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The Language of the Media (on Some Aspects of the Standard and Substandard From the Point of Accentuation)[1]

Aleksandra Lončar Raičević[2], Associate Professor
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The relationship between the standard as a special idiom, a subsystem of a language, and its additional idioms (dialects, jargon, colloquial language) is most often observed in the context of dynamic and innovative processes in the domain of language use. One of the most suitable and reliable language corpora for studying the stability of the language system and the changes that occur in it is media discourse. It represents reliable material for assessing the character of those changes, for monitoring not only development tendencies but also possible consequences. In the sphere of language use in the social context, the orthoepic norm itself plays an important role, i.e., accentuation, which represents a group of acoustic, the so-called prosodic or suprasegmental properties of the human voice such as length, pitch and loudness. In this paper, we deal with the issues of the use of standards, i.e., substandards in electronic media from the point of accent, because it is a fact that the way in which speakers in electronic media - presenters, journalists, announcers - shape certain contents could, without a doubt, strongly shape public opinion and also significantly influence the speech and language culture of a wide audience.

Keywords: media language, standard, substandard, accentuation

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Media discourse – Linguistically the most influential discourse of public communication

Many studies have shown that out of all forms of public communication journalistic discourse is the most influential factor in the development of language

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[2] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1540-8610, Corresponding author: aleksandra.loncar.raicevic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

awareness and culture of members of a particular language community. In the context of standardization and consolidation of the standard language idiom as a common code of dialectically separated speakers of the Serbian language, in the past it was one of the basic factors for promoting the standard language as a supralinguistic category. If we agree that the language of the media, considering the immediate linguistic and educational role, should be linguistically exemplary, which means shaped in accordance with the standard language norm, it is necessary that the creators of the linguistic discourse - journalists, presenters and announcers - possess at least a satisfactory level of linguistic competence. However, the linguistic analysis of contemporary journalistic discourse shows an increasing tendency to move away from the standard linguistic norm and the frequent use of various substandard idioms - dialects (Lončar Raičević, 2021; Miloradović, 2014). The analysis of speech on radio and television at the beginning of the 21st century showed that both in our region, and in the surrounding area, there is a significant decline in language culture (Jokanović Mihajlov, 2006), and reasons should be sought in the globalization and democratization of public space, which leads to "the lowering of style " (Škarić, 1998), but also to the abolition of relevant language criteria when selecting people to perform announcer jobs. Let us refer to Ivo Škarić's statement on this occasion - wherever one speaks in public, one "speaks rhetorically", which means obeying certain rules, because the speaker in the public space often does not only speak on his/her own behalf, but also represents someone or speaks as a member of a group, so he/she is also responsible to the collective he/she represents (Škarić, 1988). Not only because of the collective that h/she represents, but also because of the audience that he/she addresses, every speaker, according to Škarić, should master the basic rules of good speech, namely: *eloquence* (moving away from the mere reproduction of a written text), *personality/character* (identifying oneself with the content message that is manifested in a recognizable, individual interpretation), *logicality* (properly and logically structured speech, argumentation of statements), poetics (stylistic refinement of speech) and regularity (obeying the orthoepic norm of the standard language)" (Škarić, 1988), which is very often a reflection of the speaker's social status and his/her position on the social ladder.

Being aware of the need for the necessary mastery of standard idioms in media discourse, but also of the fact that in the written and spoken use of language, standard and substandard intertwine (dialect, colloquial language, etc.), we want to draw attention to this interactive relationship between standard and substandard idioms, above all dialects, on the corpus from the electronic media.

Standard – Substandard form the point of accentuation

Depending on social conditions, a language can be spoken in different ways, and in this sense, we can talk about language as a set of varieties. According to Milorad Radovanović, language is divided into four types: territorial, social, individual and functional. Territorial stratification implies two types of phenomena: territorial stratification in the form of dialects and territorial stratification in the form of a standard language (Radovanović, 1979: 77). Territorial stratification of non-standard languages implies spatial differentiation into different dialects that branch all the way to local languages, and they are the subject of dialectology, while on the other hand, there are also urban (city) languages that are characteristic of "urbanized societies". When it comes to standard language variants, they can be reflected on different levels, even on the level of accentuation. The problem of pronunciation in public communication is a direct result of problems in Serbian prosody in general.

It is known that the Serbian language, as an organic idiom, has several dialects that differ to a greater or lesser extent and are more or less distant from the standard. Standard languages can be created on different bases, and the basis of the Serbian literary language consists of two Neo-Shtokavian dialects: Eastern Herzegovinian and Šumadija-Vojvodina. The standard, or standard idiom, represents an explicit social convention and has the status of supra-regional and general social communication, it has gained cultural and political supremacy over all other idioms - dialects, sociolects, jargons. One of its goals is the unification and stabilization of diverse language practice (Bugarski, 1995: 162). The standard itself is a consequence of language planning, which is nothing more than enabling an idiom for public communication (Granić, 1996: 84). The standard language norm covers all levels of language structure in the entire range of language functions, so we are talking about orthoepic, orthographic, morphological, syntactic, lexical and stylistic norms, which are determined by grammars, dictionaries, stylistic, spelling and other manuals (Bugarski, 1995: 234). It is important to point out that the speech community that shares a language is never homogeneous, and it has a repertoire of language varieties that the speakers use according to their personal discretion, depending on the communicative situation.[3]

In relation to the standard language, substandard idioms are locally limited and represent non-standard language varieties that were created by the territorial stratification of the language (Bugarski, 1995: 156). They have their own implicit norm that their speakers intuitively feel and that derives from the manner of its adoption, i.e., transmission from generation to generation. So, non-standard language

[3] In sociolinguistics, there is a typology of the repertoire of speech communities, the most famous of which is the one that distinguishes the standard language and dialects, which Charles Ferguson defines as diglossia (the phenomenon refers to the point when two varieties are found in the same genetic language that are used for different functions, and both of them can be standardized). This model has been, for instance, applied in the Croatian language by Damir Kalogjera (he points out that the high variety is adopted only through education; in formal speech only the high variety is used; the high variety is not used in everyday speech). He defines the low variety as the standard layer of the language in which many structures belonging to the high variety are bypassed and solved in a different way (Kalogjera, 2009: 556), stating that the low variety is the highest level that an average educated Croatian citizen can achieve in terms of knowledge of the structural norms of the standard Croatian language, after finishing high school and obtaining a higher education degree, with the exception of diligent students who graduated from Croatian studies. The high level of the Croatian variety, for example, implies the realization of the Neo-Shtokavian accentuation norms and the application of rules concerning accents (falling accents can only be placed on the first syllable; realization of unaccented lengths; transfer of accents to the proclitic).

varieties, i.e., dialects are not explicitly normed and their development cannot be controlled, which is a key difference from the standard idiom.

Contacts of a standard language and a dialect of a language represent a completely natural and common type of contact because each speaker of a standard language is also the bearer of his/her natural dialect idiom. On the other hand, the standard language as a part of general communication, which is in a way also the language of prestige in society, significantly affects the speech of each individual. Since most speakers never master the standard, one can speak of "incomplete standardization, because even though it is officially accepted, the implementation and expansion of the standard are at a very low level" (Granić, 1996: 3). Precisely for this reason, the largest number of speakers of the Serbian language in their speech base have two varieties of their mother tongue, firstly their dialectal base, and then their own realization of the standard language.[4] It is natural that every speaker loves his/her mother tongue most, which is the local speech of his/her birthplace. On the other hand, the rules of social stratification and obligations impose norms of speech behavior depending on the sphere of language use.

When it comes to the changes that are taking place in the traditional standard Serbian language that yield a parallel norm, we can also talk about the term neostandard, in the creation of which the dominant influence is the media (Nikolić, 2020: 5). Neostandard represents a new form of a standard idiom, created in the process of restandardization, mainly under the influence of the media and new ways and needs of communication (Tavoni, 2002, quoted according to Nikolić, 2020). Reasons for the creation of neostandards are common in all European languages. Neostandard is characterized by an informal style, it is modern, creative, subjective, personal, expressive, close to a spoken expression, etc. which brings it closer to the substandard, i.e., variants, in contrast to the traditional, canonical standard, which has features of traditionality, formality and closeness to the written language. Therefore, neostandard is located between the traditional standard language, on the one hand, and regional and substandard varieties, on the other hand, to which it is opposed not only structurally, but also in terms of status and prestige. Among the most important tendencies of the neo-standard in terms of accent, the following features could be singled out: reduction of post-accent quantity, use of falling accents on the inner syllables of polysyllabic words, use of accents on the final syllable, double-stressed pronunciation within a word.

If we are dealing with the issue of observing the relationship between the standard language - dialect - substandard in the media, it is important to keep in mind the fact that we are dealing with dialects that are or are not in the base of the standard

[4] For example, the vernacular of Niš in the linguistic-geographical sense belongs to the Prizren-Timok dialect, and even more narrowly to the Prizren-South Moravian dialect. However, given that it is an urban environment, the vernacular of Niš is characterized by many linguistic features that are close to the standard Serbian language, and thus differs from the language of the surrounding rural areas. What is related to the vernacular of Niš is that the dialectal elements that made Niš part of the South Moravian region were lost over time, so today it is rare to hear them in everyday communication (Trajković, 2018).

Serbian language. It is the media that are most responsible for promoting different forms of organic pronunciation idioms, characteristics of certain urban environments and containing regional prosodic features, especially in dialectal environments with Old Shtokavian accentuations. Since there are significant differences between the accentuation systems of the Prizren-Timok and Kosovo-Resava speech zones, on the one hand, and standard accentuation, on the other hand, it is clear that speakers face serious difficulties when trying to get closer to the standard Serbian language. The standard Serbian language is characterized by Neo-Shtokavian accentuation, which is one of the most complicated in Europe (Ivić & Lehiste, 2002: 628) with six prosodic units consisting of: short rising, long rising, short falling and long falling accents, as well as unaccented length and unaccented shortness. In the Serbian language, the accent can be placed on any syllable of the word, except for the last one. Moreover, there are certain limitations in the distribution of accents, e.g., falling accents can only be placed on the first syllable in a word, and even monosyllabic words can only have falling accents, then, no accent can be placed on the last syllable in the Serbian language, and unaccented length in the standard language can only be found in the post-accented syllable.

The urban language varieties in the Kosovo-Resava region (which has a three-accent system) and the Prizren-Timok area (one-accent speech zone), which are also a feature of the media discourse in the above-mentioned region, are primarily their dialectal background, and only then a certain reorganization within all linguistic levels, i.e., innovation, or approaching in certain linguistic segments of the spoken norm of the standard Serbian language (Miloradović, 2014).

The greatest obstacles in mastering standard accentuation of the Serbian language appear precisely when two completely typologically different idioms come into contact. On the basis of typological affiliation, the standard Serbian language is classified into limited-tonal languages whose characteristic features are pitch and impact, while the basic feature of accentuation of the Prizren-Timok dialect is its dynamic component (Clark & Yallop, 1995).

The fact that this is a broader linguistic problem that does not have only a local character is also evidenced by numerous studies in other languages that deal with the possibilities of mastering a second non-native language or a variety in adulthood and the difficulty of the struggle to suppress the originally acquired accent and replace it in a consistent and permanent way (Lippi Green, 1997). The following four parameters are most often singled out as important factors influencing the acquisition of a second language accent: mother tongue, ability for oral mimicry, the length of stay in L2 environment, and the degree of accent perception. Many of these factors are crucial for the adoption of the accent system of the other, in the prosodic sense, typologically different idiom.

It is a common opinion that the system of automated articulation habits in the mother tongue is established by the age of seven, to be more precise, the automated pronunciation of all sounds in the system, all types of syllables, as well as the use of intonation patterns and other elements of the suprasegmental structure is established by the age of seven (Kašić, 2009). An automated system of articulation habits enables native speakers to speak fluently within the native language or native dialect. Conversely, it can also represent a limiting factor - when learning foreign languages and in accepting standard orthoepy. This is evidenced daily by the fact that in the public speech of a large number of intellectuals, people who pursued standard orthoepy through education, it is possible to determine with certainty which dialect type they belong to.

The question that arises is to what extent speakers who have automated the system of dynamic accentuation can adopt tonal components that are features of limited tonal accentuation, typical of the standard Serbian language. Experimental research carried out in the Prizren-Timok area showed that highly educated speakers from the Prizren-Timok area, in order to speak the standard language, retain their regional prosodic base, which is based on the expiratory dynamic unit. As an opposition to the short expiratory accent, which is the basic unit of the dynamic system, in educated speakers in the normatively expected categories with long accents, a specific long prosody that does not correspond to the descriptions of long accents from the tonal system appears, and in all the normatively expected categories there is only temporal and intensity difference, and not the tonal difference between accents (Lončar Raičević, 2020: 265). Regardless of the above-mentioned limitations in the realization of the accent unit itself, in the media discourse of the Prizren-Timok area, there is a distinct tendency of the speakers to come as close as possible to the standard accentuation with the place of the accent - correction of pronunciation is carried out, primarily in those examples that stigmatize the speaker the most. Thus, for instance, the remnants of the old accentuation to which the Prizren-Timok speeches belong are reflected in a limited number of examples.

Speakers' attitudes towards the standard idiom and other varieties

Attitudes towards language have drawn the attention of numerous authors in the field of social sciences, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics since the middle of the last century (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1983; Coupland, 2003). They actually represent a complex set of opinions, emotions and reactions of all those elements that influence the formation of the identity of individuals or groups, and greatly influence social behavior and social interaction. The largest number of papers in the field of language attitudes deals with the examination of attitudes towards different varieties, with the aim of looking at speakers' attitudes towards standard and non-standard varieties (Milroy, 20021; Coupland, 1991). The way of pronunciation actually represents a means of identification of the speaker and it can indicate his/her regional origin or it can be a mark on the basis of which an individual is placed at a certain level of the social ladder.

Attitudes towards language belong to the important factors that shape an individual's identity and behavior, and they are shaped through social interaction, which is of particular importance in today's complex social environment (Paunović, 2006). What speakers think about language illustrates how important attitudes are for fitting into a certain social environment, and it offers explanations for differences in the way an individual speaks.

When it comes to the Serbian language, there is a certain number of papers in which empirical research data are very systematically given in connection with the examination of attitudes towards a certain phenomenon. One group of authors studied the attitudes of Serbian speakers towards other varieties (Knjižar, 2011; Kovačević, 2004, 2005; Paunović, 2009; Lazić Konjik, 2011; Sredojević, 2011; Miketić, 2016; Sudimac, 2018; Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021).

With regard to attitudes towards varieties in the Serbian language, the most complete research is Sanja Miketić's dissertation *Attitudes towards language among the student population in the Republic of Serbia* (Miketić, 2016). On this occasion, we draw attention to two studies whose respondents were originally from the Prizren-Timok speaking area. It refers to the paper of M. Mihajlović, who conducted research on the value attitudes of the speakers of the Prizren-Timok dialect towards the standard language, in which the author reached the conclusions that the participants showed love for their dialect, but regarding the claim that they learnt the standardized language willingly, they unanimously expressed the view that they wanted to adopt the standard language (Mihajlović ,2018: 69). A similar tendency was observed in the research that was conducted on the corpus of media discourse data from Niš during the speech realization of announcers and journalists of electronic media, who tried to a great extent to adapt their urban variety and bring it closer to the standard (Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021). When it comes to the value attitudes of speakers (language experts) towards accent realizations, we single out the paper of D. Sredojević (Sredojević, 2020).

We are witnessing the fact that speakers of certain regionally marked pronunciations (especially speakers from the south of Serbia) are often attributed *stereotypical attributes with negative connotations*, which can be reflected in social relations in general[5]. The negative role of the media in presenting the so-called "southern speech" also played a role in the creation of stereotypes and prejudices about the south of Serbia, whose speakers are often exposed to linguistic discrimination. The speaker of the dialects of the south and southeast of Serbia is portrayed positively only if he/she is connected to certain past, idealized time or distant from modernization processes. As soon as the speaker goes out of the scope of the so-called folk wisdom and describes everyday things and the hybrid reality in which he/she lives (which happens in films, television series and other products of popular culture), the speaker becomes ridiculous, unsophisticated and grotesque (Petrović, 2015). However, when it comes to dialects with an older accent from the area of Montenegro, this is not the case because the speakers do not feel inferior in relation to other speakers and do not need to assimilate linguistically after changing their place of residence and moving to the territory where the newer Shtokavian accentuation is used. All of this is connected with the idea that is ingrained in Serbian society - that the south cannot belong to the modern world, which on the linguistic level manifests itself in the conviction that speakers from this area can never master the standard.

[5] In Montenegro, from the beginning of the 1990s to the present day, the linguistic confidence of the representatives of the urban varieties of the Old Shtokavian accentuation is growing, and at the same time the tolerance towards those varieties is growing, while the language standard is slowly losing its normative prestige.

However, one of the important characteristics of attitudes towards language is the fact that they are often based on stereotypes and prejudices, as evidenced by the results of numerous researches on attitudes towards regional and social varieties of English, as the most widely studied language (Paunović, 2006).

Otherwise, there is no scientific argument that can confirm the statement that the Prizren-Timok dialect is inferior to the Eastern Herzegovinian dialect, or that it is corrupted, just as it is pointless to prove that Jekavian pronunciation is better or worse than Ekavian pronunciation. The same applies to non-standard forms. But that does not mean we do not need a language standard. It is the product of a politically motivated decision by the community about which particular variety will be used as the one common to all of us and for the sake of increased order and ease of communication.

Concluding remarks

The way in which speakers in the electronic media - presenters, journalists, announcers - shape certain contents can, without a doubt, strongly shape the public opinion and significantly influence the speech and language culture of a wide audience. We believe that at the accentual level, insufficient compliance of prosodic characteristics in speech on radio and television with the standard language norm is observed, especially in dialect areas that are far from the standard. Judging by the results of research dealing with these issues (Miloradović, 2014, Lončar Raičević & Sudimac, 2021), the tendency of speakers to come as close as possible to the standard accentuation with the place of the accent has been observed, the pronunciation is corrected in those examples that stigmatize the speaker the most (so, for instance, the remains of the older accentuation to which the Prizren-Timok speeches belong are reflected in a limited number of examples). Since the regular education system often does not provide enough language education, it would be important to establish a network of additional language education for creators of the journalistic discourse, as well as mandatory proofreading of all journalistic genres, especially of an informative nature. The level of language culture largely depends on the individual's personal readiness to choose an adequate communication strategy, which is reflected in the numerous individual variations that are present in speakers, both at the accentual level and at other linguistic levels.

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Jezik medija (o nekim aspektima standarda i supstandarda iz ugla akcentuacije)

prof. dr Aleksandra Lončar Raičević
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Sažetak

Odnos standarda kao posebnog idioma, podsistema jednog jezika, i njegovih drugih idimoma (dijalekata. žargona, razgovornog jezika) najčešće se posmatra u kontekstu dinamičkih i inovacionih procesa u domenu jezičke upotrebe. Jedan od najpogodnijih i najpouzdanijih jezičkih korpusa za proučavanja stabilnosti jezičkog sistema i promena do kojih u njemu dolazi jeste govor medija. On predstavlja pouzdan materijal za procenu karaktera tih promena, za praćenje razvojnih tendencija, ali i mogućih posledica. U sferi društvene upotrebe jezika važnu ulogu igra upravo ortoepska norma tj. akcentuacija koja predstavlja skupinu akustičkih, tzv. prozodijskih ili suprasegmentalnih svojstava ljudskog glasa kao što su trajanje, visina i jačina. U radu se bavimo pitanjima upotrebe standarda, odnosno supstandarda u elektronskim medijima iz ugla akcentuacije, jer je činjenica da načinom na koji oblikuju određene sadržaje govornici u elektronskim medijima – voditelji, novinari spikeri – bez sumnje, snažno mogu oblikovati javno mnjenje i isto tako značajno uticati na govornu i jezičku kulturu širokog auditorijuma.

Ključne reči: jezik medija, standard, supstandard, akcentuacija.

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The Position and Transformation of the Public Sphere in the Internet Envronment

Stefan Z. Ratković[1], Teaching Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract

Contemporary media theories increasingly encounter intense changes in social relations that are the result of changes in communication techniques and means. McLuhan called this dynamic a media-centric driver of social change. Media theories and communication disciplines are becoming more current because they have a historical opportunity to follow (post)modern society, which is in a state of constant change mediated by digital technologies.

The aim of this paper is to examine whether communication and organizing people through social networks can lead to the transformation of the public sphere as defined by Habermas and related authors. We will build on Habermas' categorization of historical transformations of the public sphere in order to understand the context and epoch of the current transformation. The second hypothetical question of the paper is whether the Internet could replace some social institutions and question the authorities and conventions achieved, especially if we pay attention to the criticism of democracy by authors like Colin Crouch (2018: 9) who questions the legitimacy of current democratic elections concluding that "people are not offered essential possibility to participate in political processes".

Finally, the question remains whether the Internet as a mass medium has a systemic-technocratic character of maintaining the status quo or whether it can serve as a driver of change or a means of direct democracy for users. We believe that this kind of work will be a nice link or a quality overview of theories and anticipations concerning the issue of political and electoral motivation - the topic with which Columbia University's major research on media effects began.

Keywords: Internet, social networks, public sphere, democracy

[1] Corresponding author: stefan.ratkovic@ffuis.edu.ba

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Historical dialectics of the public sphere

The political history of humanity is the history of the exchange and juggling of the roles of private and public spheres. The way the public sphere was defined in a certain historical period says a lot about the character of the community and the social relations within it. The classical periodization of history into old, medieval, new and modern times corresponds to the periodization of the position of the public (and private) sphere in different epochs. In other words, it was possible to determine the social and cultural definition of the public only after a dialectical view of history and subsequent classification of the internal social dynamic of major historical movements and events.

The ancient Greeks had a division into private (oikos) and public (polis) sphere, but the concept of public was still not actively elaborated. This can be deduced from the etymological origin of the term (res publica) which developed among the Romans (Price, 1992). French encyclopedists, favoring Latin over Greek and Roman sources, affirm the notion of publique, which refers to openness, availability and accessibility, and by adding the prefix res, modern authors affirm the notion of a public place, matters of general interest, and more specifically matters related to state affairs (Posavec, 1995: 13). In contrast to public affairs, the relationship with property has always been important for humanity. Hana Arendt (according to Tadić, 1998: 16) in immovable property sees the attachment of a human to a certain place in the world and the condition of its organic survival.

Habermas identifies the dominance of the representative public in relation to the Medieval period. It is constituted not as a social area, but as a sign of stature. The feudal public is not a public according to the modern understanding of the term, but a royal or lordly representation of God’s authority before the people (Đorđević, 1975: 73-74). The representative public could serve us as an indicative theoretical example for the analysis of the digital public sphere, which is the central theme of this paper.

In relation to Hall’s interpersonal distance, the feudal socio-economic system erases the distinction between personal, social and public space. Let us take, for example, the dining room in the manor house. A personal space (dining room) can simultaneously serve as a public space for expressing the aforementioned stature in front of servants or guests. It is known that large tables had a multiple role - from a place for dining to convening meetings. After all, the very act of eating had a practical and symbolic role, given that every meal was preceded by a common ritual - prayer. Such a representation is in accordance with Habermas’s explanation of the representative public, which manifested itself in the representation of the nobility and church ritual, closed in courts and temples, without the existence of a public sphere in its modern understanding (Habermas, according to Tadić, 1998: 41). If we were to compare the average 21st century Facebook user profile with the dining table of a 14th century lord, we would find several common characteristics: the unclear boundary between the public, private and intimate spheres on a phenomenological level, and the actualization of the issue of privatization of the public sphere, which Habermas calls “refeudalization”. In addition to being symbolic and metaphorical, this comparison also has its own formal determination.

For Habermas in the 20th century, the rise of advertising, marketing and public relations that try to manipulate the public and discourage critical thought has influenced the state itself, political parties and interest groups to increasingly use the same approaches to get votes. Unlike publicity that exposes political dominance to public judgment, publicity imitates the aura of personal prestige and supernatural authority that was a key feature of the representative public sphere (Warner, 2013: 286). Gaining publicity has become one of the imperatives of social networks with the idea of “weakening democracy” (McChesney, 2016) on platforms that are privately owned and whose services, in addition to private ones, are also used by legal entities, states, politicians, political organizations and others. This is also supported by Arendt’s ontological critical perspective, which anticipates that with modern social processes the tendency to “dispossess the human being” intensifies, emphasizing that the main non-private feature of privacy is the possibility of withdrawing into one’s own four walls into the area of inner subjectivity, which is increasingly agitating for conformism and automatism. (Tadić, 1998: 17).

Limits of the public sphere and perspectives of the Internet

Hauser (1999: 61) defines the public sphere as a discursive space in which individuals and groups come together to discuss issues of common interest. It is the area of social life, where, according to Habermas (according to Asen 1999: 116), public opinion can be formed.

The public sphere is conceived as an area in which citizens deconstruct the ways and methods of managing the state, and the area of developing democratic practices (Mouffe, 1999). Some authors see the public sphere as a social space between the state and the market. With the convergence of mass media and the Internet, the notion of a digital public sphere has developed. The determination of the public sphere also depends on different aspects, such as the quality of the discussion, but also the amount of participation of individuals, which would actually mean that the more citizens or individuals participate in the discussion, the closer it is to the ideal of the public sphere (Grbeša, 2021: 111). The question naturally arises - why none of the theorists have accordingly characterized the Internet and social networks as perfect platforms of the public sphere, bearing in mind the number and intensity of opening accounts.

The public hypersphere or digital public sphere is created using modern information technologies, digital media and computer networks. Brisco and De Vilde (2006) develop the term digital ecosystem, which is seen as a socio-technical system with self-organization, sustainability and scalability features that functions positivistically similar to a natural ecosystem, only with more pronounced technical-technological determinants of the computer industry. The actualization of Habermas’ theme of the transformation of the public sphere under the influence of digital technologies is integrated in the concept of cyberdemocracy, as well as in the book of the same name (Levy, 2002).

For proponents of digital transformation, the public threatens institutions whose power is based on information and audience control, where mainstream media communicators must listen to what we have to say, whether we are using Twitter to complain about a product or Facebook to organize a protest. Institutions must learn how to approach equality, because according to such an optimistic judgment, the Internet will become a force for democracy, abolishing the monopoly of information and its centralized organization. Authors such as Diamandis and Kotler cite a 2009 Swedish government report that claims that the increased access to digital communications in developing countries has spurred "economic development, poverty reduction, and democratization, including freedom of speech, free flow of information, and promotion of human rights" (McChesney, 2014: 28). McChesney (2014) in his work Digital Disconnect criticizes supporters for overlooking the ability of institutions to act proactively in the face of given challenges, concluding that "the profit motive, commercialism, public relations, marketing and advertising as carriers of contemporary corporate capitalism are fundamental to any assessment of how developed the Internet and how it will develop further (...) To be clear, many of the Internet researchers I mentioned, almost no one defends existing capitalism. Many of them envision a world in which the excesses and problems of capitalism have been eliminated, if not capitalism itself."

For Vaidhyanathan (2018: 19-21), the existence of Internet algorithms on social networks creates "filter bubbles" (Pariser, according to Vaidhyanathan, 2018) where Google and Facebook offer products and services to users based on data collected about their research on the Internet, thus creating an echo chamber of confirmed beliefs. In this way, social networks perform the classic role that traditional media played until then, which is to maintain the status quo. Such hermetically sealed "filter bubbles" narrow the field of information by gathering like-minded people, which deepens social divisions. In response to the hypothesis of whether social networks can serve as a substitute for democracy from below, we will try to find examples in the case study in order to determine the criteria and the extent according to which it is possible to achieve a constructive dialogue with the actualization of issues of social importance, while at the same time, we do not bypass the hermetic criterion of the algorithm. One of the criteria could be geographical.

Research by the "Pew Research Center" showed that as many as 62% of adults in the United States of America receive news through social networks, and as many as 66% of all users of the social network Facebook (Gams, 2023: 5), which means that traditional media achieve significant penetration within the sphere of social networks.

The Internet still remains a disputed issue of regulation of the content that appears on it, which gives political communication a significant non-institutional sign. The laws of individual countries are not the same regarding Internet regulation. This is best illustrated by cases such as the legal dispute against "Licra vs Yahoo", where different verdicts were issued by the French and American constitutional courts,[2] or the exclusion of the order of the American President Donald Trump, and then its return by plebiscite after a change in the ownership and management structure, whereby Twitter proves its institutional nature.[3]

One of the unavoidable ways of contaminating the public sphere on the Internet is the advertising of politicians on social networks. Politicians most often perceive Internet communication as “a means of promotion, marketing and political persuasion, as well as the creation of pseudo-events, which also become a very important segment of political promotion” (Boorstin, 1992, Slavujević, 2009, according to Vučetić, Ratković, 2022: 671) which corresponds to the expressive and technical possibilities provided by social networks in visual culture. They build an image-distortion and mix the private and public spheres. At the same time, they are opinion leaders, and they want to present themselves to the public as “people of flesh and blood”. As Machiavelli said (according to Čavoški, 2008), people take care primarily of personal interests, but this is not an indicative judgment, but an assumption that those who rule them must have. That is why insight into the public spirit is a very important assumption of democratic decision-making, which Gramsci (according to Lou, 2013: 30) sees as resorting to communication management and social management as a means of curbing eventual dissatisfaction.

Case study

For the analysis of the use of Facebook, a social network as a kind of a public sphere, we selected the annual work of the Facebook group “East Sarajevo - Current Events” (“Istočno Sarajevo – aktuelnosti”),[4] which functions as an online space for gathering information, problem setting, and debate on topics in the form of multimedia posts that attract the attention of citizens of East Sarajevo, for the most part city municipalities East Novo Sarajevo and East Ilidža. According to simple sampling, the previously mentioned group is a good example of self-initiative, communal organization of citizens in order to start a general debate on city topics. The group consists of 9,175 members (Facebook profile). The observed sample consists of posts published by citizens in the period from January 1, 2022 to February 25, 2023. In the given period, citizens, and a significantly smaller number of group administrators, published 502 posts.

Local topics, which we will define as current problems of the wider city area about which citizens give their own opinion in the form of posting and commenting, most often were trying to remove the problem by appealing to authorities or

[2] https://dig.watch/resource/licra-v-yahoo-case, https://www.supremecourt.gov/orders/courtorders/053006pzor.pdf, accessed in December 2022.

[3] https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/26/tech/meta-trump-mainstream-social-media/index.html, accessed in December 2022.

[4] https://www.facebook.com/groups/863918937061523, visited in February 2023.

responsible fellow citizens. There were 298 such posts or 59 percent of the total number of posts in the mentioned group. A special subgroup of local topics consists of 31 posts on the topic of ecology, irresponsible cutting of parks, air pollution, irresponsible waste disposal, and the construction of mini-hydroelectric power plants, etc. The largest number of posts concerns the arrangement of city areas, parks, infrastructure problems, the cost of city services, prices of waterworks or electrical distribution, presentation of conceptual projects, criticizing investors, commenting on the intensity of urbanization, and illegal parking. Of particular interest are seven posts on the topic of events that resonated with the general public, and which within the group have a high level of "sharing" that would fall under the domain of "black chronicles" in a narrow-genre journalistic division. Such questions are interesting because their level of generality is high and they concern the exchange of opinions on socio-pathological topics such as in the above case: suicide, rape, bullying. During the analysis, it was noticed that regardless of the level of generality, such topics, although not only specific to the local area, attracted the attention of a large number of users who mostly reacted on an affective-value basis. During the processing of such topics, as well as those of a lower level of generality, it was noticed that citizens were more oriented toward the valorization and highlighting of their own impressions, than concretely proposing problem-solving strategies. As in the relationship with the media, it is mainly about finding like-minded people in order to confirm one's own opinion. According to the principle of "localization", an example of citizens arguing about photographs of the recorded public practice of religious rituals by a few fellow citizens, most likely members of the Arab population, is indicative. This kind of discourse is characterized by a high level of generalization, stereotyping and, contrary to the principle of relevance, paradoxically, a high level of user involvement in the commenting section. A tendency was noticed that with the decrease in the level of relevance of the topic, the level of homogenization of the community increases. In the case of a relevant topic, such as the citizens' appeal to the city services regarding the lack of snow removal activities in pedestrian zones, the views of the citizens correspond to the social subgroups they form at the level of the center-periphery split or drivers-pedestrians. In the group, the response from the authorities is most often absent.

Another type of posts that we included in the categorization are service information posts, in which we include questions from citizens and classified ads. There were only five job ads, which indicates that there are other specialized publications for classified ads in online and print form. Citizens' questions, of which there were 50 (10 percent), were mainly requests for urgent information about the city services, looking for or adopting animals, inquiries about the work of the public services, etc. This post type is characterized by a low level of social relevance and the number of reactions and valorization of users, but a high level of informative significance.

The third group of posts, also 50 (10 percent), consists of divisions from other media and platforms, one third of which is news about the city. Their informative value is pronounced, but their relevance is not as big, especially considering the small number of citizens' reactions to such posts. Part of the media posts are about helping the weak and charity phone calls to donate money where the response of citizens is greater. These types of "actions" realized in multiple forms through web portals or direct addresses in the group represent 22 posts. Such posts are characterized by a low publication interval, but a high intensity of response. Given that the same "action" is repeated several times, the level of informative value decreases linearly.

A somewhat larger number of posts (35) are political posts that deal with general political, even ideological topics, which are less relevant for the local community. The reaction is mainly a valorization characterized by an extremely low level of constructiveness with indications of borderline or blatant hate speech. It happens that users and local topics "politicize" in a way that brings them into analogy with higher instances of public authority. This represents one of the key problems in achieving concrete solutions, due to the interference of the effects of politicization, which increases the affectivity of the responses and the generality of the conclusions. Politicization, by which some of the theoretical paradigms from the introductory explanation turned out to be correct, is the most pronounced means of contamination of public discourse.

The rest of the posts consist of promotions and self-promotions and creative content, most often for the purpose of entertainment, with a low level of relevance and reflexivity. In one year, five polls were published, four of which concern solving specific community problems, and one poll about general elections in the country.

Based on the conducted analysis, we conclude that one of the ways to achieve the public sphere on social networks is its clear geographical definition while treating current events, the relevance of which will be evaluated by the citizens themselves. The ingredients that are missing in order for the citizens' initiative to acquire a more concrete character of democracy are:

- clearer structuring of advertising rules
- statutory organization of the group
- institutionalization through the necessary involvement of decision makers, which means external openness
- limiting to urban topics
- sanctioning of hate speech (which is partially implemented for now)
- a greater number of surveys and questionnaires through which citizens' opinions would be integrated into a concrete initiative
- orientation toward problem prevention, not just subsequent valorization
- inclusion of existing initiatives - citizens' associations (which is insignificant for now)
- focus on the establishment of citizens' associations
- more regular information
- avoiding political contamination, etc.

Conclusion

The position of the public sphere on the Internet with an emphasis on the analysis of the given research is a consequence of wider social, political and even cultural dynamics. It is difficult to expect an individual initiative such as an informal group of citizens gathered on Facebook to respond to all the challenges pointed to by the media and political theory decades ago. It can only serve to reach indicative judgments from which we have tried to present several solutions in this paper that imply a more responsible approach, not only in deontological, but also in the practical approach of citizen initiative.

For this, in addition to diagnosing the problem and understanding its internal dynamics, recognizing the source of contamination of the public space, identifying the boundaries between public and private, and intimate spheres, each of which is threatened in the mediatized reality in which we live, we need the skills to use and evaluate media content. In addition to the fact that technologies have enabled us to solve problems within "our own four walls", the issue requires us to look back at how much mediatized public space breaks through the veil of privacy and examine the effects of such media-mediated "outplay".

Bearing all this in mind, the conclusion is that media literacy skills (access, analysis, evaluation, participation and creation) are needed to understand the possibilities of the digital public sphere. As Fromm inspiredly observes in "Escape from Freedom": "the right to express an opinion is only meaningful if we are able to have our own opinion" (Fromm, 1983: 207-208). Jovanović (2012: 79) therefore states that it is not a special wisdom to impose but to insert a thought: "When someone adopts someone else's thought, he becomes convinced that he himself is its creator and is therefore ready to represent, protect and defend it as part of his own being". In other words, in order to set up one's own exposition in the public sphere (no matter where it is located), it is necessary to clearly identify one's own informational needs.

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Položaj i transformacija javne sfere u internet okruženju

MA Stefan Z. Ratković
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Istočnom Sarajevu, Bosna i Hercegovina

Sažetak

Savremene medijske teorije sve se češće susreću sa intenzivnim promjenama u društvenim odnosima koji su rezultat promjena komunikacijskih tehnika i sredstava. Ovakvu dinamiku je Mekluan nazvao medijacentričnim pokretačem društvenih promjena. Medijske teorije i komunikološke discipline postaju aktuelnije jer imaju istorijsku priliku da prate (post)moderno društvo koje je u stanju stalne promjene posredovane digitalnim tehnologijama.
Cilj ovog rada je da ispita da li komunikacija i organizovanje ljudi preko društvenih mreža mogu da dovedu do transformacije javne sfere kako ju definišu Habermas i srodni autori. Nadovezaćemo se na Habermasovu kategorizaciju istorijskih transformacija javne sfere kako bismo razumjeli kontekst i epohu trenutne transformacije. Drugo istraživačko pitanje rada glasi da li bi internet mogao zamijeniti neke društvene institucije i preispitati autoritete i postignute konvencije, naročito ako obratimo pažnju na kritiku demokratije autora poput Kolina Krauča (2018: 9) koji preispituje legitimnost aktuelnih demokratskih izbora zaključujući da se „ljudima ne nudi suštinska mogućnost učestvovanja u političkim procesima". Konačno, ostaje pitanje da li internet kao masovni medij ima sistemski-tehnokratski karakter održavanja statusa kvo ili može da posluži kao pokretač promjena ili sredstvo direktne demokratije korisnika.
Smatramo da će ovakav rad biti lijepa poveznica ili kvalitetan pregled teorija i anticipacija koje se tiču pitanja političke i izborne motivacije – temom sa kojom su započeta velika istraživanja Kolumbija univerziteta o medijskim efektima

Ključne riječi: Internet, društvene mreže, javna sfera, demokratija

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Contextualization of the Right to Privacy on the Online Portals in Serbia

Tatjana Vulić[1], Full Professor
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
Tamara Tasić, Junior Research Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

There has been an increase in the number of online portals in Serbia, which results in more competition in the media market. Due to their desire to increase readership, that is, to increase the number of "clicks" on published texts and thus be among the most visited, editors often opt for sensationalism. Such reporting often leads to the violation of the right to privacy, especially when it comes to accidents and misfortunes that are published in the "Crime and accidents" or "Crime and death" section. This is often the case not only in the texts, but also in the headlines or the visual frame of the photos. In this paper, the authors investigate the principle of "Respect for privacy" on the example of a case study of an accident in the brown coal mine "Soko" near Sokobanja. The accident happened on April 1, 2022, and eight miners lost their lives. The case study is based on the reporting of the local online portal from Niš called Južne vesti. The research was conducted from April 1 to October 25, 2022. The unit of analysis is each published newspaper article that dealt with this accident. In the paper, the authors examine whether the Južne vesti portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families, as well as other guidelines of media ethics. The corpus is composed of 21 analyzed texts, all of which were published on the Južne vesti portal under the sections "Society" and "Crime and accidents". Despite the sensationalism trends in the Serbian online media, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of our case study show that the Južne vesti portal respected the privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the "Soko" mine accident.

Keywords: Južne vesti online portal, "Crime and accidents" column, right to privacy, media ethics, accident in the Sokobanja "Soko" mine

[1] https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2413-5017, Corresponding author: tatjana.vulic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Contextualization of the Right to Privacy on the Online Portals in Serbia

Introduction

At the time of the abundance of information characterized by sensationalism and tabloidization, the right to privacy is questionable when it comes to the reporting done by online portals in Serbia. In their texts, journalists often reveal details about people who are connected to the events they report on. In this way, nowadays, the right to privacy of not only public figures, but also ordinary people, is reduced.

There is a question mark between the protection of the right to privacy and free media reporting. Some authors (De Berg, 2007; Vučković, 2018; Day, 2007) believe that the media can violate the right to privacy of certain persons in cases where it is of public interest. However, sometimes the public interest is viewed too broadly, so the protection of free media reporting can be the excuse to justify sensationalism or achieve professional and personal interests (Ćalović, 2011). Dale Jacquette also talks about respect for privacy from the point of view of journalism, stating that the development of technology also has an impact on the fact that it is difficult for ordinary citizens to hide information about their private lives from the public. He believes that the right to privacy is morally justified, and he mentions three arguments to support it: it is justified as the foundation and protection of individual freedoms; presumption of respect for persons as morally valuable and as a requirement that should be met so that people can live a happy life and avoid anxiety and discomfort. Therefore, the basic principle of journalistic ethics should be respect for the privacy of people (Jaquette 2007).

Hugo de Berg notes that the progress of global network communications has raised many legal issues, including privacy. He looks at the right to privacy from the perspective of investigative journalism, but also the legal framework, i.e., the laws in Great Britain, which ensure its protection when journalists do the reporting (De Berg, 2007). This right is a basic human right, and its importance is reflected in many international, regional and state regulations that deal with the issue of protecting the right to privacy (for example: Universal Declaration of Human Rights; European Convention on Human Rights, etc.). When it comes to Serbia, the right to privacy is not defined in the Constitution, however, several articles from the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia guarantee the rights arising from the right to privacy, such as the right to protection of personal data, the inviolability of the home and the right to secrecy of correspondence (Slijepčević, 2016). Our paper discusses the right to privacy from the perspective of the media, that is, online portals. The protection of the right to privacy of people reported by the media in Serbia is established by the Serbian Code of Journalists[2], as well as the Guidelines for the use of the Code of Serbia Journalists in the online environment[3].

[2] Principle VII "Respect for Privacy" (Press Council, 2015). See: https://savetzastampu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Kodeks_novinara_Srbije.pdf, visited on 14.1.2023.

[3] Chapter VII "Respect for privacy” (Press Council, 2016), amended in 2021 (Press Council, 2021 visited). See: https://savetzastampu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/smernice-za-primenu-kodeksa-

This paper wishes to highlight the need to protect the right to privacy on the online portals in Serbia precisely because they often violate this right with various clickbait[4] headlines and sensational reporting. This paper is based on a case study of the reporting of the local online portal from Niš called Južne vesti, and the main hypothesis is that this portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the accident in the "Soko" mine.

Importance of the right to privacy

According to Hugo de Berg, one of the main human and civilizational aspirations is the right to privacy. He claims that there are several reasons why we consider privacy a right, the main one being the importance of autonomy (De Berg, 2007). De Berg explains the significance and importance of privacy as follows: "If privacy was not recognized as a right, we would not be able to protect ourselves from manipulation and pressure on our thinking and behavior. Finally, privacy is important, because without it we would not be able to perform certain activities that allow us to build ourselves up" (De Berg, 2007: 224). For Mike Taylor, the process of defining the concept of privacy is slightly foggy, because sometimes the authors focus only on some aspects of this concept, and lose sight of other dimensions as well (Taylor, 2012). Jacquette believes that there are certain problems when defining the concept of privacy, so he calls the whole process a "slippery slope". The reason is that the concept of privacy is not absolute, because there are cases when it is difficult to establish privacy standards (Jacquette, 2007). The author primarily refers to situations when a journalist collects information about people who deserve public attention, and states that such a criterion "implies that violations of personal privacy of any public or private person are allowed, but only if this will lead to sufficiently important information that is really in the interest of the public" (Jacquette, 2007: 289). The author Jelena Vučković states that "There is a general ban on publishing information from a private life, that is, personal written records (private information)" (Vučković, 2018: 136). In most cases, the media can invade someone's private life only with the consent of those persons. However, Vučković, like Jacquette, believes that there are also cases when journalists can publish information from someone's private life even without consent and legal authorization. Vučković justifies the violation of privacy when it is in the public's interest to know (Vučković, 2018). Today's media have the rising tendency to include the private in the media space, regardless of whether the person to whom the information refers to gives permission. Due to such a way of working, the question arises whether by intruding into private life, the media today engage in a specific form of surveillance (Ćalović, 2011).

Although the authors above do not give the exact definition of the right to privacy, Louis Alvin Day defines it as "the right of an individual to be left alone

novinara-srbije-u-onlajn-okruzenju.pdf, https://savetzastampu.rs/lat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SMERNICE-PDF-PR.pdf, visited on, 14.1.2023.

[4] The European non-profit organization EAVI - Media Literacy for Citizenship defines sensational headlines as those that wish to attract attention, headlines that do not match the content and those that make money (EAVI, n.d.).

or the right to have control over unwanted publicity about personal matters" (Day, 2007:157). He claims that the job of the media is not to leave people alone, and he believes that one of the most difficult ethical issues of our time is to find a balance between individual privacy and the public's interest in information about others. Media workers should demonstrate special attention and a greater level of moral sensitivity when reporting on accidents and tragedies. Information about an accident should be published by the media, because it is in the interest of the public, but that interest does not include the publication of recordings and photos of the victims of the accident or talking to family members (Day, 2007).

The right to privacy is one of the more recent human rights that was recognized only in the middle of the 20th century and this right was mentioned for the first time in Europe in 1948, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 12[5] (Surčulija Milojević, 2016). The Constitution, as the highest legal act in the Republic of Serbia, does not define the right to privacy, but it offers a detailed list of human rights and rules from which the right to privacy can be abstracted. Thus, for example, the Constitution protects the inviolability of the home, the secrecy of correspondence and other means of communication, as well as physical and psychological integrity, and all these rights in international context equal the right to privacy (Gutić, 2010).

The protection of the right to privacy is a particularly important issue at a time of technological progress and the rapid spread of information, which is also contributed to the online portals, which the audience often uses to be informed. Compared to traditional media, online portals have brought a series of changes - supplementing content, multimedia access, and the speed of information distribution is one of its main features (Bajić, 2017). However, despite all the good aspects of online portals, there is a question whether they respect laws, human rights and regulatory and self-regulatory rules (Grigorov, 2019).

Protection of privacy on the online portals

More than half a century ago, the media theorist Marshall McLuhan highlighted that the progress of technology connects people and creates a "global village" (McLuhan, 1971). With the advent of the Internet, all borders were erased and more connections followed, so that village became more than a real representation of human life. The development of the Internet enabled the emergence of online journalism and information sharing on the online portals, so citizens can also be familiar with events outside their home country. Online journalism is metaphorically defined by Ward as a vast church that includes different genres and modes of reporting (Ward, 2002). Although the Internet is often perceived as a place that does not set limits to free expression, American journalism professor Richard Craig states that online journalists are bound by the same standards and laws as their colleagues in the

[5] Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation." Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." (UN General Assembly, 1948).

press or on television (Craig, 2010). In order for media workers to respect the ethical principles of journalism, self-regulation is an essential concept. Self-regulation in the media represents “organization within the profession, when journalists themselves set their ethical standards, expressed in journalist codes” (Surčulija Milojević, 2016: 72). It should be noted that the violation of journalism ethical codes in most countries, including Serbia, is not subject to legal sanctions (Malešević, 2017). Although the rules of the journalistic profession are not legally binding, they are legally important (Vodinelić, 2012). In 2006, the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) and the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS) adopted the Code of Journalists of Serbia. The code includes ten principles that media workers should adhere to when reporting, with special reference to principle seven, “Respect for privacy” (Press Council, 2015: 5). Also, as another form of self-regulation in the field of media in the Republic of Serbia, in 2016, the Guidelines for the Application of the Code of Journalists of Serbia in the Online Environment were adopted (Press Council, 2016). The manual “The Online Media Self-Regulation Guidebook” states that all ethical principles are important for journalism in the digital era, but it is especially noted that online journalists should be careful when it comes to privacy and verifying the information they have received (Hulin & Stone, 2013).

Respect for privacy, according to the Serbian Code of Journalists, states that “Journalists respect the privacy, dignity and integrity of the people they write about.” The right to privacy is narrowed when it comes to public figures, especially public office holders” (Press Council, 2015: 23). In the paper, we deal with the case study of the accident in the Soko brown coal mine, which is based on the reporting of the Južne vesti portal, and the first guideline of the principle explains exactly how to protect privacy in those cases - “When reporting on accidents and crimes, it is not allowed to publish names and photographs of victims and perpetrators that clearly identify them. Also, it is not allowed to publish any data that could indirectly reveal the identity of either the victim or the perpetrator, before the authorities officially announce it” (Press Council, 2015: 23).

The third rule refers to the manner of reporting on events involving personal pain, and it is the journalist’s duty to adapt their questions in a way that reflects discretion and compassion (Press Council, 2015: 24). Also, this rule includes the guideline that “photographers and videographers must treat victims of accidents and crimes with consideration and compassion” (Press Council, 2015: 24). In the Guidelines for the Application of the Code in the Online Environment, there is also the principle “Respect for Privacy” (Press Council, 2016). One of the guidelines that media workers should respect is the right to be forgotten, and it states that the online media editor “may decide to remove content or personal data within the content at the request of a person whose personal rights are threatened if the publication of personal data is not in the public’s interest, or if for any reason the right of the public to be informed about matters of public importance does not prevail over the protection of the right to privacy” (Press Council, 2016: 12).

According to the Share Foundation online media database, 1401 online media are registered in Serbia. The expansion of online media began in 2015 when 104 portals[6] were established. The consequence of the increasing number of online portals is increased competition in the field of media, which leads to the commercialization of content and often sensational reporting that is not in accordance with the stated guidelines of the Code. Thus, some portals revealed the identity of the victims and their families and details from their private lives when reporting on the accident in the "Soko" mine.

This paper is not based on a comparative analysis of the content, so we share some examples of the headlines to indicate the issue of privacy protection on the online portals: "*Don't go down, don't go down!" Terrible scenes at the cemetery in Bobovište, a miner who has a one-month-old son was buried* (Telegraf.rs, 2022)[7]*; HE HAD A SON 40 DAYS AGO, FIXED THE APARTMENT, BUT HE DIDN'T COME OUT OF THE PIT THIS MORNING! A poignant confession of Bojan's brother: They fell as if they were slayed!* (Kurir.rs, 2022)[8]. *12 FATHERLESS CHILDREN AWAIT JUSTICE, THE YOUNGEST IS FIVE MONTHS OLD: "Novosti" visit the families of the miners who died in the "Soko" mine" (PHOTO)* (D. Miljković, 2022)[9].

The starting theoretical foundation that we will use in the paper to explain how online portals publish content is the Gatekeeper Theory. The way in which the texts are distributed to the public often depends on the editorial policy, and it is the editors who are most often considered the gatekeepers. This theory shows us that the media do not publish all the information in their texts, but only the information that the editors choose, so it is a significant basis for our case study. Authors Shoemaker and Vos describe gatekeeping as the central role that the media play in contemporary public life (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The main element of gatekeepers' activity is selection, i.e., they choose how to shape the news, but also what to exclude from it (Shoemaker & Vos, 2014). The gatekeepers not only select information for the texts, but also put the content into a certain context. This theory also gains importance in the digital age, because it describes and explains phenomena that still exist, that is, individuals in the media still serve as gatekeepers (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016).

In addition to the headlines and article content, the paper will also analyze the photos about the accident in the "Soko" mine published in the Južne vesti portal. In order to see how this portal visually framed the analyzed texts, we will use framing theory. It is based on the idea of frame analysis by sociologist Erving Goffman, who believed that frames reduce the complexity of information, and that frames serve as a two-way process - they help interpret and reconstruct reality (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

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[6] The online media database (onlajnmediji.rs) is an open and free SHARE Foundation platform that contains information about websites whose primary purpose is to inform citizens, and which are registered as such as internet media" (Share foundation, n.d.).

[7] See:https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/hronika/3479870-ne-dole-ne-dole-strasne-scene-na-groblju-u-bobovistu-sahranjen-rudar-koji-ima-jednomesecnog-sina, visited on, 15.1.2023.

[8] See: https://www.kurir.rs/crna-hronika/3904663/nesreca-rudnik-soko-aleksinac-poginuli-rudari, visited on, 15.1.2023.

[9] See:https://www.novosti.rs/hronika/nesrece/1140083/pravdu-ceka-12-dece-bez-oceva-najmladje-ima-pet-meseci-novosti-porodicma-poginulih-rudara-rudniku-soko-foto, visited on, 15.1. 2023.

Journalism professor from the University of Evanston, Robert Entman, says that to frame a certain problem is to select some parts of reality and emphasize them in the text, so that they highlight a certain definition of the problem, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and/or a recommendation on how to solve a problem. He believes that the power of frames is great, and that they draw attention to some aspects of reality while covering other elements, causing different reactions from the audience. Frames are also taken as a visual category, so the photos in the text determine the focus of the story, as well as how the objects and subjects will be presented (Entman, 1993).

Methodology

The research subject in this paper is the respect for the right to privacy in the texts about the accident in the brown coal mine “Soko” published in the local online portal from Niš - Južne vesti. The main goal is to determine whether the Južne vesti portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on this accident. The main hypothesis of the research is that the Južne vesti portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the accident in the brown coal mine “Soko”.

The time frame of the research is from April 1 to October 25, 2022 (seven months). This time frame was taken because the incident happened on April 1, when the first text was published, while the last one on this topic was published on October 25. The unit of analysis is each published newspaper article that has this accident as its topic. The method applied in the case study is a quantitative-qualitative content analysis, and the corpus of analyzed texts is 21, all of which were published in the Južne vesti portal under the sections “Society” and “Crime and accidents” until November 10, 2022.

Research results

The research results will be distributed in two chapters. In the first part, and with a quantitative-qualitative content analysis and certain criteria, we will show how the Južne vesti portal reported on the accident in the “Soko” mine by analyzing the headlines and article content. The second part will include the photos that were published in that portal, which accompanied the texts about the accident.

Headlines and texts about the accident in the “Soko” mine

The analysis included a total of 21 texts about the accident in the “Soko” brown coal mine, which were published in the Južne vesti portal. In order to confirm the hypothesis that the Južne vesti portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the accident in the “Soko” brown coal mine, we will use the following criteria: mentioning the names and/or surnames of the victims of the accident in the headlines; mentioning victims in headlines without indication of the first and/or last name (Table 1). The criteria are: mentioning the names and/or surnames of the families of the victims of the accident in the headlines; mentioning victims' families in headlines without indication of the first and/or last name; mentioning the addresses of the victims and/or their families in the headlines (Table 2).

Table 1

Overview of the reporting about the accident by Južne vesti portal based on the headlines

	Number of mentions of names and/or surnames of accident victims in headlines	Number of mentions of the victims in the headlines without indicating the name and/or surname
	0	10
Total number of headlines		21

Ten headlines mention the injured miners; however, their names are not mentioned in any of them, only the words such as "killed miners", "dead miners", "deceased miners". When the accident happened on April 1, this portal published the headline *Serious accident in the mine near Sokobanja, 8 miners were killed and 18 were injured* (Lj. F, 2022)[10]. When the authorities first released information about the cause of the miner's death to the public, the headline read: *Ministry: Methane poisoning caused the death of miners in the Soko mine* (Lj.F, 2022)[11].

Table 2

Overview of the reporting about the accident by the Južne vesti portal based on the headlines

	Number of mentions of the names and/or surnames of the families of the victims in the headlines	Number of mentions of the families of the accident victims in the headlines without indicating the name and/or surname	Number of mentions of the addresses of the victims and/or their families in the headlines
	0	2	0
Total number of headlines		21	

[10] See: https://www.Južnevesti.com/Hronika/Teska-nesreca-u-rudniku-kod-Sokobanje-najmanje-8-rudara-poginulo.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

[11] See: https://www.Južnevesti.com/Hronika/Minsitarstvo-Trovanje-metanom-uzrok-smrti-preminulih-rudara-iz-rudnika-Soko.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

The headlines only mention the families of the dead miners twice, but none of the headlines mention their names and/or surnames. The day after the accident, Južne vesti published an article with the headline "Eight million dinars of aid for the families of the injured miners from the State budget" (Lj.F, 2022)[12]. An article with the headline "Humanitarian theater play in Aleksinac to help the families of the dead miners" was published on the portal (Tasić, 2022)[13]. By the way, the address or the exact place of residence of the victims and their families is not mentioned in any headline.

When it comes to the content of the articles, we will use the following criteria: mentioning the names and/or surnames of the victims of the accident in the articles; mentioning the victims of the accident in the articles without indicating the name and/or surname; mentioning the names and/or surnames of the victims' families in the articles; mentioning victims' families in the articles without indicating the name and/or surname; mentioning the addresses of the victims and/or their families in the articles. The victims of the accident in the "Soko" mine were mentioned 64 times in a total of 21 articles published by Južne vesti, but without mentioning their names and/or surnames. In the first article, when the accident happened on April 1, 2022, this portal published the initials of the deceased and the year of birth. The text was published under the headline "Serious accident in the mine near Sokobanja, 8 dead and 18 injured miners" (Lj.F, 2022)[14]. It should be mentioned that the journalists obtained these data officially, because they were published on the website of the Ministry of Mining and Energy and every citizen had access to it (Ministry of Mining and Energy, 2022).[15] There were 17 mentions of the victims' families in the articles, but none of the texts mentioned their names and surnames. One of the examples is the article with the headline: "Mihajlovic: Death of 8 miners in the Soko mine again subject to prosecution". Namely, the families of the victims were mentioned twice, but without names and surnames or any other determinants that would threaten the right to privacy: "She repeated that she would not give up on the fact that the families of the victims had to find out the truth and said that she trusted the institutions." (J.S, 2022)[16].

When it comes to publishing the exact addresses (street and number) of the victims and/or their families, which can also threaten the right to privacy, Južne vesti did not disclose this in any article. However, four articles mention the hometowns

12 See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Osam-miliona-dinara-pomoci-za-porodice-stradalih-rudara-iz-budzeta-Republike.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

13 See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Humanitarna-predstava-u-Aleksincu-za-pomoc-porodicama-poginulih-rudara.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

14 See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Hronika/Teska-nesreca-u-rudniku-kod-Sokobanje-najmanje-8-rudara-poginulo.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

15 See: https://www.mre.gov.rs/aktuelnosti/saopstenja/u-nesreci-u-rudniku-uglja-soko-poginulo-osam-rudara, visited on, 15.1.2023.

16 See: https://www.Južnevesti.com/Hronika/Mihajlovic-Pogibija-8-rudara-rudnika-Soko-ponovo-predmet-tuzilastva.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

of the deceased miners. That information was obtained from official authorities, considering that the municipalities, from which the victims of the accident came, declared a Day of Mourning. One of the articles in which the birthplaces of the dead miners are mentioned is headlined “Day of Mourning for the Death of Miners”. At the very beginning of that text, in the lead, the names of the municipalities are stated, “After the accident in the Soko mine, where 8 miners lost their lives, the municipalities of Aleksinac, Sokobanja and Trgovište made a decision to declare Saturday, April 2, as the Day of Mourning.” (M.M.K, 2022)[17].

Photographs of the accident in the “Soko” mine

In addition to the text itself and the interviewees, the photos also attract the readers’ attention. The parallel between the author of the text and the photographer is that the author chooses on which statements to build the text, while the photographer chooses what will be in his photograph (Entman, 1993). When we want to visually emphasize a certain message, it means that we choose how we will photograph a certain object, from which angle, but also what we will decide to publish along with the text from everything photographed (Perlmutter & Wagner, 2004). Research on the effects of visual framing also confirms the suggestive power of photography, and their result is that photographs contribute more to shaping the reader’s perception than the text itself (Powell et al., 2015). As is the case with headlines and texts, the media can also violate people’s right to privacy with photographs. A total of 29 photos were published on the Južne vesti portal in the articles about the accident in the “Soko” mine. In order to examine the hypothesis that the Južne vesti portal respected the right to privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the accident in the “Soko” brown coal mine, we will use the following criteria: photographs showing the victims of the accident; photographs showing the victims’ families; photographs showing the homes of the victims and/or their families.

Out of a total of 29 photos, only one shows the victims of the Soko mine accident. However, that photo is an exception, because it is a mural painted by the organization “28th June” painted in honor of the victims in Aleksinac. The mural is on a public surface and is available to citizens, and this photo was published in the article under the headline “The injured miners received a mural in Aleksinac, the report on the cause of the accident is still a secret” (T. Tasić, 2022)[18]. Južne vesti did not publish any photos showing the families of the deceased miners and there were also no photos showing the homes of the victims and/or their families. We will classify the photos that this portal published when reporting on the accident into several frames. There was a political frame and a human-interest frame that appear in other similar studies as well (Ali & Mahmood, 2013). Government representatives or other politicians are represented in the photos through the political frame, while

[17] See: https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Dan-zalosti-zbog-pogibije-rudara.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

[18] See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Nastradali-rudari-dobili-mural-u-Aleksincu-izvestaj-o-uzroku-nesrece-jos-tajan.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

the human interests frame shows people who have been affected by a certain event (Stojković and Petković, 2015). In the paper, we will add two new frames - the location frame and the victim frame. When it comes to the location frame, it includes photos that show specific locations (mine, parts of the city, institutions), while the victim frame shows the deceased miners (Table 3).

Table 3
Visual frames on the Južne vesti portal

	Number of photographs
Political frame	2
Human-interest frame	1
Location frame	25
Victim frame	1

Two photographs in the articles published by Južne vesti show the former state secretary of the Ministry of Mining and Energy, Zorana Mihajlović. One example is the article headlined *Mihajlović: "The Ministry is preparing criminal charges for the death of miners near Sokobanja*" (Ljubica Jocić, 2022)[19]. In that text, the state secretary is on the cover photo, so the photo itself is in line with the headline and content of the article, because it contains the statements of the former state secretary.

Photograph 1
Cover photo on the Južne vesti portal, 6/8/2022 (Author: Željko Veljković)

[19] See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Hronika/Mihajlovic-Ministarstvo-priprema-krivicne-prijave-zbog-smrti-rudara-kod-Sokobanje.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

When it comes to the human frame and photos of people affected by the accident, the portal published only one photo showing mine workers. It is found in the article headlined *"Three points": 50 days without answers about the causes and those responsible for the tragedy in the "Soko" mine* (T. Todorović, 2022)[20]. In addition to the accident, the article also discusses the conditions in which miners work, and the cover photo shows two mine workers hugging each other. This photo shows that the miners' job is not easy at all, it shows unity, but also sadness for the victims.

Photograph 2

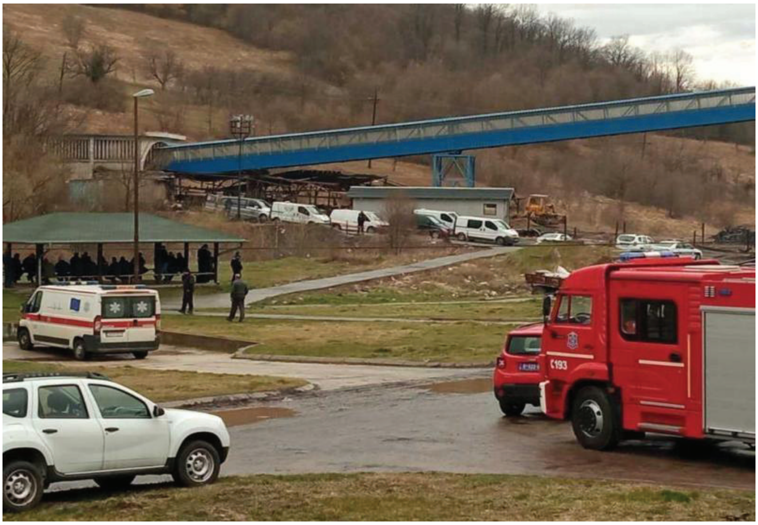
Cover photo on the Južne vesti portal, 23/5/2022 (Author: Zoran Petrović)

Out of a total of 29 photos, 25 belong to the location frame. A total of 23 photos shows the accident site - the "Soko" brown coal mine; one shows the Cultural Center in Aleksinac, and one article contains a photo from the Aleksinac Health Center. As an example, we cite the article headlined "The report on the cause of the accident in the Soko mine exists, it is not yet public and is being analyzed by experts" (T. Tasić, 2022)[21]. The cover photo shows the accident scene, and it also shows the Ambulance and the Fire Department vehicles. The photo is in line with the headline and content of the article, because it relates to the cause of the accident that happened at that place.

[20] See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Tri-tacke-50-dana-bez-odgovora-o-uzrocima-i-odgovornima-za-tragediju-u-rudniku-Soko.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

[21] See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Izvestaj-o-uzroku-nesrece-u-rudniku-Soko-postoji-jos-nije-javan-i-tumace-ga-vestaci.sr.html, visited on, 15.1.2023.

Photograph 3
Cover photo on the Južne vesti portal, 25/5/2022 (Author: Vanja Keser)



When we talk about the frame of the victims, it includes only one photograph that we previously mentioned in the article headlined "Deceased miners received a mural in Aleksinac, the report on the cause of the accident is still a secret" (T. Tasić, 2022)[22]. This is a mural in Aleksinac, which is dedicated to the deceased miners and depicts all eight victims of the mine accident. Also, the mural shows what a miner's job looks like.

Photograph 4
Cover photo on the Južne vesti portal, 22/7/2022 (Author: „28th June")

[22] See:https://www.Južnevesti.com/Drushtvo/Nastradali-rudari-dobili-mural-u-Aleksincu-izvestaj-o-uzroku-nesrece-jos-tajan.sr.html, visited, 15.1.2023.

Conclusion

The right to privacy of public figures, but also of private figures, is in most cases violated in the media (Vulić, 2018). The monitoring of the Press Council in 2020 showed that among the principles of the Code, journalists violated respect for privacy the most (Press Council, 2020). The right to privacy should be especially adhered to when accidents and misfortunes occur. However, in reality, as this monitoring from three years ago showed, the private lives of the victims and their families are often intruded upon. At a time when it often happens that media workers do not think about ethics but fight for readership, it is necessary to strengthen the control of compliance with rules and ethics. Is that possible nowadays? We have our research to support this. A quantitative-qualitative content analysis showed that the Južne vesti portal respected the principle of "Respect for privacy" and its guidelines (Press Council, 2015, Press Council, 2016) when reporting on the accident in the mine, with the headlines and article content. This local portal from Niš did not reveal the identities of the victims and/or their families, i.e., their names and/or surnames, as well as the exact address in any of the headlines and articles. The Južne vesti coverage of this accident, through headlines and articles, was more focused on answers related to the cause of the accident, who would be responsible for it, as well as what would happen to the other miners. There were no funeral reports in the texts, journalists did not enter the houses of the victims' families, and the gatekeepers put sensationalism aside.

Although the media can protect privacy in headlines and articles, photographs can often reveal the identity of victims and their loved ones. When reporting on the accident in the mine, Južne vesti published photos that are in accordance with the Code of Journalists of Serbia. There were no photos showing the victims or their families and homes, and the exception to this is the photo of the mural in Aleksinac published by this portal. The reason this photo is an exception is that the mural was painted in honor of the victims, it is located on a public surface, it is publicly accessible to all citizens, and some murals require the consent of the authorities. The largest number of photos belong to the location frame, i.e., the photos that show specific places, and the most of the published photos show the accident site, i.e., the mine. Such photos from the scene properly accompanied the texts, especially since they showed ambulance and fire service vehicles as details, and not the victims or their families. Južne vesti also used the victim frame with the photograph of the mural, and in several photos the political frame and the human-interest frame were represented, which followed the texts well. The analysis showed that the Južne vesti online portal respected the right to privacy of the miners who died in the mine near Sokobanja and their families with photographs as well. Although Južne vesti adhered to the Journalist Code of Serbia when reporting on the accident in the mine and avoided sensationalism, this did not affect the lower readership of this portal. For example, the text headlined "Serious accident in the mine near Sokobanja, 8 dead and

18 injured miners" (Lj.F, 2022)[23] had 18,368 views, which is a significant number for local media.[24] In addition to the sensationalism trend in the Serbian online media, the quantitative-qualitative analysis of our case study showed that the Južne vesti portal respected the privacy of the victims and their families when reporting on the accident in the "Soko" mine.

The accidents and incidents topics are particularly sensitive. Therefore, media workers should be more cautious in all segments of reporting, especially when it comes to respecting the right to privacy of the victims and their families. Positive examples in practice show that reporting in such situations is possible without violating someone's privacy, and that the story must firstly focus on the issues of the public interest.

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Kontekstualizacija prava na privatnost na onlajn portalima u Srbiji

prof. dr Tatjana Vulić
FIlozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija
MA Tamara Tasić
FIlozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Sažetak

U Srbiji je sve veći broj onlajn portala što za posledicu ima i veću konkurentnost na medijskom tržištu. U želji da povećaju čitanost, „klikove” na objavljenim tekstovima i time budu među najposećenijima, uređivačka politika neretko se opredeljuje za senzacionalizam. Takvo izveštavanje često dovodi i do povrede prava na privatnost, a pogotovo kada je reč o nezgodama i nesrećama koje se objavljuju u rubrici „Hronika” ili „Crna hronika”. To se često dešava ne samo u tekstovima, već i u naslovima ili kroz vizuelni okvir na fotografijama. U radu se autorke bave istraživanjem načela „Poštovanje privatnosti” na primeru studije slučaja nesreće u rudniku mrkog uglja „Soko” kod Sokobanje. Nesreća se dogodila 1. aprila 2022. godine i tada je poginulo osam rudara. Studija slučaja zasnovana je na izveštavanju lokalnog onlajn portala iz Niša Južnih vesti. Vremenski okvir istraživanja je od 1. aprila do 25. oktobra 2022. godine. Jedinica analize je svaki pojedinačno objavljeni novinski napis koji za temu ima ovu nesreću. Autorke u radu ispituju da li je portal Južne vesti poštovao pravo na privatnost žrtava i njihovih porodica, kao i ostale smernice medijske etike. Korpus analiziranih tekstova je 21 koji su objavljeni na portalu Južne vesti u okviru rubrika „Društvo” i „Hronika”. Uprkos trendovima senzacionalizma u srpskim onlajn medijima, nalazi kvantitativne i kvalitativne analize naše studije slučaja pokazuju da je portal Južne vesti poštovao privatnost žrtava i njihovih porodica prilikom izveštavanja o nesreći u rudniku „Soko”.

Ključne reči: onlajn portal Južne vesti, rubrika „Hronika”, pravo na privatnost, medijska etika, nesreća u rudniku „Soko” Sokobanja

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Media Pluralism in the Digital Environment From the Users' Point of View

Ivana Stamenković[1], Assistant Professor
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
Tatjana Đukić Živadinović, PhD
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The rapid development of communication platforms and services on the Internet created the conditions for greater audience participation in the online sphere. Parallel to the emergence of new communication spaces in which different ideas, opinions, and attitudes can be generated, there is a trend of algorithmic arrangement of content that is distributed to media users. Cognitive horizon narrowing, fake news, and public polarization are just a few of the consequences of these algorithmic calculations. Media pluralism, which is seen as an essential quality and norm of a democratic and informed society, is facing unique challenges. Given that previous researchers of media pluralism did not consider users' perspectives, this exploratory study aims to identify media users' perceptions and interpretations of the phenomenon. From the perspective of the user, the paper examines four dimensions of media pluralism: access to news sources and quality journalism; credibility, trust in the media, and attitudes toward misinformation; media transparency, and the ability to locate or avoid news (Klimkiewicz, 2019). An online questionnaire was used to collect the data. The conclusion is that ignoring citizen journalism and communication with media users, as well as the lack of opportunities for users to manage information in the online space, leads to an increase and deepening of the gap between the media and users.

Keywords: pluralism, digital media, media, algorithms, users

Media Pluralism in the Digital Environment From the Users' Point of View

Introduction

One of the terms that is often used to describe the desired characteristic of modern media is media pluralism. It is considered a norm and an essential value of a democratic and information society, established on the basis of the principle of

[1] https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3612-1659, Corresponding author: ivana.stamenkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

the free flow of information, ideas, opinions and diversity as an important quality of contemporary forms of expression in art and culture. Media pluralism can be defined from different perspectives, so that external and internal pluralism are highlighted as the dominant angles of interpretation. While the first implies the existence of various media and diversity of media ownership, internal pluralism refers to the diversity of content, topics and perspectives within the same media (Valcke, Picard & Sükösd, 2015). Given that the boundaries between different forms of communication and actors are blurred and indistinct in the convergent media environment, this distinction is also becoming less apparent and more difficult to detect (Bayer, 2019). According to Dennis McQuail (1992), pluralism is associated with the independence of media from the state and from hidden finance mechanisms, and is defined as the result of the efficient free market. The outcome of such a model of pluralism is the protection of the media from centralized control and uniformity (McQuail, 1992: 142).

Taking into account that the ownership structure of the media affects the expansion of a certain political, economic and cultural ideology, the emergence of the Internet and new communication platforms is perceived as the liberation of alternative voices from the margin of society. The modern, digitalized world has eliminated the communication barriers that marked the era of the analog media. Access to information, creation, shaping and distribution of news are no longer the exclusive domain of traditional media; instead, citizens are increasingly involved, resulting in the creation of an entirely new social reality. “Information gates” are widely open for new actors of the communication process, as well as for different ways of production and distribution of information. However, the availability of such opportunities does not guarantee that they will be most effectively used or that those who more or less participate in the process of online communication have the potential to provide an authentic, creative and significant contribution to information flows. In addition, the majority of media users who do not know or do not understand the mechanisms of online and offline media operations, their relations with other economic organizations, institutions and political parties, remain outside the zone of authentic action. Moreover, the implementation of non-transparent practices and algorithms which direct media users to content that serves the interests of new intermediaries, such as search engines, Internet service providers, content aggregators and similar actors, poses a threat to the achievement of the desired plurality of opinions, attitudes and ideas (Jakubowicz, 2019). Issues regarding the concentration of audience in the online space, which is frequently misled by the ideology of an individualized, personalized access, are added to the issues caused by the accumulation of ownership in the media (Valcke, Picard & Sükösd, 2015).

From the digital user’s perspective, there are four aspects of media pluralism that are analyzed in this paper: access to news sources and high-quality journalism; credibility, trust in the traditional and online media, and attitude towards misinformation; media transparency and the ability to find or avoid news (Klimkiewicz, 2019).

Theoretical framework

Media policies and modern democracies that acknowledge the fact that freedom of expression is essential to media freedom and media pluralism strive to create a pluralistic media environment. Also, they form the foundation of the rule of law and introduce an atmosphere of a healthy political climate and debate. As stated in Recommendation 1 of the Council of Europe on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership: “They are essential to the functioning of a democratic society, because they help to ensure the availability and accessibility of different types of information and opinions, which people may use to create and express their opinion and exchange information and ideas”.

Most frequently, media pluralism, in this case external, is associated with the diversity and transparency of media ownership where increased market accumulation can result in the development of monopoly and oligopoly (Brogi, 2020). In addition, it can threaten the democratic debate by narrowing the media space for different opinions and attitudes. Moreover, the transparency of ownership in the media can be an indicator of the degree of ownership concentration in the market, which also gives the audience an orientation for determining the importance of information they receive from those media sources.

Taking into consideration the changes in the media-audience relationship in the digital universe, Karol Jakubowicz states that there are two approaches to media pluralism that can be observed; one is defined as “public service”, while the other is “free market”. The first approach emphasizes that diversity and pluralism are the goals of media policy, which establishes cultural and political norms of cultural diversity, civil equality and universalism. This type of pluralism serves the entire society whose members have different cultural values and political views. The policy of the so-called “principled pluralism” is organized (pluralism ensured by law and regulations that leads to the representation of different social groups, cultural communities and political parties), proactive (a diversity of opinions, political attitudes, identities via media services, contents and structural aspects are actively generated and shaped), open (social diversities are reflected, such as political, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and other structures), and polarized (media are identified with ideologically opposed options, so that advocacy journalism and commentary journalism are dominant).

Free market policy, on the contrary, is based on the neoliberal conception of media pluralism, which includes deregulation, free consumer choice and a free market of ideas. This policy is spontaneous (media system and contents have a more flexible and spontaneous structure, the representation of diversity is individualized, while the interactions between media providers and users provide the foundation for media pluralism), reactive (reflects the diversity of opinions, political attitudes, cultural representations), reflexive (reflects existing population preferences), external (a variety of independent and autonomous media and providers) and moderate (the ideological differences between the media are small, while cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences do not affect the media structure) (Jakubowicz, 2015: 33-34).

The era of new media services, digital communication services and content generated by citizens has introduced new challenges to media researchers and creators of media policy. In modern society and modern democracies, non-media sources are gaining dominance and influence and the content produced and distributed from these centers has a significant social impact. However, citizens are not entirely free in the new communication environment, since between them and the desired information, as well as the relevant content of public interest, there are new factors of influence and actors who take over the control of the informative online space. The previous "information gatekeepers" of the analog age were replaced by new ones, the intermediaries, the mediators in the distribution of information, such as search engines, social media, applications, non-linear audiovisual services, etc. (Brogi, 2020: 2). Thus, the initial enthusiasm that new technologies would enable a cheap and universal system for distributing information of any kind, has been replaced by a justified concern about how to ensure media pluralism in the digital environment, which through algorithmic programming, tends to narrow down the information horizons, and under the pretense of personalization, eliminates alternatives and the complete picture of social reality. The availability and pluralism of the new media environment are threatened by other phenomena on social media, such as echo chambers (Sunstein, 2001) and filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011), thanks to which communicators reinforce the existing beliefs by communicating with like-minded people, while keeping their distance from those whose beliefs and opinions they do not share. In addition, they remain closed to the topics of public interest and to a common perspective which would enable the development of a dialogue and a critical debate. In that way, many users of digital information remain deprived of different points of view, attitudes and opinions, which is limiting their participation in a democratic spirit. In order to overcome the discovered inadequacies and improve the conditions for the development of media pluralism and plurality of information, algorithms should be developed in a way that exposes users to a variety of information of public interest, and not just to personalized and/or popular content (Brogi, 2020; Helberger, 2015). Also, other authors have expressed similar thoughts. In order to highlight the fact that media users are significant actors in a democratic mission of media pluralism and media policy, Napoli added a third dimension, the exposure diversity, to the already existing forms of diversity, the diversity of source and content, which are already recognized as the key dimensions of media pluralism (Napoli, 1997: 63). Therefore, this type of diversity refers to the audience dimension, and examines the extent to which the diversity of content leads to the audience's diverse consumption. Its importance is particularly emphasized from the point of view of the advantages and disadvantages in the era of new information intermediaries, whose primary goal is to attract the attention of the audience, to influence the access and choice of the audience (Helberger, 2014: 4-5). Given that the scope of media users' actions is greater in the era of the digital media and new online communication spaces, Napoli implies that anyone having the appropriate technology and necessary communication skills can produce content, but the main issue is its distribution (Napoli, 2009). This issue is particularly visible in the modern methods of conducting business online, where the paid dissemination of information and ideas in search engines and intermediary services of content selection determines the winners and the losers. In this way, when compared to others, some sources of information can provide themselves more prominence and priority in demonstrating the public, while algorithms and search engines also contribute to that. For that reason, they "have become an important issue in the debate on the effective dissemination of information and ideas, both from the perspective of information providers and the perspective of end users" (Van Hoboken, 2012: 260). Considering that the policy and content of media pluralism are undergoing drastic changes as a result of new spaces, services and actors of communication in the digital era, the term hybrid media pluralism has started to be increasingly used in the academic discourse to indicate the new reality. "Hybrid media pluralism can be seen as a dynamics between the forces of commonalities and differences; the ground of shared knowledge and contesting differences; the existence of shared values and common standards (such as media freedom that safeguards the hybrid media infrastructure of public communication) and culturally different and geographically specific experiences" (Klimkiewicz, 2019: 4). Despite the fact that the audience plays an important role in the hybrid media environment, it has been often overlooked in examining media pluralism and defining media policies. Referring to Potter, Klimkiewicz states that there are three types of false impressions that are prevalent in contemporary society. Firstly, a high saturation of information and news is often falsely identified with a variety and diversity. Secondly, there are both the false sensations of being well-informed and having control. Furthermore, Klimkiewicz indicates that the deliberative and representative value of pluralism in the hybrid media environment can be observed from four aspects from the media users' point of view: 1. access to news sources and high-quality journalism; 2. credibility, trust in the traditional and online media, as well as dealing with misinformation; 3. media transparency; 4. findability and news avoidance (Klimkiewicz, 2019: 5).

The first aspect, access to news sources and high-quality journalism, implies the existence of professional frameworks, including quality of journalistic training, professional associations that protect the professional autonomy, efficient self-regulatory measures and standards, as well as quality of content and journalistic performance, which is reflected in accuracy, impartiality, comprehensibility, explanatory value and the like.

Another aspect of media pluralism refers to the credibility of news and dealing with misinformation. Credibility affects the improvement of content quality, as well as the trust of users in a content provider and news in general. The reliability of information depends on the factors such as the level of competence of a source, their reputation and authority, the recency of information and its corroboration. Also, when examining media pluralism, it is important to consider how users interact with misinformation. If users do not distinguish between the quality of news, as well as which news to trust, then their autonomy concerning the selection of news would be futile. The research Citizens and the Media: Consumerism, Habits and Media Literacy, conducted by CESID in Serbia in 2020, showed that 24% of participants trusted the traditional media more, of which a fifth of participants (19%) trusted television the most, while the same percentage (24%) declared that they trusted Internet portals and websites. While younger participants are more oriented towards Internet portals and websites, older and less educated participants express their trust in television. It is significant that even a third of participants do not trust either traditional or online media. When it comes to news and information sources, it is notable that almost 50% of participants never or very rarely pay attention to the sources of information. If attention is not paid to the source of information, then it becomes challenging to evaluate the received information and develop a proper attitude towards the source and content of news.

The third aspect of media pluralism refers to media transparency. Furthermore, Klimkiewicz points out the three levels of the interpretation of transparency. The first is the structural level and refers to the means and processes by which the media inform citizens about ownership structures, sources of finance and control arrangements. This includes information on the ownership structure, links with other businesses, companies and organizations, political affiliation of a newspaper owner, organizational control and the editorial independence. On the second level, the level of provision and distribution of content, transparency refers to information on how the content is edited, distributed and created and on how algorithmic decision-making processes work. At the level of practice, transparency is created by making newsrooms and journalists responsible and checking the credibility of information (Klimkiewicz, 2019: 12).

The fourth aspect related to hybrid media pluralism from the user perspective is news findability and information overload. Despite the greater control that users have over information, they spend more time searching for and consuming the content that does not meet their demands. Additionally, users who are overloaded with news may avoid them and other information necessary for a critical evaluation of reality (Klimkiewicz, 2019: 13).

Paradoxically, having a greater control of the time and form of media use, users spend increasingly more time on searching and using the content that does not necessarily meet their personal purpose (Klimkiewicz, 2019: 13). Although users may be guided by various reasons in news avoidance, it can be a cause for concern if they "cut themselves" from a potential usage of news diversity. It might also be a reason for consideration if growing numbers of citizens seem to be disconnected from the news at all, whether this happens as a deliberative strategy of news avoidance or as a more accidental consequence of marginalization (Schrøder, 2016).

Method

In the previous studies of media pluralism, the position of media users was disregarded (Klimkiewicz, 2019; Napoli, 2007). Therefore, this paper focuses on users and their perception and interpretation of pluralism. The aim of the paper is to examine the four aspects of media pluralism from the user's perspective: (1) - access to news sources and high-quality journalism; (2) - credibility - trust in the traditional media and dealing with misinformation; (3) - media transparency; (4) - findability and news avoidance (Klimkiewicz, 2019). In this study, a survey was used as the method of data collection. It was conducted online using the Google Forms tool in April and May 2022. The obtained data were analyzed using the Microsoft Excel program

Research Sample

Taking into account that the survey was conducted online, among the Internet population, the survey sample was random and it included 200 Internet users.

Table 1

Gender of the respondents

Gender	N	%
Male	68	34
Female	132	66
Total	200	100

As shown in Table 1, of the total of 200 respondents who took part in the survey, 68 respondents, or 34%, were male. In addition, there were 132 female respondents, which comprises 66%. The largest number of respondents belonged to the group between 25 and 34 years of age (39.5%), whereas individuals over 55 comprised the smallest percentage of respondents (1.5%). The respondents aged 18-24 made up 28% of the sample, while those aged 35-44 made up 25%. Also, only 6% of respondents belonged to the age group 44-55. As far as the level of education is concerned, the majority of respondents (45%) have a university degree and slightly less is the percentage of those having a master’s degree (36%). There were 16% with a high school diploma and 3% of those with a doctoral degree.

The respondents generally spend less than two hours on the Internet (35%) or two to four hours per day (32%). However, 15% of respondents tend to spend time online between four and six hours per day. Only 9% of respondents say that they spend more than six hours a day on the Internet, while 3.5% declare they do not spend more on media content at all. In addition, 5.5% of respondents expressed uncertainty on this issue.

Most respondents (46.5%) obtain information through social media and online media portals (21.5%). Moreover, 17% of respondents use Internet browsers for obtaining information, while 7.5% use media applications on mobile phones for the same purpose. Traditional media are used by only 7%, while 0.5% use different communication applications such as Viber to get information.

The majority of respondents (44%) use between two and four media outlets and news sources daily, while 19% use between four and six. On a daily basis, media are not used by 14.5% and 9% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the amount of media content they consume on a daily basis. Only 9.5% stated that they use more than five media or sources every day, while 8% tend to use only one.

Results and Discussion

Dimension 1 - Access to news sources and high-quality journalism

Although there are several journalistic associations in Serbia, such as the Journalists' Association of Serbia, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia, the Association of Online Media and others, the largest number of respondents (36.5%) is not certain whether there are professional journalistic associations that safeguard the autonomy of the journalistic profession. Furthermore, 27.5% of respondents mostly agree with the statement that such bodies exist, while 18% mostly disagree. In addition, 8% completely agree, while 10% completely disagree with the statement. Also, 24.5% completely disagree with the statement that there are effective self-regulatory measures and standards related to the journalistic profession in Serbia, while 22% mostly disagree. Only 14.5% of respondents hold the opposing view, while as many as 39% of them are uncertain on this matter.

A negative trend is also noticeable when examining opinions about a sufficient number of online media in Serbia, whose work is characterized by accuracy, impartiality, groundedness in facts, comprehensibility, etc. Moreover, as it can be seen in Table 2, only 4% of respondents completely agree that there is a sufficient number of such media, whereas 10.5% mostly agree.

Table 2
In Serbia, there is a sufficient number of online media whose work is characterized by accuracy, impartiality, groundedness in facts, comprehensibility…

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	8	4
I mostly agree	21	10.5
I'm not sure	78	39
Mostly I don't agree	44	22
I completely disagree	49	24.5
Total	200	100

Nevertheless, the negative views prevail, according to 46.5% of respondents, whereas 39% express uncertainty. However, on the issue of increasing citizens' participation in political life, 40% of respondents agree that online media contribute to it, while 35.5% think the opposite. Still, what is noticeable is the high degree of uncertainty on this issue as well (24.5%).

Therefore, in terms of examining the access to information sources and quality journalism, a third of respondents (36.5%) are uncertain whether there are journalistic organizations that preserve the autonomy of the profession or whether media houses apply self-regulatory measures to verify the compliance with the fundamental professional standards (46.5%). It is possible to differently interpret the respondents' uncertainty - either as a consequence of a fundamental lack of interest in the principles necessary to preserve the credibility of professional journalism, or, conversely, as a result of the current state of the media. The second assumption is based on the fact that almost half of the respondents mostly or completely disagree with the statement that accuracy, impartiality, groundedness in facts and comprehensibility are the qualities of online media (46.5%). While a third of respondents believe that online media contribute to the increased male and female citizens' participation in political life, a similar percentage of them believe that the media fail to perform this important function. It is important to take a qualitative approach to this issue, which includes examining how people perceive the media's role in enhancing political participation of citizens and media polarization.

Dimension 2 - Credibility - trust in the media and attitudes toward misinformation

None of the respondents expresses complete trust in online media, while 5% indicated they mostly agree with the statement that the majority of the online media in Serbia are reliable.

Table 3
I trust most of the online media in Serbia

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	0	0
I mostly agree	10	5
I'm not sure	23	11.5
Mostly I don't agree	90	45
I completely disagree	77	38.5
Total	200	100

There is a large percentage of those who mostly (45%) or completely disagree (38.5%) with this claim, as is the case with the traditional media. Only 9.5% state that they trust most of the traditional media, while 77% have the opposite opinion. In addition, they are regarded as the unreliable sources of information by 60% of respondents. Under such a perception of the media environment, 26% say they have difficulties recognizing fake news, 12.5% are uncertain, whereas 60% state that they have no difficulty identifying fake news. However, when interpreting this answer, it should be remembered that it represents a socially desirable answer. Only 4% of respondents believe that the online media respect ethical principles, compared to 73.5% who believe the opposite. In addition, 22.5% remain uncertain on this issue.

Based on the collected data, it can be asserted that when evaluating the credibility of the online media in Serbia, the largest number of respondents express a negative attitude and distrust in the online media (83.5%), do not believe they are reliable sources of information (60%) and believe they do not adhere to fundamental ethical principles (73.5%).

Dimension 3 - Media transparency

As far as media transparency is concerned, Internet users have a very negative perception of it, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
I think that online media in Serbia are transparent in terms of their financing.

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	10	5
I mostly agree	2	1
I'm not sure	61	30.5
Mostly I don't agree	58	29
I completely disagree	69	34.5
Total	200	100

Another notable finding is the high percentage of respondents (30.5%) who are uncertain on the issue of the transparency of online media (Table 4). Also, the respondents express uncertainty (32.5%) on the matter of media transparency in the context of their ownership structure, relations with other media and non-media actors, political affiliation of media owners and other factors. As many as 57% of respondents believe that the media are not transparent regarding this issue. This finding is not surprising, given that the ownership of the media in Serbia is not sufficiently transparent, and this lack of transparency is seen as one of the major issues affecting Serbia's media system (Petković, 2014).

Furthermore, 30% of respondents are not certain whether the online media provide information about the creation and editing of content in the online environment or whether they offer information on how algorithmic decision-making processes function in their media. Almost 60% of them believe that the media do not provide such information. As can be seen in Table 5, there are different viewpoints on the matter of clear instructions for commenting on content and moderation rules.

Table 5
Online media have clear instructions for commenting on content, as well as moderation rules.

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	13	6.5
I mostly agree	65	32.5
I'm not sure	62	31
Mostly I don't agree	39	19.5
I completely disagree	21	10.5
Total	200	100

Therefore, there is a very negative assessment of media transparency. Bearing in mind that the importance that users give to the content of such media is also influenced by the assessment of various dimensions of transparency, the obtained results are expected.

Dimension 4 - The ability to find or avoid news

Only 16.5% of respondents state that they have a certain level of difficulty finding information in the online environment, while 14.5% are uncertain. Although the majority of respondents declare that it is easy to find contents they are searching for (69%), a higher percentage of them feel overwhelmed with irrelevant information in the online space (82.5%), as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
I feel overwhelmed with irrelevant information in the online environment.

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	74	37
I mostly agree	91	45.5
I'm not sure	14	7
Mostly I don't agree	14	7
I completely disagree	7	3.5
Total	200	100

Furthermore, 31% of Internet users declare that it is difficult for them to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in the online media, whereas 12% express uncertainty. However, 57% of respondents state that they do not experience such difficulties.

Table 7
Occasionally I avoid the news because of the clutter of information when searching an online post.

Level of agreement	N	%
I completely agree	71	35.5
I mostly agree	69	34.5
I'm not sure	21	10.5
Mostly I don't agree	28	14
I completely disagree	11	5.5
Total	200	100

The data also indicate that the majority of respondents occasionally avoid searching for news due to being overloaded with different information in the online sphere (70%).

Conclusion

In order to reinforce the importance of media pluralism, it is necessary to ensure diverse news that can be created by a combination of high-quality journalism, credibility and media transparency, as well as the availability of information. In the hybrid media environment, the accomplishment of this goal depends on the various aspects of the relationship between the media and the audience. According to the research, the respondents in the sample have a negative opinion about the online media, believe that they are not reliable sources of information, they are uncertain of the features of the ownership structure, the relationships between other institutions and the political establishment, as well as what models of creation, management and delivery of information are being applied. In addition to the results indicating that the respondents' trust in the online and traditional media is at a low level, there are other findings that point to the respondents' difficulty navigating the new, digital conditions of communication and indicate the lack of skills in critically approaching information in the online media and the online space in general.

The mechanism of withdrawal and news avoidance prevents people from the opportunity to participate in modern information flows and search more purposefully for alternative information and interpretations, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of social reality. If the online media do not discover adequate business models focused on developing a dialogue with media users and improving citizen journalism, and without citizens being trained to manage information in the online domain, the disparity between these parties will only widen and deepen.

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Medijski pluralizam u digitalnom okruženju iz ugla korisnika

doc. dr Ivana Stamenković
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
dr Tatjana Đukić Živadinović,
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Sažetak

Sažetak: Eksplozivni razvoj platformi i servisa komunikacije na internetu stvorio je uslove za aktivnije angažovanje publike u onlajn sferi. Paralelno sa pojavom novih komunikacijskih prostora, u kojima je moguće generisanje različitih ideja, mišljenja i stavova, pojavljuje se trend algoritamskog uređenja sadržaja koji se distribuira medijskim korisnicima. Sužavanje kognitivnih vidika, lažne vesti i polarizacija javnosti samo su neke od posledica ovih algoritamskih proračuna. Posebni izazovi nalaze se pred medijskim pluralizmom, koji se percipira kao suštinski kvalitet i norma demokratskog i informisanog društva. Imajući u vidu da raniji istraživači medijskog pluralizma nisu uzimali u obzir perspektivu korisnika, ovo eksplorativno istraživanje ima cilj da ukaže na percepciju i tumačenje pojave među medijskim korisnicima. U radu se analiziraju četiri dimenzije medijskog pluralizma iz korisničkog ugla: pristup izvorima vesti i kvalitetnom novinarstvu; kredibilitet, poverenje u medije i stavovi prema dezinformacijama; medijska transparentnost i sposobnost lociranja ili izbegavanja vesti (Klimkiewicz, 2019). Podaci su prikupljeni metodom online upitnika. Zaključak je da zanemarivanje građanskog novinarstva i komunikacije sa medijskim korisnicima, kao i nepostojanje mogućnosti da korisnici upravljaju informacijama u onlajn prostoru, vodi u povećanje i produbljivanje jaza između medija i korisnika.

Ključne reči: pluralizam, digitalni mediji, mediji, algoritmi, korisnici

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Information Chaos on the Internet - Perception in Relation to the Age of Users[1]

Ilija Milosavljević[2], Research Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
Jovana Trajković, Research Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
Neda Necić, Research Assistant
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The rapid development of the Internet as a dominant medium in the field of information brought with it several novelties, caused by the nature of digital networked media. First and foremost is the hyperproduction of information as a result of each user's free creation of content, but also the major problem of orientation in a narratively disconnected hyperspace and the proliferation of a large number of fake news. All of these changes resulted in the phenomenon of information chaos, or users' disorientation in the Internet environment. In order to adapt to the new environment, users must learn a variety of new skills, which is much easier for younger generations than for older generations.

The aim of the study is to determine to what extent users use the Internet for the purpose of information and in which ways they perceive information chaos. The goal is also to determine if there are any differences in the subjective feeling of disorientation on the Internet between younger and older users. The basic working hypothesis is that Internet users use the Internet as their primary source of information every day and are aware of information chaos on this medium, and that older users experience information chaos to a greater extent than younger users. The sample consists of 120 people divided into two groups: those aged 15 to 35 and those aged 45 and up. The data was collected using a specially designed questionnaire distributed via the Google Forms application, and the results were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistics in the SPSS 24.0 program. The findings show that the respondents use the Internet for information on a daily basis, but certain differences in perception of the Internet chaos were noticed between age groups. Besides, younger respondents use the Internet as primary source of information, whereas older respondents use the Internet as a secondary source of information, that is as a supplement to other media.

Keywords: information chaos, Internet, disorientation, hypersphere, age differences, perception

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[2] https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2341-7637, Corresponding author: ilija.milosavljevic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Information Chaos on the Internet - Perception in Relation to the Age of Users

Introduction

The development of new media forms of communication and informing the public has changed many habits and ways in which people function in society. The Internet and all the media tools and means of communication it has spawned have ushered global human society into the information age. It is characterized by an immediate, fast and large flow of information through new technologies, which become available to all users of new media. One gets the impression of a highly informed public and a world that, according to the parameters of information exchange, fully corresponds to Marshall McLuhan's global village (McLuhan, 2012). Such information exchange is fast, unlimited by space and very accessible. The fact that there are almost 400 registered information portals in Serbia, according to the Media Center from Belgrade, and that new ones are launched almost every week, speaks of the popularity and the need of public opinion for quick information (Media Center).

However, very soon after the mass popularization of information via the Internet, it was noticed that, due to the possibility that anyone can create content on it and that it is very difficult to control and regulate it, it is extremely difficult to find one's way in the Internet chaos. That is why Internet search engines appear as one of the main tools that facilitate navigation in endless databases. However, they do not eliminate the chaos of information on the Internet, but, as Neville Holmes (2005) claims, only hide it. They process the user's requests with tremendous speed and offer him the best Internet search results. But even with these tools, the amount of information that is placed on the Internet every day, both on portals and on social networks, forums and other forms of Internet communication, leads to the impossibility of regulation and organization of data and requires considerable skills in navigating such a space.

While the younger generations that grew up alongside the development of the Internet have become somewhat accustomed to the changes in the Internet environment and are actively adapting, the generations that grew up with traditional media may have greater problems in navigating the Internet environment.

The phenomenon of information chaos on the Internet - causes and consequences

The phenomenon of information chaos does not refer only to the Internet, but to a general state in which information is produced in much greater numbers than it can be processed by the audience. An equally adequate term that can be used to explain the state in which consumers of content arising from informational chaos find themselves is informational disorientation. Yu Chen Shih (Yu-Cheng et. al., 2012) with associates indicates that the problem of information chaos on the Internet can be observed particularly when analyzing the learning methods through the Internet. This disorientation stems from the hypertextual, i.e., non-linear structure of the Internet, which enables users to move freely along different information channels. The problem arises when there are so many channels that one cannot orientate through which to get the necessary data (Yu-Cheng et. al. 2012). The non-narrative nature of hypertext is connected with this problem. More precisely, in a world where the presentation of information in all spheres of society is increasingly based on storytelling forms, the hypertextuality of the Internet and its fragmentation have a negative effect on user orientation. The Internet actually requires the user to develop a different reading of texts compared to the linear reading of texts in traditional media. Peter Aflenbach and Byeong-Young Cho point out that this change is not simple, and that it requires the development of a different cognitive strategy for hypertext reading on the Internet, which involves independently giving meaning and following the information that "readers" encounter on the Internet. Otherwise, it results in a cognitive block that manifests itself as disorientation (Aflenbach, Cho, 2009). Smith calls this problem "lost in hyperspace" and explains it as the cognitive problems users feel for being unable to navigate the information environment (Smith, 1996: 365).

It is important to emphasize that disorientation on the Internet can be subjective and objective (Akçapinar, Cosgun, Altun, 2011). Objective disorientation is most often defined as "being lost" in the Internet space, while subjective disorientation is the experience or awareness of one's own random wandering through the Internet highways. These two dimensions of disorientation need not be identical. Users may think they are in a considerably less lost situation than they actually are. The best examples of this are social networks, which, thanks to the chaotic content they display, lead users to multiple different information channels. Users themselves most often do not have a clear goal when they access social networks, but instead indulge in this kind of chaos and do not perceive it as such.

The problem of the nature of the Internet, i.e., its hypertextual form and the absence of a narrative structure, is not the only one that contributes to information chaos. A much bigger problem is the fact that the Internet space is getting bigger and that there is an increasing amount of information on it. The increasing availability of the Internet has also contributed to it, which again led to the phenomenon of forums and blogs, and later social networks. With the inclusion of all users as content creators, the information richness of the Internet has increased considerably, creating a new phenomenon of journalism, citizen journalism (Krstić, 2011). Related to this phenomenon is the growing phenomenon of fake news on the Internet, which incites chaos to an even greater extent. Therefore, content and form contribute equally to the information chaos on the Internet, i.e., the fact that it contains an immeasurable and constantly growing amount of information and the fact that it is not structured and classified but connected by hypertext without a narrative form. There are ideas about solving this problem through the creation of an information-centric Internet (Trossen, Parisis, 2012), but with the growth of the Internet space, this is an increasingly difficult undertaking.

According to research, the consequences of accessing the chaotic Internet space are the feeling of being lost in space, the feeling of distance and loss of directional navigation. Also, a growing gap is created between those who have developed special cognitive skills and techniques for navigating the Internet and those who have not (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, 2015), which leads to a kind of monopoly on access to information by the former. There may also be a reluctance to use the Internet among low-skilled users, or their narrow movement area within it.

Causes of differences in the orientation of Internet users

Orientation on the Internet, that is, disorientation, directly depends on the navigation skills in the digital space that users possess. They can be divided into several types:

1. Operational – A set of basic computer and Internet skills. They refer to the use of search engines, search programs and Internet forms;
2. Formal – Skills of movement through hypermedia space versus the linear one. They refer to navigation on the Internet and the skill of maintaining a sense of location in this space;
3. Information – Information literacy, that is, the ability to detect, locate and evaluate the desired information on the Internet. Related to this skill is the skill of determining the truth of the information found;
4. Strategic – They are defined as the skills to use the Internet for informational and educational purposes, i.e., productively, versus static use for entertainment purposes (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, 2009).

A person can possess these skills at different levels, and the way and ease with which one moves in the information chaos will depend on them. As skills are much easier to master at an earlier age, and as the Internet only became more widely available at the beginning of this century, it can rightly be assumed that the generations that grew up alongside it are the most successful in avoiding digital chaos. Marc Pransky calls these generations “digital natives”. This generation is characterized by rapid reception and response to larger amounts of information, random access to information (like hypertext), entertainment and enjoyment versus work (Prensky, 2001). Conversely, according to him, there are older generations that he calls “digital immigrants” who gradually “move in” to the digital world and learn and understand its concepts more slowly. They understand the concepts of the digital age and the need to master new skills, but they do not attach as much importance to them as “digital natives” do (Ibid). Therefore, it is logical to conclude that “digital immigrants” experience disorientation and information chaos to a much greater extent when navigating the Internet space due to possessing much weaker skills than needed in the new media environment.

This claim is confirmed by the research of Van Deursen, Van Dijk and Oscar Peters conducted in 2011, which determined that older Internet users are significantly worse at maneuvering the Internet space and have more difficulties in finding the necessary information. Conversely, it is interesting that older users interpret and understand content on the Internet better than younger users (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, Peters, 2011). This indicates that neither side is completely immune to the informational chaos of the Internet because it is multi-layered and affects different generations in different ways. However, even age may not be an indicator of differences in users' perception of Internet chaos. This is indicated by a study conducted by Michael Crabb and Viki Hanson three years later. In this research, it was determined that the difference in the users` age has a very low impact on the ability to navigate the Internet, while experience, confidence and perceptual speed have a much greater impact on reducing the feeling of disorientation on the Internet (Crabb, Hanson, 2014).

Both studies had a small number of respondents and were concerned with the research of *objective* factors of orientation on the Internet, i.e., experiencing disorientation, i.e., information chaos. However, as the perception of this phenomenon can be subjective and as such it is significantly different from the objective one, it would be important to determine if there are differences in the subjective perception of Internet chaos between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants".

Subject, goal and research hypotheses

The subject of the research is the attitude of Internet users about the information chaos on the Internet. The goal is to determine the extent to which users experience information chaos and how attitudes differ between younger and older populations. In relation to the goal, the basic hypothesis of the research was defined, which reads: Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information every day and are aware of the information chaos that exists in it, and information chaos is experienced to a greater extent by older users. Due to the complexity of the main hypothesis, the auxiliary ones are defined as follows:

1. Internet users use the Internet daily primarily for information
2. Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information
3. Internet users notice and experience all aspects of information chaos on the Internet
4. Older Internet users use the Internet to a lesser extent for information

Older Internet users experience information chaos to a greater extent in comparison to younger ones

Method

In accordance with the set goal and hypotheses, descriptive and comparative statistical methods were used in the research. The instrument for data collection is a specially created questionnaire of a combined type that contains 19 questions, 8 of which are defined as questions with specific answers offered, while 11 were created according to the attitude method with Likert-type answers with 5 levels of agreement, whereby number 1 represents complete disagreement with the stated assertion, number 3 is the absence of an attitude, while number 5 represents complete agreement.

The sample consists of 126 respondents; 80 of them are between 15 and 35 years of age, while 46 respondents are older than 45. The age of the first group was defined based on the year 1996, which was taken as the year when the Internet in Serbia became available to the public. As it has been pointed out that those who grew up with the Internet do best, the upper limit of digital natives consists of people who are now under 35, and who were younger than 10 at the time of the popularization of the Internet. A gap of 10 years between the two groups was determined in order not to overlap the results, but to obtain a clearer age difference. The research was conducted from November 15 to December 15, 2022.

For the sake of more precise data processing, the SPSS 24.0 statistical data processing program was used for descriptive and comparative analysis.

Interpretation of results and discussion

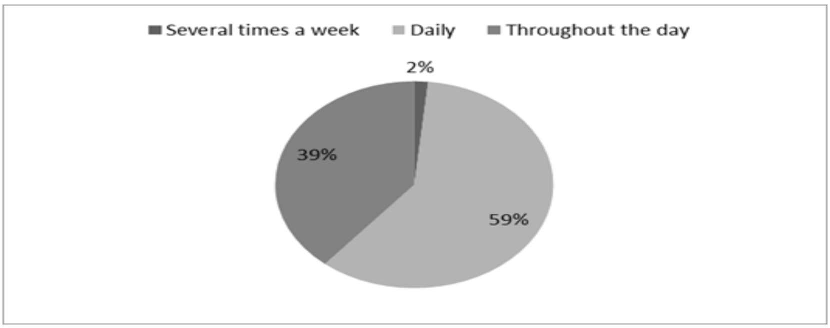
Out of 126 respondents, 80 belong to the age category of 15 to 35, and 46 belong to the category of 45 and over. The percentage of female respondents was significantly higher, 71.4%, i.e., 90 respondents, while the percentage of men was 28.6%, i.e., 96 of them. Almost the same percentage of respondents had a college degree (39.7%) and completed master's or doctoral studies (38.1%). Additionally, 21.4% of respondents completed high school, while only one respondent completed elementary school. For the sake of transparency and verification of the set hypotheses, the answers of the entire group of respondents are first presented, while in the second part of the interpretation of the results, the answers are compared in relation to age.

Internet use and perception of Internet chaos

When it comes to the frequency of Internet use (Graph 1), as many as 59.5% of respondents answered that they use it daily, 38.9% throughout the day. Only two respondents (1.6%) use the Internet several times a week, but not every day. Thus, 98.2% of respondents access Internet content daily. The most common reason for accessing the Internet is information in 54% of cases, while the second place is entertainment (22.2%), and the third is education (14.3%). Furthermore, 9.5% of respondents declare that they use the Internet for other purposes.

Graph 1

Percentage display of respondents' frequency of Internet use Figure title



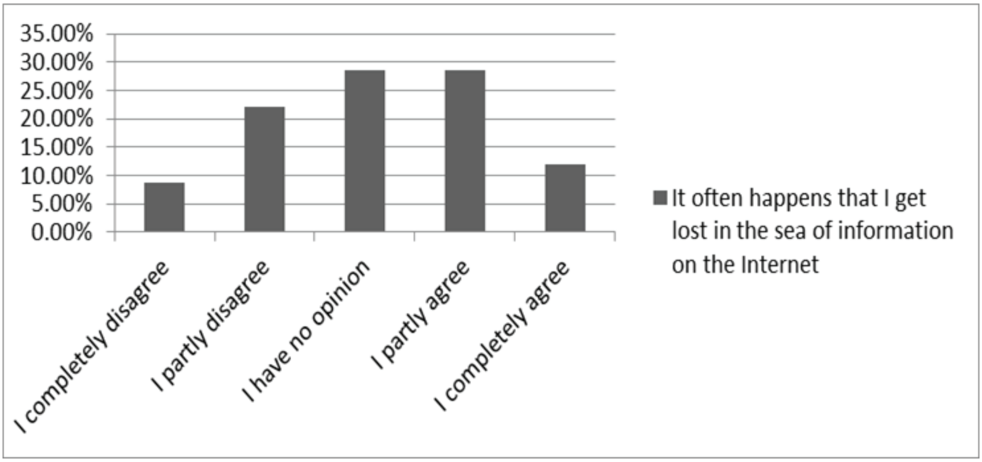
The smallest percentage of respondents (4.8%) visit 1 to 2 sites on the Internet on average, while almost 80% of them visit 10 or less than 10 sites per day. Only 20.6% of respondents visit more than 10 sites.

When it comes to information, the largest number of respondents use the Internet as a primary means of information (62.7), while almost half as much (35.7%) use the Internet as a supplement to other media, and only 1.6% of respondents do not use the Internet for getting informed. Respondents singled out social networks as the most common platforms for information (used for this purpose by 65.1% of respondents), followed by Internet portals (56.3%) whereas forums and blogs are in the last place (18.3%).

Therefore, from the overall presented results, it can be concluded that the first auxiliary hypothesis, which claims that *Internet users use the Internet daily primarily for information*, has been largely confirmed. Respondents use the Internet, almost without exception, every day, and more than a third of them are not constantly on this platform. At the same time, more than half of them primarily use the Internet to get information, most often through social networks or Internet portals, while less often the main reason for going online is entertainment or education. However, the second auxiliary hypothesis, which assumes that I*nternet users use the Internet as a primary form of information*, is only partially confirmed. Although a higher percentage of respondents do so, a large number still uses this platform as a supplement to traditional media.

When it comes to the feeling of disorientation on the Internet, 40.5% of respondents partially or fully agree with the statement that sometimes *they get lost in a sea of information looking for something on the Internet*. Moreover, 28.6% of surveyed users have no opinion on this statement, while 30.9% partially or completely disagree with it (Graph 2). The largest percentage responds positively to a greater or lesser extent to the statement *I do not encounter difficulties when I want to find what I am interested in on the Internet*, while only 8% do not think so to a certain extent. It is important to note that almost a third of respondents do not have an opinion on this. Therefore, a large percentage of respondents believe that it is easy to get lost in the sea of information on the Internet, but a significant number of them still feel confident when searching for what interests them. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the hyperproduction of information and its disorganization, which creates informational chaos on the Internet, leads to the feeling of disorientation of almost half of the surveyed Internet users. However, when they purposefully search for information, they do not encounter difficulties. In this regard, 84.9% indicated that they do not need help when searching for information on the Internet.

Graph 2
Percentage of respondents' agreement with the statement that they get lost on the Internet



This is supported by the results, which show that exactly half of the respondents are of the opinion that the Internet could be better organized and defined when it comes to information. Conversely, only 15% of respondents believe that the Internet itself is well organized when it comes to information. Therefore, users perceive chaos and experience it, but they have developed cognitive skills in order to be able to find what they need.

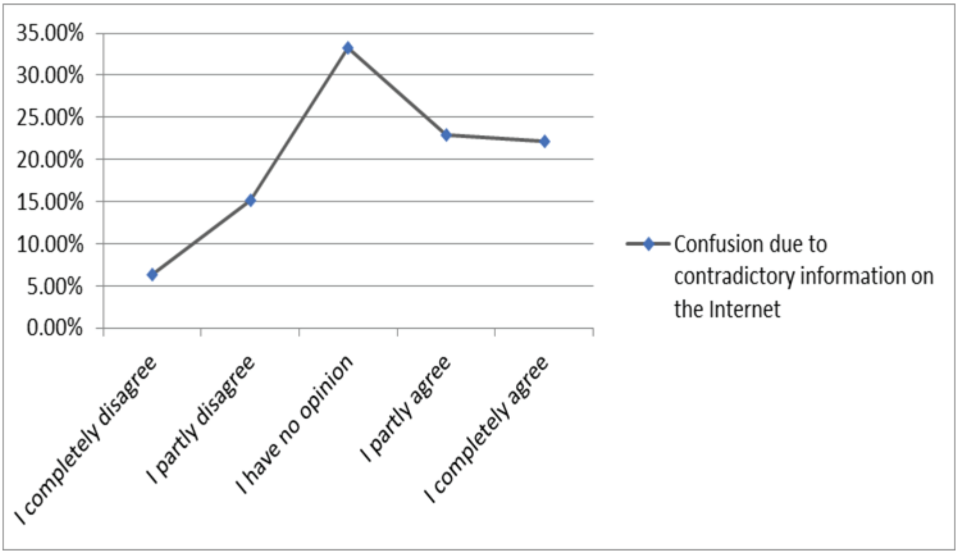
However, it is important to note that the survey showed that the largest number of users (66.6%) completely or partially disagree with the statement that it is easier to get information through traditional media compared to 9.5% of respondents who consider traditional media to be a simpler way of information. This indicates that, although there is a feeling of confusion due to information hyperproduction, the largest percentage of respondents believe that it is easier to get information through the Internet than through television, newspapers and radio. The fact that 69.8% of respondents believe that the Internet has expanded their sphere of interest also indicates that the respondents see the advantage of the Internet. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypertext nature of the Internet and the need to navigate in it, in addition to confusion, also lead to greater informational curiosity of the users, and this phenomenon should not be considered entirely negative.

The problem of misinformation on the Internet arising from an increasing number of fake news and a form of uncontrolled citizen journalism is perceived by the respondents as twofold. Thus, 21.4% of respondents rarely come across contradictory information on the Internet that creates a feeling of confusion, while 45.2% of them experience a feeling of confusion due to contradictory information. However, almost a third of respondents do not have an opinion on this issue.

In contrast, more than half of the respondents (57.1%) do not have a clear position when it comes to the reliability of information through the Internet. Internet information is considered reliable by 26.2% of respondents, while 16.7% have the opposite opinion. Almost half of the respondents experience a feeling of confusion due to contradictory and false information, but only slightly more than 10 believe that the Internet is not reliable. It should be noted that half of them are not sure if it is a reliable source of information, which contributes to the feeling of disorientation and confusion.

Graph 3

Percentage representation of respondents on the claim that they feel confused due to contradictory information on the Internet



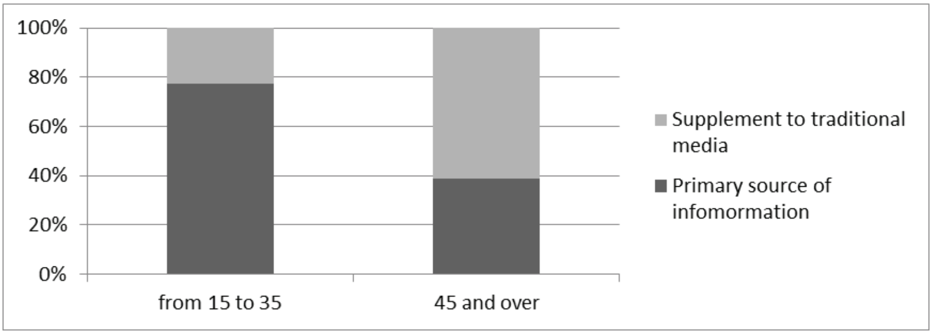
From the presented results, it can be concluded that the respondents, as a whole, feel the consequences of information chaos on the Internet in the form of disorientation and confusion, to the greatest extent due to the large amount of information and its disorganization. Also, the respondents have to a certain extent the problem of moving in hypertext, but also the problem of noticing true information online. However, among Internet users there are also those (in a smaller percentage) who do not have a problem with certain aspects of information chaos, and it can be determined that the third auxiliary hypothesis that reads *Internet users notice and experience all aspects of information chaos on the Internet* is partially confirmed. The largest percentage notices the specifics of information chaos and perceives them as a problem, but there are also those who do not think that these problems exist, nor do they perceive information chaos on the Internet. These differences in attitudes may be due to the age of the respondents.

Differences in the perception of information chaos in relation to the age of the respondents

In relation to the age of the respondents, there are certain differences in the way the respondents use the Internet. Only 19.6% of respondents over 45 use the Internet throughout the day, while 50% of younger people do so. Also, among the younger respondents, there is not a single one who does not use the Internet daily, while 4.3% of the elderly do not access the Internet every day, but do so several times a week. When it comes to the purpose of using the Internet, both groups of respondents use the Internet primarily for information purposes - 67.4% of the older and 46.3% of the younger ones. Nevertheless, this difference of 20% in the answers may indicate that older respondents have a smaller radius of movement on the Internet, that is, their Internet use is somewhat limited in relation to purpose. This is supported by the data on the differences in the number of sites that both groups visit on average in one day on the Internet. The results also show a difference in the number of the Internet sites that respondents visit on average per day. Thus, respondents under 35 mostly visit 5 to 10 websites (45%), while older respondents visit fewer websites per day - from 3 to 5 (41.3%).

There is a significant difference in the way respondents use the Internet for information. When it comes to older users, 58.7% of them use the Internet as a secondary source of information, that is, as a supplement to other media, while only 22.5% of younger users do so. On the contrary, younger users mostly use the Internet as a primary source of information, in the percentage of 77.5% compared to older respondents, which is 37%. When they do so, both groups use social networks in a similar percentage (about 65%), while the percentage of young people who primarily get information on portals is slightly higher compared to older respondents, 62.5% versus 45.7%. In this sense, it is important to note that as many as 63.1% of older respondents believe that it is impossible to follow all important topics via the Internet, in contrast to younger respondents, where only 30.1% of them have such an opinion. In a certain sense, this justifies the fact that older respondents use the Internet as a secondary source of information, given that they believe they cannot follow all important topics through the Internet. Therefore, there are clearly noticeable differences in the frequency of Internet use, the purpose and the channels through which respondents older than 45 get information, compared to those under 35. The elderly access the Internet less often, and even when they do, they see information on the Internet as a supplement to information in traditional media. Also, to a lesser extent, they use official portals for information, but they get information on social networks, forums and other entertainment sites. Therefore, it can be determined that the fourth auxiliary hypothesis has been confirmed, that is, that o*lder Internet users use the Internet to a lesser extent as a primary form of information.*

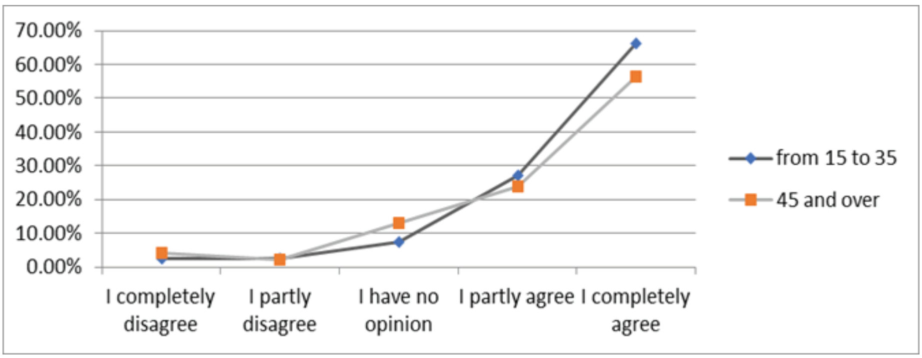
Graph 4
Percentage display of respondents' views on the use of the Internet for information



Differences in attitudes towards the experience of certain aspects of online disorientation are not found in all statements, but they are identified in some of them. Thus, to the statement that they sometimes get lost in the sea of information on the Internet, as many as 48.8% of the younger respondents answered that they partially or completely agree, compared to 26% of the older ones. When it comes to help when searching the Internet, there were no significant statistical deviations. Thus, 87.6% of respondents under the age of 35 claim that they do not need help when searching, as well as 80.4% of respondents over 45.

In this sense, 84.8% of older people agree with the statement *I know exactly what I'm looking for when I search the Internet*, compared to 72.6% of younger people. Therefore, older respondents have greater self-confidence when using the Internet and have the impression that they do not get lost in information chaos, that is, they feel the consequences of hyperproduction of information and disorientation in hypertext to a lesser extent. The reason for this may be the already mentioned fact that older Internet users visit fewer sites on a daily basis, which can cause a feeling of less disorientation. In a similar percentage (about 70%), both groups of respondents do not encounter difficulties when searching for what interests them.

Graph 4
Comparative percentage of respondents' views on the statement I don't need help when searching the Internet



The largest number of respondents of both age groups do not have a clear attitude when it comes to the reliability of information through the Internet (about 60%), with younger people expressing greater confidence in the reliability of Internet information. However, only 13% of older respondents stated that it does not happen to them to find completely different information on the same topic on the Internet, and are not sure which is correct, while this happens to almost a third of younger respondents. This is supported by the fact that almost half of the older respondents do not have an opinion on this issue (45.7%).

There are 62% of younger respondents who do not agree with the statement that it is easier to get information through traditional media, compared to 56.6% of older respondents, while twice as many older respondents do not have a clear position on this issue compared to younger respondents (17.5%). In the comparative statistical analysis, there are no significant indications in any case that older respondents experience greater disorientation in the Internet space, according to any of its indicators, compared to younger users. Therefore, it can be argued that the fifth auxiliary hypothesis, which assumes that *older Internet users experience information chaos to a greater extent than younger ones*, is completely unconfirmed.

The disconfirmation of the last auxiliary hypothesis is unexpected, first of all, because earlier research (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, Peters, 2011) that dealt with the difference in the orientation of Internet users in relation to age indicates that older users exhibit all the characteristics of disorientation.

They see the Internet as reliable; they think that they do not need help to navigate it, they do not get lost in the sea of information, they know what they are looking for in a hypertext environment and they can almost always find it. However, we should not forget that respondents who are 45 or older access the Internet less often and use it as a supplement to information from traditional media. Therefore, as one of the possible explanations for the more comfortable use of the Internet by the elderly compared to the young, it can be offered that older users have a lower sense of disorientation because they have not fully familiarized themselves with the size and possibilities of the Internet space, and therefore with the chaotic nature of hypertext, fake news and hyperproduction of media texts. An opposite explanation could be that older respondents on the Internet are only looking for additional information that is already known to them through traditional media. In this sense, the number of sites they visit is smaller because it is not their primary source of information.

As the first two auxiliary hypotheses were confirmed to the greatest extent, the third was confirmed partially, the fourth completely, and the fifth hypothesis was refuted, it can be concluded that the main research hypothesis, which assumes that Internet users use the Internet as a primary form of information every day and are aware of the information chaos on this medium, and information chaos is experienced to a greater extent by older than younger users, was partially confirmed. Respondents use the Internet daily, mostly for information, and they see problems that lead to information chaos. Older users, contrary to the majority of prior research that dealt with objective disorientation on the Internet, possess a higher level of self-confidence and trust in the Internet space and do not perceive movement through it as a problem.

Concluding considerations

The appearance of the Internet as a dominant form of informing the public has brought many changes in the way media content is used and coordinated with the new media space. The changes were caused by the general availability of the Internet, the hyperproduction of information and the constant growth of the number of websites, a large number of social networks, the appearance of a large amount of false information, but also the hypertextual nature of the media. In order for users to adapt to them, they must develop a whole series of new skills, and this learning process is much easier for a group of young "digital natives" than for older "digital immigrants". The research has established that users use the Internet daily for information purposes and that they face all aspects of information chaos on it. However, contrary to the objective state of affairs, although they use the Internet considerably less and as an auxiliary rather than the main means of information, older users perceive the chaos and problems it brings to a lesser subjective extent. Their more limited use of hypertext gives them the impression of a much more harmonious and reliable medium, and this is proven by the fact that they visit fewer sites per day compared to younger users. Simply, "digital immigrants" have a subjective view that they are much more prepared for the Internet than is objectively the case.

The importance of the research is that it determines the basic habits of Internet users, and the general perception of disorientation on the Internet, but also that it determines that the subjective attitude about Internet chaos among older users is similar in intensity to that of younger users. In this way, it points out that there are two dimensions of Internet chaos, objective and subjective, and that they are inversely proportional in certain segments.

The main drawback of the research is the small sample size, as well as the fact that the objective skills of the respondents were not measured, which would have given an even more complete understanding of this phenomenon. The research can be used as a basis for a more complex investigation of the phenomenon of experiencing information chaos on the Internet, or as part of a longitudinal study on this phenomenon. It should be expected that in the future the Internet will become an increasingly dominant source of information, as generations become even more accustomed to it, but thanks to this habituation, they will become even more aware of the problems of disorientation in the Internet sphere and the confusion of the growing hyperspace.

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Informacioni haos na internetu – percepcija u odnosu na uzrast korisnika

MA Ilija Milosavljević
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija
MA Jovana Trajković
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija
MA Neda Necić
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Sažetak

Nagli prodor interneta kao dominantne platforme u sferu informisanja doneo je sa sobom nekoliko novinina uzrokovanih prirodom digitalnih umreženih medija. Na prvom mestu je reč o hiperprodukciji informacija usled slobodnog kreiranja sadržaja svakog korisnika, ali i o velikom problemu orijentacije u narativno nepovezanom hiperprostoru i bujanje velikog broja lažnih vesti. Sve te promene stvorile su fenomen informacionog haosa, odnosno dezorijentacije korisnika u internet okruženju. Kako bi se navikli na novi prostor, korisnici moraju razviti niz novih veština, a njih mnogo lakše usvajaju pripadnici mlađih generacija, dok je to znatno teže starijim.
Cilj rada je da ustanovi u kojoj meri korisnici upotrebljavaju internet u svrhu informisanja i na koje načine opažaju informacioni haos. Takođe, cilj je i utvrditi razlike u subjektivnom osećaju dezorijentisanosti na internetu kod mlađe i starije populacije korisnika. Osnovna pretpostavka rada je da internet korisnici koriste internet kao primarni vid informisanja svakodnevno i svesni su informacionog haosa koji na njemu postoji, a informacioni haos u većoj meri doživljavaju stariji nego mlađi korisnici. Uzorak čini 120 ispitanika koji su svrstani u dve kategorije: od 15 do 35 godina starosti i od 45 ili više. Instrument za prikupljanje je posebno dizajniran upitnik distribuiran putem aplikacije Google Forms, a metod korišćen za ispitivanje rezultata je deskriptivna i komparativna statistika u programu SPSS 24.0. Rezultati pokazuju da ispitanici koriste internet svakodnevno za informisanje, ali su u okviru starosnih grupa primećene izvesne razlike u percepciji haosa na internetu. Osim toga, mlađi ispitanici internet koriste kao primarni vid informisanja, dok stariji ispitanici internet koriste kao sekundarni izvor informisanja, odnosno kao dopunu drugim medijima.

Ključne reči: informacioni haos, internet, dezorijentacija, hipersfera, razlike u uzrastu, percepcija

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The Problem of The (Ir)Rational Agent: The Question of the Discontinuity Between Ethical Reflection and Action in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

Marija Glasnović[1], PhD

Abstract

In this paper, I will examine the problem of the (ir)rational agent, and discuss the issue of discontinuity between ethical reflection and action in Kierkegaard's philosophy. The quality of infinity of ethical reflection generates the problem of justification of its interruption: since the reflection cannot stop itself, the question arises as to how it is possible to "deduce" action from it. This means that an individual can either be a highly rational non-agent (if he indulges in reflection) or an irrational agent (if he interrupts reflection to instigate action). I will pose the problem in an epistemological way, and thus try to answer the question of the formation of existential beliefs, that is, beliefs with ethical-religious content. I will try to prove that, although the process of formation of existential beliefs requires a sudden interruption of ethical reflection, this does not mean that the transition from reflection to action is unjustified, and ethical-religious beliefs unfounded. Furthermore, I will try to show that the moment of choice, which is an essential element of the formation of existential beliefs, does not render the process irrational. Namely, I will show that the choice, which is carried out in the process of adopting existential beliefs, does not refer to their content, but to their actualization in the domain of practice. The subjective thinker does not choose low-probability beliefs that are not supported by evidence, but decides to prove existential beliefs existentially — by living by them.

Keywords: ethical reflection, (ir)rational agent, existential belief, existential faith

The Problem of the (Ir) Rational Agent: The Question of the Discontinuity Between Ethical Reflection and Action in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

It is generally known that reflection precedes (or at least should precede) action. Before we decide which model of behavior to accept or how to respond to the moral problem in a given context, we usually examine different options, consider the

[1] Corresponding author: marijaglasnovic988@gmail.com

possible consequences that our actions could produce, and interpret the specificity of our moral situation in the light of generally accepted moral principles. When we finish the deliberation, we decide to act. From everything that has been said, it seems that action follows naturally and unproblematically from the previously conducted reflection. But is it really so? In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus describes the situation of the agent as follows: “The demand of abstraction upon him is that he become disinterested in order to obtain something to know; the requirement of the ethical upon him is to be infinitely interested in existing” (Kierkegaard 2009: 316). Climacus suggests that there is a disproportion between the logic of reflection and the ethical demands. What does this mean?

The problem of ethical reflection

To be able to answer this question, the analysis should recall the research of Compaijen and Vos about the peculiar nature of ethical reflection. In the paper *Ethical Reflection as Evasion*, we read: “As *ethical* reflection, it is essentially directed towards the domain of practice, dealing with action, choice, and existence. As ethical *reflection*, however, it moves in the opposite direction, away from practical life” (Compaijen, Vos 2019: 68). On the one hand, the goal of ethical reflection is to govern and initiate action; on the other hand, its very nature prevents it from doing so. Within Kierkegaard’s philosophy, this phenomenon is known as the problem of the infinity of reflection. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, in the part where Climacus questions the possibility of an absolute beginning of speculative philosophy, we read the following: “Reflection has the notable property of being infinite. But its being infinite must in any case mean that it cannot stop by itself” (Kierkegaard 2009: 95). The infinity of reflection is grounded in the incompleteness of both the subject and the object of knowledge. When reflection is directed to the empirical domain, its object turns out to be unfinished because all empirical existence is in the constant process of becoming. Similarly, the reflecting subject is also caught up in the process of becoming; his continuous cognitive (but also existential) development further establishes the inexhaustible renewal of reflection. Finally, it should be noted that reflection has the qualification of infinity because it is always possible to produce a higher cognitive act whose object would be a reflection of a lower order. At the same time, it should be clearly stated that the infinity of reflection is not a bad thing in itself. When it comes to scientific reflection, the character of infinity opens up the possibility of revising and rebuilding scientific theories, thus contributing to the progress of science. However, within the field of ethics, the infinity of reflection has completely different implications. When questions of morality are raised, and propositions of existential importance are considered (which oblige the individual to act and organize their life accordingly), reasoning has the character of urgency. In this sense, Kierkegaard warns in several places that ethics differs from other sciences in its “direction” – while other sciences tend to collect data and expand the existing fund of knowledge, thus moving from actuality to ideality, the meaning of ethics is the actualization of the knowledge, translation of the ideal into the actual. In terms of ethics, reflection has to lead to action. However, since reflection has the characteristic of infinity, the question arises as to how it is possible to "deduce" action from it. As Stokes notes, "there is always another thought to think, always another angle to consider" (Stokes 2019: 275), which means that any additional or subsequent consideration delays the action that is ethically required. Hence, the infinity of reflection means that the prolongation and avoidance of action can be continually renewed. On the other hand, ethics demands urgency of action. It states that the "good must be realized immediately, right after it has been understood" (Kierkegaard 2009: 72). How, then does ideality pass into actuality? How can action be derived from reflection? Regarding the nature of reflection and its process, Kierkegaard is clear – reflection cannot overcome itself. This paradoxical combination of the necessity of action and the infinity of reflection in Kierkegaard's philosophy generates a problem that we can now name the problem of the discontinuity of reflection and action. According to Stokes, the union of necessity *and* undesirability of ethical reflection has several dimensions. Namely, Stokes finds that the paradoxical nature of reflection generates problems that transgress the field of ethics. For Kierkegaard, reflection is both necessary and destructive – Anti-Climacus shows that reflection or self-relation is necessary for the constitution of the self, while also claiming that reflection leads to moral evasion; in *Two Ages*, reflection turns out to be a disease of the modern age, while Judge Wilhelm insists that reflection is the only way to overcome the immediacy. Ultimately, Stokes believes that Kierkegaard's complex and at times (self-)contradictory doctrine on reflection generates three fundamental problems: the ontological problem of the finality of the self, the problem of self-immersion and solipsism, and the problem of the (ir)rational agent (see: Stokes 2019: 275). This paper will only examine the third problem.

Although the problem of the discontinuity between reflection and action is already intriguing enough, Kierkegaard's response to this problem seems even more complicated to interpret. Namely, instead of bridging the gap between reflection and action, Kierkegaard only deepens it: " I am charging the individual in question with not willing to stop the infinity of reflection. Am I requiring something of him, then? (...) And what do I require of him? I require a resolution. And in that I am right, for only in that way can reflection be stopped." (Kierkegaard 2009: 109-10). The introduction of the third term, the moment of will, into the reflection-action relationship, only complicates it. If the intrusion of a voluntary act provides the transition from reflection to action, the action becomes unjustified, and the deliberation becomes redundant. In this regard, Stokes writes the following: "Reflection cannot be stopped except by act of will, so reflection cannot instigate action – instead it must be stopped for the sake of acting, which makes it seem as if action is troublingly disconnected from rational deliberation" (Stokes 2019: 276). Since the decision establishes the transition from reflection to action, it follows that the subject can be either a highly rational non-agent (if he indulges in an endless flow of reflection, fails to make a decision and thus postpones action) or an irrational agent (if he arbitrarily interrupts the process of reflection to instigate the action). The epistemological aspect of this problem brings interesting insights. Suppose the will represents the third term between reflection and action. In that case, the transition to action would be achieved through a simple (unproblematic) choice of beliefs with ethical content. Since reflection can never arrive at final results, and rational deliberation cannot reach a final conclusion about the truth value of opposing propositions, it seems that it is allowed to choose beliefs to enable action. But this means that the action is never rationally justified because the reasoning is "violently" and suddenly interrupted by the intrusion of the will.

Therefore, to be able to solve the problem of the (ir)rational agent, and to provide the answer to the question of the transition from reflection to action, it is necessary to investigate the process of adopting beliefs with ethical content and the role that the will plays in it. To achieve this goal, the research will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will offer a definition of existential beliefs (beliefs with ethical-religious content) and explain the problem of their formation more precisely. In the second part of the analysis, I will try to show that the interruption of reflection, which the will implements in order to initiate action, is justified, and that the thesis that beliefs are a direct product of (irrational) decisions is unfounded. To succeed in this, I will rely on Stokes' research. In addition, I will try to show that choosing existential beliefs does not refer to their content, but to their actualization. At this point, I will refer to Lübcke's understanding of Kierkegaard's indirect communication, and the double reflection on which the communication is based. At the very end, I will open the problem of the uncertainty of existential beliefs and the complementary problem of existential faith, which has a task to ensure the overcoming of uncertainty and the formation of beliefs with ethical-religious content.

Definition of existential beliefs and existential faith

In *The Logic of Subjectivity*, Pojman presents the following definition of existential belief: "In ordinary believing, assent may come automatically as a function of the word's representing itself to us. But existential propositions are equiposed, with equal evidence on both sides. The evidence is essentially indecisive, insufficient to sway us to either side. In such a situation, one might be allowed to let his desires count in making a choice one way or the other" (Pojman 1984: 114). On the other hand, existential faith is "a second immediacy, an attitude of passionately holding onto its object in spite of apparent evidence" (Pojman 1984: 77). According to Pojman, existential faith is a faculty that allows an individual to hold onto a proposition despite the evidence that disputes it, while existential belief, as its product, refers to an undetermined and unresolved judgment about the truth value of the proposition. Thus, when adopting existential beliefs, the subject is aware that the existential proposition is characterized by uncertainty, but, by the power of existential faith, he manages to overcome it and adopt the proposition despite counter-evidence or the lack of evidence. Of course, the question arises as to what enables and justifies this cognitive maneuver. To answer these questions, Pojman presents another characteristic of existential belief that distinguishes it from ordinary, factual beliefs: "The difference lies in the importance of the proposition to the subject. In a faith situation, the subject regards the proposition as crucial for his life; in an opinion situation, this is not the case" (Pojman 1984: 93). Existential beliefs are important for the existential development of the individual, which means that they refer to ethical-religious beliefs. Using an example that Pojman provided (see: Pojman 1984: 55-56), it can be noted that the beliefs related to the qualitative determinations of Ford and Buick, and which enable the individual to choose between these two car models, can hardly have any influence on its existential development. This means that they cannot be qualified as existential beliefs. On the other hand, Pojman finds that propositions such as " 'God exists', 'The soul is immortal' (...) affect one's inner being" (Pojman 1984: 56). Only such beliefs would merit the existential qualification.

The subjective importance of existential beliefs conditions their further epistemological characteristics. One of the key problems that arise at the level of the formation of existential beliefs is the problem of their uncertainty. Although epistemic uncertainty is a feature of all beliefs related to the domain of becoming, Pojman notes that existential beliefs are particularly problematic because they imply a different *experience* of uncertainty: "Whereas objectively a person may judge two propositions (*p* and *q*) equally probable, of one proposition (*p*) is life crucial and the other (*q*) is not, then the uncertainty attaching to *p* will be more important than the uncertainty attaching to *q*" (Pojman 1984: 93). In this regard, Pojman finds that the existential proposition *p* will arouse more passion in the subject and that the belief that *p* will "involve risk in a way that belief in *q* will not" (Pojman 1984: 93). It should be noted here that Pojman's analysis of existential beliefs is well-founded, and that it can be justified by referring to Kierkegaard's doctrine on subjective truth. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus warns us that "the investigating subject is passionately interested in his relation to this truth in respect of his eternal happiness", and that, in this case, "it is nothing but a misunderstanding to seek an objective assurance" (Kierkegaard 2009: 37).

However, what is questionable in Pojman's interpretation is his further interpretation of the formation of existential beliefs. Drawing on James' research, Pojman notes the following: "If I strongly want *p* to be the case, but there is no decisive evidence one way or the other, why should I not choose to believe that *p*? I can continue to live with a suspended judgment (...); but if I can give a good reason for wanting *p*, it seems that there is justification for this action. Why cannot I live with a weaker standard of rationality? This argument is similar to William James's discussion, where the proposition is lively, momentous, and forced" (Pojman 1984: 115). The cited excerpt from Pojman's work represents the so-called existential argument, which supposedly stands in the background of Kierkegaard's understanding of the process of adopting existential beliefs, and justifies the act of choosing beliefs. But is that the case? To answer this question, we need to open the problem of the transition from reflection to action, ask the question of its justification, and investigate the meaning of the choice that is being made at the level of adopting existential beliefs.

The problem of the (ir)rational agent: Reflection and action

When considering the problem of the (ir)rational agent, Stokes starts by analyzing Kierkegaard's understanding of reflection on one's own death. According to Stokes' findings, contemplation of death represents an ideal combination and balance between subjective and objective reflection, making it the most suitable candidate for analyzing the indicated problem. Although it may seem that subjective and objective reflection are two extremes on the reflective spectrum, it should be noted that objective reflection does not require the complete abandonment of interest and renunciation of subjectivity, just like subjective reflection does not imply the complete absence of an object. However, in objective reflection, the object of reflection has primacy in such a way that the subject "always stands behind his back" (Kierkegaard 2009: 111). The expansion of objective reflection constitutes self-forgetfulness and the forgetfulness of existence. Hence, it turns out that it is necessary to make a radical move for the individual to return to himself. This is where the reflection of one's own death comes to play. Although directed at the object (death), this type of reflection refers back to subjectivity (one's own death) and thereby enables two key processes:

1. the process of individuation, and
2. the constitution of a state of wakefulness.

How does the reflection about death result in individuation? Climacus first notes that we have countless information about death: "For example, *to die*. I know what people ordinarily know about this: that I shall die if I take a dose of sulphuric acid, and also if I jump into the water, sleep in an atmosphere of coal gas, etc. I know that Napoleon always had poison on hand, and that Shakespeare's Juliet took poison, that the Stoics regarded suicide as a courageous act and others consider it cowardly" (Kierkegaard 2009: 138). But does this knowledge of death mean that we also have an *understanding* of death? What is forgotten in medical, sociological, and even philosophical discussions about death is that it never happens to a person in general, but that it happens to *me*. Thoughts *en général*, which describe death as a universal phenomenon and see mortality as a characteristic of the universal man, do not result in an authentic understanding of death. This is possible only when reflection is liberated from the Heideggerian *Das Man* or "anonymous self" (see: Heidegger, 1962) and when the individual makes the transition from judgments such as "one dies" and "all people are mortal" to "I will die". This is the first prerequisite for the suspension of self-forgetfulness and the return to subjectivity. When death is understood personally and when the subject meets his own death, he finally understands that he is a concrete "existing spirit, a completely individual human being" (Kierkegaard 1996: 213).

The specific character of reflection on death, its subjective-objective nature, and the potential to initiate individuation and self-development, represent the theme of many achievements in film art. In films like *The Seventh Seal*, *The Green Knight*, and even *Swiss Army Man*, death is at the beginning always shown as the opposite, i.e., the object to be overcome. Whether it is an opponent in a game of chess, an enemy who represents a threat to the kingdom, or an unexpected friend who cures loneliness in an unusual way, death is first something external, the object of man's questioning, his struggle or a joke, until it becomes an occasion for understanding his own situation and also for accepting his finitude.

Another characteristic of reflection on one's own death is that it enables the constitution of a state of (existential) wakefulness. According to Stokes' analysis, precisely this phenomenon justifies the interruption of reflection and the leap into the domain of action. But how to understand this state of wakefulness? How does this resolve the problem of the (ir)rational agent?

First, the analysis should consider how reflection on one's own death can result in a state of wakefulness. In this regard, it should be noted that this borderline case of objective reflection reveals (in Heideggerian terms) the always-mineness of death and thus returns to the always-mineness of existence. But aside from enabling the process of individuation, death also reveals that existence has the quality of finitude. Through reflecting on his death, the subject also realizes the finitude of his existence, which, in turn, leads to the constitution of the awareness of the necessity and urgency of action. This kind of awareness eliminates the error of a transgression to another genus (*metábasis eis állo génos*) and justifies the suspension of deliberation and the decision to act. However, Stokes notes that solving this problem only generates a different one. If reflection on one's own death justifies the individual's decision to suspend reflection for the sake of action, does this mean that every instance of ethical reflection must be conducted under the auspices of a *memento mori* to result in action? Here Stokes offers an ingenious solution. At first, Stokes notes that this demand to "remember one's own death" can lead to a banal conclusion that every time someone asks us the question 'What are you doing' or 'What are you thinking about', the answer must be 'About my death'. Constantly dealing with one's death leads to the ethically problematic phenomenon of self-immersion. In other words, instead of justifying and urgently demanding action, contemplation of one's death could produce egocentrism and self-obsession. For this reason, Stokes argues that reflection on death should end with the constitution of a state of wakefulness that resembles the phenomenon of keeping watch. Namely, just as a guard does not have to maintain awareness of the necessity of keeping watch to guard successfully, analogically, an individual does not have to constantly remind himself of his mortality to produce awareness of the necessity of action. Reflection on one's own death "retreats" from the domain of active contemplation into the precognitive domain. The awareness of death thereby becomes a non-positional consciousness (of) consciousness that accompanies every instance of ethical reflection, and enables and justifies the transition from rational reasoning to action.

Nevertheless, even though it can be argued that the choice to forgo reasoning about the ethical situation to initiate action is justified, the nature of such choice still needs to be determined. According to Pojman's interpretation, the object of choice is a propositional belief. Since reflection is infinite and an equal number of *pro et contra* reasons can be offered for each belief, the only thing left for the subject is to halt the reflection and choose the belief that aligns with his desires. But is it really so? Does ethical reflection, as a case of subjective reflection, require an arbitrary choice of existential beliefs? The analysis will introduce Lübcke's interpretation of Kierkegaard's indirect communication to answer this question.

It is well known that indirect communication, which Kierkegaard used in his esthetic writings, represents a specific way of communicating with the reader. However, this method of communication represents a complex phenomenon and should not be reduced to communication skills or writing style. In this regard, Roger Pool finds that it is necessary to distinguish between two indirections, two (re) duplications, or two dimensions of indirect communication – esthetic and existential (see: Pool 1993: 158-159). The esthetic dimension refers to the author's style, which requires a kind of reduplication of the writer's identity and the implementation of dialectics. Hence, the esthetic dimension refers to Kierkegaard's practice of *incognito* communication, combining opposites such as earnestness and humor, using parables, etc. It is quite clear that this kind of indirection is irrelevant to the current investigation. Yet another kind of indirection proves useful. Namely, Pool finds that the existential dimension of indirect communication refers to the phenomenon of double reflection, which is realized at the level of "the relation between the communication and its author" (Pool 1993: 159). While at the level of the first indirectness, (re)duplication functions as a tool of esthetics, a clever deception that allows the author to hide his intentions, the second indirectness refers to an authentic, existential double reflection. Namely, double reflection requires the subjective thinker "to exist in a way that dictates thinking" (Kierkegaard 2009: 104). The secret of double reflection is that it is a "reflection of the inwardness, a reflection of possession" (Kierkegaard 2009: 161), which means that the thought, contemplated on the reflective level, is repeated and actualized on the level of existence. Therefore, Pool concludes that the authentic meaning of reduplication can only be recognized within the second indirectness because it refers to the reduplication "between written text and lived expression" (Pool 1993: 159). However, the true meaning of indirect communication is not to help the author find his expression but to motivate the reader to existential development. This is when Pool concludes that "what is true for the author must also be true for the reader" (Pool 1993: 160). What does this mean? At this moment of analysis, Lübcke's research should be introduced. Namely, Lübcke tries to discover why Kierkegaard insists on the inadequacy of direct communication and the necessity of the indirect method. His thesis, presented in the work *Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication*, is that "this shift is not provoked by problems within *semantics* but has to do with the *pragmatic* aspect of language" (Lübcke 1990: 32). Lübcke finds that the misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's indirect communication is mainly based on the traditional interpretation that relies on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. However, unlike Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard does not consider ethical and religious problems to be unspeakable. Therefore, the need for indirect communication is not constituted at the semantic level. The problem of ethical concepts is not related to their unspeakable or semantically problematic content, but to the way this content should be adopted. In fact, Lübcke believes that, according to Kierkegaard, moral principles, imperatives, and the difference between good and evil, are already universally known. Therefore, communication of the ethical can "abolish the object of speech" because "there is simply nothing left to teach" (Lübcke 1990: 34). However, it is necessary to motivate the reader to practice what he has always known: "we ought to take the object and the message about it as a given and pass from the *semantic* to the *pragmatic* level of speech, so as to concentrate on the pragmatic task of motivating the listener to do what he knows to be his duty" (Lübcke 1990: 34). Combined with Pool's remark that "what is true for the author must also be true for the reader" (Pool 1993: 160), it can be concluded that the use of indirect communication is based on the need to awaken the reader's double reflection. Therefore, the choice made at the level of adoption of existential beliefs does not refer to their content, but to their existential application and actualization. This interpretation aligns with Climacus' definition of double reflection: "The reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but as existing in this thinking, as assimilating this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated" (Kierkegaard 2009: 62).

Therefore, the moment of choice that enables the transition from reflection to action does not refer to the content of existential beliefs, but to the individual's decision to bring them to actualization. Although this transition represents a kind of leap, it is grounded in a non-positional awareness of death, which accompanies ethical reflection and demands the necessity of action. However, to provide a complete answer to the problem of discontinuity between reflection and action, the problem of uncertainty of existential beliefs should be examined in more detail. Although it was shown that the choice does not refer to the beliefs themselves, but to their actualization, and that the halting of infinite reflection is grounded, the fact of their objective uncertainty remains. Therefore, there is still room for the thesis about the (ir)rational agent. The subject may be obligated to abandon reflection and proceed to act, but this does not absolve beliefs of their objective uncertainty. In what way is this uncertainty overcome? Is objective uncertainty eliminated by an unwarranted choice to ignore the evidence attesting to its degree? To answer these questions, the examination must open the problem of Socratic existential faith.

Existential faith – Socrates' model of adopting existential beliefs

According to Pojman's understanding, "existential faith (is) passionate commitment to uncertain, action-guiding propositions" (Pojman 1984: 94). Further, Pojman says that existential faith "involves wrestling with the evidence" (Pojman 1984: 94) and assumes an "intensification of subjectivity proportional to a decrease in objectivity" (Pojman 1984: 121). From there, it is possible to posit two key theses concerning existential faith. First, it seems that the phenomenon of objective uncertainty is crucial for understanding the function of existential faith. Second, it can be concluded that precisely this attachment to uncertainty constitutes the irrationality of existential faith. Pojman's definition of existential faith suggests that its function is to enable the choice of insufficiently grounded existential beliefs. But is it really so?

First, the investigation needs to discover the origin of the objective uncertainty that characterizes existential beliefs. The answer stems from Climacus' understanding of double reflection. Jacob Howland explains: "the double-reflection of subjective thinking involves thinking of the universal, eternal truth and then bringing this truth into the thinker's particular, time-bound existence" (Howland 2006: 194). What does this mean?

The example of Socrates is the best way to explain the uncertainty of existential beliefs. Namely, in the *Postscript*, Climacus writes: "Let us consider Socrates. Today, everyone deals with evidence; some have some such evidence, others less. But Socrates! He objectively asks the question in a problematic way: If there is immortality" (Kierkegaard 1996: 219-220). Why does Socrates act this way? This calls for a brief analysis of ontological knowledge. According to Kierkegaard's understanding, ontology refers to "an *a priori* development of all the predicates that may be applied to anything that can exist" (Piety 2010: 66). Ontology deals with the very form of thinking (see: Piety 2010: 66), it questions and develops the highest categories and modalities of being. Just like mathematics, the ontological investigation is directed to the domain of immanent metaphysical reality, which means that it is exclusively directed to ideas and the relations they form. Mathematics, metaphysics, and logic explore how the relations must be ordered if certain types of beings are to exist, but do not answer the question of their actual (empirical) existence. This nature of ontological research should become clearer through the interpretation of one (ethically important) metaphysical claim – *The soul is immortal*. From the point of view of ontology, this represents an analytical proposition, because it simply explicates the idea of the soul. Namely, the soul is such a type of being that has the characteristic of immortality. The ontology does not state whether such a being exists. Therefore, a more detailed ontological explanation of the nature of the soul would be: "*If* there is an entity that has all the characteristics of a soul, then it will also have the characteristic of immortality". This makes apparent why Kierkegaard considers ontological (and mathematical) knowledge to be hypothetical in nature. The metaphysician's research on the soul and its immortality does not prove that the soul exists outside the sphere of the ideal being. But can such proof be established? Climacus gives a clear answer to that question in *Philosophical Crumbs*. Considering the possibility of evidence for the existence of God, Climacus writes the following: "What is missing in Spinoza is the distinction between the real and the ideal" (Kierkegaard 2020: 52). In other words, the error of the ontological proof rests on the confusion of the spheres of ideal and real being. When the error is eliminated, it becomes evident that it is impossible to derive the actual existence from the theoretical examination of a certain concept.

This is also the case with the concept of the soul. Namely, the statement that the soul is immortal is not problematic in itself; it becomes that when a philosopher abandons a purely metaphysical consideration to examine the soul's actual existence. Does the soul actually exist? Does an immortal, eternal soul reside in a finite body? We cannot get definitive answers to these questions. In other words, eternal truth becomes problematic when it is brought into relation with the domain of becoming. In this sense, Climacus warns that "the continuous process of becoming represents the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain" (Kierkegaard 1996:

220). This means that the origin of the objective uncertainty of existential beliefs lies in the contingency inherent to the empirical domain. Objective uncertainty is generated whenever we attempt to bring eternal truth into relation with the existing individual. This also explains the function of existential faith. Namely, faith is that faculty that has a function to overcome objective uncertainty and constitute subjective certainty. However, unlike organic faith, or faith in its ordinary sense (see: Kierkegaard 2020), which enables the formation of factual beliefs, existential faith cannot act organically. The subjective thinker is fully aware of epistemic difficulties; he is aware that "the truth will remain a paradox as long as he exists" (Kierkegaard 1996: 220). Therefore, Socrates does not try to derive a theoretical proof for the existence of the soul, but accepts uncertainty, declares his ignorance, and formulates a hypothesis. As Jacob Howland observes, Socrates tries to prove the existence of the soul practically – by bearing witness to its immortality with his life (see: Howland 2006). Consequently, it should be noted that existential, Socratic faith is not realized on a cognitive level, but on a practical one. The proposition of the existence of an immortal soul is in a state of epistemic suspension, and for Socrates, it will remain a hypothesis as long as he exists. This can also explain the moment of decision. Since the proposition that the soul is immortal remains at the level of a hypothesis, we cannot claim that Socrates directly chooses the belief that an immortal soul exists. The only thing Socrates can decide is to exist under this hypothesis.

So, for Socrates, truth is characterized by objective uncertainty and will remain so as long as he exists. The problem of its uncertainty is not resolved on a cognitive level but is overcome within practice. However, this is only one aspect of the phenomenon of existential faith. Namely, it appears that existential faith, on the cognitive level, implies a skeptical attitude. Furthermore, Climacus notes in several places that the subjective thinker is required to embrace uncertainty. Why? Does the introduction of skepticism entail irrationality of action?

First, we need to recall the meaning of choice at the level of existential faith. It was already established that the subject explicitly chooses to relate to the truth existentially, that is, to realize the truth in existence. However, this simultaneously means that the individual has lost the safety of the objective path. He can no longer count on absolute certainty of ontological and mathematical knowledge, or attain the approximate certainty of empirical knowledge. Just like the skeptic, the Socratic subjective thinker must bear in mind the fact of objective uncertainty in order not to indulge in speculation. For a subjective thinker, objective reflection and objective certainty represent an eternal temptation that he must resist at all costs. What does this mean? Climacus constantly reminds us that people want results, that they want to have something completed, to ensure a high degree of certainty of their statements and beliefs before they finally decide to realize them in existence: "They [people] marry, they acquire positions in life, in consequence of which they are honor bound to have something finished, to have results" (Kierkegaard 2009: 72). Let's recall the case of esthete A, who admits that the marriage vow would make sense if "instead of saying 'forever', they would say 'until Easter' or 'until the next first of May' (..) because then they would still say something real and something they could hold on to" (Kierkegaard 2017: 236). An esthete would perhaps decide to get married if he could know how long the marriage would last. But the esthete does not dare to act, he does not dare to make a decision for a lifetime because he does not want to face uncertainty. One short narrative from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* best demonstrates the kind of comedy that transpires when one relies on certainty in empirical reality: "A man stood talking with one of his friends, whom he then invited to dinner, promising him a rare dish. The friend thanked him for the invitation. The man then said: But be sure now to come. Definitely, replied the invited friend. So they parted, and a roof tile fell down and killed the prospective guest – isn't that something to die laughing over?" (Kierkegaard 2009: 73). What does Climacus want to say? For the guest's answer to be true, he had to consider every possible scenario and even take into account the possibility that the tile might fall on him and kill him. But can we reach that level of certainty within the realm of empirical existence?

Conclusion

Contrary to Pojman's interpretation, the subjective thinker chooses the existential attitude toward the truth (to organize life according to it, to translate it into action) and, therefore, chooses to be aware of the objective uncertainty inherent in the domain of becoming. Neither the first nor the second choice implies an unjustified choice of existential beliefs and does not lead to the irrationality of actions. In the first instance, the epistemic subject does not choose the truth, but its actualization. In the second instance, one does not choose a belief with a low degree of probability, but (in the manner of ancient skepticism) chooses awareness of the objective uncertainty of the entire empirical reality. The subjective thinker chooses to become aware of the risk that follows from the fact that all empirical reality is characterized by objective uncertainty, and then decides to prove existential beliefs existentially – by living by them.

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Problem (i)racionalnog delatnika: pitanje diskontinuiteta između etičke refleksije i akcije u Kjerkegorovoj filozofiji

dr Marija Glasnović

Sažetak

U ovom radu, bavićemo se problemom iracionalnog delatnika, te otvoriti pitanje diskontinuiteta izmedju etičke refleksije i akcije u Kjerkegorovoj filozofiji. Budući da etička refleksija (kao i refleksija uopšte) ima karakter beskonačnosti, postavlja se pitanje opravdanosti prekida deliberacije i iniciranja delanja. Budući da se premeravanje evdincije i razmatranje različitih opcija moze beskonačno obnavljati, ispostavlja se da individua može biti ili visoko racionalni nedelatnik (ukoliko se prepušta refleksiji) ili iracionalni delatnik (ukoliko prekida refleksiju zarad delanja). Problem ćemo postaviti na epistemološki način, te ćemo probati da odgovorimo na pitanje formiranja egzistencijalnih verovanja, odnosno, verovanja sa etićko-religioznim sadržajem. Probaćemo da dokažemo da, iako proces formiranja egzistencijalnih verovanja počiva na iznenadnom prekidu (beskonačne) etičke refleksije, ovo ne znači da je prelaz od refleksije ka akciji neopravdan, a etičko-religiozno verovanje neutemeljno. Sa druge strane, pokušaćemo da pokažemo da momenat izbora, koji je nesumnjivo suštinski element usvajanja egzistencijalnih verovanja, ne čini proces iracionalnim. Naime, pokazaćemo da se izbor, koji se sprovodi u procesu usvajanja egzistencijalnih verovanja, ne odnosi na njihov sadržaj, već na njihovu aktualizaciju u domenu prakse. Subjektivni mislilac ne bira verovanja sa niskim stepenom verovatnoće koja nisu podržana svedočanstvom, već odlučuje da egzistencijalna verovanja dokazuje na egzistencijalni način – tako što će prema njima živeti.

Ključne reči: etička refleksija, (i)racionalni delatnik, egzistencijalno verovanje, egzistencijalna vera

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