popdrome, which is also a place that gathers the street artists. The political influence in entering every aspect of the city, so it applies to the arts, as well. The decisions inside the state are copped onto the street art itself. There is no unity, which influences the authenticity of the whole scene. There is no "fog" of this region, it is still under discovery."

On street art and off streets...

"Despite the use of street iconography for marketing purposes, or some sort of institutionalizing of street art through galleries, street art itself doesn’t lose its essence nor its purpose. It’s not threatened by it, and the need for that kind of self-expression isn’t any
Comics are Back

For the sixth time, Belgrade hosted the International Comics Showroom. The event gathered together enthusiasts from all around the world and had most visitors ever.

C omics are back! We could say so for the comic scene in Serbia. However, not to make any confusion, comics are deeply rooted in our country, it was widely read and regularly published. But let us start from the very beginnings of the comics in Yugoslav region.

Appearance of comic books in Europe and the USA in mid-nineteenth century reached yet in 1862 our publishers who were not all in immune to the new art and prosperous medium in rise. The very same year Moonwalker magazine was founded in Novi Sad, and in 1861 Mosquito illustrated magazine appeared.

In those days, some magazines disappeared while some others took their place. In 1861 the satirical magazine The Hedging of Podesta appeared in Novi Sad (today in Croatia), the only issue of Humorist magazine in Novi Sad as well, while Jovan Javorovic Zmaj issued the satirical magazine in Novi Sad as well, while Jovan Javorovic Zmaj issued the satire. Comic books slowly started reappearing in all high-circulation newspapers of Yugoslavia region, while some others took their place. In the beginning of World War II. It affected pre-war comics and impressive works ended. However, comics started coming back into all daily newspapers, as well as for the private conversation and internal exchange of ideas.

The second half of 1939 was marked by two significant events stirring a relatively tranquil climate in the comic market: first, Mickey’s Readers magazine was to be released, Politikan Zabavnik shortly afterwards, which was to take the supreme position of Mickey Mouse. Since 1939 when Politikan Zabavnik appeared, comics has been its component, and included works of almost all relevant international authors. All distinguished national authors (Nanovic, Senis, Soljic and Lobac) started working for this magazine.

Although comic books gradually appeared in almost all high-circulation newspapers of the time, it was apparent that European and American public was not yet convinced, which does not undermine the relevance of our authors who did have space for their works. Editorial policy of newspapers then was intentionally focused on presenting state-of-the-art works to the public, making national authors at least qualitatively match the foreign ones. At the same time, Mika Mir magazine was released in Belgrade, gathering exquisite cartoonists like Djordje Lobac, Nikola Nanovic, Djaka Jankovic, etc.

The issuing of comic books came to a halt at the beginning of World War II. It affected Politikan Zabavnik, Eye, Mickey Mouse, Happy magazine, Mickey’s Readers, Blue Magazine, etc., a turbulent period of pre-war comics and impressive works ended. It is estimated that the circulation in those days was between 20,000 and 40,000 copies.

Taking into account the social circumstances at that time, the post-war period was not fruitful for comics. However, in the 1950s, as conditions changed for better, comics started coming back into all daily, weekly and monthly papers with World War II as a prevailing subject matter. Edition Never a Slave then appeared with Children’s Newspaper from Gornji Milanovac, later renamed into Mirko and Slars in 1978, two partisan messengers who were the most popular characters in the edition. Its circulation was around 200,000 copies, which is not negligible even in global terms. At that time, new editions appeared—Pongo, Zenith, and Paroome which would be the longest-living edition in our region Stripoteka (Stripteze).

In 1971, due to the amendment of the federal law on press and other means of informing, comic books were not spared. Besides, comics were additionally taxed, which brought a number of editions to an end and made many authors stop working or shift to illustrating licensed editions.

The end of the 1970s and 1980s were “golden years” of Yugoslav and Serbian comics marked by numerous editions and involving many national authors. Strip Art, Spank News, Ex Almanach, Love, Politikan Zabavnik and Stripoteka covered vastly extended range comics were issued in all republics. Circulation was high and editions numerous.

During the 1990s comics scene was almost gone, influenced by other events, nevertheless leading to its revival in 2000 when comic books slowly started regrouping, different, modern, with new characters and stories created mostly abroad.

VI Belgrade International Showroom

For the sixth time, the Student Cultural Centre of Belgrade organised the International Comics Showroom. This event, which gathers together the enthusiasts of the ninth art from all around the world, took place from 25 to 28 September 2008.
Since 2003, the International Comics Showroom has been organised in September with duration of several days, depending on the programme. Along with the Balkan Comic Meeting in Leskovac, the International Comics Showroom represents the biggest comic festival in Serbia nowadays.

The most interesting part of the festival is the comics contest. The sixth International Comics Showroom received 210 works from 32 countries and from all continents except Africa. The topic was free, and a prescribed length was one to four boards. The members of the jury were Srecko Jovanovic, publicist (president of the jury), Vasa Pankovic, literary critic, Miroslav Milenovic Buda, comic strip author, Zlatko Milesevic, “grapa” web page editor, Koka Milenkovic, theatre director. The jury estimated that science fiction was a prevailing genre, regardless of the country or contestants’ profiles.

Showroom prizes were awarded on the first day, at the opening ceremony. Special award for contribution to Serbian comics was given to Srecko Jovanovic, the founder of the Children’s Newspaper, back in 1956 and still one of his interests. Children’s Newspaper was one of the most significant comic book publishers in the former Yugoslavia region, with such publications as La Almanaca, Tu Comics, Gigant and Pearl Comics.

In 2008 festival Grand Prix went to Alem Gigant from Slovenia. His work is ‘The child’. The prize was shared by Bratislav Milenkovic and Milos Jakovljevic, authors of the comic book “The child”. It is a series of comics that deal with the theme of the child in his childhood. The jury praised the series for its use of symbolism and its ability to bring issues of childhood and the child’s world to the forefront.

Thursday are constantly issuing new editions, which is very important for creating new public, more than necessary to the comics today. Second of all, there are a few publications that somehow manage to release national comics, e.g. Strip Pressing, Think Tank, Eon, Enea. We have two big comic festivals - Balkan comic meetings in Leskovac and Comics Showroom in SCC in Belgrade, and the fact that more and more national authors are working for international publishers only confirms the improvement. I think there are more than 30 comic-artists working for French, Italian or American publishers, many of them are even working on two serials at the same time.

Marko Stojanovic: Money. In the right hands. I know it is nothing new, but it all comes down to the amount of money invested in comics and to the right or wrong way it is invested. It is especially unfortunate that not too much is being spent on the development of national comics in Serbia. It is a shame that the one who should appreciate in the French comics market, which is commercial and always hungry for good comics-artists, why should they not create public. I see this as the only way.

It often happens that a comic-artist first becomes popular due to foreign publishers and then acknowledged among the national public. Has anything changed so far?

Stojanovic: As I have already said, no. Our comic-artists are excellent and formed to a great extent; they are highly appreciated in the French comics market, which is commercial and always hungry for good comics-artists. Why should they
waste their energy here in Serbia trying to find a way to publish a few boards and be miserably paid (and often with a few-month delay) or even work for free, when there is somebody out there who wishes to pay abundantly (for Serbian circumstances) for their talent and work. And then somebody can find it strange that people have high-circulation publications in the west, and yet nobody has heard of them in Serbia.

The International Comics Showroom seems very various in its efforts to become the pivot of Balkan comics. How realistic is it to have the authors and publishers reconnected into a creative publishing framework?

Stojarovic: Balkan Comics Meeting was established in 1998 and has been organised every year since, making it the oldest comics festival in the ex-Yugoslavia region. The uniqueness of this festival is that it is focused on younger Balkan authors, and it also aims at familiarising comic scenes in the Balkans. This year’s meeting brought together around 120 authors from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Greece, with over 50 guests attending the festival. There has also been the International Comics Showroom in Belgrade for the last six years, this year with around 200 authors from 32 countries worldwide. This festival is expanding year after year and bringing better and better authors each year. I am not sure how realistic it is to reconnect authors and publishers into a publishing story, because national publishers have little commercial interest if there’s a stable domestic production. Simply, it is much cheaper to pay royalties for a certainly lucrative French or American comic book than to pay a national author and risk if the comics would be sold out or not.

Publishers like System Comics or Labyrinth should be congratulated for their efforts to publish national comics on a regular basis, and we have also to admit that their publishing work is based on enthusiasm, of both publishers and authors who work for them...

Which Serbian authors would you especially name?

Stojarovic: I am already tired of repeating how great our authors are, but it is true. Dejan Nenadov and Darko Perovic have for long been my favourites, since Yu Strip I read retroactively - and both of them are doing great things, for Italian and French publishers, respectively. At the moment, Rajko Miljevic Gora is at the peak of his career working on the Scapelli serial for a branch of American Detective Comics (DC), Vertigo, while the comeback Vladimir Krestic Laci from Nis is creating miracles for French publishers Soleil and Delcourt. I cannot skip some mid-generation artists like Sedjan Nikolic Peka, Vladimir Aleksić, Milorad Vicanovic Maza, Lejla Pilipovic, people then of similarly my age Mirko Colak, Ivan Sainovic, Jovan Ukropina, Milos Bankovic, Sinisa Banovic, Nebojsa Pejic...Finally, it is a fact that the Internet provides possibilities for creating a more widely connected comics scene in Serbia and the Balkans in general, via sites and forums like UPPP (upp.org.yu), which is certainly a desirable direction with good results and diverse forms of cooperation.

The Longevous represent an attempt to publish a ten-album serial album, if it is going according to your plans?

Stojarovic: The Longevous are even more ambitious than it seemed at first, since they were not envisaged as a serial of ten albums, but as many as we could make - the first cycle, which rounds up a story, consists of seven albums. It is the serial published in Politikan zabrnik and System Comics’ albums - the one dealing with the adventures of Krklevic Marko (the immortal, in our interpretation) and the mysterious Chinese Chen (a vampire, in everybody’s interpretation). Adventures of these two accident partners start in Vienna, on the night of Mozart’s death, and besides Mozart, the Longevous introduce Till Eulenspiegel, Milos Oblic, Vuk Branovic, Faust, Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein and a great number of mythological creatures. It is an adventure comic book, with a punch of macabre located in a solid historical context. As for the plan, it has been spoiled a bit by the fact that only the first episode has been published in “Politikan zabrnik” even though three have been done, but the team members (comics-artists from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania) Sedjan Nikolic Peka, Vlada Aleksić, Aleksandar Sotirovic, Tihomir Celanovic, Radomir Igrapecvic, Milorad Vicanovic Maza, Igor Jorenckovic, Denis Dusanovic, Danijel Atanasov, Filip Andruski, Milos Mihajlovic Misha, Borivoje Grbic, Nebojsa Pejic, Boris Bakic, Milan Antanasijevic, Dejan Seclan, Ivan Sainovic, Damjan Milihacic, Zoran Jovanovic, Mijn Mijatovic et al. are still working hard to succeed.
Alongside these artists who base their lyrics on the criticism of society and politics, new groups and individual artists emerged with the emphasis on humorous funny side of human relations. While people stare in shock, way to go — is the constant motto of the underground scene. And they managed to form a big fan base eager to hear something else. The band “Bad Copy” with its laid back and some-what simple and enjoyable style, had already hit the top of the charts, well before songs appeared on TV, I have to wonder what will happen with the Serbian hip-hop culture. Is the fact that only performers that got famous before 2000 have benefits from it. Although the underground scene is very strong at the moment, with a lot of good groups and artists, they cannot reach a wider audience and earn a living by making hip-hop records. Media’s lack of interest is what holds the whole culture back. There is not a single TV show dealing with hip-ho at the moment. There are a couple of radio shows in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia that deal with hip-hop but they are not the most popular radio stations, therefore are practically unnoticeable. Compared to foreign radio stations, (e.g. Tim Westwood’s BBC Radio 1) the Serbian hip-ho radio shows and stations, are not so popular. One show is the most famous and one of the most influential shows for everything new that comes out) radio station which had the opportunity to air those shows didn’t manage to hold on for long, and soon enough were cancelled, above all, because of lack of understanding from environment, editors, as well as previous negative experiences concerning hip-hop, which was considered as a bad legacy from the 1990s, connected with criminal and bad boys who used to make this music.

On top of all of these problems with the media, copyright problems and piracy, Internet as one of the basic source of information for young people in a way hinders young groups and artists but it also helps them. One of the few websites, which deals with the whole Serbian hip-hop scene more seriously, is servisnovigrad.com. It tries to gather all artists at one place, to introduce them, and to report about what is going on in the world of local hip-hop. There are plans and projects aimed to help young unknown artists, and most important-ly there is a will for creating new TV and radio shows, as well as making a documentary about Serbian hip-hop culture which is expected to be the ba-sis for other projects aimed at helping the development of future composers and for people eager to see something happening in the Serbian hip-hop scene.

Cyber Basement
Serbian Rock ‘n’ Roll Scene Today

Rock ‘n’ roll in Serbia today, eight and a half years after the 5 October over-throw, which was considered as a mile-stone for social changes and as a sort of “rock ‘n’ roll revolution”, is even deeper un-derground than it was under the rule of Slobodan Milosevic. Whether it is because of piracy, lack of understanding, lack of good composers, lack of money, or maybe because of financial power of that “other”, never illustrated, turbo folk scene. Rock ‘n’ roll has been pushed to the margins of soci-ety, and left in the hands of their enthusiasts in the last couple of years. The example of a well-known Belgrade band “Eyeburn” best illustrates the situation of the Serbian rock scene. Soon after the already mentioned 5 October, “Eyeburn” achieved, for Serbian circumstances, good commercial success but confronted with the inability to progress in an existing environment, the band soon ceased to exist. Their frontman is building up his European career, the drum-mer plays in Lepa Brena’s band, the bass player gave up music, and the guitar player performs with the cult underground metal band “Ozmi Patak Di”. The only possi-ble choices for rock musicians in Serbia to-day are leaving Serbia, giving up music, go-ing over to the ideologically other side (fi-nancially much more powerful) or going underground and starting all over again. Apart from Student Cultural Center (SKC) and the renovated Youth House (Dom Omladine), rock ‘n’ roll today can be heard in about ten small clubs in Belgrade and Novi Sad, while rock concerts in other cities occur rarely. What makes the situation even more difficult is the overwhelm-ing number of so called “tribute bands”. They play songs from worldwide known bands, supported by the radio sta-tion Beograd 202, and gain profit for the club owners unlike original composers who often have to pay for the organisation of their concerts. The situation is somewhat similar with the record labels. Bigger com-panies in Serbia hardly ever release records from the alternative artists. Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) releases rock records occasionally, but mostly from al-ready established bands (“DLM”, “mikro-projekt” etc.).

Students Theatre Play „FOUR SEASONS IN WALD“ (SPRING presented as Hip Hop part)
The alternative rock scene has almost completely transferred to the Internet and is operating in a sort of cyber basement, due to insufficient support especially over the last couple of years.

After cancelling rock shows on almost all TV stations as well as magazines Rock Express and OK Magazin, articles about alternative bands can occasionally be read in Bilic and city guides (Bilic Cab, City Magazin, Rockshop and Singlomagazin Weekly), whereas rock music videos are shown only on MTS and TV Metropolis. The alternative rock scene has therefore almost completely diminished supporting bands by buying their CDs (and cassettes long time ago).

Music as a Communication

Students’ projects within the Management of Cultural and Artistic Projects course

If we think about the music as a way of communication then we may reach a conclusion that one of the forces with the most powerful influence on creating of any kind of art is the power of art to communicate throughout the world. Art is language understandable everywhere in the world. It overcomes religious boundaries, cultural heritage, race and gender.

By Sanja Petricic, Assistant Professor Faculty of Media and Communications

While studying at the Juilliard School in New York, I had the opportunity to meet with the concept of connecting several arts into one project, i.e. with the making of multimedia projects. The Juilliard School has three divisions: drama, dance and music. Each division has its own educational plan and programme for students, but the interdisciplinary cooperation is well developed.

What is a dance without music, opera without acting or acting without movement? Interdisciplinary cooperation is more and more the represented model of studying at Juilliard, because students have the opportunity to learn about ideas and interpretation of different performance arts.

A very significant part of educational plan and programme is interdisciplinary cooperation, during which dance students take acting and singing classes, drama students take dance and singing classes (and later implement their acquired knowledge in their performance in various musicals), and music students attend acting and dancing classes. The programme also encompasses cooperation between composers and choreographers courses, aimed at connecting the composer, instrumentalist’s and dancer’s talent through projects performed once a month in the prestigious Alice Tully Hall.

Interdisciplinary cooperation also appears through student’s own initiatives, such as composers who are composing music for contemporary plays, dancers who are performing in opera and ballet.

By acquiring experience in this way through interdisciplinary cooperation, students have the opportunity to be acquainted with different concepts of interpretation of all performance arts.

Upon returning from America, I started my pedagogical career at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade in 2006, where I made the educational plan and programme for the course called Management of Cultural and Artistic Projects. I wanted to enable students to make, organise and realise projects involving classical music through this course, and to present them to the Belgrade audience. The idea was to present classical music in a new and creative way, and students to acquire basic theoretical knowledge in arts management, which would later be used in the practical work of designing and realisation of projects.

We have managed to realise fifteen projects so far, out of which several were realised in Dom Kultura Studentski Grad (Campus Cultural Center). One such project was realised in the Office of Cultural Development gallery, Students’ Cultural Center and children’s theatre Possitance Pazz.

While I was working on multimedia projects with students, I came to the conclusion that it is very important to work on developing young people’s creativity and to enable them as much work on this kind of projects as possible, so they could get better acquainted with art in an unshooled manner.
Having been driven crazy from too much “history” and “double standards,” overexposed to political propaganda and having experienced a lot in life, an average Serb is inclined to see a “plot” and a hidden agenda in almost anything. Therefore Public Relations (PR) is some kind of a novelty that should convince us that something is good for us but is actually not in our best interest. On the one side, PR managers are considered to be manipulators, people from the shadows that make crucial decisions and govern our fate. On the other side, we tend to simplify which we do not understand so many perceive PR managers as “parasites” who do not really do anything useful. Executive Director of Communication Services in Erste Bank Serbia Andrea Brhaklic says that the public perception of the PR profession is such that most people see PR managers as “pretty blonds speaking the lines learned by heart.” This attitude, Brhaklic says, stems from lack of understanding of the basics of the profession.

Thus, the mission of this course is to give students valuable experience in art management through practical work, and thus connecting with students from other faculties, artists (amateurs as well as professional artists), and cultural institutions. If we think about the music as a way of communication then we may reach a conclusion that one of the forces with which we have to deal with art in our everyday life is the Public Relations (PR). And MBAs in PR give students valuable experience in art management through practical work, and thus connecting with students from other faculties, artists (amateurs as well as professional artists), and cultural institutions.

The transition process carries in itself a powerful potential for public disagreement. PR managers are challenged to identify it, lessen its effect, rationalise it, and work toward resolving it to help create understanding within the environment in which businesses operate.

Public Relations in Serbia

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Pretty Blonds Speaking the Lines Learned by Heart

It is clear that PR activities do not deserve such a reputation. It is a job that requires a significant amount of work and creativity. In essence, public relations cannot be done by copy/paste templates and it also involves tough decision making. In 2008, the Public Relations Society of Serbia commissioned an online survey called “PR Profession in Serbia” on the state of affairs within the profession. The survey involved 134 public relations offices employed by companies, organisations, and PR and marketing agencies. Out of total number of PR employees in companies and public organisations, 34 percent were not hired as PR professional but were transferred from another post within the company. Thus, over one third of people working in PR have not been properly educated for the job. In majority of cases, this happened as a result of re-organisation of companies that caused some job posts to disappear (like Social Standard Officers or All-National Security Officers). While this does not necessarily prove to be the reason for the bad image of PR profession in Serbia this fact points out that not enough importance is being given to the profession of public relations.

34 percent of PR employees were not hired as PR professionals but were transferred from another post.

On the other hand, public relations is a well-paid job with 72 percent of PR officers in professional PR agencies and 68 percent working in other companies state that they are very satisfied. According to the survey, PR professionals typically have high salaries in comparison to Serbian standards - 36 percent of interviewees employed by companies and 43 percent working for agencies make over 70.000 RSD (around 700 EUR) per month.

By Milena Beatovic, Student, FMK

Students attending this course are going through different development stages of a project, from creation through to realisation, and what gives me joy is seeing their persistence, assiduity and enthusiasm. Thus, the mission of this course is to give students valuable experience in art management through practical work, and thus connecting with students from other faculties, artists (amateurs as well as professional artists), and cultural institutions.

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A great number of interviewees express a desire to keep their job and to improve their skills through advanced training. Only 12 percent would like to change their work post. Among the skills needed for the successful PR professional, at the top of the list are creativity and the ability of the PR employee to identify the cause of the problem and the solution.

Obviously, interviewed PR experts very much like and appreciate their job and consider it to be important and creative. Nevertheless, they are aware that the public does not have a good opinion of their profession, as 54 percent of them, according to the survey, consider the biggest problem of their line of work to be “lack of understanding of the importance of public relations in society in general”.

Over one third of people working in PR have not been properly educated for the job.

To ease the process of transition and to consider all successful entrepreneurs to be tycoons and all successful projects or wrong ideas. The core of PR is not in building “Potemkin villages”. The development of PR will depend on the development of society as a whole, and especially on economic development. PR will not solve the global economic crisis, but they can help good projects get public support and not get shunned out of misunderstanding and resistance. In hard times that are coming everyone needs good ideas and support for their implementation.
O n a cold winter day in December 2002, the Director of Agence France Presse (AFP) for Eastern Europe visited the offices of a private news agency BGNES in Sofia. The agency had no heating and people were working at their desks dressed in winter jackets. An unpleasant meeting about the agency’s late payments to AFP turned into a conversation about the future plans for BGNES and the business model that the agency is using. At that moment the BGNES owner understood that practicing journalism is one thing, but running a successful business is something entirely different.

BGNES News Agency was established in 2001 by Lyubcho Neshkov, a Bulgarian journalist. After the post-1990 democratic changes in Bulgaria, he worked for several years in the newspaper Standard followed by five years at the Bulgarian National Television. During those five years, Neshkov was a war correspondent for the Bulgarian National Television with two years spent in Bosnia and Herzegovina and three years spent in Kosovo. After returning from his assignment in June 1999, when NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) forces entered Kosovo, he felt he has been changed as a person, as a journalist, and as a human being.

At the same time, he felt that the media house he was working for, Bulgarian National Television became too small for him. In 2001, he decided to leave the television and start his own agency.

The idea for the agency was born during Neshkov’s time as a war reporter in the 1990s when he saw the work of agency journalists and their ability to send the news out efficiently as soon as they received it. On the other hand, he as a correspondent always had to wait for his stories to be reviewed, approved and broadcast on the news at 18:00 or 20:00.

When BGNES first opened its doors its business model was entirely based on a model copied from the big world news agencies. This soon proved to be a mistake due to the lack of resources and the capabilities agencies in Bulgaria have compared to these large agencies. Therefore, the copied business model presented many problems for the agency during 2002. Everything Neshkov owned, personal as well as family possessions, he was forced to sell so the agency could acquire some money to pay for the people working there.

The old business model was completely changed in 2003 when Neshkov decided to incorporate photos, audio, and video in the services the agency offered. He understood that one can sometimes be late with sending out news, but if they are packaged well, sold well, and are of high quality then one can have a successful, profitable news agency. The first five years were financially very difficult for BGNES. The hardest part was being unable to pay on time for news to the agencies Reuters and Agence France Presse. The second problem for BGNES was the inability to pay their journalists well. This created additional difficulties, because not having money for salaries can mean not having good journalists, which affects the quality, the image, and the authority of the agency. The new business model also called for establishment of a photo agency. That was a risky investment, because high-quality photo technology although necessary, is very expensive. Three months after implementing the new business model, the agency was in a position to return the money invested in the necessary changes. After that, a snowball effect, things started rolling. Soon after, BGNES started with the use of local correspondents throughout Bulgaria, due to the lack of event coverage in the provinces in favour of events taking place in Sofia.

All the good work BGNES has done since its founding can be credited to the good team at the agency. Neshkov is a journalist, well known amongst his colleagues, so even though there were times when his product was not of the best quality, his colleagues, journalists, understood his situation. Many of them signed the contract agreeing to work for BGNES and that helped the agency tremendously.

The BGNES team has been through some changes since the founding years. In the beginning they employed many young people, but then Neshkov decided to implement some changes. That was a risky experiment but he was confident that he could not work only with young people anymore because in journalism, like in every other profession, practical experience is necessary. Therefore, he started taking people who previously worked for the state agency. Other people BGNES employs came from the state radio that always had a good, strong tradition. Recent recapitulation of employees showed that BGNES has changed 95 percent of the people working at the agency since its beginnings. All of them are journalists with many years of experience and are very well known in their profession. At the agency in Sofia, there are about 70 employees including journalists, editors, administrative staff, an accounting department and Neshkov. In the provinces the agency has around 40 photographers and journalists, as well as 10 cameramen. They work under the con-
Bulgaria. Subscribers’ interests change and from abroad, Bulgarian embassies abroad, as ones. Customers also include many region-
Sofia that is all nine or ten daily newspapers, take around 80 percent of BGNES news. In customers today are media houses, which everyone knows it is BGNES. When someone talks about ‘News by SMS’ characteristic of BGNES, so even today, news, etc. According to Neshkov, this type of business depends on the audience. This is a model that currently works very well for BGNES. However, when large events can take place or when the big news story breaks, the agency sends their correspondents to the location. For example, in 2008 BGNES covered five to six events in Serbia, among them the elections and the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. In addition, they also covered the development of events in Kosovo. On top of this, their correspondents covered events other than political ones. They have also continued the lifestyle that are garnering increased interest from the audience. For example, a video of a Madonna’s concert in Montenegro was watched by 80,000 visi-
tors to the BGNES website in only three hours, while presidential elections in Serbia had the audience of just 1,002 peo-
ple in 3 days. Those are substantially dif-
ferent numbers. This shows how much such business depends on the audience. As Lyudmila Neshkov explains, “BGNES is the only 100 percent private and 100 percent commercial agency and we must know what people expect from us, because if we don’t know what people expect from us then we cannot offer them what it is in demand.”

Obviously, for this type of business it is also very important to have good IT specialists because a photo cannot take too long to download or a video cannot stop every three seconds, because no one will ever come back to your website. Material has to be of good quality and it has to download quickly. The agency covers 10 percent of the infor-
mation required by protocol and related to the work of the parliament, president and political parties, but they also have to cover other areas of interest such as health, so-

Een even today, when someone talks about ‘News by SMS’ everyone knows it is BGNES. The agency has customers in every bigger or medium-sized city in Bulgaria. Its largest customers today are media houses, which take around 80 percent of BGNES news. In Sofia that is all nine or ten daily newspapers, one state-owned TV station and four private ones. Customers also include many region-

Bulgarian human rights organisations are engaged in an effort to block the introduction of laws that give far-reaching surveillance powers to the Bulgarian authorities - powers that threaten freedom of the press. So far they have scored a couple of impressive victories, but the fight is not over yet.

The adoption of EU directive 2000/21 in March 2006 caused an outcry among media freedom organisations. Introduced to ease police investigations into terrorism and organised crime, it obliged EU member states to pass laws ensuring that telecommunications providers store - for a period of up to two years - information on the date, duration and user identity of all electronic telecommunications traffic they handle.

The directive recognizes and protects the professional secrecy of defence lawyers, priests and parliamentarians, but no such protection is provided for journalism - a profession for which confidentiality is also a must.

The Bulgarian government transposed the directive into its domestic law in January 2008, through the promulgation of Regulation 40, issued by the State Agency for Information Technologies and Communication and the Ministry of the Interior. It was not long, however, before Bulgarian human rights organisations realised that Regulation 40 went beyond even the controversial requirements stipulated in the EU directive, thereby for greater power to conduct surveillance upon the authorities and raising serious concerns about their freedom to do their personal data.

“One of the paragraphs [of Article 1 of the regulation] gave the Ministry of the Interior direct access, through a computer, to all the data that were really very bad,” says Alexander Kurashis, head of the legal office at the Access Information Programme (AP), the organisation that in 2008 appealed against Regulation 40 at the Supreme Administrative Court.

Another paragraph gave the criminal investigative authorities access to the files, and the third paragraph removed all the security safeguards, such as those in other cases that could be accessed on the basis of a written request,” continued Kurashis.

AP’s appeal resulted in the overturning in December 2008 of all three disputed paragraphs of the regulation, the Supreme Administrative Court finding that they contravened Articles 1, 3 of the Constitution and Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Basically, the Court interpreted [both the Constitution and the European Convention of Human Rights] Rules require precise grounds on which data can be accessed (including judicial review); requests for data must not enough without specifying what information is sought and how long it may be retained; and power that threaten freedom of the press. So far they have scored a couple of impressive victories, but the fight is not over yet.

The potential of the authorities to access to telecommunications data was exposed before the Supreme Administrative Court returned 
and not having extra money, but enjoying financial security, right now is not unemployment, but cor-

Unfortunately, many states in South-Eastern Europe are following suit. As political restrictions remain in place, the media have been trying to find new ways to make money. They have used these laws to uncover the identity of internet users expressing opinions on blogs.

Unfortunately, despite the Supreme Administrative Court’s victory, the regulation and use of telecommunications data applied in a very bad way. The Court ordered the government to remove the violations, but the authorities continued making changes to the law.

On 23 January 2009, AP were again involved in defending off an attempt by the Ministry of the Interior to see the three overturned paragraphs of Legislation 40 turned into law - this time the ministry attempted to persuade a parliamentary committee to introduce amendments corresponding to the provisions into a draft law on electronic communications.

The committee decided not to adopt the provisions in the bill. However, if the law is passed, the powers that have been granted to the authorities can be used again. They did, however, make changes that weaken safeguards contained in the original EU directive - such as the requirement that all data be deleted automatically after the 24-month retention period.

Given these developments, AP for one, intends to take up the battle further. “Their amendments have already been adopted by the committee, but they are not yet voted on in the second reading, so our intention is to continue with this,” says Kurashis. Their success for so far looks good enough that their efforts will pay off.
“Vienna is Special” - City’s Communications and Public Relations Philosophy

By Selma Koris, SEEMO

The City of Vienna is considered to have one of the best functioning city administrations worldwide. Its complex political and administrative structure, counting around 62,000 employees, gives city’s managing body feeling of a small 20th century city. Vienna is divided into 23 residential districts, each ruled by the District Chairman. The City Administration is subdivided into eight Administrative Groups headed by an Executive City Councillor overseeing housing, education, finances, health care, cultural affairs, and environment, among others. These Administrative Groups comprise a total of 70 Municipal departments.

The Press and Information Services (PID), the central communication office or Communications Centre of the City of Vienna is a home to vibrant and innovative activities. PID is working in close cooperation with research promoters and other municipal departments. Communication Centre is the central editorial office for all City of Vienna media. This is also the place in charge of knowledge management that includes market research, trend research, and Customer Relationship Management. Led by the Head of Press and Information Services, Fred Vavrousek, its list of tasks is extensive and includes media cooperation, public relations work for the city, image building and advertising work in Austria and abroad, dissemination of information to the public, support for print media publications, and support and training for the department staff. There are about 105 people working for the Communication Centre, including 20 press spokespersons for eight Executive City Councillors, including the Mayor Michael Häupl.

The City’s communications work is organized in such a way that the press spokesperson of each city politician is employed at the Press and Information Services department. Since, these press spokespersons are working very closely with politicians in different departments, they meet once a week to discuss and coordinate their activities, press conferences, and events.

The City of Vienna bases its communication and PR work on a Contemporary Communications Philosophy, which boils down to three main messages: get into dialogue with public, present customized information, and do the city branding.

The city branding aspect of communication philosophy started in the year 2000 with the goal of having targeted audience groups associate a project or a campaign with the City of Vienna. The aim was to develop a comprehensive tool to convey Vienna’s image, but also to strengthen the city’s corporate culture and improve internal communication and contacts among the city personnel. This led to a corporate umbrella branding covering all 70 municipal departments. This branding effort includes corporate design, corporate identity, and corporate communication. According to Andrea Leitner, using corporate design and corporate logos for various city services allows workers performing these services to feel more likely as part of a larger city community. Also, for the residents it is now easier to associate services being performed by the city with the City of Vienna.

When this corporate identity project started in 2000, the city printed an internal publication called Communication Handbook targeted at employees of Vienna’s 70 municipal departments. Communication philosophy is strengthened by the comprehensive training programme offered to PID employees. Training is offered as basic, intermediate and advanced, and the spectrum of topics covers all aspects of PID’s work including advertising, public relations, event management, press releases, media relations, and communication strategies.

Examples of city’s communication philosophy are found in various communication outlets used to promote its work. One of many success stories for the city is its website located at www.vienova.at. Designing this website was a challenging project due to the amount of information and document that needed to be presented in the electronic format and made available online. The site currently consists of 43,000 pages and 25 million page impressions per month. It is also available in English, but this version offers limited amount of information compared to its German language counterpart. The City of Vienna also owns 18,000 apartment buildings (Gemeindebau) and provides wall newspapers within the entrances to these buildings for their residents. New project in development includes TV sets/screens inside these city buildings that will be used to inform residents about what is going on in their neighbourhood and the city.

In addition, an effective way for the city to communicate with its employees is an internal website called City Hall TV, a portal for internal broadcast, shown within the intranet, with the content primarily including weekly presentations of new city projects via videos.

The City of Vienna regularly distributes a variety of publications, external, aimed at the media and general public, as well as internal, published for the city employees.

The Official Gazette of the City of Vienna, Amtesblatt, is published weekly every Thursday in 6500 copies. It provides information about the meetings of administrative councils and committees, and it is also used to give notifications, announce official visits, inform about regulations, planning projects, building licenses, etc. This publication is distributed mostly to businesses and business owners. All official announcements by the city also have to be published in the Wiener Zeitung for the general public.

Vienna’s monthly info magazine, Wien.at, is distributed to all 950,000 households in Vienna. It is being delivered by the post, but the electronic overview of the most interesting articles is also available online.

In 2006 the city started with the lifestyle and special interest publications in order to target communication to specific groups such as kids, seniors, animal lovers, and others. Under the motto “Providing information exactly at the time when people need it”, these magazines are published four times a year and are for free. Included in this group of publications are magazines City & Life (for young people between the ages of 10 and 16), Fernsen & Eindienen (devoted to research and science developments in Vienna), Hund, Katz & Co (all about pets), Kinder & Co (for children up to ten years old and their parents), Leben & Freude (for senior citizens), and Web & Stadt (for migrants). These publications are available mostly by subscription, but copies can also be picked up at the Vienna City Hall.

International visitors to Vienna are welcomed by a bilingual publication Enjoy Vienna that comes out 12 times a year on 16 pages with ten pages devoted to the City of Vienna. Magazine covers places to visit and events to attend in Vienna, and it is available at various visitor entry points such as the airport, train and bus stations, and hotels. One of the new projects for international community in Vienna is publication of brochures in English.
Another aspect of the city’s comprehensive PR strategy is its well-developed international program that includes partners such as Vienna Business Agency, the Vienna Economic Chamber, and Vienna Tourist Board.

The advertising work of PID includes many innovative campaigns to emotionalize diverse target groups with clever approaches, such as those against discrimination based on people’s fear of immigrants or the one promoting building of the thermal power plant in Vienna that was opposed by the majority of city residents for a very long time. The campaigns are developed by advertising agencies in consultation with PID staff and can sometimes cause quite a stir among city residents, providing a testament to their effectiveness. One such example was an attempt to advertise the fact that Vienna’s green areas cover about 50 percent of the city’s overall territory. The campaign was launched during one of the political election periods and with the sign reading: “Green: 50 percent. Vienna has more green areas than most big cities.”

Now, Vienna residents knew what their city was trying to communicate to them and the campaign turned out to be one of the most memorable ones, not an easy task considering the number of other commercial advertisements the city has to compete with every day.

Bearing in mind the complexity of city administration and the intricate coordination work needed to bring projects and campaigns to fruition, it is little wonder that the City of Vienna and its Press and Information Services serve as a model for other European cities on how to run successful public relations platforms and how to stay engaged in good communication with its residents, neighbours, partners and customers.

Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity

How the City of Vienna communicates with immigrant communities

One probably little known fact among the residents of Vienna is that about 500,000 people, or 32 percent of the Vienna residents, have another country of birth. Similarly, about 310,000 residents of Vienna have foreign citizenship. These numbers are a reason for Vienna to take its work with immigrant communities very seriously. The department that works with immigrant communities in Vienna is the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity and it is one of 15 municipal departments. This department works closely together with the Press and Information Services, as both departments acknowledge the importance of good communication practices with local immigrant communities.

The department for Integration and Diversity has about 15 employees, speaking 23 languages and coming from 14 different countries. Central department office houses the Press Department and in addition to two other centres in the East and the West part of the city charged with catering districts in these areas of Vienna. Each centre has eight to ten employees speaking different languages.

The Department’s website is available in main languages of the largest immigrant communities (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Turkish and English). According to Goran Novakovic who is responsible for coordinating the work of the department, the largest immigrant community in general is a Yugoslavian (125,000), and the largest among those in the Serbian community (89,000), Bosnian (16,000), and Croatian (16,000); Turkish community in Vienna counts 49,200 people.

The Department for Integration and Diversity provides information and orientation for immigrants through the programs (among others): “Start Wien” which is a special coaching service for every new inhabitant of Vienna and it is available for those residents who obtained their living permit for Austria. The program offers services as diverse as providing a Vienna education booklet and the Vienna language voucher worth 300 EUR, helping with finding a suitable German integration course, offering recommendations for counselling centres, finding a job, getting your qualifications recognized, etc., discussing basic questions (registering your child for school, compulsory schooling, etc.), and providing information on a variety of other relevant topics.

The program also offers orientation sessions about housing options in Vienna and the minority of immigrants. As Novakovic points out: “Orientation sessions are also opened to ‘old’ immigrants, not just new, so at 40-41...10 people attending lectures, 20 of them are there to get a stamp and another 20 because they have interest in the topic.”

The department has good connections to many immigrant organizations in Vienna, which have an opportunity to come to every event organized for immigrants and provide useful information.

For example, all immigrant organizations were invited by the department to the launch of the Start Wien program and were asked to advertise and promote the program in immigrant communities in which they work. These connections and cooperation with different immigrant organizations exist for 15 years, and are helping to establish good connections to all immigrant communities.

The department also has connections and contacts to immigrant mother-tongue media such as press (newspapers), TV, radio, and internet. They provide these media organizations with information on what is new with department programs and different actions they take in Vienna. Immigrant media outlets are interested in promoting this information, often at their own initiative and without paid advertisement. They also frequently attend press conferences organized by the department, and use their “official” positions to extend the department’s communication and cooperation.

Important websites for immigrants in Vienna include www.startwien.at (available in all languages), and www.integration.wien.at. These sites contain the most important information for starting a new life in Vienna. Information focuses on finding German courses, finding housing and employment in Vienna, and other important information for starting a new life here.

Important information resource for immigrants is the magazine Welt & Staat, a joint publication of the Press and Information Services, the Integration, Citizenship and Registry Offices, and the Department for Integration and Diversity. It is available free of charge, and published mainly in German language with short excerpts in languages of main immigrant communities. It is available in Vienna, Sale & Stadt comes out every three months. According to Goran Novakovic, the immigrants are the special target group for this publication, as they always look for information on what is going on in Vienna, city activities or any new regulations coming up. Such publications are available in local immigrant offices and immigrant organizations and are a good resource for new immigrants to stay informed on what is going on in the city and their community.

In addition, the department joined with the above-mentioned partners to bring Multilingual-Glosso-Code of the City of Vienna to residents, translators or counselors who need to translate the city administration terminology from German to Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Turkish or English.
State of the Media

Axel Schindler, the CEO of the Newspaper Group Bulgaria, shares his views on the print media landscape in Bulgaria and the daily newspaper 24 Hours.

By Selma Kotev, SEEMO

Schindler: The already-mentioned competitive patterns influence not only the field of the daily print media, where more than 14 newspapers with national coverage exist with a combined print-run of more than 400,000 copies, but also the segment of the weekly and monthly publications. Despite the inevitable print-run drops and the existing of new titles and free newspapers, our dailies, Daily Truth and 24 Hours continue to defend their position as market leaders with a combined market share of more than 50 percent. Many of the dailies are trying to support higher print-runs with additional products like DVDs and books.

Market leaders, in their respective segments, are many of our weekly publications: 168 Hours, AutoBild, etc. There are many licensed newcomers in the magazine sector and the competition is growing especially in the categories Women’s Interest (more than 20 different publications) and Home Design Magazines.

Please tell us a little bit about the daily 24 Hours. When and how was it founded, and in which different aspects about it distinguishing it from other daily newspapers.

Schindler: 24 Hours was launched on 18 April 1991 by the Press group “168 Hours”. With regard to the very successful and profitable 168 Hours weekly papers, the publisher made the logical decision to issue a daily newspaper as well. 24 Hours was the newspaper that introduced modern professional standards to the Bulgarian press after the 1989 change in political landscape, such as the clear separation of facts from comments, verification of information by using at least two independent sources, mandatory provision of news space to aggravated parties, etc.

Due to these completely new principles in the post-1989 newspaper publishing in Bulgaria, and because of its lively language and informative headlines the 24 Hours achieved an enormous success. Within a few weeks it has become the largest-circulated and authoritative newspaper in Bulgaria. This successful model pushed the other dailies to take these principles as well.

The shortest description of the 24 Hours concept is provided in a sentence under the newspaper’s masthead - “A Daily for the News as They Are.”

It is very important for 24 Hours to present rich and pluralistic commentators, to seek different, interesting viewpoints on events, to aim at an attractive way of developing and presenting current topics and investigations, and to comply with the reader’s needs providing useful information regarding people’s day to day life.

However, there is one more point to be highlighted - the 24 Hours’ initiatives of public importance, which are invariably demanded in target group research as the most essential part of the newspaper’s trademark. The newspaper involves its readers and the society in general, often in cooperation with electronic media, into attractive and important projects and enterprises.

Who was the owner of dailies such as 24 Hours and Daily Truth before WAZ took over? How did these dailies change since WAZ took over the ownership?

Schindler: The first private Press group (“168 Hours”) was the owner of 24 Hours before WAZ entered the Bulgarian print market in 1996. In 1997 WAZ brought a minority share of the publishing group “Media Holding”, which was owned by several journalists of Truth. Later on WAZ became a majority shareholder.

WAZ introduced a successful economic model, which guarantees the economic independence of the publications, the freedom of speech and reduced the possibilities for external interference in editorial work. It is very important for the publications in our group to have a strong commitment to the ethical and quality standards of journalism. We will also support these processes through our own Journalism School, which was established in October 2008.

Going back to Bulgarian print media landscape, what is your take on the problem of anonymous journalism in Bulgaria? This issue was brought up frequently at the South East Europe Media Forum held in Sofia in November 2008.

Schindler: We have already a number of absolutely unprecedented cases of anonymous journalism, solutions to which have yet to be sought.

Looking back at a recent case at hand, we can see that it was from the forum of a very popular site that a rumour of problems in a certain bank spread out and caused almost a run on the bank. Afterwards a discussion on the responsibility of forum administrators started, since this media can easily be used for getting even in business and political fights, for discrediting competitors, etc.

In the last case we had, some completely unfounded, however sensational stories about politicians, businessmen, etc. got reprinted by non-anonymous sites, with reference to the anonymous one. Sensational stories about politicians, businessmen, etc. got reprinted by non-anonymous sites, with reference to the anonymous one. Sensational stories about politicians, businessmen, etc. got reprinted by non-anonymous sites, with reference to the anonymous one.

Perhaps this problem just reflects the situation with professional and ethical journalism standards in Bulgaria? How would you describe the Bulgarian print media environment? What is the quality of print media in general?

Schindler: The print media market in Bulgaria is facing the same global issues, which affect most of the print media in the world. The print media compete with other information channels - news have been covered in an increasingly professionally manner at the Bulgarian private television stations with national coverage in recent years, and online journalism is developing rapidly.

The Bulgarian media environment begets a highly competitive market approach, especially on the daily newspaper market, but also unequal chances for the competitors due to the several factors. First, the financial background of some publications is unclear. The audience has been constantly spoiled with add-on products for free in recent years. Two free daily papers have been launched in September 2008. On the other hand VAT on print products has not been reduced, which affects the prices in a low-income country and is still important for those publishers who are willing to pay taxes.

Second, all of the news formats compete with reality-shows, tuning the audience to a spectacle and entertainment mode. Also, “yellow press” weeklies are flourishing.

Third, the economic and political interests of several print media’s owners are a natural restraint on providing information of public interest in its completeness.

Nevertheless print media still have the opportunity to establish themselves as trusted and deeply focused sources, where more details and an analytical approach is needed. Through online and mobile phone extensions of the trademarks print media are faster than ever. In compliance with these developments we launched the NEWSMOBILE-service, the mobile sites of Daily Truth and 24 Hours at the end of October 2008.

What is the current situation with the print media market in Bulgaria in terms of the number of publications available, circulation numbers, readership structure, etc.

Interesting facts about 24 Hours

- Poll’s data show that 24 Hours has a particularly great number of readers among the younger audience and people in active age living in the cities.

- In 2004 24 Hours developed in close partnership with a team of university instructors and sociologists the first Bulgarian media rating of the universities in the country using European criteria - a ranking similar to those ones made by well established western publications.

- On tens of thousands motor vehicles in Bulgaria there are the 24 Hours stickers, distributed during initiatives aiming at reducing road accidents, with the following appeals: “Drive wisely, come home safe!”, “If you have drunk, come off, I want to go home alive!”, “No TIRism in my days off!” (for limiting heavy trucks “TIR” on the road during weekends).

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Esad Hecimovic is the first one in the new Danusii-SEEMO Edition “Investigative Journalists”.

Esad Hecimovic was born in Zenica in 1963. Studied philosophy and sociology in Sarajevo. Worked for different printed and electronic media in former Yugoslavia, today’s Bosnia and abroad. As co-author and author, published the books “Quiet, they are killing” (Tiše, ubijaju) about the genocide over Bosnian Muslims in the area of Prijedor and Kosara (Preprint, Zenica 1992); and “How they sold Srebrenica and saved the power” (Kako su prodali Srebrenicu i sacuvali vlast), special edition of magazine BH Dani, Sarajevo, September 1998.
The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia

by Brigitte M. Holzner

The book builds on primary research through interviews with women from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, and secondary data in the form of texts and visual materials (cartoons, caricatures and photographs) from the media during the 1990s, in order to confirm similar representations of women and sexist violence. In addition, this has been made possible by the publication of new literature and newspaper articles from the Balkans in the wake of the genocide in Bosnia.

Zarkov shows how female and female bodies were used symbolically for the construction of meanings around gender, ethnicity, nation and sexuality, of ethnicity, nation and the state. She asserts that there were two wars - a media war and war after the Second World War in order to confirm similar representations of women and sexist violence.

In this discussion, in Yugoslavia, sexuality and reproduction as such was dealt with in different ways in the media. In some cases, the author compares how the same incidence of rape was portrayed by different media and thus reveals the political message behind the interpretation. For journalists, this book should be obligatory reading, making them more careful to identify the sex victims they are covering and the metaphors they are using, and making them aware of the responsibility they have in contributing to peace and non-violence instead of hatred, violence, and war.

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Zarkov asserts that the construction of the de-nationalization of Yugoslavia was the beginning portrayed as a civil war, but the violence was not just internally, as well as outside the country as an ‘ethnic’ war. Ethnic nationalism in a country of the former Yugoslavia resulted in a civil war, with the exception of ‘ethnic’ war through force and violence as consequence, in order to make the nationhood of ‘pure’ race, cultural and sexual violence about 100,000 people were killed, 600,000 were internally displaced - where the victims of terrorizing the others, of establishing dominance, and making sure that the act of offending would prevent retribution. But without the media that reported such acts of sexual violence in the form of statistics, pictures and cartoons, the link between ethnicity and gender would not have been successful. The story about these stories of gender and ethnicity carried by the press is a tool of creating and not yet, the body is also a construct, a product of visualization sustained by meanings.

The book demonstrates accuracy in the collection, selection, and use of records, sensitivity to language, linguistic expressions and meanings, and ingenuity in the interpretation of visual material (cartoons, images).

This book demonstrates accuracy in the collection, selection, and use of records, sensitivity to language, linguistic expressions and meanings, and ingenuity in the interpretation of visual material (cartoons, images). It is also a rich source of information for historians providing them with many pieces for the puzzle of the break-up of Yugoslavia. For journalists, Dubravka Zarkov’s book should be obligatory reading, making them more careful to identify the sex victims they are covering and the metaphors they are using, and making them aware of the responsibility they have in contributing to peace and non-violence instead of hatred, violence, and war.
They reported on the so-called "Bulgarian community". In addition, readers are encouraged to give feedback, which is mainly positive.

The magazine covers various topics interesting to both Bulgarians living in Austria and German speakers interested in Bulgarian society and culture. From page stories always introduce portraits of immigrants who successfully integrated into Austria and its culture. They moved to Austria for mostly cultural reasons, like the scientist Ludmila Chicon, who was born in Bulgaria but raised and educated in Cuba. There she learned Spanish and Russian, and still cultivated her Bulgarian culture and language. After her studies in English and Spanish language and literature in London and Sofia, she started to work as translator in several embassies and was also teaching Bulgarian to diplomats. Two years after her move to Austria in 1987 she started her doctorate in philosophy. Now she is living and teaching Spanish at the University of Economics and Business in Vienna.

In one other magazine number, the editors interviewed Elia Trojovatz, a famous author who moved to Vienna in 2006. He was born in Bulgaria in 1965, but lived like Ludmila Chicon in different countries, that is to say in the former Yugoslavia, Italy, Kenya and Germany, where he studied law and ethnology. Nevertheless he decided to drop university and set up a publishing company. As a result of his writing he won the Book Fair Prize of Leipzig (Preis der Leipziger Buchmesse) in 2007 for his work The Collector of Worlds (Der Weltsammler), which also became an international bestseller.

Apart from the immigrants’ portraits, Bulgare in Österreich also focuses on different projects concerning intercultural exchange and communication. For example, they reported on the so-called European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and the ten-year long project youthSOUTH East Europe (2001-2011). According to the information on the project’s website http://youthSOUTH.de, youthSOUTH is a network for European SEETeens created by the intercultural centre in Vienna. The aim of the project is to establish better relationship between NGO leaders and youth workers and to develop successful network of non-governmental organisations between countries of western and eastern Europe, as well as support intercultural communication.

Bulgarians in Austria also promotes projects involving some local members of Bulgarian community. One example is the cultural project Paranguea, which has been created by the community called IDEA of society, a society for international development and enhancement of arts whose members want to promote intercultural exchange. With this in mind, artists involved in this project act as ambassadors of cultural heritage. By means of this cooperation, ideas for themes of current interest. Paranguea is financially supported by UNICEF. Apart from establishing close contacts, relationships with many artists and galleries are supported and furthermore extended. As a saying goes “We are most afraid of what we do not understand”, Paranguea is supposed to diminish such fear.

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Radio Bulgaria was founded in Ljubljana in 2004. It is still the first and only broadcast programme in Bulgarian and German language in Austria. The editorial staff, including Director Dunkov and Brigite Allerstorfer, broadcast on the first Saturday of every month from 18:00 to 19:00. The main motivation for its start was, for the most part, the lack of information about Bulgaria and its culture. Even if there some appeared, it was mainly one-sided.

In the interview, Zhurkov also mentions the effort to achieve better mutual understanding and therefore a better integration on the part of inhabitants with Bulgarian background. For this reason they write their articles bilingually as well. The articles are written by editors living in Austria, but also by correspondents, who are sending their reports from Bulgaria. The magazine is available at different firms, information centres or travel agencies, but also in restaurants like Pleson or Weinstudio in Vienna.

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The team thematically focuses on present, past and historical events in Bulgaria. This also includes Bulgarian culture and developments in southern Europe. In addition, Dimitar Dunkov presents his contribution about European civilisation. He is also creator of Radio Bulgaria- Linz and moderates the programme in the Bulgarian language. As a former lecturer at different universities, including the university in Vienna, he found his way to Austria. His theories concentrate on eastern and southern Slavic languages as well as their culture. Those interested can read about his career at http://dunkov.lausitzernet.com/. For Austrian or German listeners the programme goes with Brigite Allerstorfer, who finished her Slavonic and Bulgarian studies in Salzburg and has participated in projects of KulturKontakt Austria.

The radio programme is made up of three parts:

- Hello Landsmann (Hello Fellow), which applies to Bulgarian nature, people, religious communities and folklore.
- Hello Nachbarn (Hello Neighbour), which focuses on culture and on topics about the nearness to lands of Balkan.
- Duell und Judeln (Bargagues and Yodel), which elaborates on interrelations between Bulgaria and both Austria and Middle Europe.

Bulgarian and German periodicals and further scientific publications set ideas for themes of current interest. Contributions by Dunkov and Allerstorfer frame the broadcast, which is accompanied by Bulgarian and other Balkan lands’ folk music. The broadcast can be received via the internet at http://www.bam.at or on Mhz 105.2.

The information- and culture-magazine programme Brigada is broadcast on the Ö10 Channel by Bulgarian students living in Vienna. Ö10 is a non-commercial television channel that aims to complete the effort to achieve better mutual understanding and therefore a better integration between Austrian inhabitants with Bulgarian background. For this reason they write their articles bilingually as well. The articles are written by editors living in Austria, but also by correspondents, who are sending their reports from Bulgaria. The magazine is available at different firms, information centres or travel agencies, but also in restaurants like Pleson or Weinstudio in Vienna.

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Brigada, it primarily supports Bulgarian immigrants by keeping them informed about obtaining certificate of employment, scholarships for students, and so on. Apart from this, they also report about general cultural life in Bulgaria and of the Bulgarian community in Austria. Brigada content is also available on the internet at http://okto.tv/brigada/.

Also worth mentioning in this review is the cultural institute KulturKontakt- Haus Wittgenstein. As the information on the homepage http://www.haus-wittgenstein.at points out, the institute offers a physical space for exhibitions and events concerning Bulgarian culture, science and arts.

Recently they also increased the number of discussions, conferences and congresses held on the premises. Like the media scene, the institute also aims at better exchange and cultural interrelationship between Austrian inhabitants and the Bulgarian community. Almost all famous artists, authors or musicians, who visited Austria, presented their work in Haus Wittgenstein, which was renovated in autumn 2002. Visiting hours are Monday to Thursday from 10:00 to 12.00 but one can also book a tour.

Apart from media published in Vienna, there are also online platforms for students like www.bg-student.org where students mainly exchange information, but also contribute to discussions about Bulgarian culture in Austria. An interview with Aleksandar Iliev, a Bulgarian student of Economics, revealed that students also use the online discussion forum of the magazine Bulgaren in Österreich, available at http://www.bulgaren.org/forum/.

In the opinion of Ludmila Handjiska, Bulgarian students mainly support the media scene, but at the same time they notice a lack of information about Bulgaria. “This is for the most part blame of Bulgarian immigrants - there should be more advertisement or informative about Bulgaria”, says Ludmila.

Apart from the media created by the Bulgarian community in Vienna, one can also read newspapers and magazines, and receive radio and television programmes coming directly from Bulgaria. One such channel is Kanal 1, the national Bulgarian satellite channel, which also has a website that offers the most important news. One can also watch television programme. Another broadcast from Bulgaria is radio Horizon, which in Austria can be received via the internet at http://www.bg-horizon.org/.

The wide range of print media offer in Vienna includes daily and weekly newspapers as well as various publications. Bulgarian dailies that can be bought in Vienna include 24 Chase Daily, Sefa Daily, Monitor Daily, Stanant Daily, 7 Diit Sport, and Meridian Mach. Weeklies available in Vienna include Capital Weekly, 168 Chase Weekly, Politika Weekly, and Teul Weekly. Magazines selection includes Paralleli, Bisuk and Tema. Popular yellow press publications available in Vienna include Shock Show, Paparak, and Wunderrat.
The V1 “Dr. Erhard Busek-SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe” was presented to Brankica Stankovic in Vienna on 16 November 2006 by Dr. Erhard Busek former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, former Coordinator of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Chairman of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) and President of the European Forum Alpbach, and by the SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujoç.

Stankovic, born in October 1975 in Belgrade, Serbia, has been working as an editor for TV B92 in Belgrade since 1997. Her outstanding efforts in journalism have contributed towards a better understanding and the removing barriers between nations in Southeast Europe.

In the course of her work, Brankica Stankovic introduced new and improved standards of professionalism to Serbian journalism and has addressed in her TV show, The Insider (Insider), important issues that have been either concealed or sidelined by Serbian authorities. The Insider has attracted much attention and, as a consequence, the authorities have often resorted to launching investigations, pressing charges and issuing warrants based on the information presented in the show.

On this special occasion, Brankica Stankovic shared what motivates her as a journalist and as a person.

Who is Brankica Stankovic?

Stankovic: One completely normal person, I’m joking... I don’t like to talk about myself this way, so I really do not know what to say. Perhaps the more adequate answer would be that, in my opinion, it is the most important to be true to yourself in every sense.

They need to work on discovering the truth about everything that took place, because that is perhaps the only way to break with all the crimes that have happened in the past, so the future can be different and better.

Prior to The Insider you produced a broadcast about a cooler truck that sank in the Danube next to the town of Kladovo, Serbia. Can you tell us something about this case, what exactly happened and what were you able to discover?

Stankovic: That was the radio show back in 2001 when we actually uncovered two-year old state secret that, during bombing of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbian Republic Yugoslavia - SRJ) in 1999, bodies of Albanians from Kosovo were transported in cooler trucks to Serbia. We were able to convince witnesses of this terrible event to publicly talk about what happened and how the entire town of Kladovo lived for two years in a conspiracy not to reveal witnessing the cooler truck falling into the Danube full of bodies of children, women and men.

You are currently within a professional specialisation. How important is it for you to learn and improve in your work? Often times, journalists think they accomplished everything once their stories are published and do not feel the need for specialisation.

Stankovic: I think that constant improvement is needed in this type of work, and even more important is an ongoing exchange of experiences with colleagues from the region and the rest of Europe.

You have received “Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe”. What does this award mean to you?

Stankovic: The SEEMO Award is very important for me as well as the entire Insider team, because SEEMO is an organisation that promotes real values in journalism. In the last several years we have received numerous awards, so this one is additional proof we are doing important work, and of course, the obligation for us to do even better job.

How do you see the future of investigative journalism in Southeast Europe? What kind of challenges do you predict for you and your colleagues in the region?

Stankovic: Unfortunately, I think all countries in the region have similar problems to Serbia. I believe there are many journalists in this area who would like to do this kind of journalism, but simply have no possibilities. The fact is that today there are many people with different connections in this business. The survival of many media companies depends on the money of business people, the lack of adequate laws, and a good will of state representatives. Therefore, the investigative journalism is less and less popular. For example, if you work on a certain story, during investigation you will inevitably uncover names of people involved in something, who are, for example through advertising, financing the media company you work for. That is where, unfortunately, the story about investigative journalism ends.

That is the situation in Serbia and, I assume, in the region as well. We, The Insider team, have it somewhat easier because the media house we work for, B92, supports the type of journalism we do.
SEEMO Award for Human Rights presented to Spomenka Hribar

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

The 2004 “SEEMO Award for Human Rights” was presented to Spomenka Hribar on 12 December 2004 in Ljubljana by Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, at the event hosted by Joze Mermal, president and CEO of BTC company.

This year’s recipient, Spomenka Hribar, is a Slovenian journalist, writer and human rights advocate born in Belgrade in 1941. She received much publicity in the 1960s with her essay “The God and the Sin”, which critically exposed the post-war liquidation of Nazi collaborators by the communist regime. The essay described all liquidations as a crime, demanded an apology and emphasised the importance of public remembrance of these events, especially for purposes of national reconciliation. The essay was initially forbidden in the former Yugoslavia, then published three years later. The “SEEMO Award for Human Rights” is an annual award dedicated to International Human Rights Day, 10 December, and SEEMO has been presenting it since 2002.

Speaking at the award presentation in Ljubljana, Oliver Vujovic emphasized the importance of speaking openly, using certified facts and scientific studies, about the past and events in history, as well as the danger of fabricating history and presenting false claims under pressures of ideology, politics, nationalist tendencies or some other reason. “Unfortunately”, said Vujovic, “the past events in Former Yugoslavia showed that often times journalists, but also historians and school textbook writers, became part of a propaganda, instruments of politicians, certain ideologies or political parties, whether they did it purposefully or were not even aware they are doing it”.

Following the award presentation, Dr. Hribar talked about her life and work in a brief interview.

How would you best describe yourself?

Hribar: This is a difficult question, perhaps the most difficult of all. I can just describe what I do. I am mostly a housewife with two wonderful grandchildren, ages three and nine. That is the most beautiful part of my life, all in my family are luckily healthy and good people, and we understand one another very well. Otherwise, I am 68-years old and I am currently retired. I still write an article or a political analysis here and there, because the one who writes based on his or her conviction and conscience actually never counts on receiving an award, and never stops writing.

What was your strongest motivation to continue your struggle for the respect of human rights and ethical standards in all spheres of society, in spite of constant difficulties?

Hribar: The strongest motivation… I think it was the fact that I don’t tolerate bullying and humiliation of people… and my desire for things to change. My confidence with people, I think, led me to say and do something myself… at least and foremost for my own soul.

Which results of your struggle for the respect of minorities, gender equality, and tolerance in the society you live in are you the most proud of?

Hribar: You see, if you want to attain the respect of minorities, gender equality and tolerance in the society, you have to change the core of the social structure if it obstructs those human rights of any minority. Therefore, in our society it was necessary to change the authoritarian, even totalitarian, structure of society. That meant abolishing latent civil war that is typical for one-party systems. In that context was my first public controversy at the end of seventies.

My strongest influence on public and on politics itself was with my essay “Blame and Sin” (Blame and Sin, 1984), which was under an “embargo” for three years. In that essay I analysed the post-war elimination of the returned domestic fighters and civilians, and I asked for the merciful treatment for them. Not because they were fighters and collaborators but because they were human beings. The Boshevik-style government of that time eliminated them without fair trials and was hiding that crime for thirty plus years including the locations of their graves. I think that the mercilessness against those who are dead is the basis for any civilization. On a symbolic level this principle exists from the time of Antigone and onwards. The man became a man when he started burying his own dead. And of course, since we were not in peace with the dead, there was no peace among the living. Until today there are around 600 locations evidenced as possible graves, of course not only graves of Slovenians because post-war eliminations did happen on Slovenian ground but also to members of other Yugoslav nationalities. Relatives of those eliminated, who were mostly Catholics, because Catholic Church here collaborated with occupation forces, and Catholics in general were in Socialism treated as the second-class citizens. Other citizens who also opposed the power of one party received the same treatment. You see, the revelation of that crime and the taboo-style of hiding it is what, in our case, started destroying the totalitarian pyramid of those in power. As you know, the communist rule was based on the victory in the liberation struggle of the Second World War and the victory of revolution, which was presented as error-free and completely “pure”. The Communist party used that “purity” argument for its absolute, a priori legitimacy and legality of its rule. When the horrible, post-war elimination of tens of thousands people became a part of public consciousness, revolution was not innocent and “pure” anymore... and if it is not “pure” anymore, then the party has to legitimize its power in free elections, and they require participation of more parties. And that was the beginning of the end for the ethical, principle and political foundation of one-party system. Of course, on the level of practical advocacy for democracy there were many people, groups and movements asking for the end of one-party system and installing of democracy.

Going back to human rights of different minorities and underprivileged, in all democracies, and as here as well, there are many injustices and difficulties people face. Therefore, I still strive for removal of those injustices, of course mostly through my writing and public engagements.

What do you read in your free time? What kind of literature interests you? Do you have a hobby that occupies your free time?

Hribar: I read professional literature from the fields of philosophy, sociology, politics, as much as I can, because honestly, I have very little time for reading. From the rest of the literature, I like poetry the most. Sometimes also a crime novel...

What are you working on right now? Are you researching any new areas or preparing something for a publication?

Hribar: Yes, I am trying to write a study, an analysis of spiritual, totalitarian sequences in our history, which caused the civil conflict here during World War II. Those chapters are exclusive. Catholic Church here collaborated with occupation forces, and Catholics in general were in Socialism treated as the exclusive Catholics. Unfortunately the past events in the former Yugoslavia.

SEEMO AWARDS

Former recipients of the “SEEMO Award for Human Rights”

2002 - Christine von Kohl, editor-in-chief of the Vienna-based Balkan Südosteuropäischer Dialog magazine

2003 - Nebojša Pepov, founder of the Belgrade-based magazine Republika

2004 - Fatos Lubonja, an Albanian author

2006 - Abdulhalim Dede, a journalist and member of the Turkish-Muslim minority living in Western Thessaloniki, Greece.

resulting in the multi-party system. This would, of course, require the readiness on everyone’s part to live in tolerance with people whose ideological and political set-up is opposite of their own. I hope that with publication of such study, analyzing how the right side conditioned the reaction of the left, and vice-versa, there would be less possibility to, as is the case today, transfer responsibility always to the other side. Neither side is ready to justify its actions, to see itself and admit its share of responsibility for everything that happened. Still, today we can talk and write about it more openly. The graves are being revealed, accessible for visitors, grave stones are being erected and even the grand monument for those who were liquidated. In that sense, I can say that there is less and less transfer of guilt taking place and the “past” is somehow outside of the daily political fights. But I don’t know when and if I will finish this work because it is voluminous and I have very little time… and I am becoming a little bit tired of everything.

You are recipient of “SEEMO Award for Human Rights”. How much this award means to you?

Hribar: It means a lot to me, but I also feel humble because on the territory covered by SEEMO there are many journalists and media people who deserve this award. I feel especially honoured because this award was previously given to my long-time friend Dr. Neksija. Papos, who gave me support 35 years ago and who, almost single-handedly publishes the magazine Republika, and through his analysis and commentators keeps open at least one window of light shining from human and scientific intelligence and mutual tolerance, everything we think of when we say “European spirit”. And now, I have also received this SEEMO award. In that sense I feel a special honour as one of the recipients.

The Central European Initiative (CEI) was established in 1989 as an intergovernmental forum for political, economic and cultural co-operation among its Member States (currently 11).

The CEI’s main objectives are to bring the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe closer together and assist them in their transition to stable democracies and market economies as well as in their preparation process for EU membership. During the last years, the CEI has undergone a transformation from being predominantly oriented towards policy dialogue to an organisation emphasizing transfer of know-how and technology, business facilitation, investment promotion, promotion of scientific research, postgraduate training and of civil society. Priority regions for CEI assistance are the countries of the Western Balkans and those part of the EU’s neighbourhood policy, namely Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

The CEI Presidency 2009 is held by Romania.

In a recent interview, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cristian Diaconescu expressed his views about this important role. In describing the benefits such a task could bring to Romania, he stated that “before becoming a CEI Member State in 1991, Romania received valuable support from the CEI by working together for a common purpose as well as by complementing Romania’s efforts in the European integration process.” According to Diaconescu, “the CEI Romanian Presidency is a new opportunity to promote cooperation and European values beyond the borders of the CEI Member States as well as to consolidate cooperation between the CEI EU and non-EU Member States.” This would “authenticate how to transfer and give non-EU CEI Member States assistance in specific fields such as transport, energy, agriculture etc. in order to boost their relations with the EU”, he added.

Diaconescu finally pointed out that the CEI Romanian Presidency will focus in particular on:

- cooperation between the CEI and other regional structures (e.g. SEECP, RCC, BSEC), a key factor for establishing political stability, security and for promoting good-neighbourly relations;
- activities in the field of transport, economy, agriculture, environment and cross-border cooperation.

For more information: www.cei.ro

CEO News:

CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence - Call for Proposals 2009

The Slovene Writers’ Association has recently launched the Call for Proposals 2009 for a CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence. The fellowship is endowed with a cash award of 5,000 EUR offered by the CEI for a three-month stay in a CEI Member State chosen by the candidate. Eligible applicants are writers under 35 years of age from non-EU CEI Member States. The award will be presented on the occasion of the opening of the Vilenica International Literary Festival on 2 September 2009.

Deadline for submission: 1 June 2009

The Call for Proposals and Application Form are available at: www.vilenica.si

A Review: Contemporary Serbian Photography in Vienna
by Christopher G. Westman
Student, University of Vienna

“Land of Promises”: For a long time, the USA was probably associated with that expression. Within the same-named exhibition, curator Ana Adamovic introduces, in addition to herself, seven Serbian artists some of whom indeed gained their experiences in and with America, especially due to studies overseas. Contributing artists include Uros Djaric, Dejan Kudeljorovic, Zoran Nasikovski, Tijana Pakic, Vesna Pavlovic, Vladimir Pezic, and Ivan Petrovic.

Notwithstanding, this exposition is rather a matter of contemporary photography from Serbia. Recent themes and ideas of the Serbian art scene are found at this small but subtle exhibition as well as elaborated interpretations of the title, which turn out to be symbolic on the one hand and endowed with a massive dose of irony on the other.

As the main importance is attached to socio-political and social issues, the photographers’ chosen topics are multivari- ous and range from (childhood) memories, basketball (one considers the reap- peared parallels between Serbia and the US), the “other”, Balkan-style, private gar- dens, populism and pop culture to atomic shelters.

With that expression “Land of Promises, USA”, one may link another, alien country, but not that country in which he or she actually lives,” explains Ana Adamovic. Generally speaking, it is about identity. Identity through future, the past? “The past doesn’t exist as a fact – it is a construction,” says Vienna-based Dejan Kudeljorovic, who, with his photo project, proposes the question: “What did tomorrow bring us?”

The exhibition “Land of Promises – Contemporary Serbian Photography” was featured in France (Strasbourg, Paris) and recently, January-February 2009, in Vienna at Galerie ArtPoint (KulturKontakt Austria).

Book Presentation

From the author:

“Europe is often considered to be an ‘educational space’, which means that education is somehow an important category in defining the challenge for Europe’s future. This will not be so easy, since in Europe education policy is responsibility of the member states. There is hope that this self-containment is taken as a treasure of diversity, but there is also the challenge of developing systems of cooperation. As far as media and media education is concerned, the book discusses through theoretical concepts, through analyses and through models for the educational practice the position of Europe within the media education discourse and it outlines media-education frameworks for the discourse on Europe.”

The book can be ordered at the deScripto editor’s address.
SEEMO Regional Meeting: “Private News Agencies in South East Europe”

By Mirjana Milosevic, SEEMO

From 9 to 11 December 2008, the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), in cooperation with the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC)/ Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and with the local partner Radio Televizija Slovenija, organised the SEEMO Regional Conference “Public Broadcasting in South East Europe”, in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

During the conference several topics were discussed as all participating countries are dealing with similar issues concerning public broadcasting. Therefore this conference was a good opportunity to brainstorm together on how to deal with certain issues in the best possible way. Topics during the conference included; “The current state of affairs in the field of public broadcasting in South East Europe”, “Future of new media activities and PBS”, “EBU and PBS in the region”, “ERNO and the future of the trans-border cooperation”, and “The experience of the governing bodies of the PBS in the region”.

Boris Bergant from RTV Slovenija mentioned, for example, that the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is under permanent threat as everybody wants gains and advantages so the PBS has to anticipate changes and requests in advance. Problems are many faceted and of both a legal and financial nature, as well as being affected by the economic crisis and replicable advertisements but problems are also of a nature of principle. The South East and Central European region are countries still in transition. The region has a difficult history, a recent history of hate and war and transition will take longer here. That is why everybody needs to help each other, learn from each other, learn from more experienced public service broadcasters, but also from the positive examples that are there. Benchmarking is necessary. Jean Reveillon, Director General of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), stated that EBU is committed to answering freedom of expression and is very concerned about journalists’ safety. All conclusions from this meeting were put together in a document called the ‘Ljubljana Recommendations on Public Broadcasting’ and have been distributed to all the participants as a guideline.
Your Excellences!

September 2008

Dr. E. Bernd Busek - SEEMO Media Award

The SEEMO Media Award is in the name of the renowned Austrian diplomat, journalist and writer, who devoted his life to media self-censorship in the former Soviet Union. In his career he was a well-known investigative journalist, as well as a well-known human rights activist, who dedicated himself to the work of the European Press Club in Brussels. He was also a member of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the OSCE Center for Media and Information Coherence (CMI). The SEEMO Conference will be held in Belgrade on 30 August and demand the coverage of their uprising against the police on 21 July. The Middle East is the most important region of the media. The SEEMO Conference will address questions of human rights, social and economic consequences of these processes. Information available at: http://www.mediacenter.bg (Source: Roman Kocyński)

UNICEF Events

Celebration of World Press Freedom Day

Doha, Qatar, 3 May 2009

The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is a United Nations agency established in 1946 to help children affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies. UNICEF’s work focuses on four main areas: health, nutrition, education, and social protection. In this event, UNICEF celebrates World Press Freedom Day by highlighting the importance of press freedom and media integrity in covering news and events in the Middle East and Central Europe.

International Conference: Culture and Security Sector Reform: Political, Strategic and Military Culture in Transition Countries

Seminar, Sarajevo, 7-10 May 2009

The International Conference on Culture and Security Sector Reform: Political, Strategic and Military Culture in Transition Countries is a multi-disciplinary forum that brings together scholars, practitioners, policy makers, and stakeholders to discuss the latest research and developments in the field of culture and security sector reform. The conference will include discussions on the role of culture in security sector reform, the impact of security sector reform on cultural diversity, and the challenges and opportunities for cultural diplomacy in the context of security sector reform.

Council of Europe

1st Council of Europe Conference on New Media & Information Society Forum

Doha, Qatar, 3-5 May 2009

This conference aims to address the challenges and opportunities of the new media and information society forum, focusing on issues such as the role of social media, the impact of the internet on democracy, and the importance of media literacy. The conference will bring together experts from a variety of fields, including journalism, academia, and civil society, to discuss the latest developments and best practices in the new media and information society forum.

The SEEMO Conference on Public Services in South East and Central Europe

Vienna, 30 September 2008

The SEEMO Conference on Public Services in South East and Central Europe is a forum for journalists and public service providers to discuss the latest developments in the field of public services, focusing on issues such as the role of public service media, the impact of the internet on public service, and the challenges and opportunities for public service providers in the context of the new media and information society forum.

SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: BULGARIA

3rd SEEMO Conference Bruscelon Confronts Bulgarian Editor and Journalists

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SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: SEBIA
VISe Protest Against Amendments Proposed to the Public Security Broadcasting Law of Montenegro
Vienna, 7 October 2008
The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), voiced its concern over the proposed amendments to the Broadcasting Law of Montenegro. According to information before SEEMO, four journalists from Montenegro were arrested in the afternoon of 13 October 2008 after they were denied access to the Kursumlija buildings during an investigation into these incidents, and to send a strong signal that these kinds of incidents will not be tolerated.
We thank you for your attention.
Your sincerely
Oliver Vujovic
SECRETARY GENERAL
SEEMO

SEEMO/IPI CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE AGAINST THE MEDIA IN THE REGION
Vienna, 24 November 2008
The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned about the potential for further violence against the media in the Region.
According to information brought to the attention of SEEMO, a Hungarian television station which was broadcasting a programme on the conflict in southeastern Europe has received a bomb threat.
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VISeIPI Press Release: Greece
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On the fast track to Europe

The WAZ Media Group publishes different titles in ten European countries: 33 daily and 18 weekly-newspapers, 176 special-interest and trade magazines, 107 advertising papers and 400 customer magazines are part of the group.

The WAZ Group actively accompanies the South East European countries on their fast track into the “European House”.

The WAZ Group builds on professional journalism: free, independent, non-party oriented. In respect of the freedom of media, it sets signals and thus gains the “trust” of the readers as well as the of that advertising businesses.

It offers companies a credible platform to show their presence, create markets and generate demand and growth.

It works the switches towards future.

This is the way. This is the aim.

www.waz-mediengruppe.de