

# deScripto

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Media Landscape

# Serbia in Transition



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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers!

Following the concept of *deScripto*, to present the media landscape of countries in South East Europe, the media landscape in Serbia has to be observed through a special focus, which is “change”. Serbia in the last couple of years has undergone a turn that might be estimated as a significant example, maybe also a model for an active transition. The political bent of that turn and for change was neither easy to do nor accomplish and has been accompanied by strong conflicts, but now has happened irrevocably. There are many areas where that move of change can be observed. One of those areas is media. Since media is not just a system of devices or of organisation, but much more a social system of intermediation, it is a cultural, political, educational and economical platform of building a society. If there is something relevant within a transition process, then it is the active movement of change of social relationship. What is changing through transition is not only the macrocosm of basic institutions (market, politics), what is changing is the microcosm of social relations, increasingly developed and organised through media and usage of media.



The young and vivid media scene in Serbia represented by open minded and creative students shows that Serbia did not lose its power of reflection. It has transferred that national talent of pride and reflection into a new era of mirroring itself through media. The students of the Faculty of Media and Communications at Singidunum University in Belgrade who mainly worked on this issue of *deScripto* have decided for a spectrum of topics, which represents the ambiguous world of media in Serbia. The outcome is a colourful picture of a vivid landscape, designed by shrill accents and continuous ways alike. Thanks to them we get an idea of what is going on in Serbia’s media landscape.

This is why we thank all the students of the Faculty of Media and Communication and especially *Mirjana Stefanovic*, who did the editorial coaching and who stood responsible for this part of the issue. We hope you will enjoy it and you will gain a greater insight and understanding of Serbia.

*Thomas A. Bauer, Editor-in-Chief*

Letter from the Publisher

Dear Readers!



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

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

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

*Oliver Vujovic, Publisher*

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**Mission Statement**  
*deScripto* is committed to the enhancement of a climate of critical reflection on media culture and communication, in and among the SEE countries. Published quarterly as a joint project of the University of Vienna and the University of Applied Sciences Vienna, under the auspices of The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), *deScripto* is an independent journal of analysis and opinion dedicated to the democratisation of the media and the development of civic society in the SEE Region.

The views expressed in *deScripto* are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of SEEMO/IPI.

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The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is a regional non-governmental, non-profit network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, news agencies and new media in South East Europe (SEE). With its committees, SEEMO aims to create a bridge between international media activities and media developments in the region (South East, but also Central and East Europe).

SEEMO was founded in October 2000 in Zagreb, Croatia, by a group of leading editors-in-chief, media executives, and professors of journalism and communications from South East Europe, in the presence of representatives of international institutions and with the financial support of the International Press Institute (IPI). SEEMO has local partners, members and coordinators in all countries and territories in SEE.

One of SEEMO's main activities is protecting press freedom by helping journalists and media outlets in South East Europe. Over 60% of SEEMO's press releases and letters of protest to governmental and other officials have had positive results in the past. Every SEEMO protest is distributed to leading regional and international media, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations, politicians, and public persons and institutions. In the past, SEEMO has provided direct help to journalists in the region by giving them technical equipment and other assistance. SEEMO has also provided necessary aid to journalists who have received death threats. SEEMO has over 500 editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe as individual members, and over 100 media outlets and institutions as corporate members.

During the last seven years, SEEMO has brought together in various meetings over 6,800 editors-in-chief, media executives, leading journalists and public persons from the region. Some of these meetings, like the meeting of editors-in-chief and media executives from Belgrade (Serbs) and Pristina / Prishtinë / Priština (Kosovo-Albanians), were the first of their kind in history. No one before SEEMO had managed to gather such high-level media representatives from Belgrade and Pristina in a meeting. Between 2002 and 2004, SEEMO organised 14 dialogue meetings between editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe.

In October 2005, SEEMO organised the SEEMO Dialogue Conference between editors-in-chief and media executives from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia/Montenegro in Opatija. One month later, in November 2005, a SEEMO Dialogue Conference between editors-in-chief and media executives from Albania, Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia-FYROM), and Serbia/Montenegro/Kosovo was held in Tirana.

SEEMO also organised the first meeting of leading media representatives of all important private news agencies in the region in June 2005, and as a result of the meeting the agencies founded a regional organisation of private news agencies (APNA).

SEEMO actively cooperates with international, regional and national governmental and non-governmental organisations and institutions. SEEMO also actively cooperates with other international press freedom and media organisations, and it supports and participates in joint regional and international projects and activities.

Together with partners, SEEMO has organised seminars and conferences promoting European values and ideas (2003, 2004, 2005), ecological philosophy - environment and better transport possibilities in the region (Belgrade 2002, 2004 and 2005, Athens 2003 and 2004, Trieste 2004, Sarajevo 2004 - all conferences in cooperation with City of Vienna and Bohmann publishing group), a regional conference on investigative reporting (2002), a regional conference on minorities (2002), elections (Media and Elections in 2007, together with Radio 101, Hrvatsko novinsko društvo and Guardian Foundation), two conferences for editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists of Roma media in the region (2003), two conferences of editors-in-chief, media executives and leading journalists of Vlachian-Aromanian media in South East Europe (2004), several conferences on press freedom, the legal situation of media, relations between media and politicians, the public role of parliamentarians, access to information, the right to secrecy of information sources, tolerance (Media and Tolerance Conference in 2004, together with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and International Center for Education of Journalists (ICEJ)), teaching public relations and communications for governmental officials, etc.

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Helping journalists also means furthering their education. Several workshops and seminars were organised in the field of education, especially for investigative reporters (in Opatija in Croatia (2006), in Babe in Serbia (2006), in Tirana in Albania (2007), in Bucharest in Romania (2007), in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007) and in Sofia in Bulgaria (2007)) and also workshops for representatives of minority media. Some of the minority media workshops and seminars took place at the SEEMO Media Minority Centre (MMC) in Opatija, Croatia.

In June 2008 SEEMO organised the conference Media, Marketing and Business, as also the regular meeting of the private news agencies in South East Europe. In December 2008 SEEMO will organise the conference Public Broadcasting in South East Europe in cooperation with RTV Slovenija.

SEEMO has several international and national governmental organisations and institutions as project partners, like the Austrian Development Agency - Austrian Development Cooperation, The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, or the Central European Initiative (CEI). SEEMO has an ongoing project-cooperation with a number of foundations, universities, media schools and media companies. In the past few years, SEEMO has coordinated several media monitoring projects in South East and Central Europe, and has also organised several pieces of media research.

SEEMO started, together with the German WAZ Medien Gruppe and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF) - South East and Central Europe Media Forum (SECEMF). The first SEEMF was organised in Zagreb in 2007, under the patronage of the President of Croatia H.E. Stjepan Mesić, and in cooperation with local media partners: Europapress Holding (EPH), HINA, HRT, Mediaservis, Obiteljski radio and NCL (Nacional) Media Group. The topic of the II SEEMF is "Media and Democracy in South East Europe: Professional Standards and Education of Journalists." The II SEEMF will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 5-6 November 2008. This II SEEMF is organised by the WAZ Medien Gruppe, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), and SEEMO, with local partners Newspaper Group Bulgaria and the Media Development Centre, Sofia

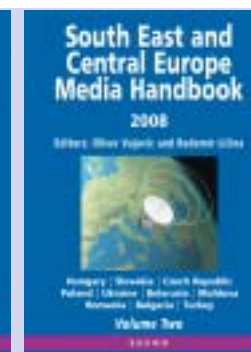
In cooperation with the University of Vienna, since 2004 SEEMO has regularly published a quarterly media magazine for South East Europe called *De Scripto*.

Since 2003, the *South East Europe Media Handbook (SMH)*, an annual publication covering media developments in SEE, which includes selected media contacts, has also been published. Since 2008 the book is published under the name "*South East and Central Europe Media Handbook* (well known

to everyone *SEEMO Media Handbook* (or SMH) in October 2008. The Media Handbook includes media reports and contact details of selected radio and TV stations, newspapers, magazines, media organisations, media schools, journalists' organisations, and internet service providers and other new media from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Bulgaria. SEEMO publishes this book annually in cooperation with its partners, and since 2008 the partners are the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, and the ERSTE Foundation from Vienna.

Next to these publications, SEEMO has published some other books in the English language, such as *Media and Minorities in South East Europe* or the *Handbook for Investigative Reporters in South East Europe*. But SEEMO also publishes in local languages from the region, for example, the publication *Istraživačko novinarstvo u JE* or the editions of *SEEMO Media Handbook* in Albanian language and in Serbian language. SEEMO is also co-publisher of different books covering media topics. Book on "Media and PR" and a book on *Media, Marketing and Business in South East Europe*. Furthermore, publications on *Public Broadcasting in South East Europe* and *Women, Men and Media* are in planning. SEEMO started also a regional research about Women, Men and Media.

SEEMO awards prizes for outstanding achievements in the field of media. The recipient of the Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in 2002 was Croatian journalist Denis Latin, for his TV-show 'Latinica' (HTV). The 2003 Award was given to Kemal Kurspahić, former Editor-in-Chief of the Bosnian daily *Oslobođenje*. He and his team managed to publish during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina *Oslobođenje*. every day in the besieged city of Sarajevo. In 2005 this award was given to Brankica Petković from the Ljubljana-based Peace Institute. In 2006 Danko Plevnik, international relations columnist for the Croatian daily newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* from Split, received the Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Better Understanding. Plevnik is also the author of several books analysing media, such as *Information is Communication* (1986), *Towards the Civilisation of Mobile Text* (1988) and *The Practice of Ethical Journalism* (2004). Plevnik has also published a number of books on politics, the European Union, and the Balkans amongst others. Soon his two new books, *The Right to Self-Meaning* and *The Fortune of Reading* will be available. In 2007, after careful deliberation, the jury has chosen Milena Dimitrova, commentator for the Bulgarian daily newspaper *Trud* from



Sofia, as the 2007 Winner of the Dr. Erhard Busek SEEMO Award for Better Understanding. Dimitrova holds a PhD in Journalism and is also the author of several books, such as: *Pictures from Japan* (1992), *Parliament and Journalism* (2000), and *Frantzhipani i Farangi: Two Bulgarians with the "Giraffe" Women of Burma* (2005), written together with Magdalena Gigova. Dimitrova also teaches Press Journalism and Investigative Reporting at Sofia University "Sv. Kliment Ohridski". She is the President of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists' Investigative Journalism Section.

The SEEMO Human Rights Award SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe is traditionally awarded on 10 December, International Human Rights Day. In 2002, the award was given to Christine von Kohl, a fighter for human rights in the Balkan region, and Editor-in-Chief and founder of the Vienna magazine *Balkan - Südosteuropäischer Dialog - Balkan anders*. In 2003, the award was given to Nebojša Popov, a leading Serbian human rights fighter and founder of the Belgrade magazine *Republika*. In 2004, the award was given to Fatos Lubonja, a leading Albanian writer, journalist and fighter for human rights. In 2006 SEEMO Board Members chose Abdulhalim Dede, a journalist and a member of the Turkish-Muslim minority living and working in Western Thrace, Greece, for the SEEMO Human Rights Award. In 2007 the SEEMO Board named the journalist, writer and fighter for human rights Šeki Radončić from Montenegro, who lives in Bosnia- Herzegovina, as the recipient of the 2007 SEEMO Award for Mutual Cooperation in South East Europe.

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

Since 2008 SEEMO has also the Award for the Best Photograph in the Human Rights Field. The first winner of this award (2008) was Maja Zlatevska (*Dnevnik*, Skopje), for the photograph "Zatvor" ("Prison"), her contribution to the human rights struggle in the region. A certificate of distinction was given to Marko Djurica (*Blic*, Beograd/Reuters), for his photograph "Liturgija" ("Lithurgy").

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

SEEMO Board members (since 2007): Radomir Ličina (Senior Editor *Danas* daily, Belgrade), Agron Bajrami (Editor-in-Chief *Koha Ditore* daily, Pristina), Boris Bergant (Deputy Director RTV Slovenia, Ljubljana, and EBU Vice-President), Pavol Mudry (Co-founder and Board Member SITA news agency, Bratislava), Marta Palics (Editor, RTV Novi Sad, Novi Sad), Jorgos Papadakis (Journalist, Athens) and Zrinka Vrabec Mojžes (Editor, Radio 101, Zagreb). Former SEEMO Board (2002-2006): Radomir Ličina - President, Samra Lučkin (Director, Boram Network, Sarajevo), Stjepan Malović (Director, ICEJ, Opatija), Risto Popovski (Director, Makfax, Skopje), Remzi Lani (Director, Albanian Media Institute, Tirana), Jorgos Papadakis/Mircea Toma (Director, Media Monitoring Agency, Bucharest) and Ognian Zlatev (Director, Media Development Center, Sofia). SEEMO Ethical Committee is represented by Danko Plevnik (commentator for *Slobodna Dalmacija* daily, Split). SEEMO Coordinators are: Albania - Frrok Cupi (director, *Agon* newspaper, Tirana), Bulgaria - Ognian Zlatev (director, Media Development Center, Sofia), Bosnia Herzegovina - Samra Lučkin (director, BORAM, Sarajevo), Croatia - Ante Gavranović (former president of the Croatian Journalists Association (HND), Zagreb and of Croatian Publishers Association, Zagreb), Greece - Jorgos Papadakis, Moldova - Alina Radu (director, *Ziarul de Garda* newspaper, Chisinau), Romania - Marina Constantinoiu (editor-in-chief, *Jurnalul National*, Bucharest), Serbia - Veran Matić (Radio TV B92, Belgrade), Montenegro - Željko Ivanović (director, *Vijesti* daily, Podgorica), Kosovo - Haqif Mulliqi (RTV Kosovo, Pristina), Ukraine - Aleksey Soldatenko (Programmes Director, International Institute for Regional Media and Information, Kharkiv).

SEEMO Advisers: Hari Štajner (former Director of Media Center, Belgrade), Boro Kontić (Director, Media Centar, Sarajevo), Donika Shahini and Shpresa Mulliqi (OSCE Media Department, Pristina) and Mitja Meršol (former Editor-in- Chief, *Delo* daily, Ljubljana).

The current SEEMO staff members are: Krasimira Plachetzky, SEEMO assistant; Sara di Pede, SEEMO assistant; Sladjana Matejevic, SEEMO conference and financial coordinator; Elva Hardarson, press freedom and fundraising coordinator and Selma Koric, coordinator *De Scripto* magazine.

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# Communications in the Age of Hypermodernity

By Nada Popovic-Perisic  
Dean of the Faculty of Media and Communications

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

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

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

Liberalism of the world of media whose interest does not necessarily overlap with public interest led to evolution of

populism. Authorities in the world of communications who give rise to a utopia of 'a planetary world' could, in near future, become a backbone of authoritarian regimes which control people; all the more so as they spend their time nailed to computers and also as their communication is technically transparent.

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



Nada Popovic Perisic with associates  
Photo by Snezana Skundric

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

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society pays so much attention to communication. Presence of technology in our environment is not a necessary sign of modernity. Criticism is based on the fact that real modernity is firstly political and only then technological. The essence is not criticism of communication by itself, but of its excessive use. If we say 'everything is communication', we take upon ourselves a responsibility we can not justify.

By definition, media are supposed to bring people together, in other words, to make it easier for them to gain access to events, because communication, in its nature, tends to abolish distances. But 'distances' put up a struggle more than we could have expected. Recognition of a uniqueness of a culture, which is necessary in order to understand an event, is complex and it resists media analysis. By transferring information, media help increase ignorance, because the biggest ally of ignorance is the illusion of knowledge. Denis de Rougemont insists in one of his texts on thorough differences which exist between 'information' and 'knowledge' and 'information' and 'recognition'. One of the problems is that a modern man thinks he has knowledge of the event just because he has information about it. Regardless of quality of work of journalists, information always faces a step after which it can no longer offer a meaning to the event. When it comes to media we are facing a yet another paradox; our feelings are more easily stirred up by television fiction than by pictures of real misfortunes in the world.

Media and communications study is a very wide field with unclear borders that is hard to cover by programmes that offer high level of specialised training. Therefore, we have opted to research this subject through its links to philosophy applied to media and communication. Philosophy, as creative questioning of the world, aims our approach.

Post-modern philosophers like Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida are in the basis of our consideration and critical analysis of the world of media. According to Foucault's division into 'seeable' and 'speakable' the focus inside a culture shifts towards speakable. In such a way picture is no longer being watched but 'read'. Our philosophy tradition has favoured the individualistic concept of cognition for a long time. Information and communication science accompanies philosophy in one attitude: only inter-subjectivity and already established communities can create the subject and 'self' provided with identity. Placed in the field of communication linguistic signs loose their prestige and autonomy: they are a part of the orchestra in which languages of body, pictures and signs have their place. Our language is no

longer, or in other words, not only the element of exposing the truth. From photography to video, from information to testimony, we are facing a semiotic orchestra of signs.

If communicating means 'having in common', and sharing what is common, the contemporary world and its interconnectedness continuously restore ways for us to stay together, and to revive our world in its details. Spiralling differences between scales of communication ranging from interpersonal to interplanetary, suggests the fact that one scientific discipline is not enough to cover the entire field of study. Hence, discipline like communication science searches for its consistency and tries to achieve it by means of confrontation of different knowledge. Communication is nowadays at a crossroads of philosophy and social sciences. That is why it helps us understand several changes in the age we live in. First of all, how to think alongside metaphysical? Namely, this science follows and analyses developments in the processes of desacralisation and secularisation, which Max Webber considers to define the modern age. Secondly, it teaches us how to criticise logocentrism. Namely, our language is not only the means of discovering the truth, but a part of an entire orchestra of signs, what we call semiosis. It helps us criticise egocentrism. On contrary to the individualistic concept of cognition, establishing of subjects is overseen through inter-subjectivity. And finally, how to consider individualism and autonomy. New technologies make the sender's monopoly on the meaning of a message more difficult, and private acceptance of the message on behalf of an ever-growing circle of recipients, easier. For too long philosophers have been placing reasons inside a conscious individual as an innate ability. Information and communication science manages to describe the outer side of reason which lies in socio-technical networks of our cognition and classing.

How can we evaluate the effects of technology? It has been viewed as sub alternate reality for a long time. A project of mediology - logic of media - is to examine numerous effects of technology on a spiritual side, and its efficiency, according to a materialistic and eco-logical approach. This communication culture appears to be complicated because it should embrace semiology, which involves mediology, then, models of cybernetics, especially laws of circular causality and self-organization, terms of social psychology and psychoanalysis. This curriculum should not only show how a message circulates but also in accordance to which imaginary and symbolic influences it does so. That set of disciplines poses as a perfect challenge. It can be of interest to sociologists, philosophers and logicians. That was the very reason for the foundation of Faculty of Media and Communication and it decided the nature of the curriculum taught at our Faculty. ■



## Media Change - The Key of Social Change

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

By Thomas A. Bauer

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

In a media society, social change in first line is media change. Media is a source of experience that constructs experience becoming knowledge because of the structure of sharing different perspec-

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

This new mechanism of trust in media might have to do with the in same time decreasing importance of institutions (cultural critical evaluation), when media understanding as (special) institutions or such that just replace traditional ones, shifting over them to be-

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come media-like institutions: media religion, media politics, media education, media economy and so forth. But trust in the media also could emerge through the social construction of ubiquity. Increasingly media get used by people that generate knowledge or conversation and also by people that search for knowledge or conversation - both supposing that media are the framework of reference of all, for all, and in relation to all. Media are supposed to be the measure of reference in order to value what one thinks one should know about supposing that any other also could know from there. This concentration of generalisation makes media to become the agencies of the generalisation of social presumption and central agency of social connectivity. As this means a change on all levels of the concept of social change: a change in social relations, a change in the structure of the discourses, a change of values of the traditional social practice, and - last not least - a changeover in using technologies for the construction of social relation, the concept of social change related to the contemporaneous societies, is a *change of the principle of social intermediation*.

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

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



Press conference with President Boris Tadic  
Photo by Imre Szabo

*small number of journalists so the absence of several journalists for a couple of months would not be feasible*", Ivanovic remarks.

Good quality investigative reporting requires time and resources. One example is journalist and *Blic* editor Branislav Grkovic, receiver of UNICEF award for the story on battle against child pornography. *"The story exposes the pattern by which the new era of technology mirrors the old power imbalance, readiness of abusers to transpose their old criminal habits to the cyberspace and empowered by the new technology occupy that space before children have even stepped into it. It is an excellent and convincing piece of investigative work... It also elucidates the regional dimension. The articles appeals to fight this form of crime and violence back by good preparation and adequate policies,"* the jury stated following the decision on the award.

It took almost half a year for Grkovic to investigate the leads to the story.

*"The entire process lasted around five or six months, partly because of how information got to me, and also because of technical matters. I will make an example: I had to wait for three months to gain permission from the Ministry of Police to interview one policeman who worked on such cases,"* he notes.

## Struggling with Funds and Interests

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

Media experts in the developed world sometimes ask the question if investigative journalism is the only true form of journalism, then is everything else is just public relations?

From the perspective of societies in transition, well developed democracies enjoy the abundance of investigative journalists that expose affairs of public importance and are able to prove facts before publishing. They can monitor their societies through the discoveries of investigative journalism. In Serbia, as in most countries in transition, things are quite different. Both media professionals and the public agree that there is not enough investigative journalism. Not that there is not any, but there is far less than necessary in a society that is not famous for weeding out corruption, crime and abuse of power.

Milorad Ivanovic, deputy editor-in-chief of a nation wide daily *Blic*, considers lack of financial resources and proper education to be main reasons. *"There is some investigative journalism in Serbia but not as much as in Western countries. Over there investigative journalism implies journalists spending a lot of time and money working on a story. Unfortunately, media here do not have funds to finance major investigations. Besides, media outlets here employ a*



By Aleksandar Skundric, Student, FMK

**Media here do not have funds to finance major investigations**

A journalist and teacher of investigative journalism, Branko Cecen, comments on that matter: *"Serbian media do not make enough profit to be able to engage into developing investigative teams, or to let journalist spent three months on a single investigation. However, media are not doing*

*much to overcome that obstacle. Not every story takes months to write; sometimes it can be done much faster. After all, many media discoveries came months, years, even decades after that which had happened, and they still attracted huge attention. We have not done everything we could, we have not learned enough. Only when we do, will we have the right to complain*", notices Cecen.

Another important issue is status of journalists as professionals. Describing in short the findings of research in this area, Cecen summarises: *"Journalists are underpaid and unprotected, both*

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legally and physically, and they are supposed to risk their safety in order to inform on the issues being hidden from the public. Now imagine an editor saying to a journalist: "First you need to work and get some proper training. Then in your own time go and investigate the wrongdoings of some guy who can kill you and get away with it. And you will get 300 EUR at the end of a month". I find it extraordinary that there are people who are willing work in such conditions", Cecen concludes.

### Investigative journalism and education

Currently, investigative journalism is being taught as a course at two Belgrade faculties and in the universities of Nis and Novi Sad. There have been an abundance of professional trainings provided through the donations of various institutions in EU and USA. However, the interest of students and journalists for the investigative journalism is decreasing. There are also serious differences and inaccuracies about what the term investigative journalism means. In the socialist times of former Yugoslavia, investigative journalism implied a combination of analytical journalism and some sort of scientific investigation.

"There are two sides to that story", says Milorad Ivanovic. "There is lack of adequate training on investigative journalism so many are confused about what it is. On the other hand, those who attend the available courses go back to new rooms unable to apply that which they have learned."

To make matters even more complicated, privatisation of the media and new rules of the market democracy have brought financial interests of the media owners before the interests of public and the journalism. "Many media outlets will not investigate those affairs that affect business interests of their owners. In the past they were controlled by politics. Today it is tycoons who are often more powerful than the media and those who want to survive are afraid of criticising tycoons for they fear they might lose advertising income", says Cecen.



Journalist Branko Cecen  
Photo by Igor Marovic



Milorad Ivanovic, editor of daily newspaper BLIC  
Photo by Imre Szabo

### Lack of legal response to the findings of investigative reporters is number one complaint

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

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

### The effects of investigative stories

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

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

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

## It Takes Faith and Persistence

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

By Aleksandar Skundric,  
Student, FMK

**T**he *Insajder* (Insajder) series by Brankica Stankovic is one of the rare cases of television investigative journalism on Serbian television. The three-member team is led by Stankovic in search for evidence related to the most sensitive topics for the Serbian society including football mafia, money laundering, organised crime and corruption. Last year Brankica Stankovic received the 2008 Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe awarded by SEEMO. In the course of her work, Brankica Stankovic introduced new and improved standards of investigative journalism and has addressed in her TV series the important issues that have been either concealed or sidelined by the authorities. In an interview for *deScripto* Brankica Stankovic says that "things are going to change, but it takes a lot of persistence and faith in what you're doing to accomplish that"

Stankovic further explains: "When you keep in mind that what you are doing is in public interest then you do not let anything be an obstacle in your work. I think that we as the investigative team proved that. We have encountered various difficulties in our work - people "closing the doors", spirals of silence. However, we publish everything we are sure we have enough evidence to prove and for which we are certain is correct. We also name the people who refuse to answer along with the questions they refused to address. That way a viewer can make conclusions if someone is hiding something and also why that someone is stubbornly ignoring questions and remains silent in spite of the obligation to respond as a holder of public function. I believe that, eventually, many things in this country are going to change, but it takes a lot of persistence and faith in what you're doing to accomplish that."

[Have you seen any improvements in the overall conditions for investigative journalism? Media legislation has been progressing along with the work of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance...](#)

**Stankovic:** There are some positive steps, but that's still minimal in comparison to normal, democratic countries. In Serbia, people still



Brankica Stankovic,  
Author of  
THE INSIDER

Photo by BETA SERVICE,  
Vladimir Milanovic

don't know faces of certain business people and politicians who are virtually "owners" of Serbia. There are people who acquired all sorts of properties and companies around the country and public don't know who they are and where their money is coming from. They choose to stay anonymous and simply respond in a casual tone: "I never give interviews nor answer questions". They are arrogant to journalists and act like they are protected from everyone. We had a minister who spit on and even kick a journalist and everyone just laughs! That's unacceptable. Journalists should not withdraw when faced with such behaviour of politicians or powerful people. Otherwise, what difference media legislation make. Who is going to enforce it? The whole system has to change in Serbia so that journalists can have a role as everywhere else in the democratic world. Public is to control government not the other way around.

[Have authorities undertaken any activities as a result of your findings? Any arrests being made or policy changes implemented...](#)

**Stankovic:** The prosecutor's office reacted several times during the broadcast of *The Insider* in which we revealed the details about the ways money was taken out of Serbia during UN sanctions and citizens of Serbia were being robbed. There are few more examples of arrests. Police and the Prosecutor's office reacted after the aired our findings about "football mafia" and cigarette smuggling. Several indictments followed the broadcast and some people were arrested. However, I still see that as an attempt to trick the public into believing something is being done to resolve organised crime. I don't think any of those are related directly to *The*

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

I believe the authorities are reacting to *The Insider* primarily because of its wide viewership. As citizens throughout Serbia are retelling its content after each episode, it would have been too much for them to ignore it and take no action. It is not up to a journalist to prosecute and arrest, but it is to reveal every doing that either government or certain individuals are trying to keep away from the public. Therefore, if we dig out evidence and disclose it publicly, the prosecutor should react. That, unfortunately, is not happening yet.

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

**Stankovic:** I don't. Quite the opposite. Number of media outlets, especially newspaper and tabloids, are trying to cover up whatever *The Insider* discovers. Or else the journalists working for such media use false information to confuse the public and falsify the essence of what we reveal to the public. The question is why? Why would any Serbian journalist mind disclosing this kind of information in the first place? Isn't it in every journalist's interest for a story to be investigated thoroughly? The answer is yes. But, many journalists here aren't really journalists. They are paid by certain individuals to protect the interests of criminals, business people, politicians...This is something to be ashamed of! Of course, there are also professionals, but just take a look at the Serbian media today - all the lies and propaganda - and you will soon realise that the professionals are in the minority. The only comforting thing is that it all remains written and one day many of those will be ashamed of lying to their readers and viewers. In my opinion, those journalists should be fought against just like every other type of criminals in this country. ■

## More Doors Still to be Opened

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

By Aleksandar Skundric, Student, FMK



Rodoljub Sabic, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance

Photo by FoNet Service, Nenad Djordjevic

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

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

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

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

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

## Deconstructing Stereotypes

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

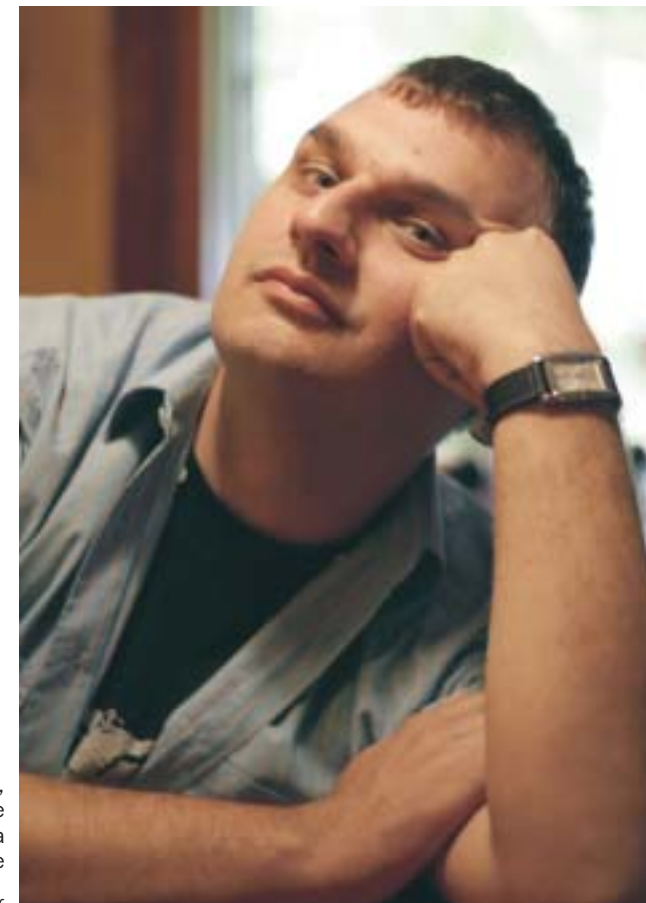


By Nikola Herman, Student, FMK

**I**n November 2000, the Queeria Centre was established as the first youth branch, a working group within a political party, Social-Democratic Union, to publicly promote the rights of sexual and gender minorities. In 2006, the group registered as NGO - the Queeria Centre for Promotion of Culture of Non-Violence and Equality. Today, the Queeria has become a well known brand in the Serbian media scene and the best recognised activists in the promotion of queer culture. In December 2008, the Centre received funding for its web platform from the Ministry of Culture under the programme

that supports minority media in Serbia thus becoming the first Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) organisation supported financially by the government.

The corner stone of the Queeria approach is the inclusion of all interested in supporting the affirmation of queer rights and culture. Their strategy is somewhat unusual in comparison to typical human rights advocates. "We believe that in order to be successful advocate for the rights of others, we first have to be free ourselves. An individual should not rely solely on institu-



Boban Stojanovic, Coordinator of the NGO Queeria Center Belgrade

Photo by Snezana Skundric

tions and policies to protect their rights. Normative optimism is the ideal that requires discard of all criticism. To have laws is good, but the laws come and go, so do governments and politics. Being free, being who you are is what attracts others to reconsider their position. When you are free and comfortable with yourself, you set other people free", says Boban Stojanovic, one of the founders of Queeria Center in an interview for *deScripto*.

"Our position is the queer position. Some of our activists belong to the gay and lesbian population and some do not. While we do express our choices and affiliation where we believe it's important, we don't believe in the correctness or incorrectness of the cultural concepts, we do not subject to authority and we do not accept any forms of isolation - physical nor emotional. The position of gay person in Serbia is the position of the condemned, stigmatized and discarded. There exists a certain consensus in Serbian society around concepts of human rights and unacceptability of the violence but in practice gay people are associated within the context of the morally problematic group. Our solidarity goes with anyone who does not conform to violence to express their selves and represents no physical threat to the society", says Stojanovic.

**How would you describe your approach?**

**Stojanovic:** Our work is based on market principles - we are developing more than one 'brand' and we consider the needs of

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our target groups such as media, the gay community outside of big cities and out of Internet reach. Many human rights organisations speak the language that's not easily understood by the wider audience and mostly preoccupied with the problem of violence. We respect that but are aware that such language and approach is somewhat devoid of what I would call "the joy of living". Therefore we are searching for new approach to human rights and advocating against violence and homophobia.

**What are some of your major strategic points?**

**Stojanovic:** We live in a society where authorities are addressing human rights of those indicted by the court in Hague, right wing politicians have adopted the language of non-violence, and fascists are adopting political correctness. That leaves us with no room but to look for new strategies. Our first position - show no fear. People who spread hatred towards LBGT count on inciting fear. We want to live free, joyful and happy in spite of bad experiences.

Secondly - be a celebrity and hang out with celebrities. Activists of Queeria Centre are often invited to appear in the media because of their attractive appearance, openness and the identity role-playing. In the media, we are positioning ourselves not as victims but as stars of tabloids. We do not judge the journalists and media. We provide them with



Snapshot of Nikola Herman „August face“ on Queeria Calendar

kind of information and entertainment they need: front covers, commentaries on stage performers, gay icon popularity contests, interviews with celebrities, etc. If the journalists are creating the demand, we offer them a good product.



LOGO of the Queeria Center Belgrade

**What about pointing to the violence and discrimination of gender and sexual minorities?**

**Stojanovic:** When it comes to concrete examples of violence against people, we condemn it publicly. When we talk about discrimination of the gay population, instead of saying that we are discriminated against based on our personal characteristics or choices, we talk about sick partner in an intensive care whom we cannot visit because it is the privilege of the closest family members. If people do not identify with a problem, there will be no empathy, thus no support and no change.

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

And, of course, our favourite 'weapon' - playing with the stereotypes. One cannot identify with a homosexual person through ethnicity, religion or such a similar key. In search for ways to advocate for our rights, we can think about 'universality of human rights' and try and make public identify through that concept, but that's kind of too broad. If we try to portray LBGT as 'normal' by the standards of the majority - we would

be labelled as 'sissies' who are faking it. For that reason in its public appearances, the Queeria presents visibility and confirmation of all stereotypes. There are over twenty nationalities and ethnic groups in Serbia represented by the Constitution. They have the right to promote their culture, tradition and art, to wear their traditional folklore and costumes. Our traditional costumes are tight shirts, tight underwear, gossiping and obsession with sex, so - what's the problem? All of that has been a part of gay culture for centuries, so you cannot say that we are "trees without roots". ■

# Between the Rock and a Hard Place

## Privatisation of the Local Media in Serbia

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

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

The journalists of *Suboticke novine* expressed an interest in participating in the auction. They were engaged with developing the business plan and the strategy for further development of this media outlet. Their goal was to ensure financial sustainability of the newspaper while accommodating to the principles of ethics and professional standards of journalistic profession. They presented this programme to the local authorities, political parties, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Culture and Media, but they never got any response.

*Suboticke novine* became the property of the consortium of three owners - two entrepreneurs and a journalist. One of them, the entrepreneur Rajko Stojnic had an 85 percent share. The only partner with the professional experience was the journalist Nada Harminc, who owned only 5 percent of the consortium's shares. That way they met the legal requirement that one of the

buyers in the group has to have a journalistic background. The privatisation contract with the municipality of Subotica secured the new owners monthly monetary support to the newspaper in the amount of 10 percent of their yearly budget.



By Vladimir Vlajic, Student, FMK

Fourteen journalists and two reporters resigned after the newspaper was sold. They accepted an offer from the regional daily *Dnevnik*, which in part belongs to the WAZ media concern, to further develop a new weekly media outlet in Subotica called *Suboticke*. As of June 2006, *Suboticke* were printed regularly covering key topics in the city with better equipment and a more efficient business strategy. In a short while, *Suboticke* achieved the circulation rate of its rival *Suboticke novine*.

According to the editor-in-chief of *Suboticke* Dragica Pavlovic, the only motive of the journalists leaving the privatised *Suboticke novine* was to keep the professionalism and avoid working under terms dictated by people who are not in the media business. The journalists expected the new consortium to eventually

neglect the professional standards for commercial purposes, thereby jeopardising their positions as well as the position of the newspaper.

In a sudden turn of events, several months later one of the member of the new consortium, the journalist Harminc, decided to step out and terminate her contract. The other two owners of *Suboticke novine* were arrested for abuse of their position.

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

On 18 October 2007, *Suboticke novine* was sold for the second time. This time it was sold for 100,000 EUR on the Belgrade Stock Market. Just like the previous owner, the new buyers got the entire property of this media outlet including the two-storey building in the centre of Subotica. Yet, this time the buyer had to take on the responsibility for around 70,000 EUR of

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debt made by the previous owner. As the circulation of both *Suboticke novine* and *Suboticke* was insufficient for commercial survival of either newspaper on the local market, an arrangement was set between owners of both outlets to have journalists of the latter return to their original post - *Suboticke novine*. In return, the new owners *Suboticke novine* committed to print all of its editions in the printing house owned by the media concern to which *Suboticke* belong to. That way, *Suboticke novine* would continue to publish in full with verbal guarantees to keep all the journalists that returned to the newsroom in full employment. At the same time, the owner of *Suboticke* would make a profit out of doing the printing job for all the editions of their previous competitor. In November 2008, the agreement came to fruition. In the statement that followed on the online edition of *Radio-television Vojvodina*, one of the journalists Zlatko Romić stated that the editorial staff accepted the offer to return to *Suboticke novine* because both outlets were poorly managed and did not prove to be competitive in the market.

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

In spite of the verbal agreement to keep all the employees in *Suboticke novine*, three journalists soon lost their jobs. One of them is Zlatko Romić, considered to be one of the best reporters by his colleagues in the newsroom. The reporter Mihalj Novak and advertising officer Stipan Stipančić were also dismissed. Furthermore, salaries have decreased by 30 percent and are also running late for four-months - all against the agreement, Romić claims. "What are the criteria by which the workers were fired and why was the agreement violated?" he asked his superiors, but he never got a response.

Zoran Kosanović of the Independent Journalist Association of Serbia (NUNS) from southern Serbian city Nis describes another example of privatisation of local media, this time in the south of Serbia. In the third biggest city in the country - Nis, the local newspaper *Narodne novine* was privatised in 2006. Twenty journalists left this newspaper and went to the newly founded *Nase* daily. Less than a year later, *Nase* went out of business. The same group of journalists went on to found new weekly *Niski glasnik*. That one also failed, and journalists joined the other media outlets. *Narodne novine* is still being published with double decreased circulation and significantly lesser number of employees with overall little focus on local affairs. "Instead", Kosanović says, "the newspaper is filled with news provided by the national news agencies. Its content could not be praised for quality."

These cases involving *Suboticke novine* and *Narodne novine* are striking and somewhat representative of the challenges brought by the privatisation of local media. The process started in 2001 as part of the overall privatisation of the state and public capital throughout Serbia. However, the initial results in the local media sector were not satisfactory, which was the reason why the privatisation process was discontinued at the end of 2007.

President of the Independent Journalist Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) Dinko Gruhonjić states that the real issue is the lack of clear objectives and goals of the privatisation. "Media are not the same as any other business and that was not taken into consideration. Protecting the interest of the public should be key criteria." Gruhonjić also points to other issues such as the absence of a media register, lack of transparency of the ownership structures, as well as the fact that this kind of privatisation results in suppression of research-oriented journalism. Yet, the biggest problem, as Gruhonjić singles it out, is the



Newsstand in Belgrade

Photo by Kornelia Szabo

fact that the privatisation process has not been continued yet. Current public debate on Law that should prevent media concentration /monopoly could help overcoming most of the issues. However, Gruhonjić believes that such a law should have been passed and enforced way before the actual media privatisation started.

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

Dragan Janjić, former editor-in-chief of BETA news agency, who recently held a position of the assistant to the Minister of Culture, believes that the law that would

prescribe on 30-30-40 ownership structure principle (that is, local authorities would have 30 percent of the ownership of the local media, the employees would also have 30 percent of the shares, and the 40 percent would be on the market) would resolve the complicated situation of the media, allowing for more efficient privatisation. Some local authorities refuse to accept this proposition as the Law on Local Self-Governance allow them to have larger share in the ownership structure in the local media which leads to another set of confusion.

"Privatisation of the local media is a delicate process because of the various challenges brought to the journalist profession by poorly managed or non-transparent process", says Prof. Dr Boban Tomic, journalist and

media theoretician, who analysed and studied this issue in his PhD thesis.

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

Journalists also fear the "tycoonisation" of the media, which means that business

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

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

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

Local media around Serbia are in a deadlock as far as privatisation is concerned. Preparation for privatisation is going slowly and there is an obvious lack of interest on the side of the buyers. The local authorities are either not interested or scared of losing the media influence, so no one supports nor supervises the preparation process for selling remaining media outlets. All that led the privatisation process to move from its initial phase down to some sort of a 'zero position'. ■

# Editors to be Held Responsible

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

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

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

Judging by the opinions of journalists and the public alike, the quality of journalism does not meet the professional standards of developed and democratic societies. The majority of journalists are poorly paid, working in modest conditions and have not had many opportunities to be properly trained and educated.

“What you read in our dailies or watch in the news programmes are predominantly topics that are of little importance for citizens’ everyday life. That is the number one problem with Serbian journalism. Media are saturated with stories like murders, crimes, political scandals, intrigues... which can be explained as expected outcome of a long-lasting obliteration”, says Nadezda Gace, president of Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) in interview for *deScripto*. The NUNS President has had a long and rich journalism experience since the times of the former Yugoslavia. After

being expelled from formerly state-owned RTS for protesting against the propaganda of Milosevic regime, she worked for Jugoslovenska televizija - JUTEL (founded in 1990, just before the war, by journalists from all parts of former Yugoslavia who wanted to preserve a integrated media scene), and then in many print media outlets such as the Slovenian journal *Delo* and the Serbian newspapers *Borba*, *Nasa borba* and *Danas*.

“The problem is not the topics but the approach that journalists take. No critical approach whatsoever. It all comes down to the same clichés. If they are covering corruption - they report that person got arrested and then make accusations before the trial is over. The affair goes on in the media for couple of days, prepared to serve as ‘remedy’

or consolation to the impoverished and disappointed public. And then, nothing. This kind of approach makes it impossible to publicly open serious discussions on issues that are important for the future of Serbia”, says Nadezda Gace.

### Journalists are not to blame

For that, Gace holds editors to be the most responsible. “I do firmly believe that journalists are not to blame for such a state of affairs but editors. And I am not saying that to defend journalists but because I know that between them and what ends up on TV, radio or newspaper there stands the editorial team. It is the editorial teams who are responsible for not opening up some of the most important subject matters in our



By Damjan Malbasic, Student, FMK



Newspaper headlines on arresting Radovan Karadzic

Photo by FoNET news agency, Zoran Mrdja

society. They are responsible for production of such a high amount of prejudices and stereotypes.”

### The influence of politics and money on the media in Serbia is large and is intertwined

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

“On the other hand, there are the rich people gaining influence on the media, or even buying some outlets. I believe their motive is not to ‘rule’ over media. It’s more like they believe that by having influence over media they can get closer to a certain political party. Therefore, the influence of politics and money on the media in Serbia is big and greatly intertwined. Influences today are much more sophisticated than in times when only one political party was ‘giving orders’. There are many more roundabout ways to shape public opinion”.

### Political tabloids

Another popular belief in Serbia is that the media is becoming means by which politicians try to assault and neutralise both their opponents and journalists who do not conform to their interests. Asked if tabloids are particularly responsible for that, Gace answers: “First of all, media la-



Nadezda Gace, Head of NUNS  
Photo by Imre Szabo

belled as tabloid in Serbia are not the tabloids in the sense of what we see in the West. What we are dealing with here are political tabloids used by politicians to ruin reputation of their political opponents. In Serbia issues are not raised to be solved, but to be used by politicians to deal with each other”.

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

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

“After 15 years it is still not known who murdered a journalist Dada Vujasinovic, or who killed Slavko Curuvija nine years ago. Former Minister of Police reported that a journalist from Jagodina, Milan Pantic, was not intended to be murdered, but only beaten up in order to be intimidated. His murder is still unsolved. These cases are not being solved because they would eventually reach some people that are not to be reached.

Evidence would probably lead to high-ranking officials”, says the NUNS President.

Lack of educated, thorough and documented investigative journalism Gace considers as the key reasons for which some of the most important issues have never been properly investigated and reported on. In cooperation with the US Embassy, NUNS has established the Centre for Investigative Journalism for all journalists interested. However, Gace thinks that the government should also stimulate the development of investigative journalism.

### Responsibility for public speaking

The president of NUNS disagrees with the general opinion that all Serbian newspapers are beginning to look like each other and like tabloids; “I would not agree that there is an all-out tabloidisation. There are still newspapers like *Politika*, *Blic* and *Danas* which operate in a different manner.”

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

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However, the NUNS president is optimistic when it comes to instituting and implementing responsibility of public officials for their public speaking. "For NUNS it is our number one priority. We issue so many press statements reacting to every account of inappropriate public speaking or offence against someone's personality in public. A politician was recently called 'murderer'. An actress who played in a move about Srebrenica was titled as 'whore' in one tabloid. We act immediately to protect the rights of people and journalism speech. 'Street talk' creates negative public opinion. Increasing circulation by using such words is no excuse", Gace says.

Acknowledging that in the 1990s young people were deprived of proper education, Nadezda Gace says that the malfunctioning education system and lack of knowledge are hardest to compensate. "Besides all the wars and poverty that Serbia suffered, lack of education is great burden to Serbia. Knowledge leads the way out of crises and makes the wheels of society spin", she says. NUNS regularly organises trainings, workshops and calls professionals to assist with education of young journalists.

The head of NUNS notes that she does not have any illusions that politicians elsewhere in the world do not try to have media 'on their side'. "But there are rules to the game. In Serbia rules still have not been set. There still are no standardised systems".

Asked about the role of NUNS in drafting media legislation and the goals of this organisation today, Nadezda Gace replies that the voice of NUNS is being heard: "Nowadays we participate in writing bills on media consolidation and transparency in ownership in media. I think we play a good role. Many do not like what we say, but we are not here to be liked. We stick to morality and ethics. I think that NUNS has a good effect on things that matter and we do not want to be associated with any political option". ■

## Serbian Media Going Online

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



By Ana Koncul, Marko Herman, Students, FMK



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

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, in the beginning of 2008, 47.6 percent of households in Serbia were owners of a computer (a desktop or a laptop), and 33.2 percent of households were regularly using the Internet. Less than a half of Internet users, only 15.5 percent of households have broadband Internet access, but the number of broadband users has almost doubled in comparison to the year before. The latest development is that new ADSL speeds that are available to the users give us good reason to think that broadband access will spread even more

widely. Also, it is worth mentioning that 74.5 percent of households have at least one mobile phone, and that around the third of them use their phones to access the Internet.

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

Also, broadband connections allowed the users to more easily send their own contributions which are becoming more important for media.

So when we talk about new media in Serbia, we talk about how the traditional media grasped the possibilities the

Internet brought them, but also how the web only media and citizen media developed in recent years.

#### Traditional media in the new environment

Although the national television network, which is now transformed into the public service network existed for much longer (radio for around 80 years and TV for half a century), it is best to follow its development from the point of dissolution of former Yugoslavia at the beginning of 1990s, when it started broadcasting under the current name - Radio Televizija Srbije (RTS). During the reign of Slobodan Milosevic, RTS was censored and known for manipulation and limited freedom of expression. As a response, a radio station with a different news concept was established by a group of young people under the name Radio B92. Over the course of the following years this became a well-established national TV and radio station B92. A year ago, B92 also established a cable news channel - B92 INFO, along with the new version of their online issue for mobile devices.

#### Relevant links:

- <http://www.rts.rs/>
- <http://www.rts.rs/page/blog/sr.html>
- <http://www.rts.rs/page/live/sr.html>
- <http://www.radiobeograd.rs/>
- <http://www.b92.net/>
- <http://blog.b92.net/>
- <http://www.b92.net/kultura/>
- <http://www.b92.net/radio/uzivo.php>

Today, both RTS and B92 have a dominant influence on creating public opinion in Serbia and both have developed online news platforms with increasing number of visitors. Only a year after B92.net was started, in 1996, it was proclaimed as the most visited and the most influential website in the region. The contents of both websites are similar: mostly news, both al-

low streaming of radio and TV programme, and both influence public opinion. Both have blogs mostly written by well known public figures, as well as comments sections and forums. And both sites have much more cultural news than their radio and TV schedules.

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

#### Newspapers online

Daily newspapers are probably the first printed media organisations to realise that the Internet will influence them greatly. This realisation leads newspapers in several directions. Some refused to use the Internet for anything more than a simple presentation, some decided they could sell access to most of their information (which proved wrong), and some started putting all of their content online for free.

One of the first to use the Internet and to try to sell and provide their content freely was *Danas* ([www.danas.rs](http://www.danas.rs)) daily. This media outlet started as the opposition to the government print media in the 1990s and built their reputation as the strong opposition, independent from the government newspaper, which promoted the voices of the opposition political parties, youth organisations and NGOs. Today, *Danas'* web edition is a modern news website with contents updated several times a day and on the way to fully integrate video materials into their content.

Similar to theirs is the website of *Blic* daily ([www.blic.rs](http://www.blic.rs)). They also update their content on when-it-happens basis. Their website also leads to other publications under the *Blic* brand, and provides their readers several way of communication with them; to comment on their stories

and engage in a discussion forum. *Blic* also started their own blog which is written by several important figures from Serbia's economic, political and public life. Another Ringier's newspaper - freely distributed *24 sata* ([www.24sata.rs](http://www.24sata.rs)), fully implemented their orientation towards younger audience on their website. Short news stories, commenting option and fresh design, with possibility to download each issue in PDF format for offline reading. They are also the only daily to experiment with *KlikMee* ([www.klikmee.com](http://www.klikmee.com)) technology, which allows easier access to online content for the users of photo capable mobile phones.

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

#### Periodicals

Weekly and monthly magazines showed mostly less understanding for the Internet. They usually provide content that is widely available online (mostly in other languages), and try to appeal to the readers by additional content and nicely designed "packages". Therefore most periodicals' websites are Internet advertisements for their latest issues without much freely available content. For instance, the weekly magazine with a good reputation - *Vreme* ([www.vreme.com](http://www.vreme.com)), publishes some of the stories and offer web subscription for those who want to read it all online.

On the other hand, another important weekly - *Ekonomist* ([www.emporal.rs](http://www.emporal.rs)) discarded such a model and created a full web portal related to economic and political issues. Content from their printed issues is available for reading online and only requires a free registration. Their online content is much richer than the printed version.

Looking at bi-weekly and monthly periodicals, it's even harder to find those with websites. It seems that mostly those ori-

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ented towards younger audience put some effort in their online presence. For instance, relatively young free monthly (soon to be bi-weekly) city guide *City Magazine* ([www.citymagazine.rs](http://www.citymagazine.rs)) created a website that has its own life between two printed issues and also used a bit of web 2.0 trends by implementing a blog which is written by some of the staff members as well as other figures relevant to the local urban scene. Similarly, *RLN* ([www.realno.org](http://www.realno.org)) has a website developed with much attention. And although not much of their content can be read online, they allow the download of the PDF version of the magazine.

#### Web magazines

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

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

Connecting IT and gadgets with other topics of interest to Serbian Internet users is



Illustration by Aleksandra Petkovic

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

Since most Internet users in Serbia are high school or faculty students, it's only logical that there is also a

specialised web magazine called *Studentski svet* ([www.studentskisvet.com](http://www.studentskisvet.com)). They cover topics related to education as well as topics of general interest. And magazines presented here are only a tip of the iceberg. There are many more good examples, and also a lot of bad ones.

#### Media 2.0

The Serbian blog scene is a world in itself. Since most magazines, whether traditional or web oriented, didn't pay much attention to readers' needs, they started writing for themselves. Yes, blogs did start as personal diaries, but nowadays they are a form and a concept of publishing different contents.

The best place to start exploring Serbian blogosphere is *Blogodak* ([www.blogodak.com](http://www.blogodak.com)). This is an aggregator with blogs sorted by topic. Not all blogs are Serbian, but all of them are written in one of the similar languages spoken in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Most of the blogs are per-

sonal, or written from a personal perspective, and couple of good examples are *Blogowski.eu* and *Artmistakes.com*.

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

## Media in Serbia and the Idea of the Network

*Between the "Internets" and the handouts-for-free*



By Vlada Jeric, Student, FMK

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

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

The wider awareness about the potential of the Internet in Serbia came fairly recently (some would say that we are still waiting for that to happen). This 'slip' from the global mainstream is being explained by the distinctive local history of 1990s, which for Serbia would be marked by the

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### Reportage on web radio [noviradiobeograd.com](http://noviradiobeograd.com)

#### New Kids on the Cyber Block

When on one occasion I read about audiophile shelter on the Internet, full of free spirit that wasn't felt on the Serbian media scene since the beginnings of B92, I was very interested in listening to New Radio Belgrade. And when I first tuned to their programme the intention of those editing and broadcasting (streaming) the station - to offer the alternative and a place in the (cyber) community where listeners can enjoy all the things that didn't find their place in the dominant media.

Although it was experimentally streamed before the official start, on 6 October 2008, the shaking up of the sleepy Serbian scene started, as the Editor-in-Chief Milutin Petrovic put it. This date isn't randomly selected. 6 October is the day after the famous 5 October 2000 revolution, when Slobodan Milosevic regime was thrown down. Although people expected that changes would be very deep and implemented in all areas of social and political life in Serbia, most people feel that many things remained the same. Therefore, 6 October is often referred to as *the day that never happened*. That is why this date was symbolically chosen for the birthday of New Radio Belgrade as a reaction to the lack of interest of other media to improve Serbian (primarily music) scene.

After only couple of months of broadcasting, NRB is one of the most popular Internet radio stations in the country. The audience is won over by the fact that this

### \*New Radio Belgrade

is a radio without traditional genre forms that strives to improve the culture of dialogue, promote reconciliation and tolerance, establish contacts with Serbia's neighbours, as well as to positively 'provoke' sleepy Serbian musical and general cultural public scene.

Through almost 30 different shows, (mostly) young staff addresses the topics related to popular science, culture, sport, social minorities, and at the same time clearly broadcasts the message that they are against any form of government controlled arts, stereotypes and prejudices.

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

Relevant links

<http://www.noviradiobeograd.com/>

<http://www.last.fm/user/NoviRadioBeograd>

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

And the prices... Serbian state-owned Telecom remains to be a so-called "last mile" monopoly - one of the few left in the world of telecommunications. It may not necessarily be a bad thing - where this monopoly from the side of society or a state is being lost and the "free market" completely took over, we already saw quite a few challenges to the idea that all information going through "the tubes" should be treated equally, and some businesses trying to grab the piece of other businesses at the expense of 'network neutrality' - which would be, without any doubt, at the expense of 'democracy', 'the right to public speech', 'truth', 'transparency' and other 'pillars of the society' - such an attempt should be defined, prevented and



Between Internet and handouts-for-free

Photo by Igor Marovic

punishable by the law of any contemporary society. On the other hand, there is no guarantee nor mechanism set in place not to see this position being exploited by the state monopolists in a similar manner. If a national public service like Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) sees no problem in being backed by the budget, funded from the mandatory subscription and by selling a commercial space all at the same time, there is no reason for the state-backed telecom company not to try to do the same. This is especially true with the forthcoming financial crisis, which everybody is getting more and more worried about, but which seems that nobody really understands, which gives a tremendous opportunity for (any) state or business to bring decisions which it does not have to explain or argue at all - so, 'recession' and 'crisis' may become some sort of 'magic' words, and something you are not really expected to discuss.

Back to the story of the Internet - the result of such a recent local history combined with the existing monopoly in Serbia is that the prices of Internet access remained very high compared to the Europe and the region, and extremely high compared to the average local income. Obviously, infrastructure-wise, Serbia is still one messy place - it is not easy to get the connection at all, and once you get it you find yourself paying more-for-less, compared to everybody else around; but, if compared to the situation

before 2004, there is at least something in terms of connectivity, and it is getting more and more wide-spread, if you are lucky enough to be in Belgrade or a few other (for businesses and politicians more interesting) places. The first serious landmark number was reached in the spring of 2008, when, according to some surveys, Serbia had 250,000 broadband users. Some sources state that we are operating with the number of around 500,000 already, some would mention much more, but the statistics would come from different sources of which none should be considered as absolutely confirmed and 'objective', in a scientific way. This kind of disorientation is illustrative of the lack of a more mature social infrastructure in the field, as still we wait for clear government policies (and then to fight with the consequences of it), still most of the government and businesses and other institutions have sloppy and dysfunctional websites, still e-mail is not something widely considered as a valid sort of communication, and still there are no means of online electronic payment and related services emerging. And yet, some of us enjoy the marvel of the lack of over-regulation in the field, and hope it will stay that way.

**Broadening "the tubes"**

So, it can be said regarding the infrastructure, however expensive, slow and sloppy it may be, that it became available for quite some number of people now; what is with the 'cul-

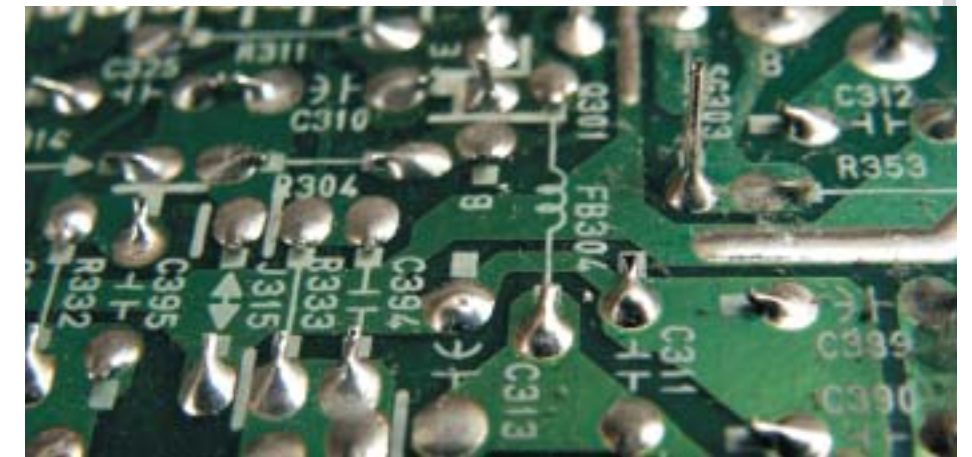
ture of using', which would be 'the second stage' in introduction of a certain new social paradigm (of technology, of media, etc)?

According to the previous government and the Secretary of the former Ministry for Capital Investments, Dragana Djurcic, the fact that Serbia is still at the very bottom of the European list of 'penetration' of computers and Internet is not the fault of government but of citizens themselves. She was quoted saying the following, at the *SEE Broadband 2007*, a regional 'broadband conference' of the countries of South East Europe held in Belgrade: *"The reason for not using the Internet enough is definitely not the price because [in the survey probably commissioned by government] only 9.6 percent of households consider the price of broadband Internet too high. Most of the households - around 44 percent - say they don't want the broadband Internet, don't need it or don't know how to use it."*

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

But why would all those people think that they neither need nor liked to be connected, how would they decide about it? And why would the government say that it has nothing to do with its society's attitude towards what is being considered a global 'revolution' in communications? The culture of using and promoting the usage of the Internet, as we all know too well and as is the case with anything else, does not happen 'by itself'. It is not that millions of citizens will wake up one morning, 'feeling the

need' to be connected, and then rush to local providers and enlist for a line - it comes as the consequence of the set of strategies and campaigns to 'create' that need and/or desire. The interest of society to participate in The Network needs to be clearly outlined and articulated to everybody involved; of course that the role of media would be crucial in creating this kind of public awareness and consent. The problem is, the traditional media in Serbia at this moment do not see the Internet as a friend or as an ally; so it would be the combination of misunderstanding and fear which would guide owners, managers and editors of "the big



media", and consequently the entire public sphere, into either rather pretending that the Internet is not really happening (or that "the whole thing is overblown" and does not deserve much attention) or into the very campaign against the Internet, presenting it as not just insignificant and meaningless phenomena, another fashion-of-the-moment to fade away tomorrow, being replaced by something else, but also a potentially very dangerous place to be.

This is something which was also characteristic for the lot of traditional media in societies which were going to this kind of 'media transition' and which came to use digital networks before, and on a wider scale, and still the process is unfolding in many different places - as 'the tubes' got broader, not only printed media, but radio

and then TV came challenged; but precisely of it being the matter of time, and also of scale, now the media in those societies would have already a certain position towards the Internet - they would be pretty much clearly divided on the basis if they somehow are trying to merge or intertwine and eventually become the part of One Network, or if they have embraced the approach to 'fight back' and resist. And none of them could ignore that the Internet is already here and constantly emerging, becoming more powerful and 'unavoidable' in each circle of its permanent expansion. Still, nobody is sure what

it did to us exactly, and it is understandable that a lot of people may go through the period of disorientation and confusion.

Obviously, there is some kind of 'half-generation split' happening among the population in their 30s and up. There is already some research on the possibly growing cultural differences and the phenomena of 'misunderstanding' and 'miscommunication' between those involved in transformation and those who are not; but there is also something which should be viewed as coming from the entirely different angle. It is the willingness to understand, the trust to 'others' and especially 'younger others' from the side of skeptics, and an honest and (however 'painful' it may be) realistic attitude towards what is already happening

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Computer Main Board  
Photo by Igor Marovic

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and what is emerging as 'ubiquitous', which elevates the idea of Internet, or anything 'new', to the tipping point, making it not 'the phenomena' of the avant-garde and 'experimental' practice of one society anymore, but a common, not-a-big-thing and default social infrastructure. The 'tubes' have to become transparent, to the point it makes them almost 'invisible', before we can consider that people finally accepted it - but never, ever, we should forget the material practices and material character of it.

It is not that Serbia is that late in this queue to reach 'the tipping point' - as we have seen, even in the very society in which this 'paradigm shift' of media was introduced, the United States, up to now there is still both tremendous wide-spread use of the Internet among the population and a generation of 'resistance' to it, involving some of the 'big media' as well, and symbolically represented in the idea of Internet as 'internets' by the former president, or the even more amusing idea of the Internet as 'the series of tubes' as explained by senator Stevens. The recent electoral victory of President Obama was widely attributed to the success of his media and fundraising campaign relying heavily on The Network. This replaces this symbolic resistance with symbolic acceptance, clearly demonstrating that it is not the matter of opinion but of recognising the material practice to accept the new power of the Network, finally disarming the remnants of the generation of 'sceptics' and rendering any 'offline' approach to oblivion. It is important to add that it is not just the idea of the Internet-as-technical-infrastructure for the exchange of digital archives and communication, and for creating 'virtual' social networks, which relates to that change, but also different other social processes, the daily practices and modes of organisation (and of collaboration and communication and exchange) in what we traditionally

called 'real life', which both become visible or emerged as we started to use the Internet more, changing significantly not what we think about or do 'online', but our understanding and material practices of 'offline', as well.

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

Regarding traditional media in Serbia, there is no doubt that both 'online' and 'offline' aspects of this change are happening as we speak - most, if not all 'the big media' would have or are in the process of building the extensive digitized and networked presence. There is a vast network of 'smaller' media, which are already exclusively based on the 'online' approach, and the world of print media increasingly resembles the looks and practices, 'the interface' and 'the content' of their online siblings. But, the shift in culture, 'the tipping point' or the symbolic acceptance still does not appear to be around the corner - despite all the practices we are undeniably witnessing happening. The 'official' attitude of the 'official' media remains at best in denial, and at worst quite defensive. If for this is already being said that it presents the 'expected' phase in this process of media (and social) transition, and something most of the societies experienced or are about to experience as the one (for some social groups) quite painful aspect of 'evolving' towards the networked society, then in Serbia this process may be more

bold and more the 'caricature of itself' than elsewhere and before, as the consequence of the historical and political circumstances outlining it.

#### The politics of fear

A small survey made to illustrate this claim was done researching the excellent media archive of Ebart Media Documentation, who provided a support to FMK in data-mining media for this issue of *deScripto*. It did confirm what is already suspected and 'perceived' from the experience - the traditional media in Serbia would rather ignore mentioning the Internet at all (being in denial), by not attributing the online sources from which they predominantly aggregate news and information from, and, even more importantly, by avoiding any discussion on the Internet and its omnipresence in the life and work of the growing number of people. In other words, you will not find many reports or discussions from, or about, the Internet in the traditional media of today. It appears as if nothing really important happened since the 1990s, and that it is still considered quite normal to accept that public communication and journalism, culture and politics, entertainment and science, and everything really, still happens on the pages of printed media or at the other side of TV screens. In most of the cases, if the Internet is mentioned at all, it would be in specialised columns and TV shows, or small pieces of news reporting from 'out there', from some distant and still curious and dubious, not-that-significant-at-all place of 'internets', where we follow the activities of "them", a defined and finite group of people who are 'different', and who for some reason decided to spend time "there". It will almost never be about "us" and "here". The second approach, which is much more aggressive (or, perhaps more accurately, a defensive one), is being used in the cases in which the existence and influence of the Internet can not be ignored, or in which the aim is to spread the atmosphere of fear and doubt towards the very idea of it. Headlines and news ex-



Street Graffiti

Photo by Kornelija Szabo

cerpts confirm that those are still the two dominant approaches used by the mainstream media, and here are some amusing and characteristic examples, all from daily and weekly press during 2008:

*Mass murderers buying arms over the Internet (Blic, 17 February 2008), A modern thief sits behind the computer (Glas Javnosti, 3 February 2008), Hackers from Kosovo attacked the web-site of the youth organisation (Danas, 18 August 2008), Albanians blocked Serbian web site (Kurir, 15 August 2008), Civil servants banned from using Facebook (Blic, 19 December 2008), Another robbery on YouTube (Blic, 27 February 2008), Electronic thefts (Ekonomist, 10 March 2008), National Agency for Telecommunication invades the privacy of citizen (Glas Javnosti, 30 July 2008), Cash machines under the attack of cyber criminals (Biznis, 3 March 2008), Cyber criminals arrested in Kraljevo (Politika, 5 June 2008), Online sexual maniac got caught (Kurir, 30 May 2008), Charges against Internet paedophile (Press, 18 June 2008), Videos of orgies involving horses available online (Glas Javnosti, 18 June 2008), Protect your identity while online (Pregled, 22 August 2008), Laws needed against online violence (Danas, 9 September 2008), How to prevent the misuse of Internet? (Narodne novine - Niš, 9 September 2008),*

*Parents don't know how to control the online content (Danas, 8 May 2008), Internet makes you dumber (Politika, 12 July 2008), Prostitution flourishes over the Internet (Blic, 9 November 2008), Internet addiction on the rise (Glas Javnosti, 30 November 2008), Manipulation of public opinion on the Internet (Glas Javnosti, 18 January 2008), Indecent proposals in chat rooms, parents misguided (Politika, 25 February 2008), Children are the target of Internet maniacs (Blic, 3 June 2008), Drugs and prostitution in the virtual world (Politika, 6 December 2008), Facebook addiction surpasses the addiction on computer games (Politika, 6 December 2008), Internet more expensive, e-mails under control (Blic, 26 July 2008), Inspectors chasing pirates (Politika, 14 November 2008), Computer viruses replaced bombs (Nedeljni Telegraph, 21 May 2008), A law on electronic communication is necessary (Danas, 3 March 2008)...*

Hope you had a good laugh. It is important to remember that this is just a tiny portion of the headlines referring to the Internet, and there is much more; so what the average citizen reading newspapers could conclude on 'this Internet thing'? This is one dangerous place, in which terrorists, pirates and maniacs of all kinds operate, and children are the prey of an army of pedophiles; it is not just your

money they steal there, but also your entire 'identity'; and if by some chance it doesn't get you addicted to it, surely it will make you dumber.

#### Now press 'enter' if you dare

This is not to say that some of the things mentioned in the headlines do not happen. Of course that there is a lot of 'criminal' behaviour online - but, more-or-less in the same ratio as in 'real life', and it is expected - as the Internet and related digital communication tools expanded our reach much beyond the possibilities of our body, or beyond the place we live in or the social circles we can be the part of - it did so for all the aspects of 'us'. Also, this is not to say that there is no positive and affirmative coverage of the Internet, and that there are no specialised magazines and columns dedicated to promoting all things Internet, albeit most of it would be promoting the products and services, quite possibly connected with vendors or distributors and acting as advertisement, without real critical and scientific discussion about the Internet, besides on the Internet itself. However, most of those would be confined to 'specialised' places and addressing the audience already aware of the Internet and its ever expanding potentials and problems. In the general picture, the 'popular' press, the one addressing just 'the people', in the situation where there is no immediate knowledge and experience of the topic, is still producing more fear and confusion than critique and curiosity; without having a clear social consensus, reflected in the media, that The Network is here to stay, with all of the gains and losses it may bring, it is quite possible that almost 50 percent of the citizens will continue to say: *Internet? No thanks, I don't think I really need it...* No matter how much is invested in infrastructure, or not, from this point on it is the culture which decides on the further progress in the field. And this is where traditional media should play a very important role. Once they are clear about what that role is supposed to be. ■



# The Art of Rationalisation in the Age of Crisis

Interview with Milos Rancic - a linguist, computer programmer, Wikimedia Serbia, Ebart media archive

By Vlada Jeric, Student, FMK

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

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

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

Quite a few of the local journalists and different "experts" would still feel the need to speak in public about Wikipedia as unreliable, insufficient, amateurish, even 'dangerous' or 'dam-



Photo by Igor Marovic

Wikipedia screenshot

aging', although we all know for quite some time now, backed by all the relevant surveys and analysis, that it is completely the other way around. Where, according to your opinion, does this need come from? Why do those people not accept it for what it is, and not try to benefit from having Wikipedia, instead?

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

In the previous issue of *deScripto* dealing with local media landscape, published in 2006, still there was some criticism on Wikipedia coming from the people considered to be the experts, similar to what would be a popular misconception of

the Internet in general, claiming that it is 'unstable', 'unreliable', 'over-simplifying', and repeating other common stereotypes?

**Rancic:** It is quite clear that the 'rules of working' are much 'harder', defined in more details and more transparent in Wikipedia than in all of the local encyclopaedia projects...

...and we had a flood of "new encyclopaedias" recently...

**Rancic:** Yes, right. In Wikipedia, there has to be a relevant source, and preferably more sources, referenced; then the 'tone' needs to be neutral, and you can not play on the 'authority' card - in a lot, a lot of the other projects it is just one 'authority' figure which is referenced, somebody who wrote on something for which there are no other sources, no confirmations, and in that respect it is very problematic to state that Wikipedia doesn't come up to the standards of any general encyclopaedia. I am not really following all the new and different projects developing around, so still I take as the examples and references the never finished *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, then *The Military encyclopaedia* and a *Little Prosveta Encyclopaedia* (so-called *Mala enciklopedija Prosveta* - officially: *Op(ta enciklopedija, trece izdanje, Prosveta, Beograd, 1978*, which used to be a very popular and referenced one). Realistically speaking, compared to *Prosveta* edition, for example, almost each entry in Wikipedia is just plainly better. And, one more thing - Wikipedia is not a 'wonder' anymore, so that the people would be excited to speak and comment on it, nor we from the local branch of Wikimedia feel much need to campaign and 'popularise' it around - most of the people I meet these days know precisely what Wikipedia is, and are in general quite positive about it. People use it. It is here to stay.

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

**Rancic:** The real problem of Wikipedia, and I am talking about the 'big' one here, the one in English, would be that it is still "thin" in those fields where, in general, there is not yet a critical mass of people who are also prominent in computer sciences, and in average that would be social sciences. Wikipedia is 'thinnest' there. For example, as somebody educated in linguistics, I can say that Wikipedia is pretty 'thin' in the field - of course, the main things and basic terms are there, but compared to, for example, astronomy, which is covered in tremendous details now, it is not much. But people around astronomy are familiar with computer technology and computer culture for decades. Wikipedia in Serbian would have slightly different problems, which would be similar for all the communities from the smaller-in-population languages, and that is that the certain individuals can still influence a lot; a good example of that would be socio-linguistics, where I launched the ini-

tiative together with professor Jelena Filipovic from the Faculty of Philology and students contributed with three entries each, so the field is decently covered, I would say better than in the Wikipedia in English. But, in general, this is what I see as the real problem, still there is the lack of people from certain fields who are also prominent in using and understanding computer networks, and it is reflected in Wikipedia.

*Wikipedia 'broadens' the scope of future journalists' education; it teaches you how to search*

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

**Rancic:** Oh, I don't know what they (the mainstream media) did recently; I'll need to search the Ebart media database to update myself on it (laughing)... But we've seen everything - really everything - piracy, the 'real piracy' - popular daily papers taking and using the photographs, for example, or quoting the verbatim pieces of certain articles, and if all what they should do is to attribute it, but they don't do even that, it just shows... Well, a bad attitude. Bad taste. But with some news agencies we have a wonderful collaboration. For example, local *WikiNews* is re-publishing the news-stream from the Beta News Agency, and it works great.

I see the potential for collaboration with traditional or mainstream media, and I don't think Wikipedia presents any kind of threat to traditional journalism. Still there is the public demand to have an extensive and permanent, 24-hours per day coverage (and also the space to sell ads), especially in smaller and mid-sized environments, like this one here - and I don't think that the traditional local news services are in any state of immediate danger to be extinct. Still they provide the service some self-organised entities can not - they produce the news which are systematically covering all fields, deliver on regular basis and in time, and without much if any oscillation - in other words, I don't see any treat to Beta, Tanjug, Agence France-Presse or Reuters. But with daily newspapers, it is different; it becomes obviously an obsolete thing, to say.

Well, the local numbers disagree - the circulation of traditional press is not growing, but not shrinking, yet; and just 30 percent of regular hardcopy readers do read the online version of the dailies here and there. On the other hand, all the newspapers have online editorial boards and are 'competing' to build extensive web-sites and archives, and the concept of the newspapers-for-free, introduced by 24 sata, provoked some response by the biggest and most traditional - *Politika daily* re-

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cently begun handing out *Politika.zip*, a free digest of the 'real' issue. But I agree that it seems that this sort of publishing is fading away, and is being growingly replaced by the Internet - and I also think that we haven't even begun to explore the full potential of mobile phones in this respect, for example - so the monopoly to find, produce and disseminate information or a piece of news is definitely lost for daily newspapers. It is already over. Where the potential of professional journalism remains may be actually in the journalism itself, not just in standing in between the news and the public, but in commenting, criticism, analysis, contextualising, predicting, joining the dots - in 'interpreting' the news, to say. The 'news-as-the-information' is already omnipresent, in real time and in all the formats and media we may use, but as a fast and short, bold and dry, somewhat disconnected 'piece of data'. Journalists should be the people who are there to "interpret" the data, to analyse what it means and what are the possible consequences of it.

**Rancic:** There are a few paradigms there. One is about the content, and what the nature of that content is. Another is the question of media, in a technological sense. When I am not behind the computer (and that is almost never), I am following the news on my mobile phone. The point is, the technology of such access to news is not in that widespread use yet. Still a majority of the people will grab newspapers on their way to toilet. Me, I take my mobile. I've done that ever since I got a first mobile, which was able to do so. But this technology seems to be still emerging, and I am sure once it takes over people would feel no need to revert to carrying a bunch of papers around. The previous year may be characteristic by announcing the technology of paper-like computer display. That means that soon we will read from such displays, and you'll have only a few displays around, which will show any content from any source on your demand, so for journalism I do not really see the option of not publishing online. What would be a revenue model for journalism is one entirely different story - I don't know, probably advertising... And also, when occasionally I go through a paper copy of the newspapers, most of the times I find myself reading the news I read yesterday online; since I already read the yesterdays news yesterday, I go online and read the news of today. But I think that aggregating news is still not that easy, and I think news agencies like Beta are still much 'stronger' than the Internet, to say; especially considering the local news, they have people who do that all the time, they gather the news, filter out the noise, and organise these streams into categories which may be of your concern, otherwise you would have to cope with that. But a very small number of people is sufficient for this job, so it would be just a small portion of the people working in 'journalism'. Journalism is becoming different now. I think that today there is too much people in media and journalism. Similar to software - also I think there are too many computer programmers.

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

### *News agencies remain 'stronger' in aggregating the news*

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

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

Regarding the government policies, I don't see any of this reflected there. There I see nothing happening really. I see some initiatives, even from the places which are close to the structures of the government, but in reality and within what we consider as 'official', nothing is happening yet.

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



Milos Rancic

Photo by Vlada Jeric

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

**Rancic:** But, regarding those issues, again I don't find the situation here much different then in most of the other places. I consider myself pretty well informed about the topic, as most of the time I follow *Slashdot* - it is my main news source, as at least 20-30 percent of the news on *Slashdot* feeds I find I am interested in, which for me makes it by far the most relevant source compared to anything else - and there I see the similar problems being reported from more or less everywhere, including the United States. There are people everywhere who are afraid of the Internet, who scare other people with the Internet, and there are numerous different horror stories about the Internet emerging all the time; I am online since 1995, so pretty much from the beginning of the Internet as we know it, and in my immediate environment I never ever experienced any of the "horror stories". It is obvious that there is a campaign against the Internet among some social circles, or by some individuals; I attribute it to fear. Once some people used to be afraid of the soap, remember? It is the matter of understanding, of knowledge. Just look how the horror stories about the launching of the Large Hadron Collider in European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) this autumn emerged. People really thought that when they switch it on, the whole planet would collapse into itself, and whatnot. In some places on the Far East still people believe that if the fan cooler is switched on, you should not spend any time in the room where it is working, as it may "suck all the air out" and you may suffocate. Some Somali tribes believe that local men can become impotent only by shaking hands with white men, so they will be afraid to touch you. Of course, a certain level of rationality and rationalisation is always required. There are paedophiles around. There are people who would rape a 5 year old kid. These things may happen. But are not usual - how many people you met in your life which may do such a thing? None, I guess.

Similar chances you have to meet one on the Internet, then - it is not much different, really. But you need to rationalise.

I started this small survey with the premise that Internet infrastructure, however expensive and outdated, became finally available in Serbia, and that the society entered the phase in which the wider social acceptance of the Internet depends much more on promoting and researching the culture of using it, living with it, working with it. It is only this way that it may become both ubiquitous and transparent, a common thing, something which should be taken as default. Would you agree?

**Rancic:** Well, infrastructure remains to be the problem. I myself had to pull a very strong "connections" in Telecom in order to be "switched" from the notorious Puls-code Modulation (PCM) telephone line in my previous apartment to something which would be able to transmit data. But OK, let's say it was a remote suburb, and that it was not the 'priority' to upgrade the lines there. Some parts of Belgrade still have a lot of issues regarding connectivity. Then I moved to the city centre, and ended up making the improvised connection using the line from the apartment next door, as my line again was not 'modernised' and couldn't be used for data. So infrastructure is definitely still something to deal with.

Regarding promoting the culture of using the Internet, I quite agree that any sort of coordinated activity from the side of government and institutions is yet to be expected. There are some new people around now, so we will see. I had the opportunity, by chance, to meet most of the people who were officially in charge of the Internet by now. It has to do with the Computer Center of the University of Belgrade (RCUB), and with Faculty of Electrotechnics. This would be the profile of the people involved, they will be predominantly engineers. And it appears to be the problem. There are always two aspects of the technology, but the average local politician would not be able to distinguish between the two, and would see it appearing as one. One aspect is the technology as in what engineers do - determining, planning, creating and maintaining the technical functionality of one system. It has a lot to do with hardware and software issues. There, without any doubts, the Faculty of Electrotechnics is producing a competent people. And this is what most politicians are able to recognise as "technology". But, there is another aspect of technology, which for politicians and those in charge is not articulated yet, and because of which having those new people around is very important. You need people who know how the Internet is working. I have no doubts that engineers would continue to make great functioning and very redundant systems for electrical distribution, or land line telephony. But the Internet is different, as it requires all what an engineer does, and beyond, in order for it to really work. This is not to say that engineers would not be a perfectly good choice to deal with the Internet - only, additional education is required, and one that goes beyond engineering. And I think that there is a big lack of this kind of peo-

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ple. I met engineers who can code in complex languages just like that, and who are able to program micro-controllers to do wonders, anytime, but who just happen not to know how to format the text in Microsoft Word. Probably it is different by now, and I think the situation among young people is much better in that respect - I am talking about some previous generations - but those generations would be precisely the people who grew up to be of influence in certain institutions today. The problem is if you try to learn about the Internet issues from some sort of 'external' position, you will always be lagging at least a generation behind. You need to be 'on' the Internet in order to know about the Internet. This is the profile of people required, and those people would be able to "push" things. But still we have politicians who think "OK, this is something connected with computers and Internet, we need an engineer here". This I see as one serious, core problem.

And, for the end: as somebody who lives and works on and from the Internet - Wikipedia is voluntary affair, of course, but before Ebart, you have been working with regional VOIP providers, so professionally and financially you have depended on the Internet for quite some time - how do you access the consequences of forthcoming recession on Internet, on the people who depend on the Internet in their daily activities and those who are directly employed on the 'internets' - what will change for you?

**Rancic:** Well, there are a few aspects there. The company I work for is data-mining and archiving media. A lot of companies, institutions and political parties are depending on exploiting these resources in order to analyse and decide what to do next. Whatever crisis is coming, I think this is the last service they would decide to deprive themselves of. So I think my position is pretty "safe", to say. On the other hand, I expect a lot of rationalisation to happen around. There will not be much funding around for developing this and that anymore, and a lot of things would go under the process of rationalisation. This rationalisation should also include accepting the open-source and free software on much wider scale, and I actually think that people able to work with free software may be in growing demand. It also may mean even more of using the 'pirated' software. But I expect that a lot of programmers would lose their jobs and contracts. When a bank goes down, for example, it does not require the developing of any software applications anymore. So, as in any crises, those who have more options would have much better chances to "get through" - and it is true for programmers, as well. If you can code in several different languages, you have much more chances than if you know to work just with one; if you can port for different operating systems, you are better off than if you are connected with just porting for one. We can also see more of the outsourcing in one scenario I can think of, and much less in another; it is very uncertain which way it would go. But living in Serbia, one thing proved to be constantly true: anything is possible. ■

## Devastating Status of Roma Media

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

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



By Andrea Perunovic, Student, FMK

Over the last years, the Serbian public have witnessed a number of awareness raising campaigns promoting the rights of minorities and marginal social groups, as well as number of appeals focusing on the alarming status of the Roma population in Serbia. Still, the prejudices about Roma citizens are visible within the Serbian media. Their language is rarely heard on Serbian radio and TV stations even in areas with a larger Roma population. As for the Romani media, the status is as difficult, since the number of media outlets in the Romani language is decreasing. Dragoljub Ackovic, editor of the Romani programme in the Radio Program I of the national broadcasting service Radio Television of Serbia since 1978, the founder of Romani news agency *Rominterpres* and one of the



Dragoljub Ackovic

Photo by BETA NEWS SERVICE, D. Antonic

founders and the Vice-President of the International Romani Parliament considers shutting down of media in Roma language 'to be systematic'. Since 2006, the Republic Broadcasting Agency has been implementing new broadcasting legislation and has been licensing radio and television outlets on local and national level in Serbia. Several Romani media were not awarded a licence and have shut down in the process. In an interview for *deScripto*, Ackovic explains why:

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

*The Decade of Roma Inclusion Presidency is currently held by Serbia under Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic. He recently spoke very affirmatively about the development of Romani media. When I asked him why they shut down three media stations, he had no answer. I do not think he even knew about it.*

*One thing is for sure - our language is our state. If you shut down Romani media, you are seriously impacting Roma national awareness, culture and everything that constitutes being Romani."*

*In Belgrade, three out of four Romani media were denied broadcasting license*

How would you describe the way media are addressing Roma citizens and issues that concern Romani population in Serbia?

**Ackovic:** Media that talk about Roma people the most are those who have a sensationalistic approach towards the Roma population, for example reporting on Roma persons who stole a chicken, or got into fight half-drunk, or an under-aged Roma child smoking. On the other hand, they don't have the opportunity to write about Roma men or women who have brought important change or have developed something or saved the ship from sinking. Roma people are not on the governing positions and nowhere in the world do they have such opportunities. I wish these media outlets could leave the sensationalism behind and start reporting on real issues.

As the Secretary for Information of the International Roma Union I have struggled a lot with main international news agencies to persuade them to use term Roma instead of Gypsies. Some of them would even claim that we made it up to be different. We did, but a couple of thousand years ago. That is what we are called and what we will always be. Will mainstream media do something to change it? I don't know...

I remember that in 1969, one of the biggest Yugoslav dailies at that time *Novosti* was running an initiative to support Roma people and it was very well received by public. Since then, I have not seen any similar initiative ever. Last December *Politika* daily was publishing feuilleton and that was good. But, not enough.

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

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

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

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

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Roma children in front of Belgrade Gallery

Photo by Aleksandra Petkovic

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You were talking about the shutting down of the Romani media. What is the situation in Serbia today?

**Ackovic:** Romani media in Serbia are in a devastating position. When define Romani media as those who broadcast programmes in Romani language or whose owners are Romanis. There is one local television and radio station in Nis, one radio station in Krusevac, and one in Obrenovac broadcasting only commercial announcements. I am the editor of the *Roma world*, which is Romani programme on national radio service RTS. Regional TV in Novi Sad is broadcasting *Amen Adjes* show. There were in the past random broadcasts on the TV stations in cities Kikinda, Pristina and Smederevo. Now, the question is why on TV RTS, which is national public service, we do not see any programme in Romani language. We wrote tens of times to the CEO of RTS Aleksandar Tijanic but received no answer.

What about Internet media? Do you have any presence there?

**Ackovic:** Yes, Roma people are using the Internet a lot, and the majority of Romani organisations have their own websites. Our organisation *Rominterpres* has a website and I noticed that there were around 12,000 visitors in just a couple of months. That's a very positive statistic, and there certainly are much better websites than this one. My colleagues and I thought of something useful for Roma people, to build a Romani nation-state on the Internet - Romanistan. It is very popular among "Romani hackers" and people using the Internet. Romanistan is housing our national library, the Bible translated in the Romani language, and daily news as well. For Roma people it's a source of information, but also source for so much more that concerns our being. ■

## Mediating the Past

*(Don't) look back in anger*

### Born in a Cross-Fire Hurricane

Almost 17-years ago, at the very start of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which will become inextricably linked with terms such as "ethnic cleansing," "genocide," and "war crimes," a child, not more than a year old, was taken from a village near Tuzla-where the father happened to have been away on business-along with her older sister and mother. The latter two have never been found, nor have they so far been identified among the remains exhumed from any of the mass-graves which Bosnia and Herzegovina is littered with. Yet the child survived, and, through ways, which can at best be described as "murky," ended up being raised by an older couple in Belgrade, coming to know herself as Mila Jankovic.

In her teens, the awareness of adoption and her origins prompted an identity crisis and some trouble at home, which led to employing the Red Cross to try matching up Mila's DNA with any of the samples volunteered by the survivors of the war. This is how Mila found her biological father, Muhamed, alive and living in Germany, having fled there in 1995. She also learned of her birth-name: Senida Becirovic. One article reports her nearly fainting upon seeing it inscribed into the commemorative monument to "THE MISSING". In the traumatic events that took place afterwards, however, hers is the first name that can safely be taken off that board.

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

The Sarajevo's popular daily *Dnevni avaz* broke the story of reunion as "How Senida Became Mila." Its Serbian and Croatian counterparts followed, each with a piece of their own. "They told me: 'You are not Mila, your name is Senida,'"

read the headline in the Croatian *Jutarnji list*. "More Mila Than Senida," countered Belgrade-based *Vecernje novosti*.

While *Dnevni* and *Jutarnji* could afford to state explicitly that it was the (Bosnian) Serb forces that stormed the village and snatched Senida, the reportage in *Vecernje* plays it down. Perhaps so as not to disturb the Dickensian aspect of things, it emphasises the merciful 'soldier saviour' angle, and speaks rather of her being 'swept by the whirlwind of war,' as if one is swooped into a new home and into a new name by a force of nature, or of fate; or by an overused, worn-out metaphor.

Years ago in a Belgrade's quarterly *Genero*, a political sciences professor and media theorist, Snjezana Milivojevic, examined why "the media are the ideal site of opening up the facts of the past and critically examining them," upon which "it is discovered that the past was and is-an ideological battlefield." The past may seem to us dead and buried, but its ghosts are haunting by the very way we speak of it, or, rather, the way we don't. And if a story of a most innocent war-survivor yields such disparate press accounts, the polarity which severs the public each time a controversial fig-



By Gavriilo Petrovic, Student, FMK

ure or a past event re-emerges into the media spotlight can easily be imagined. Instead of the victims or the missing, it's the war crimes and the fugitives charged with them that have become the symbol of Serbia's division.

### A House Divided

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

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

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

Sitting next to him, prominent human rights activist Natasa Kandic seemed stupefied. "Is that the kind of message you want to send to Law students?" All this, and more, in a primetime political talk show aptly named *State of the Nation*. If you can guess the right percentages of the public's opinion divided upon the issue, start text-messaging now, for you may win some money. The question of the day was delicately phrased as "Would you report Ratko Mladic for a million euros?", that being the sum Serbia has offered to anyone who provides information leading to his arrest. The spokesperson for the polling agency explained the staggering 65 percent of 'No' answers by the way the question was put to the polled. "It sounds a little like, 'I'd sell him out for a million bucks.' You don't get a clear message from the officials what he is indicted of and how backed-up the indictment against him really is."

The article follows with a high-government official in charge of cooperation with the ICTY depressingly declaring the "battle already lost," since "the attitudes are already formed."

Possibly still the most reviled person in Serbia, thanks to her relentless efforts to unearth the evidence of atrocities, coupled with the equally relentless demonisation campaign waged on her by late strongman Slobodan Milosevic's media, Natasa Kandic of the

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Humanitarian Law Centre is well-aware what an attitude-shaking effect a mere media event can have. It was her, after all, who got hold of, and submitted as evidence to both the Hague's and Belgrade's war crime prosecutors, the infamous 'Scorpions' video-tape. Initially presented at the Milosevic trial, just a month ahead of the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, the Serbian public has been confronted with a video showing members of a Serbian paramilitary unit executing Muslim men in plainclothes, by forcing them to lie face-down, hands tied, in a roadside ditch, before shooting them in the back.

The showing of the tape was simultaneous with the Serbian war crimes prosecution charging the soldiers identified from the video. Two years later, in 2007, it secured convictions for four of them (the verdicts almost invariably rendered in opinion and commentary pieces either as 'unpatriotic' or 'nowhere near harsh enough'). Citing a government-ordered survey, the prosecution claims 70 percent of the population was informed about the tape. Its office has received a steady soar of coverage ever since, the total number of segments and articles devoted to it in the past year being, by their account, about five times bigger than in 2003 when it was first established.

The prosecution judges its overall cooperation with the media as "positive, especially with those whose editorial policy is open to a more complex examination of these issues." Noting various "precious investigative programmes dealing with war crimes" borne out of this cooperation, it still reserves a critical glance at how the media have reported the 'Scorpions tape' affair. "The footage was shown on 1 June 2005 as part of a live coverage [of the Milosevic's trial in Hague] on TV B92. By the time for the evening news, however, it was only B92 and another local TV station that deemed it top story. The day after, the killing of Srebrenica's young men was only on the cover of [independent] daily Danas, while the highest-selling Vecernje novosti reported about it on page 17," the prosecution says.

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

Since tabloid dailies deal with Hague-indictees in much the same way they do with celebrity gossip, the sudden arrest last July of Radovan Karadzic, former Bosnian Serb political leader, was followed, after the first couple of days of 'hard news', by a sure fire 'whirlwind' of intrigue and trivia. Thus the line between reality and fiction was once again blurred. Living in, granted, a bizarre disguise among Belgrade residents for years, practicing alternative medicine under an alias Dragan David Dabic, this 'other' Karadzic resembled more a mix of a John Le Carré spy and a spiritual guru.

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

The Independent Association of Journalists (NUNS) published in its publication *Dosije* (No.25, July 2008 - September 2008), a scathing critique of the media coverage following the arrest, pinpointing the exact moment when 'Radovan Karadzic fell into oblivion' behind media-friendlier Dabic. Along the same lines, the war crimes prosecution offered its critique: "Each medium reports about it from its own angle, but what is unfortunate is that often they are more eager to deal with side-details... than with facts that brought an indictment upon those people."

"Hard-news facts, it seems now, can hardly keep the public's attention for long," estimated Aleksandra Niksic of Belgrade bureau of Agence France Presse. "Alleged satisfied patients, presumed lovers and soap-opera elements attract readers and viewers. Which is fine in terms of circulation, but it is a duty of journalists, nowadays mostly forgotten, to inform and not to entertain."

#### A Tale of Two Cities

"Language is, of course, a diabolical thing. It reveals everything," starts a prominent human rights activist Borka Pavicevic, hunched over her antique office-desk in the Center for Cultural Decontamination, where various panel discussions, workshops, plays, ballets and operas are performed. "I don't know of anyone from this 'Second Serbia'-the words 'second' and 'other' being one and the same in Serbian-who ever named something First Serbia. It's how a majority defines a minority." Reaching up for a collection of essays published at the eve of 1990s wars, she says, "Here it is". The book was indeed titled 'The Other Serbia,' and came about as a response to the leading Greater Serbia cause. Needless to say, the anti-war force had lost the battle. Ever since, along with Kandic, Pavicevic is more famous for the abuses that are hurled at her then by her statements.



Borka Pavicevic

Photo by FoNET news service - Bozidar Petrovic

And so is this 'Other Serbia' itself, it seems: liberal columnist Teofil Pancic argued that the term "lives in the [rhetoric of the] Right much more than in those who are this supposed Other Serbia." Thus, pundit Djordje Vukadinovic of the conservative think-tank New Serbian Political Thought, when asked which parties comprise the pro-European, liberal option, decreed that it is "All those who coincide with the current interests of American foreign policy."

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

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

"But such an attitude should not be forgiven nowadays. Maybe then the public in Serbia did not get proper information on the war in Bosnia, but glorifying or finding excuses for atrocities, persons and events that have been historically and legally confirmed-such as the genocide in Srebrenica-must be punishable in a responsible society," Niksic says.

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

#### Enjoy the Silence

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

To feel compassion towards a victim not of one's own ethnicity, especially toward those made victim by one's ethnicity, it turns out, is to be engaged, self-consciously, in a political act. "The basic mistake with the concept of confronting one's recent past here was that it was presented as something self-explanatory, well-understood, and good for its own sake," muses psychologist Kaja Damjanovic. "I'm not saying it was intentionally botched-up, but it did allow for reconciliation to become just another political stance, ideologically optional." And so it did with genocide denial: wearing T-shirts with Mladic's picture printed on is - whether one likes it or not - a specific kind of punk-rock attitude adopted by Serbian youth today.

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

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

While this may suit the majority of the population, Damjanovic warns, it can erase the identity of the victims. While Natasa Kandic piled up facts about the crimes, there should have been other realms for the reconciliation processes to occur. "It's obvious that can not be conducted without the political elites declaring it an interest of the society," says Damjanovic.

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“Let us imagine,” echoes Niksic, “that after Milosevic fell in 2000, top minds—whichever they may be—sat down and thought it through for six months, and implemented a new subject in schools, called something along the lines of ‘my neighbours, our conflicts with them and why they shouldn’t happen again.’ What the democratic government should have done was to seize control of the school history books.”

Changed in 2002, new history books in Serbia have only flipped ideological leanings, no longer favouring the communists, deeming the former Yugoslavia of Tito an imposed experiment on the Serbs. They have introduced another preposterous historical perspective, interpreting the 1990s wars as a continuation of World War Two. “The unfinished war has continued after exactly 50 years,” so conclude the writers of the history textbook meant for high-school children.

Damnjanovic is suspicious about the theory, taken for granted, that if we do not settle the disputes of the past, we are bound to repeat them. “Because, if you accept that current events crucially determine the future, then even the Battle of Kosovo seems like a valid argument, does it not?” ■

Taken from an article published in *Dnevni avaz* on 19 January, 2009, written by E.H.

## Senida Bećirović will stay in Sarajevo!

While the media pressure (which she was exposed to because of her unbelievable destiny) subsides, Senida Becirovic makes decisions about her future. A girl who grew up in Belgrade as Mila Jankovic, after one soldier carried her out of the house on fire, in Caparde, near Kalesija in May 1992, managed to find her real father after 16 years and decided to go back to Sarajevo.

She will live in the house of her mother’s sister Munevera and her husband Esnar Vrabac.

“I will stay with my aunt and uncle in Sarajevo. I will start going to school again and get into college there. I will of course go to visit Djecije selo in Sremska Kamenica, and people who helped me a lot while being in Serbia”, Sanida said for *Dnevni avaz* newspaper.

Most important reasons to stay in Sarajevo, as she said, were the love and attention she received, as well as understanding.

“It was up to her to decide. We have two sons, a year older and a year younger than she is. Everything we can do for them, we will do for her as well. We think of her as our third child”, Esnar Vrabac said.

In the meantime, the problems with her documents were solved. She got her ID card on the name Senida Becirovic, but she decided to keep the name Mila, as well. She said she wanted to find the truth about what had happened to her mother Senada and her sister Sanda.

## Between Urban and Rural, Global and National

### How Mainstream Media Construct National Identity in Serbia

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

We could easily predict what kind of media image awaits us this year right at its very beginning. Traditionally, the New Year’s Eve programme on Serbian television, apart from an air of festivity, has a certain patriotic note. On the public broadcasting TV channel, precisely at midnight, about a hundred accordionists started playing Serbian folklore dances, and in this way, with the national music, wished the citizens all the best in 2009. As for the music programme, the prevailing sounds were those of traditional folk music, but also those of the newly composed commercial folk. On the two most popular channels, the public broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia and Pink TV that insists on entertaining programme, mostly the same performers participated in the shows recorded beforehand.

Far behind were televisions that offered significantly less content that could be considered “national”, so B92 television had only 5 percent of viewers that night. On the other hand, almost four million citizens watched a part of Pink TV’s “Grand’s Folk Festivity”, a very popular TV show in which, in the prime-time, commercial folk music by both anonymous and popular performers is aired. In the New Year’s Eve prime-time B92 aired one of the final evenings of the “Operation



Living in the media

Photo by Igor Marovic

Triumph” reality show, with participants from all over ex-Yugoslavia. Although people-meters may not have registered a big whole-evening viewer rating, people at the “Operation Triumph” management have to be satisfied with the fact that during New Year’s Eve over one million people voted for their



By Nikola Benderac, Lada Paunovic, Ranko Stojilovic, Students, FMK

favourite contestants at the “Musical Academy”. Since this autumn, the most expensive and the most ambitious reality show has been shown in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Emotion production succeeded in gathering almost all of ex-Yu republics in what is the most complex TV project in this region, something that no one

before had accomplished. Students of the “Academy”, scrutinised by domestic and foreign experts, learn to sing, to dance, to act on stage, overcome stage fright and become favourites of the public from all over the country and the region while at the same time performing next to international music stars. This project is particularly interesting in terms of the internationalisation of media in the region, and together with the increasing trend of popular TV series, made in ex-Yugoslavia states co-production, announces the tendency of an inevitable international cultural and media dialogue.

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

By creating an appealing and likeable image of Serbia, not perfect but easy to become fond of, and by having access to so many homes, the media construct a national identity that is, according to the viewer rating, readily accepted by public. The current serial “Village’s on Fire while an Old Woman is Combing” arouses

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nostalgia also in the city kids who had spent the most beautiful moments of their childhood in some relative's countryside home.

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

*By creating an appealing and likable image of Serbia, not perfect but easy to become fond of...the media constructs a national identity that is readily accepted by public*

However, in difficult situations, no matter what, they are always ready to help. They have gone through the World War II, the nationalisation of their possessions with the purpose of "denationalisation", that affected them in the first years after the World War II, disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the bombing of 1999. It all left traces on them, the whole village was on fire, but still, at the end they move ahead without making much fuss, so it is good, as a misogynist saying - considered a popular wisdom - goes, that "the old woman was combing".

In this series we can also recognise the huge importance of family as an institution and its internal relations that are certainly not ideal. In a family people argue, command, cheat, but above all, they love each other infinitely, with all the purity of heart of a simple soul, and even when doing harm, they do it unintentionally, simply because they know no other alternative.

Father is the head of the family, but it is the woman who puts an effort without indispensable for progress. She assembles everything and everybody. The man is proud. He would give up his own son because he thinks that he hasn't managed to turn him into a man. His son is a deserter, a fact he couldn't forgive neither of them. But he still suffers for his pride, he is hurt, and he secretly hopes that his son will eventually come back, and when he does... it is as if he had never left. Here we can recognise how the series promotes the 'patriarchal-heroic' morality that, in fact, is a pure demagoguery.

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

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

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

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

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



Installation on 13th ART EXPO in Novi Sad titled "From Picasso to Marina Abramovic"

Photo by Kornelija Szabo

press individuality. They develop xenophobia in us, the fear of everything outside our little world. Do they do it on purpose and influenced by those who actually want an old woman to be combing while the village's on fire?

Do the productions that basically represent 'the story about us' just try to sell the well-branded product with the secure market i.e. viewer rating? It is obvious that the domestic media production fails to show that the people in the immediate surroundings live the same problems and similar and simple lives just like the people in Serbia.

life attitude of "an old woman that is combing while the village's on fire" and in that sincerity and simplicity we will be recognized, accepted and esteemed.

And what if it was not that simple, what if the media placed just a likeable and appealing image of what we could be, of what we could identify with? What if it was just a simulacrum of our national identity, created by the media? When we adopt that imposed image, we become exclusively self-oriented, oriented towards our immediate surroundings, our little needs... In doing so, we are given amnesty for the possible guilt of not reacting to the wrong moves of the individuals we had given the power and the right to lead us. They deprived us even of the right to feel anger and rage for the narrow-mindedness. They lull us into a narcissistic image. They emphasise spite as a prevailing national characteristic. They pacify possible individual efforts, they sup-

Is it aimed to stir stereotypes to political effects, with the idea of 'being national as opposed to global' and with the typical messages like "so what, if the world doesn't want us, we are self-sufficient, our wisdom and honesty are enough; all the bad things come from outside..."

Or, in lyrical colour, with the nineteenth century style romantic rapture, they want to arouse sympathies in the public for their fellow-countrymen, consciousness that this is where we belong, which represents a certain deviation from the onetime emphasis of epic, warrior and "divine" elements. Leaning on the stereotype of a 'Serbian soul' doesn't call any names, doesn't provoke and, above all, it is politically neutral. The viewers like to identify with positive characters, and those who can't recognise themselves there, are left to other TV channels. ■



## Seeking not Facts but Power

Anonymity - a Ruler From the Shadow

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



By Kristina Balac,  
Student, FMK

A villa on Banjica [neighbourhood in Belgrade] for a member of Al Qaeda', 'Tadic's grandfather responsible for the murder of Prince Ferdinand', 'Islam conquers Western Europe', 'The planet threatened with famine and lack of water', 'Criminals taking over the Balkans', 'Seselj might be coming home', are all headlines published every day in Serbian daily tabloids. These stories about cataclysms, bloody clashes, conspiracies and scandals are mass-produced and published in the same manner.

Stories crop up, cause fear, panic and gossip, and then disappear the way they came - as if they had never existed, only to come back again, stir things up, and disappear all over again.

The question of their origin is dubious because such articles are often unsigned, signed by initials, or are based on unnamed sources.

They usually come out of nowhere, apparently caused by nothing at all, while they are actually always present and keep on reappearing in order to keep the citizens in a state of uncertainty, anxiety, panic and all-round fear. They are always sensationalistic, mythical, conspiratorial, based on secrets and speculations and it is inconceivable who is telling us what, and why. That phenomenon of a flood of cataclysmic statements of unnamed sources or journalists spreads throughout entire newspapers, especially before important political events, like elections, with the sole purpose

of contaminating the public with sensationalistic and tabloid 'news'. After performing their task (and that usually lasts for a couple of weeks), a paper closes down and everyone forgets it. In spite of it all, no one wonders why they even came about, or what happened to the paper itself.

*A source that is neither named nor described is put in a place of power without being held accountable.*

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

Anonymity is a master in disguise, a ruler from the shadows. It provides for a mythical, almost god-like position of unlimited

power. Under the guise of anonymity, journalists and their sources appear to inform the public, while they actually confuse them and make them incapable of judging and interpreting information in the texts. A source that is neither named nor described, as it should, is put in a place of power in a way that they can present information that will certainly have an effect on the public, without being held accountable. They can lie, as they can tell the truth, but that is of no importance to the story. The important thing is that their information is talked about and that the medium maintains its popularity.

The anonymous source often reveals morbid details, especially when the issues are murder, rape and political scandals, so that the multitude of information stops the audience from reacting and critically analysing the story. His job is to target the emotions and to confirm doubts and fears. Regardless of the fact that that he has little credibility, he is sensational because he stirs things up, raises eyebrows. Likewise, he is also to show a different assumption of an event, an alternative to widely-known, even in so-called 'serious media'. He plays his role even when he has been refuted and he is always cited in order to show the pluralism of opinion and probably freedom of expression. That way an unnamed source builds his identity in the world of unknown and mysterious, awakening pagan tendencies to the occult and mystical. He becomes a kind of a God that shows us that nothing is cer-

tain and that relativity is commonplace and rational. In the end we get an impression that amongst ourselves we are equally important and respected, and that anyone can be an unnamed source. That way we can be in the spotlight too and that feeds our ego.

The problem becomes more serious when stories that come from such tabloid media started to get reprinted and re-broadcasted in the media that are considered professional and credible. When such 'news' becomes a topic amongst the so-called 'serious media' that takes it to the higher level and 'news' starts gaining legitimacy.

*Tabloids have started to compete with the truth*

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

of the event itself. That The myth itself is impossible to confirm or deny. Tabloid stories don't seek the truth, they seek power, and they draw that power from the discourse that arises from the and from which they are shielded by anonymity.

This raises serious questions; what are the 'serious media' doing? Why are they helping to sustain the institution of a powerful Anonymous? Are they so naive or are they part of the same machinery? It seems to me that the answer is again in the balance of power and dominance. Media have started to compete with the truth. They strive to grab total control over society because a society that is dependent on media can provide them with an everlasting existence. Economics and existence, as principles of media society and an unnamed source as an institution of unlimited power. Completely free of responsibility and liberated from the truth, the media can publish all they want, in order to show they exist. They create their own reality, media reality, which is parallel to social reality and brings it into question. The dominant discourse is created by tabloids and based on this dominant discourse the public builds its picture of reality. Therefore, in the world of pictures that are too big for us to observe completely, or too blurry to make out, our reality becomes confusing, and the unnamed takes over a legitimate place of power. Such power becomes absolute; you can not resist it because it is unknown; it can either be ignored, which will not harm it, or strengthened by discussing it further. ■

## Simplified Narratives and Stereotypes

*Serbian Tabloids and Representation of Women*



By Nevena Kujovic,  
Student, FMK

*Contemporary media culture provides forms of ideological domination that help to reproduce the current relations of power, while also providing resources for the construction of identities and for empowerment, resistance and struggle.*

(Douglas Kellner Professor Ph.D.,  
Philosophy, Columbia University)

In the analysis of the Serbian political scene since democratic changes in 5 October 2000, one has to notice a distinction between two major political elites both of which are deeply rooted in the authoritarian tradition as seen by the political analyst and the university professor Dr Jovica Trkulja. The first elite represents the remaining power structures of the former regime while the second includes the newly established pro-democratic structures that have encountered many challenges in the development. On the level of media representation in the tabloid media, these two types of patriarchy are being portrayed in a simplified way

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"Anonymus Source"  
Photo by Snezana Skundric

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thus producing a divergence between these two types of masculinity on the basis of difference between the 'right' and 'false' masculinity and division between supporters and traitors of 'Serbianity'. Masculinity promoted those close to Milosevic's regime, who fought in wars and are affiliated to the right-wing ideology, to represent the 'right' manliness, and those men who now undertook the power to implement reforms and serve as 'attendants of the west' are the other - weak and 'treacherous' manliness.

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

Tabloid newspapers achieve their high circulation through the means of sensationalism, political exclusion, celebrity gossip and various kinds of hate-speech. In terms

of visual content, tabloids typically print pictures of female bodies followed by stereotypical sexist comments, thus representing women and their sexuality as yet another available good on the market. Printed tabloid media use the genre of 'pornographic photography' varying from 'soft', not as depicting and not so exposing, as seen in tabloids, to 'hard core' photography present in pornographic magazines (definition of pornographic photography



Cover page of ALO! tabloid  
Photo by Kornelija Szabo

implies pictures of naked or half-naked female body - in detail, medium close-ups, entire figure - which concentrate on the sexuality made available to a viewer).

The number of photos involving women in the daily print media is considerably small, media analysis show. However, it gets considerably higher in the fun pages, and in the entertainment newspapers. The analysis of the social role of women on these photos shows that there is a tendency to create stereotypes of the roles of

women. Tabloids tend to be selective in the women roles they illustrate with pictures. Most commonly, women are represented through entertainment roles - fashion models, TV celebrities and pop and folk singers.

The next big group of roles contains the ones related to the private sphere - mothers, housewives and wives. The analysts had to include the categories "without a role" on the list, as well as the "body-object", for women depicted regardless of any social context, anonymously and exclusively as a "decoration", which didn't have the equivalent in the group of the male photos. There we see omnipresent gender inequality, sexism and misogyny in the print press, especially on the covers and in the daily tabloids. Visual portrayal of the stage performers is either sexist - woman as the body-object or the promoter of the fashion industry, and the look being the highest value and preoccupation - or pornographic. Moreover, a large part of their photographed and written material consists of the pornographic photo-reports by the paparazzi, revealing the underwear and "indecent" body parts, or other smutty content and "humorous" photo-comics with people from showbiz full of offensive comments.

Misogyny in tabloid media takes many shapes, from the obvious to very sophisticated. It contains in itself discrimination of women regarding their look and age, as well as negation or disparagement of their professional achievements, stereotypes which underestimate their intelligence and abilities. Furthermore, it indicates that their only goal is seducing men and eliminating their female competition, by large reducing a role of women to that of sex objects and judging them by their appearance. ■

## Reality Shows as 'Gladiators' Arena

Serbian TV viewers overwhelmed with reality shows on all major national TV networks

Serbian electronic media outlets are nowadays overwhelmed with reality programmes. *Big Brother*, *Operation Triumph*, *It's Time for Babies*, *48 Hours Wedding*, *Survivor*, *Exchanging Wives*...all ran during prime time on television stations with national coverage including the public service network Radio Television of Serbia RTS, Pink and even politically-oriented media such as TV B92. In these television shows, ordinary people are filmed in 'real-life' circumstances such as weddings, women during their pregnancy and whilst giving child birth, family life, but also put in out of ordinary living conditions such as on a deserted island in Panama or in the *Big Brother* house. For months, then, Serbian viewers have been glued to their television stations, carefully watching what is happening with their favourite characters in the reality shows, identifying with their feelings, fears, inter-relations difficulties and conflicts. In the process, the viewers de facto consolidate their own position in a distribution of social roles and adopt forms of socially (un)desirable behaviour. Typical 'heroes' of reality shows are faces you would see in everyday life - in a store, on the bus or while walking around the city. They come from all walks of life with different characters and tempers so that every viewer can find his or her own favourite. The selection of participants to participate in the reality shows reflects the typical mentality of an environment it is being both filmed and broadcast in. Every reality show favours certain suitable prototypes. In the

first series of the *Big Brother* the first of the participants who was kicked out was a young man who stated that he was a homosexual. The audience did not want to get to know him better and he could not profit from his stay after being ejected. On the other hand, a man and a woman who started a relationship inside 'the house' were later hired as hosts in a TV show.



By Nada Kostic,  
Student, FMK

*Created 'Me', edited in the editing-room, over time gains priority over a true 'Me'*

TV shows that make us become directly involved in the most intimate moments in relationships of people similar to us stimulate voyeurism. An observer is in some way a participant. Without blinking he watches silently, and sometimes with tears in his eyes, his heroes desperately fighting for their happiness. Even though he lives their every emotion, rejoices over their successes, and grieves over potential sad moments, often imitating their actions in real life, a participant on the other side of a screen is just an observer. All he can do is identify himself with the participants and fulfil his need to 'live' and 'feel' something by spending a couple of hours in front of a TV-set following the rhythm of some life story in a more-or-less realistic environment.

These viewers have an important role they need to play while they watch a certain reality show. Many of these shows are competitive in character. It means that participants fight for a monetary prize (or so it appears on the surface). But when you take a deeper look you see that a reality show stops being a set of games that are meant for players to show their abilities, and turns into a gladiatorial arena out of which one person can come out 'alive'. What does that really mean? It means that players will stop at nothing to win, and that producers can push the human psyche to and ridicule people without limit. Nowadays, in reality shows there is a real battle going on, a battle for 'survival', and also for the sympathy of the audience because they decide their faith by voting. That is the role viewers need to play while they enjoy watching their favourite 'gladiatorial games'.

*"We have become bored with watching actors give us phoney emotions. We are tired of pyrotechnics and special effects. While the world he inhabits is, in some respect, counterfeit, there is nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards. It isn't always Shakespeare, but it's genuine. It's a life".* These are the opening quotes in Peter Weir's movie, *The Truman Show*. Truman lived in a simulated world, but no more than the people who watched his show 24-hours a day, seven days a week, and who found comfort in it for 30-years. As described by the creator of *The Truman Show* in the film, people want to watch genuine feelings in which they will see parts of themselves, and they want to face a true, cruel, real life without any masks. Rawness is what appeals to people.

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Another important point is how accurately participants in the reality shows are being presented. The behaviour of some participants can be completely edited, and that way they can be given new identities. Maybe some of them willingly agree, with financial compensation but most of them do not know what is coming to them when they step into the reality space. That newly created 'Me', edited in the editing-room, over time gains priority over a true 'Me' of some person. When that happens, trying to prove that things are not the way they are shown on TV is in vain. For God's sake, TV does not lie!

One of the reality shows whose purpose is to make pop and rock celebrities out of its participants is *Operation Triumph*. Serbia was the first country in the Balkans in which it was broadcast. Of course, as it was a new show, it was amongst the most popular in Serbia, especially because its participants came from all over the ex-Yugoslavia. In order to examine the ratings of the TV station that aired *Operation Triumph*, and to see how viewers rate that station, Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) conducted two surveys. The first one was in April 2008, before *Operation Triumph*, and the second, in October 2008, when *Operation Triumph* was being aired on the TV station B92. Both times examinees were asked the same questions - *At what time of do you watch TV on workdays?* And *At what time do you watch TV on weekends?* They were also asked to rate the quality of B92's programming. Since *Operation Triumph* was aired during morning, afternoon and evening hours, examinees were asked to rate the quality of B92 programme's in those exact hours.

After midnight during October, B92 broadcast live from the house participants in *Operation Triumph* stayed in, while afternoon and midnight hours were reserved for stage appearances of members of this so-called 'singing academy', and for a retrospective of the events of the day. It was evident from the beginning of the TV show that a number of people watching B92 increased by 5 percent from April to October.

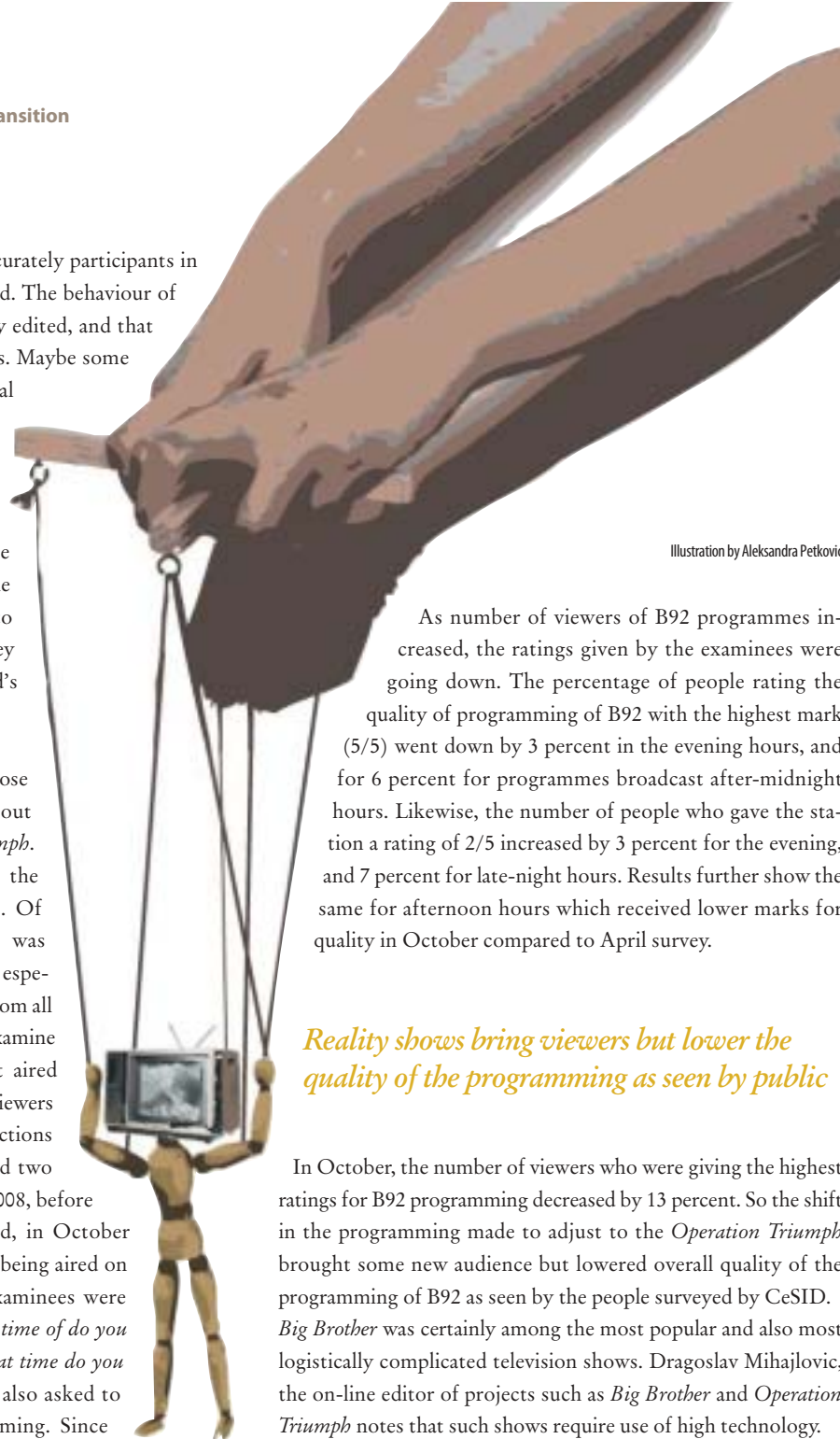


Illustration by Aleksandra Petković

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

**Reality shows bring viewers but lower the quality of the programming as seen by public**

In October, the number of viewers who were giving the highest ratings for B92 programming decreased by 13 percent. So the shift in the programming made to adjust to the *Operation Triumph* brought some new audience but lowered overall quality of the programming of B92 as seen by the people surveyed by CeSID. *Big Brother* was certainly among the most popular and also most logistically complicated television shows. Dragoslav Mihajlovic, the on-line editor of projects such as *Big Brother* and *Operation Triumph* notes that such shows require use of high technology.

"This was the first time so many video cameras have been used in a live broadcast", says Mihajlovic. "Video recordings were filmed either by 'live' cameras, operated by cameramen, or remote controlled cameras. There were also innovations regarding audio technology because microphones were worn by participants and they were also placed around the house" What is an 'inconvenience' according to Mihajlovic is the unpredictability of the participants' reactions in the show. Control is to some extent possible by means of assignments given to participants, but sudden, unpredictable events are always behind a corner.

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

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

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

"There was no misuse in *Big Brother*. Dramatic flow was dictated by how interesting events were", claims Mihajlovic. That is why some people get angry and think that they have not been represented truthfully. They claim to have been manipulated, that their statements have been taken out of context, and that they were portrayed as completely different people.

According to Mihajlovic the only ones facing danger while taking part in reality shows, are celebrities. They have to pay close attention to their behaviour because one wrong move is enough to demystify their persona and wreck their image.

"Truman, say something, God damn it! You're on TV! The whole world is watching you!" shouted his 'father' at the moment when

Truman realises that his whole life is a hoax concocted in order to draw from him un-staged emotions and actions. Television rarely puts up with silence (even if that silence speaks more than a thousand words), and even more so today when it represents a kind of a confession booth, a bed patients lie on during a session with their psychiatrist. Truman realises at that moment that he does not possess any privacy because he shares it with a multitude of people all over the world. All those who participate in any reality show are doing the same. It is obvious that today, the line between private and public keeps getting thinner. It almost disappears. So does critical thinking. Lost somewhere in between *Big Brother* and *48 Hours Wedding*. It is replaced by the attitude that the only competence comes from what is said and shown on



Public announcement for Reality TV Show Killer

TV, and it is not to be doubted. The way things have started, it looks as if in some time there will not be a single person who would not want to discuss their privacy in public. We can easily picture a situation where there will be a sign on every TV station that reads: "Come on, open your soul to us". Anyway, hasn't everyone ever wanted to give an interview for television and become somebody? Isn't that so? ■

# Turbo Traditionality in the Form of Modernity

## Turbofolk and Media

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

(Rambo Amadeus, Belgrade musician and composer)

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

Those who consider it a musical genre outline that it started out in the former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s. It was influenced by many modern styles, and the music itself represents a mixture of ethno music with the influences of Arabic, Turkish and Greek folk music. Such a "benign uncultured form of entertainment" originated in the "general cultural crisis"



Scene of GRAND PARADE SHOW on TV

Photo by Vesna Andjic

that engulfed Serbia and started dominating the media as well as the taste of young people in the early 1990s. In turbofolk, as a new musical genre which the newly-composed folk-music turned into in the 1990s, one can recognise 'traditionality', which the word "folk" stands for, and the characteristics of the modern lifestyle, embodied in the word "turbo" (taken from car racing, this word signifies something fast, such as an urban lifestyle). In accordance with that, the songs of the new genre are based on an upbeat rhythm,

sat" (200 km/h), who is therefore considered a representative of this genre.

The aesthetic analysis of turbofolk would probably indicate a mixture of styles and genres, unoriginal lyrics and kitsch, but turbofolk became an inevitable part of this society's everyday life. Even though this music encountered mostly negative views and was considered far from quality music by critics, it was commercially exploited and therefore became a recognisable and authentic audible décor of this part of the world.



By Tamara Granic, Tijana Stojanovic, Jelena Lacmanovic, Students, FMK

techno and dance matrices with elements of folk and the recognizable "howling". One of the first turbofolk songs that starts with the words: *"Techno, techno, technofolk!"* was Ivan Gavrilovic's "200 na

luxury, glamour and money - in a word, good life - which itself was a paradox considering the situation the people were in. The new values were promoted not only through music, but also through almost

all media content (videos and shows), which promoted the image of turbofolk performers.

### The effects of the new style on the Serbian youth

The image of female singers, who were a lot more present in the media than their male colleagues, was often connected to their provocative clothing and lifestyles. Scantily dressed on the stage, with lots of makeup, they mostly played on the sex card rather than good songs. The basic characteristic of their style was: minimal clothing (mini skirts and cleavage), high heels and lots of shiny details (unless the entire outfit was extremely shiny). With their provocative moves on the stage and the equally provocative way in which they dressed, they set the standards of behaviour and clothing, promoting "pink" culture during Serbia's "black days". Reference to 'pink' comes from the name of the television TV Pink that was the first one to promote turbo-folk music and turbofolk lifestyle in their programming thus exploiting this form of entertainment largely to attract viewers.

*With their provocative moves on the stage and the equally provocative way in which they are dressed, they [female singers] set the standards of behaviour and clothing, promoting "pink" culture during Serbia's "black days".*

Soon after its appearance, turbofolk culture attracted lots of young people in Serbia and in the region of the Balkans. Young people liked their style and they identified with some of its elements. Inspired by the lives of music stars, most members of the female gender visually looked alike and followed the same styles, but also started forming a society of so-called "sponzoruse" ('gold-



Illustration by Aleksandra Petković

diggers'). An abundance of long-legged blondes, with too much makeup, wearing short skirts, "hugged" by fake fur, actively walked the streets of the city hoping to be recognised and fulfilling their lifelong wish - "catching" a wealthy man. The knight in shining armour from fairy-tales was substituted by a perspective "businessman" driving a BMW, and the castle with a luxurious villa. They thought they deserved to live in luxury and hedonism, and they naively likened themselves to their music star idols that dominated the music scene and set new life values and standards. That is how the old values, which were in force up until them, stumbled and were eventually swept away by the "pink tsunami".

It's not just the music that promoted those values; they were also present in music videos, music shows and other visual representations of turbofolk performers. That is how almost all forms of mass media participated in the education of the young people and the promotion of

the new "elite", consisting of businessmen and turbofolk singers. Therefore, when we speak of turbofolk, we can't fail to mention the role of the media, which significantly contributed to turbofolk's incredible success.

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

The entire nation was being "bombed" by long Sunday shows broadcasting that sort of music. The most popular shows of this variety were *ZAM*, *Minimakssoviziija* and *Jedna pesma jedna zelja* (*One Song One Wish*), whereas the radio was dominated by:

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*Poselo, Sabor and Diskomer.* When the Pink and Palma television stations “launched the stars into the sky”, the tabloids became interested in their personal lives. The songs, the happenings on the music scene, i.e. being informed about the lives of performers became a common topic among the members of our society. Pompous headlines attracted the attention even of those audiences that seemed uninterested, and the texts acquainted them with the most recent events in the lives of their favourite performers. The general public would widely discuss affairs and break-ups of ‘celebrities’, their marriages and divorces, cellulite, underwear, pregnancies and scandals.

The greatest interest surrounded the brightest stars such as Fahreta Jahic whose artistic name is Lepa Brena and Svetlana Velickovic, today Raznatovic - Ceca. The media followed Ceca’s private life closely, and turned her and paramilitary commander and mafia lord Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan’s wedding into the spectacle of the year. The wedding was broadcast live, and the tape of their wedding was later sold by LP production of Radio Television of Serbia. That event is one of many that confirm the link between turbofolk, the new criminal elite and the state-controlled media.

Even today when it is usually being called “folk”, “pop-folk” or simply “narodnjaci”, it doesn’t have a strong enough competitor that could resist its power and perhaps take away its status as the most popular musical genre in Serbia, a status it’s had for years. That is confirmed by the high ratings of shows such as television shows *Grand Parada, Stars of Grand* and massive readership of tabloids such as *Svet* and *Skandal*.

One of the characteristics of our capital city is the great fun and crazy nightlife, happening on rafts such as “Blaywatch” and “Acapulco”, in pubs all over the city and also in ‘fancy’ clubs. At each of the

forementioned places, one can hear the well-known sounds of folk hits being listened to by those who “don’t prefer folk”. Despite the fact that all those places are packed on weekends, few people would admit that they listen to folk music, because it has a negative connotation.

Of course, there are those who “really” don’t listen to folk music, whose choice is pop and rock music, but their choice of potential places where they can go out, or radio and TV stations they can listen to and hear the sound of their favourite songs, is very small. A TV station such as Metropolis, which airs videos and concerts of pop and rock performers hasn’t been able to gather momentum, ratings and power, with which it could force a new taste in



Folk singer Lepa Brena Photo by Imre Szabo

music, for years. All that the fans of those types of music are left with is satisfying their musical needs in cyber space because this world is ruled by turbofolk, which can be discussed not only based on one’s personal beliefs, impressions and the taste of those who dislike it, but must be seen as a really popular phenomenon. What is good and what isn’t remains to be seen. ■

## The Art for Social Change

Interview with Belgrade street-art diva TKV

By Nikola Herman, Student, FMK

“**E**very morning I go out to balcony to have my morning coffee and the first thing I see are six huge billboards attacking me. On the highest one (30 meters high) there is a yogurt advertisement, with a half-naked woman looking at us seductively”, Belgrade street-artist TKV begins her story on how she decided to start with this form of art.

While briefly reminiscing on the outdoor advertising in the 1970s when it was mostly about former Yugoslavia state symbols, flags, coats of arms, TKV notes that already in 1980s there was a significant influence of New York graffiti scene on the streets of Belgrade. In the 1990s, disintegration of the state, total isolation, poverty and the state repression, as well as material and existential insecurity made this form of expression less achievable. The first tags didn’t appear until the middle of the decade, a time when a very small scene started to develop. This technique was also used by the organisations fighting against the former regime as part of the citizens’ protests and activities of pro-democratic opposition parties. They used this subversive media to get their message across, because there were little opportunities to express these ideas. The most famous is the *Otpor* (Resistance) organisation sprayed the symbol of a fist all over Serbian towns and cities.



Graffiti made by street artist TKV

Photo by Komelija Szabo

Today in Belgrade, urban space is overly saturated with street posters, billboards, and other forms of advertisement. Street art could be understood as a reaction to this space organisation. What is depicted on those billboards? Great number of those ads carries the street art iconography. However, when a street artist “fills in” the billboard with his own tag, such act is considered vandalism and it is removed straight away. It’s an irony that the iconography of the street art is bothered by the street art on the billboards.

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

“The point is you have to express yourself. Urban space gives great possibilities to express yourself and frees you from restraints and rules that would usually be imposed. It offers thousands and thousands of information, and you have to respond to it somehow. The only question is what form you will choose, and street art is the form free from all censorship. The place and the subject matter depend solely on the artist. I choose my work space strate-

gically, but sometimes the theme of the work determines its place. It doesn’t matter to some artist, and they can work wherever, but some do think about aesthetics.”

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

### On street art and billboards...

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

“Despite the fact that our society offers a lot to react against (not necessarily with street art, though), people rarely do so. That’s why the street art scene is so poor. You can blame

it on the mentality, but you must consider the paint prices, which are doubled because of the import taxes. One of the other reasons, perhaps, could be the fact that street art is illegal. Still, regardless of that, spray painting on the streets is not considered a major felony in Serbia. The whole state is in the certain state of confusion, which impacts the artists and the scene, as well. There are special police departments in some countries dealing just with that issue, while in Serbia the only thing questioned is the price of taking it off.”

### On “The scene”...

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

### On street art on and off streets...

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

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Street Artist TKV  
Photo by Kornelija Szabo

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weaker. Street art doesn't have a reputation of being the real art in Serbia. It still isn't showcased in the galleries."

Yet, this type of art is recognised in some of its forms. There was an exhibition in the "Blok" gallery, in New Belgrade (block number 45) named "Street art and graffiti", in 2007, featuring artists such as: Lortek, Hope, Nasa, Angel, Gua and TKV. For two weeks, that is, as long as the exhibition was shown, the gallery recorded the greatest number of visitors. Furthermore, eight graffiti and street artists painted the Eastern Tower inspired by Japan, as a part of the "Belgrade days" manifestation in May 2008. The same year in August, Belgrade Summer Festival (BELEF) festival in Belgrade included a street art event in its programme. It took place on the Nikola Pasic Square, and many graffiti and street artists from Serbia, as well as the other parts of the Balkan region took part in the event.

#### On street art and the Internet...

"Considering that the nature of street art is such that its works can disappear any time, the Internet is the one place that somewhat keeps it alive. When you do something, you take a photo of it, post it on the Internet and it lives there. You have to be prepared that once you have done something on the street, it is not yours any more. It lives its own life. The Serbian scene is mostly using "Myspace", for its own self-promotion, as well as for the private conversation and internal exchange of ideas."

#### On accepting street art...

"As I came on the balcony to drink my coffee one morning, I noticed the wind has torn the billboard with that half-naked woman seductively watching us (who in a way represented the yogurt goddess, 30 meters long) in two pieces. That was the moment of deliberation from the visual molesting, even if it was for a short period of time, since it was soon replaced by the new one. Except that the 30 metre long woman was no longer there, on the tall building near the highway in New Belgrade."

There is always a counter balance. In places overcrowded with different advertisements, the reaction will emerge "naturally". Even if there wasn't for such great visual content imposed on us, there would be a reaction to other things: political, cultural, or any other action which influences that part of the world.

"We need to accept this type of communication. It can be a lot deeper than it might seem, or than some would like to present it. Street art communicates, but it allows to be communicated with. It criticises, but gives freedom, as well."

"We currently live in the world which turns the works of art into art products, whose value is measured in terms of the money they can earn. The work of art is seen only as a good, with its market value. Street art is offered to everyone. That's the art which lives on the streets and communicates with all people."

"The word of the street art is the last 'free' word". ■

## Comics are Back

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

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

Appearance of comic books in Europe and the USA in mid-nineteenth century reached yet in 1860 our publishers who were not at all immune to the new and prosperous medium in rise. The very same year *Moonwalker* magazine was founded in Novi Sad, and in 1861 *Mosquito* illustrated magazine appeared.

In those days, some magazines disappeared while some others took their place. In 1861 the satirical magazine *The Hedgehog of Podrava* appeared in Varazdin (today in Croatia), the only issue of *Humorist* magazine in Novi Sad as well, while Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj issued the *Zmaj* satirical magazine in Budapest, shortly preceding its regular circulation in Novi Sad. The magazine represents the precursor of contemporary comic book in our region.

The milestone for the development of comics is marked by the release of satirical-humorous magazine *Nettle* displaying at

the very beginning illustrated supplements, which gradually cultivated the language of comics. Such circumstances fostered a climate for more rapid development of comics. The very same period and release of licensed issue of *Max and Moritz* by Wilhelm Busch represents the transfer from caricature and satire to the form of comic book.

However, comics, still not defined as a medium, were released without a clear concept, as supplements to newspapers, and even the additional hurdle to commercial prestige of such publications was set by their unacknowledged artistic value. In such a climate of ignorance authors like Andrija Maurovic and Branko Vidic started creating comics. As illustrators, both authors are related to the set up of two pre-war comics' development centres - one in Belgrade, the other in Zagreb.

The Belgrade daily newspaper *Politika* has continuously published comic and educational stories since 1930. The biggest success was *Mickey Mouse*, followed by other Walt Disney characters, making these stories a regular supplement to the paper. Still, not until the release of Alex Raymond's *Secret Agent X-9* was the term comic book used, but instead phrases like graphic novel, picture novel, cartoon, etc. The term *comics* became widely used in *Politika* and then widely acknowledged.

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

The second half of 1939 was marked by two significant events stirring a relatively tranquil climate in the comics market: first, *Mickey's Realm* magazine was to be released, *Politikin Zabavnik* shortly afterwards, which was to shake the supreme position of *Mickey Mouse*. Since 1939 when *Politikin Zabavnik* appeared, comics has been its component, and included works of almost all relevant international authors. All distinguished national authors (Navojev, Sensin, Solovjev and Lobacev) started working for this magazine.

Most national authors fully relied on the texts of their colleagues. There were no strict selection rules for literary works and works of both national and foreign authors were adapted. Some of them were Tolstoy, Pushkin, Twain, Shakespeare, Verne, Dumas, Gogol, Hugo, Dickens, London and Nusic.



By Vladimir Bozovic, Luka Beslagic, Students, FMK

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

Taking into account the social circumstances at that time, the post-war period was not fruitful for comics. However, in the 1950s, as conditions changed for better, comics started coming back into all daily, weekly and monthly papers with World

War II as a prevailing subject matter. Edition *Never a Slave* then appeared within *Children's Newspaper* from Gornji Milanovac, later renamed into *Mirko and Slavko* - two partisan messengers who were the most popular characters in the edition. Its circulation was around 200,000 copies, which is not negligible even in global terms. At that time, new editions appeared - *Penguin*, *Zenith*, and *Panorama* which would emanate the longest-lasting edition in our region - *Stripoteka* (Stripoteque).

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

The end of 1970s and 1980s were "golden years" of Yugoslavian and Serbian comics marked by numerous editions and involving many national authors. *Strip Art*, *Spunk News*, *Ex Almanach*, *Laser*, *Politikin Zabavnik* and *Stripoteque* covered vastly ex-Yugoslav region and were issued in all republics. Circulation was high and editions numerous.

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

#### VI Belgrade International Showroom

For the sixth time, the Student Cultural Centre of Belgrade organised the International Comics Showroom. This event, which gathers together the enthusiasts of the ninth art from all around the world, took place from 25 to 28 September 2008.

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Since 2003, the International Comics Showroom has been organised in September with duration of several days, depending on the programme. Along with the Balkan Comic Meeting in Leskovac, the International Comics Showroom represents the biggest comic festival in Serbia nowadays.

The most interesting part of the festival is the comics contest. The sixth International Comics Showroom received 210 works from 32 countries and from all continents except Africa. The topic was free, and the prescribed length was one to four boards. The members of the jury were Srecko Jovanovic, publicist (president of the jury), Vasa Pavkovic, literary critic, Miroljub Milutinovic Brada, comic strip author, Zlatko Milenkovic, "strip news" web page editor, Kokan Mladenovic, theatre director. The jury estimated that science fiction was a prevailing genre, regardless of the country or contestants' profiles.

Showroom prizes were awarded on the first day, at the opening celebration. Special award for contribution to Serbian comics was given to Srecko Jovanovic, the founder of the *Children's Newspaper* back in 1956 and its long-time editor till his retirement. *Children's Newspaper* was one of the most significant comic book publishers in the former Yugoslavia region, with such publications as *Ex Almanach*, *Yu Comics*, *Gigant* and *Pearl Comics*.

In 2008 festival Grand Prix went to Alem Curin from Croatia with the comic book named *I'm here - I'm not here*. Mijat Mijatovic and Marko Stojanovic were awarded the best work in the field of classic comic language for their comic book *Hunt. Violet Helix* by Bratislav Milenkovic and Milos Jakovljevic was chosen the best work in the field of alternative comic language and at the same time awarded by the jury a special prize for innovation in comic art. Best scenario award went to Marko Stojanovic for *Labour*, while the best drawing award went to Dragan Paunovic.

The Young Lion award, given to students up to 15, went to Jelena Vucic for *Paper Airplanes*. The jury awarded Ana Grigorijeva for mature and imaginative comic strip named "The Game", and nine-year old Teodora Birmancevic was awarded a special prize for the youngest contestant. Besides the above mentioned, the prizes were also awarded by the patrons of the Showroom - *Stripoteque*, *System Comics*, *Happy Thursday*, *Strip Pressing* magazine, etc. As in the previous years, the International Comics Showroom hosted numerous guests in the field of ninth art. This year's guests were David Lloyd from the UK, Matt Hollingsworth from the U.S.A, Esad T. Ribic from Croatia, Bart Nauwelaerts from Belgium and György Palfi from Hungary.

David Lloyd is known to the readers as the illustrator of graphic novel *V For Vendetta* by Alan Moore. Apart from this work, he has illustrated comic books *Hellblazer*, *Aliens* and *Night Raven*. Matt Hollingsworth is one of the leading colourists in the world of comics nowadays. Some of the comic serials he coloured are *Preacher*, *Daredevil*, *Hellboy*, *Hellblazer*, *The Filth*, etc. During the festival, Hollingsworth held an exclusive presentation on colouring. Esad T. Ribic started drawing professionally in the mid 1990s. Since 2000 he has worked for Marvel Publishing. Currently he is working on a serial *Submariner: The Depths*. Bart Nauwelaerts was in charge of this year's promotion of the International Comics Showroom in Ganshoren (Brussels, Belgium), while György Palfi, as the representative of Moholy-Nagy Art and Design University from Budapest, held a lecture on illustration.

In 2008 the Showroom had most visitors so far. Numerous lectures and workshops were organised during the festival, a lot of works were exhibited, and a comics market was organised in the lobby of the Student Cultural Centre where visitors could buy the copies of the comics they miss in their collections. ■

By Vladimir Bozovic, Luka Beslagic, Students, FMK

**"C**omic books have always been part of my life", starts Marko Stojanovic his story. "I learned Latin script by reading comics. 'Mom, what's this letter? Oh. And this one?' and so on, bit by bit, I read a bit of 'Raban', 'Johnny Logan', 'Il Comandante Mark', just for a start. As for my involvement in comics, my first steps were also made when I was little, maybe even before I learned Latin script. I remember a notebook with a drawing on each page, each representing the next war phase between two groups of fighting Stickmen. Drawing, and later writing, had always been connected with comic books, with narration, with telling stories. I was not interested in drawing and inking out of the context of comic strip and for this reason I had never wanted to enrol in the secondary school of arts, let alone the academy. Simply, it was not my 'cup of tea', and even then I knew - but when the school of comics was opened in Leskovac in 1995, I was the happiest person in the world. Finally, I found somebody who knew how to make comics, but I also met a lot of people of similar age and of absolutely the same interest in comics. Heaven. Nowadays, my colleague Srdjan Niklic Peka and I are giving lectures in the school of comics 'Nikola Mitrovic Kokan', named after its founder - and I can assure you that preserving heaven in life is by no means an easy task.

Whom would you name as a role model among the comics scenario writers and illustrators?

## Balkan Comic Artists Getting Back Together

Interview with Marko Stojanovic, comic strip scenario writer, the eight-time awarded participant at the VI International Comics Showroom

**Stojanovic:** I learned from anyone who astounded me, and I learned all I could. Now I teach the participants at the school of comics to carefully observe comics, illustrations, films, and if they like something, to immediately ask themselves why they like it. That is how the craft is learned, and comic strips have to be craft before they could perhaps become art. As for scenarios, I learned from Alan Moore, Frank Miller (in his early phase), Tiziano Sclavi, Garth Ennis, Neal

What is your overall impression on the comic scene in Serbia today?

**Stojanovic:** I think the climate is far better than in the 1990s and it is improving. There are no giant leaps and not all is right, let me make myself clear, but gradual improvement can be seen. First of all, there are more and more comics editions, at the newsagents', at comic books stores; big publishers like System Comics, Marketprint, White Road and Happy

Showroom in SCC in Belgrade, and the fact that more and more national authors are working for international publishers only confirms the improvement. I think there are more than 30 comic-artists working for French, Italian or American publishers, many of them are even working on two serials at the same time.

Serbian comic strip has started looking up to world trends, but production is still lagging behind. Are there any solutions to this problem?

**Stojanovic:** Money. In the right hands. I know it is nothing new, but it all comes down to the amount of money invented in comics and to the right or wrong way it is invested. It is especially unfortunate that next to nothing is invested in national comics, in national comics production - for this reason a great number of our comics-artist publish their comic books in France, and domestic readers do not even see a page of their comics. We need to invest systematically in national comics, and use production to rebuild distribution (a scar of national comics publishing since the 1990's) and attract or, why not, create public. I see this as the only way.

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

**Stojanovic:** As I have already said, no. Our comics-artists are excellent and formed to a great extent; they are highly appreciated in the French comics market, which is commercial and always hungry for good comics-artists. Why should they

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Marko Stojanovic (second from left)

Photo by Luka Beslagic

Gaiman, Warren Ellis. I still like Brian Azzarello, for example. This writing style is alive, it breathes, drags you into its own world and will not let you out until you are told all there is to be told. Regarding letterists, at the very beginning it was Bane Kerac as the first role model, but I also looked up to Mike Mignola, Frenk Miller, Eduardo Risso.

Thursday are constantly issuing new editions, which is very important for creating new public, more than necessary to the comics today. Second of all, there are a few publications that somehow manage to release national comics, e.g. Strip Pressing, Think Tank, Eon, Enea. We have two big comic festivals - Balkan comic meetings in Leskovac and Comics

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waste their energy here in Serbia trying to find a way to publish a few boards and be miserably paid (and often with a few-month delay) or even work for free, when there is somebody out there who wishes to pay abundantly (for Serbian circumstances) for their talent and work? And then somebody can find it strange that people have high-circulation publications in the west, and yet nobody has heard of them in Serbia.

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

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



Poster for the Second International Salon

widely connected comics scene in Serbia and the Balkans in general, via sites and forums like UPPS ([upps.org.yu](http://upps.org.yu)), which is certainly a desirable direction with good results and diverse forms of cooperation.

**The Longevous represent an attempt to publish a ten-album authorial serial. Is it going according to your plans?**

**Stojanovic:** The Longevous are even more ambitious than it seemed at first, since they were not envisaged as a serial of ten albums, but of as many as we could make - the first cycle, which rounds up a story, consists of seven albums. It is the serial published in Politikin zabavnik and System Comics' albums - the one dealing with the adventures of Kraljevic Marko (the immortal, in our interpretation) and the mysterious Chinese Chen (a vampire, in everybody's interpretation). Adventures of these two accidental partners start in Vienna, on the night of Mozart's death; and besides Mozart, the Longevous introduce Till Eulenspiegel, Milos Obilic, Vuk Brankovic, Faust, Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein and a great number of mythological creatures. It is an adventure comic book with a pinch of macabre located in a solid historical context. As for the plan, it has been spoiled a bit by the fact that only the first episode has been published in "Politikin zabavnik" even though three have been done, but the team members (comics-artists from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania) Srdan Nikolic Peka, Vlada Aleksic, Aleksandar Sotirovski, Tihomir Celanovic, Radomir Izgarevic, Milorad Vicanovic Maza, Igor Jovcevski, Denis Dupanovic, Danijel Atanasov, Filip Andronik, Mihajlo Dimitrovski The Mico, Borivoje Grbic, Nebojsa Pejic, Boris Bakliza, Milan Anatanasijevic, Dejan Sedlan, Ivan Sainovic, Damjan Mihailov, Zoran Jovanovic, Mijat Mijatovic etc. are still working hard to succeed. ■

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

**Which Serbian authors would you especially name?**

**Stojanovic:** I am already tired of repeating how great our authors are, but it is true. Dejan Nenadov and Darko Perovic have for long been my favourites, since Yu Strip I read retroactively - and both of them are doing great things, for Italian and French publishers, respectively. At the moment, Rajko Milosevic Gera is at the peak of his career working on the Scalped serial for a branch of American Detective Comics (DC), Vertigo, while the comeback Vladimir Krstic Laci from Nis is creating miracles for French publishers Soleil and Delcourt. I cannot skip some mid-generation artists like Srdjan Nikolic Peka, Vladimir Aleksic, Milorad Vicanovic Maza, Leonid Pilipovic, then people of similarly my age Mirko Colak, Ivan Sainovic, Jovan Ukropina, Milisav Bankovic, Sinisa Banovic, Nebojsa Pejic...Finally, it is a fact that the Internet provides possibilities for creating a more

## One Culture, One Voice

### Hip-Hop Culture in Serbia

Over the last couple of years there has been a major breakthrough of American hip-hop and there have been changes in hip-hop culture altogether. It seems that all those changes influence very slowly the development of Serbian rap and hip-hop culture in general. Even though Serbian hip-hop culture may be proud of its early roots, dating from the beginning of the 1980s, and of its enormous influence on popular culture during the very difficult for living wartimes during the 1990s, the biggest expansion and breakthrough of young artists happened in the period after 1999 till the last couple of years, when Serbian rap found itself in some sort of status quo, which lasts till the present day.

Groups and artists which ruled the Serbian hip-hop scene in the 1990s made more profit from their work than their colleges nowadays, because at that time piracy and Internet were not that powerful and spread out.

Artists who made their breakthrough after 1999 and 2000, during the times of so called the 5 October Revolution and times of changes and democratisation of society, received the biggest media attention. After 5 October there haven't been changes just in the distribution of political power, but in culture as well, and especially in Serbian hip-hop culture. One of the most amazing examples of changes in culture itself and in the human relations in war raging countries is the BASSIVITY MUSIC, founded in



By Milos Dunjic, Student, FMK

2002, which gathered artists and groups from the former Yugoslavia region at one place and as such got pretty good press coverage. After BASSIVITY MUSIC record label was started, and after a big step forward in Serbian hip-hop culture, new genres, artists and groups started emerging in Serbia. During the 1990s the only and most influential genre on Serbian hip-hop was "gangsta rap" with its messages about violence, money and respect. It was the main driver of the whole scene as well as of its creation. In the years after the 5 October and in the years of development, emphasis is on criticism of the social and economic well-being, human relations, and politics. One of the most significant examples of political rebellion is the band "Beogradski Sindikat" (Belgrade Syndicate) which released single "Govedina" (Beef) in 2002, one of the most controversial hit-singles. It was

released when the new government started their term, and the lyrics of the song were the fierce and direct criticism of the whole political scene. The following part from afore mentioned song best depicts state of mind of young people at that time.

"I'm sitting on the river bank, staring at the Danube,  
Wondering who is putting our new constitution together,  
Wondering why our president is dumb,  
What is Milo (Montenegrin president at that time) hustling...  
motherfucker!"

What's the means of transport, planes or the railroad?  
Are the goods paid in cash or by settling the debts?  
Are the partners Greaseballs or the southern tribes?  
Low birth rate; there are less and less Serbs,  
Sister if you wanna give birth you need balls,  
To give up everything and to work like a dog,  
To be a barefaced liar and steal,  
Double standards, cooking books,  
To smile like a rat in elitists company,  
To fake like American wrestlers on a business dinner,  
Or to play possum when foreigners come,  
To renounce Guca, kajmak and radza,  
And to tolerate Croatians, Borka, gay parades,  
Fuck Levy's documentaries,  
I don't feel shame about my origins."

Another example worth media attention was a guy under alias Marcelo, Philology Faculty student, who in a prudent, truthful, cynical and in a bit brutal way describes social issues damaging to the society. In his song "House on a draft", he describes individual's viewpoint, young people's viewpoint about current situation to be more precise.

"I don't watch weather forecast,  
I already know it's gonna be bad,  
I grew up among nettle,  
So I didn't turn out to be a rose,  
Reality is sad and today  
It broadcasts live, the horror  
Turmoil and scuffle, life as a necessity  
With nothing to offer  
You've replaced all the big shots  
But the rats are still there  
Along world class thieves  
Who don't care  
About our concerns, slimeballs

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They don't give a fuck  
 About those who are low on the social ladder,  
 Doesn't work, I know they don't see them,  
 We've just sorted ourselves a bit,  
 And a new scandal arrives  
 They whacked a prime minister  
 While people stare in shock, way to go  
 In a capitol city,  
 On a shiny day, a man with a crutch  
 And where were the boys  
 In blue coats?"



Students Theater Play -FOUR SEASONS-VIVALDI (SPRING presented as Hip Hop part) Photo by Igor Marovic

Alongside these artists who base their lyrics on the criticism of society and politics, new groups and individual artists emerged with the emphasis on humorous funny side of human relations, as well as having a good time, and all those things that made life easier and simpler in these hard times of transition Serbia was going through. The band "Bad Copy" with its laid back and sometimes repulsive style brought that humorous style back to the scene, and they managed to form a big fan base eager to hear something that would make them laugh and cheer them up, driving their thoughts away from everyday problems they endured. As far as criminal themes in Serbian hip-hop culture are concerned, it is still the base for it, and groups and artists who were the best in this genre during the 1990s still have a big support and respect, among both mainstream and underground fans.

After this sudden breakthrough and after these changes concerning style happened, it may be said that these last couple of years were a period of inertia and splitting. When I say inertia I mean that styles haven't changed, because all those styles and subgenres, which emerged after 'October' changes, are still developing and defining. When I mentioned splitting, I meant on splitting the scene into underground and commercial rap. Economic changes influenced division. Nowadays it is hard for an artist to break through because the whole hip-hop scene is put aside and neglected by the media. The question remains whether it is because of foreign competition, lack of quality performers with the strong message, whether it is because of Internet, lack of interest of big record labels to promote and support more young artists, or whether it is because of the fact that only performers that got famous before 2000 have benefits from it.

Although the underground scene is very strong at the moment, with a lot of good groups and artists, they cannot reach a wider audience and earn a living by making hip-hop records. Media's lack of interest is what holds the whole thing back. There is not a single TV show dealing with hip-hop at the moment. There are a couple of radio shows in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia that deal with hip-hop but they are not the most popular radio stations, therefore are practically unnoticeable. Compared to foreign hip-hop radio shows and stations, (e.g. Tim Westwood's BBC Radio

One show is the most famous and one of the most influential shows for everything new that comes out) local radio stations which had the opportunity to air those shows didn't manage to hold on for long, and soon enough were cancelled, above all, because of lack of understanding from environment, editors, as well as previous negative experiences concerning hip-hop, which was considered as a bad legacy from the 1990s, connected with criminal and bad boys who used to make this music.

On top of all of these problems with the media, copyright problems and piracy, Internet as one of the basic source of information for young people in a way hinders young groups and artists but it also helps them. One of the few websites, which deals with the whole Serbian hip-hop scene more seriously, is *serbianun-*

*derground.com*. It tries to gather all artists at one place, to introduce them, and to report about what is going on in the world of local hip-hop. There are plans and projects aimed to help young unknown artists, and most importantly there is a will for creating new TV and radio shows, as well as making a documentary about Serbian hip-hop culture which is expected to be the basis for other projects aimed at helping the development of future composers and for people eager to see something happening in the Serbian hip-hop scene.

Be that as it may, while I'm sitting in front of my computer, or while I'm walking down the street and listening to the latest news on how Eminem and 50 Cent released their new albums and had already hit the top of the charts, even before songs appeared on TV, I have to wonder what will happen with the Serbian hip-hop culture. Is the fate of American hip-hop lurking behind the corner; mass production of bad artists, meaningless songs without rebellious messages, without a cry for something better? Will we forever be torn between strong didactical underground sounds and completely commercialised sounds about what kind of rims somebody put on his car (even though that certain somebody cannot even afford car and those rims which most American rappers own and promote). Will we be in constant disagreement between those two sides, or will we snap out of it and reject all those meaningless issues and start making high-quality, realistic, down to earth and above all didactical songs which might be the means for everyone to express their thoughts and feelings in these times of mental repression. Who knows? Time will tell, and we are left to fight for our place in this jungle of symbols and virtual feelings. ■



## Cyber Basement

Concert of the rock band SINESTESIA in Belgrade

Photo by Igor Marovic

### Serbian Rock 'n' Roll Scene Today

Rock 'n' roll in Serbia today, eight and a half years after the 5 October overthrow, which was considered as a milestone for social changes and as a sort of "rock 'n' roll revolution", is even deeper underground than it was under the rule of Slobodan Milosevic. Whether it is because of piracy, lack of understanding, lack of good composers, lack of money, or maybe because of financial power of that "other", never lustrated, turbo folk scene. Rock 'n' roll has been pushed to the margins of society, and left in the hands of their enthusiasts in the last couple of years. The example of a well-known Belgrade band "Eyesburn" best illustrates the situation of the Serbian rock scene. Soon after the already mentioned 5 October, "Eyesburn" achieved, for Serbian circumstances, good commercial success but confronted with the inability to progress in an existing environment, the band soon ceased to exist. Their frontman is building up his European career, the drummer plays in Lepa Brena's band, the bass player gave up music, and the guitar player performs with the cult underground metal band "Osmi Putnik Dva". The only possible choices for rock musicians in Serbia today are leaving Serbia, giving up music, going over to the ideologically other side (financially much more powerful) or going underground and starting all over again.

Apart from Student Cultural Center (SKC) and the renovated Youth House (Dom Omladine), rock 'n' roll today can be heard in about ten small clubs in Belgrade and Novi Sad, while rock concerts in other cities occur rarely. What makes the situation even more difficult is the overwhelming number of so called 'tribute



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bands'. They play songs from worldwide known bands, supported by the radio station Beograd 202, and gain profit for the club owners unlike original composers who often have to pay for the organisation of their concerts. The situation is somewhat similar with the record labels. Bigger companies in Serbia hardly ever release records from the alternative artists. Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) releases rock records occasionally, but mostly from already established bands ("DLM",

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“Eyesburn”, “Disciplina Kicme”), or ex legends’ “*the best of*” compilations. Media company B92 turned completely to world music, *Multimedia* released several alternative records (*Six Pack, Rare, Thimble, Sweeper*), and reactivated *Automatik* is probably the mostly alternative oriented record label today (“Euforia”, “Covek Bez Sluha”, “Goribor”, “Backbone”, “Decontrolled”...). Another one worth mentioning is *One Records*, which releases mainly hard rock and heavy metal records. Alternative oriented small record companies appear on the market now and then, but they mostly go bust, because they have small target groups, price of the resources, percentage that distributors take, and insufficient initial and reserve capital. Large broadband Internet expansion in comparison to dial up era further diminished supporting bands by buying their CDs (and cassettes long time ago).

*The alternative rock scene has almost completely transferred to the Internet and is operating in a sort of cyber basement, due to insufficient support especially over the last couple of years.*

After cancelling rock shows on almost all TV stations as well as magazines *Rock Express* and *OK Magazin*, articles about alternative bands can be occasionally read in *Blic* and city guides (*Yellow Cab, Trip, City Magazin, Beoskop and Singidunum Weekly*), whereas rock music videos are shown only on MTS and TV Metropolis. The alternative rock scene has therefore almost completely transferred to the Internet and is operating in a sort of cyber basement, due to insufficient support especially over the last couple of years. Bands and clubs opened their Internet presentations, MySpace and Facebook profiles, “bulletins” and “events”

replaced concert placards, records which could not reach music publishing companies are available for free download, and specialised Internet portals and web magazines are covering the rock scene. There are over 500 biographies of still active bands, news, concert previews, critiques and list of all rock clubs in Serbia on the RockSerbia website ([www.rockserbia.net](http://www.rockserbia.net)). BalkanRock ([www.balkanrock.com](http://www.balkanrock.com)) is not so good technically and visually, but it encompasses rock scenes from former Yugoslavia as well as Romania and Bulgaria, whereas BalkanUnderground ([www.balkanunderground.com](http://www.balkanunderground.com)) created by merging one website from Novi Sad and one from Osjek, managed to connect underground activists from the former Yugoslavia. However, two web magazines whose efforts in popularisation of the scene we must point out are *Trablmejker* ([www.trablmejker.com](http://www.trablmejker.com)) and *Popboks* ([www.popboks.com](http://www.popboks.com)). Here is how *Trablmejker* defines its mission: “*What we are trying to do is to point out qualities and potential young people in our country have which are unnoticeable for whatever reason there may be, even though they are worthy, to meet each other through communication and to widen the circle of creative and free minded people.*” Apart from comprehensive concert previews, album reviews, forums, blogs, download section and online shop, selling CDs, t-shirts, books (out of which they published one “*Heroes of the Urban Misery*”, a collection of poems from 44 authors from the former Yugoslavia) and unique pieces of art by young artists, their creation of online serial “*Trablmejker Bureau of Investigation*” is particularly interesting. Their “*TBI team tries to identify the causes and guilty parties for the condition Serbian culture is in*”, as well as groundbreaking enterprise “*My Underground*” based on the social network principle, and its goal is to “*create networks for creative people*”.

The website *Popboks*, which was at first just the *Dzuboks* and *Ritam* magazines archive, in time, became the most significant web magazine for pop culture in

Serbia. *Popboks* has so much to offer, but for promoting rock music the most important is their section called “the scene”. “*Young and unknown artists, as well as all other bands which cannot reach record labels and media, are invited to present their music to wider audience.*” If the recordings meet certain technical standards (which *Popboks* does not consider too strict), they are included in an online database of the scene. At the end of last year *Popboks* moved forward in promotion of the scene, and in cooperation with *Odlican Hrcak* record label, starts edition ‘New Serbian scene’, and publishes debut albums for “*Nezni Dalibor*”, “*Petrol*”, “*Repetitor*” and “*Slaptrap*”.

The positive effects of this Internet guerilla fighting are becoming visible on the Serbian metal scene as well. One of the ‘insiders’, Marko Tica, who organised many concerts of foreign bands in Belgrade, founder of the independent record label *Mr. Metal Records* and guitar player in the band “*Decontrolled*”, says: “*Even though there is much more enthusiasm than serious work done on the scene, bands that work seriously started to stick out. Quality of the recordings, shows equipment and image is on a higher level, and from the last year first serious connections with the abroad had been established, so bands can go on a tour in a surrounding countries and bigger festivals, while some of them are releasing their records for mediocre European record labels.*”

Are those things indicators that the Serbian alternative scene will come out of the “cyber basement” soon? Time will tell. Musicians and promoters united with their enthusiasm can make certain improvements, but they have no control over certain facts; music equipment is probably the most expensive in the whole Europe because of the customs, and bands are not in a position to present themselves outside Serbia because of the rigorous visa regime. That’s politicians’ job. Jobs for those politicians, who before and after 5 October, described themselves as rockers. ■

## Music as a Communication

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

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

By Sanja Petricic, Assistant Professor Faculty of Media and Communications



Photo by Snezana Skundric

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

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

A very significant part of educational plan and programme is interdisciplinary cooperation, during which dance students take acting and singing classes, drama students take dance and singing classes (and later implement their acquired knowledge in their performance

in various musicals), and music students attend acting and dancing classes. The programme also encompasses composers and choreographers courses, aimed at connecting the composer, instrumentalist’s and dancer’s talent through projects performed once a month in the prestigious Allice Tully Hall.

Interdisciplinary cooperation also appears through student’s own initiative, such as composers who are composing music for contemporary plays, dancers who are performing in opera and similar. By acquiring experience in this way through interdisciplinary cooperation, students have the opportunity to be acquainted with different concepts of interpretation of all performance arts.

Upon returning from America, I started my pedagogical career at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade in 2006, where I made the educational plan and programme for the course called Management of Cultural and Artistic Projects. I wanted to enable students to make, organise and realise

projects involving classical music through this course, and to present them to the Belgrade audience. The idea was to present classical music in a new and creative way, and students to acquire basic theoretical knowledge in arts management, which would later be used in the practical work of designing and realisation of projects.

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

While I was working on multimedia projects with students, I came to the conclusion that it is very important to work on developing young people’s creativity and to enable them as much work on this kind of projects as possible, so they could get better acquainted with art in an unschooled manner.

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Students of FMK performing in a theater as a part of the course Music as a Communication  
Photo by Snezana Skundric

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Students fulfilled necessary criteria during the realisation of projects and met my expectations. It is interesting to mention that most of the students got in touch with this kind of work method for the first time, which implied a number of challenges like team work, efficient time consumption, human relations in the business world, and at places where the projects took place they experienced working with various artists and cultural institution's administration.

This course's concept was somewhat risky because projects were held at well-known cultural institutions - like those mentioned above. However, I think that every success entails risk, but it entails persistence and assiduity as well. It seems to me that those challenges thought and enabled students for work on future projects.

Students attending this course are going through different development stages of a project, from creation through to realisation, and what gives me joy is seeing their persistence, assiduity and enthusiasm.

Thus, the mission of this course is to give students valuable experience in art management through practical work, and thus connecting with students from other faculties, artists (amateurs as well as professional artists) and cultural institutions.

If we think about the music as a way of communication then we may reach a conclusion that one of the forces with the most powerful influence on creating of any kind of art is the power of art to communicate throughout the world. Art is a language understandable everywhere in the world, overcoming the religious boundaries, cultural heritage, race and gender. Regardless of whether it is expressed through words, colours, body movements or sound, the main message is always the same - the need of human soul to express itself.

When you connect the power of art as a means of communication with creative ideas and energy of our students, who are the future of our society, then it creates one beautiful picture, giving us something to run away to from our everyday life. ■

Having been driven crazy from too much "history" and "double" standards, overexposed to political propaganda and having experienced a lot in life, an average Serb is inclined to see a "plot" and a hidden agenda in almost anything. Therefore Public Relations (PR) is some kind of a novelty that should convince us that something is good for us but is actually not in our best interest. On the one side, PR managers are considered to be 'manipulators, people from the shadows that make crucial decisions and govern our faith'. On the other side, we tend to simplify which we do not understand so many perceive PR managers as "parasites" who do not really do anything useful. Executive Director of Communication Services in Erste Bank Serbia Andrea Brbaklic says that the public perception of the PR profession is such that most people see PR managers as "pretty blonds speaking the lines learned by heart". This attitude, Brbaklic says, stems from lack of understanding of the basics of the profession.

Such as it is, current public opinion towards the PR profession is far from

Public Relations is defined as a group of managerial and communication activities whose goal is to create, maintain and improve good relationships with the social environment. It means that the purpose of a PR agent is wider than that of a spokesperson. It is also different to the purpose of marketing. Van der Meiden describes PR by breaking the most common of clichés: "PR does not mean arranging the shop window, or polishing the exterior. It is not a better word for propaganda, nor beatifying for a purpose of advertisement. It also isn't a good-natured lying or not telling the whole truth."

## Pretty Blonds Speaking the Lines Learned by Heart

Public Relations in Serbia

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



By Milena Beatovic, Student, FMK

ideal. An economy in transition has brought unemployment, uncertainty and insecurity of one's existence. Therefore it is not surprising that the institutions that are symbols of a new system such as non-governmental organisations, marketing agencies, privatisation advisors and financial experts and PR managers are generally viewed unfavourably and suspiciously by the general public.

It is clear that PR activities do not deserve such a reputation. It is a job that requires a significant amount of work and creativity. In essence, public relations cannot be done by copy/paste templates and it also involves tough decision making.

In 2008, the Public Relations Society of Serbia commissioned an online survey called "PR Profession in Serbia" on the state of affairs within the profession. The survey involved 154 public relations officers employed by companies, organisations and PR and marketing agencies.

Out of total number of PR employees in companies and public organisations, 34 percent were not hired as PR professional but were transferred from another post within the company. Thus, over one third



PR Week seminar at the Faculty of Media and Communications Photo by Igor Marovic

of people working in PR have not been properly educated for the job. In majority of cases, this happened as a result of re-organisation of companies that caused some job posts to disappear (like Social Standard Officers or All-National Security Officers). While this does not necessarily prove to be the reason for the bad image of PR profession in Serbia this fact points out that not enough importance is being given to the profession of public relations.

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

On the other hand, public relations is a well paid job with 70 percent of PR officers in professional PR agencies and 68 percent working in other companies state that they are very satisfied. According to the survey, PR professionals typically have high salaries in comparison to Serbian standards - 36 percent of interviewees employed by companies and 43 percent working for agencies make over 70,000 RSD (around 700 EUR) per month.



Street advertising often compensate PR

Photo by Kornelija Szabo

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A great number of interviewees express a desire to keep the job and to improve their skills through advanced training. Only 10 percent would like to change their work post. Among the skills needed for the successful PR professional, at the top of the list are creativity and the ability of the PR employee to identify the cause of the problem and the solution.

Obviously, interviewed PR experts very much like and appreciate their job and consider it to be important and creative. Nevertheless, they are aware that that the public does not have a good opinion of their profession, so 54 percent of them, ac-



PR Week lecturer at the Faculty of Media and Communications

Photo by Igor Marovic

According to the survey, consider the biggest problem of their line of work to be “lack of understanding of the importance of public relations in society in general”.

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

The development of the PR profession in Serbia is associated with the development of a free market democracy. Like all other institutions of the market economy public relations is a new occurrence as well. The market favours the successful while the un-

successful are marginalised more severely than was the case in the previous system of socialistic wage levelling and directed economy.

The transition to a market economy, even if not preceded by a full-scale revolution, carries in itself a powerful potential for public disagreement. It is up to public relations managers to identify it, lessen its effect, rationalise it, and work toward resolving it in order to help companies run businesses smoothly and in the environment that understands its needs and benefits.

Let us not forget that PR's job includes acting inside the company, not just towards the business and social environment. It is a difficult

job that sometimes calls for unpopular measures to be taken. What makes things even more complicated is general lack of knowledge about the functioning of market economy and crisis of value system since the destruction of socialism has not yet led to new value system being instituted. Inevitable measures like layoffs, retraining and demotion of the less competent have to be explained, justified and rationalised in a way that leaves at least some hope and a point to the right direction for working population. The general public is quick to generalise mistakes in the process of transition and to consider all successful entrepreneurs to be tycoons and all their consultants “mafia-type consigliere”. PR persons in corporate and public sector should point out to the public the positive sides of

privatisation and the introduction of market economy in Serbia. They should emphasise corporate responsibility of the companies and the government and illustrate the examples of concrete measures taken in order to ensure responsible market behaviour.

The public relations campaign of US Steel Serbia using the slogan “US Steel Serbia for a Better Life in Serbia” goes to show how a well-planned campaign, which recognises and understands the local mentality, can produce positive effect regardless of challenges in the market. Thomas R. Ferrall, PR adviser in US Steel and one of the noted PR experts worldwide entrusted a local public relations agency, New Moment, for the job. The campaign highlighted the workers of this privatised company encouraging their potential and the optimistic future that is to come. The campaign has changed the negative perception of the privatisation of ‘Sartid’ and placed an emphasis on the success of the company in the domain of production and its corporate activities. Results when it comes to production in other countries (like a steel-mill in Slovakia) are the key to the reputation of the company, but if it was not for good public relations then the overall picture would not be as good.

That is the direction public relations in Serbia should take. According to the PR manager of Erste Bank: “Public relations was brought to Serbia along with foreign investors and many instituted this service for the sake of fashion, but more and more people understand the significance of this line of work”. No PR officer can defend unsuccessful projects or wrong ideas. The core of PR is not in building ‘Potemkin villages’. The development of PR will depend on the development of society as a whole, and especially on economic development. PR will not solve the global economy crisis, but they can help good projects get public support and not get shunned out of misunderstanding and resistance. In hard times that are coming everyone needs good ideas and support for their implementation. ■



Nada Popovic, Dean

Photo by Snezana Skundric



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Snezana Skundric, FMK Creative Director

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Student illustrator Aleksandra Petkovic

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Student Photographer Igor Marovic

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## Get your news by SMS! - It is BGNES

### Story of Bulgarian Private News Agency

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

On a cold winter day in December 2002, the Director of Agence France Presse (AFP) for Eastern Europe visited the offices of a private news agency BGNES in Sofia. The agency had no heating and people were working at their desks dressed in winter jackets. An unpleasant meeting about the agency's late payments to AFP turned into a conversation about the future plans for BGNES and the business model that the agency is using. At that moment the BGNES owner understood that practicing journalism is one thing, but running a successful business is something entirely different.

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

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

The idea for the agency was born during Neshkov's time as a war reporter in the 1990s when he saw the work of agency journalists and their ability to send the

news out efficiently as soon as they received it. On the other hand, he as a correspondent always had to wait for his stories to be reviewed, approved and broadcast on the news at 18:00 or 20:00.

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

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

return the money invested in the necessary changes. After that, like a snowball effect, things started rolling. Soon after, BGNES started with the use of local correspondents throughout Bulgaria, due to the lack of event coverage in the provinces in favour of events taking place in Sofia.

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

The BGNES team has been through some changes since the founding years. In the beginning they employed many young people, but then Neshkov decided to implement some changes. That was a risky experiment but he was confident that he could not work only with young people anymore because in journalism, like in every other profession, practical experience is necessary. Therefore, he started taking people who previously worked for the state agency. Other people BGNES employs came from the state radio that always had a good, strong tradition. Recent recapitulation of employees showed that BGNES has changed 95 percent of the people working at the agency since its beginnings. All of them are journalists with many years of experience and are very well known in their profession. At the agency in Sofia, there are about 70 employees including journalists, editors, administrative staff, an accounting department and Neshkov. In the provinces the agency has around 40 photojournalists and journalists, as well as 10 cameramen. They work under the con-

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tract exclusively for BGNES and have no right to work for anyone else. The key for them as well is to be well paid. In the early days, agency also had correspondents in Balkan countries but that proved to be financially burdensome. Instead, they decided to employ people who speak Serbian, Greek, Turkish, Romanian, and can read all the information locally in Sofia, and inform Bulgarian public about important developments in these countries.

At the end of 2006, BGNES established its video service and it is the only agency in Bulgaria today that offers text, photos, video, and audio. No state or any other private agency provides such a diverse service to its customers. BGNES is also the only agency in Bulgaria working with the biggest mobile operator in Bulgaria, MTel, to deliver top news from Bulgaria and abroad to tens of thousands subscribers on their mobile phones via SMS and MMS. This way the subscribers are always informed of the latest developments in the field of politics, economy, sports, show business, and medicine. They also receive the weather forecast, horoscopes, lifestyle news, stock exchange news, etc. According to Neshkov, this type of mobile service became the recognisable characteristic of BGNES, so even today, when someone talks about 'News by SMS' everyone knows it is BGNES.

The agency has customers in every bigger or medium-sized city in Bulgaria. Its largest customers today are media houses, which take around 80 percent of BGNES news. In Sofia that is all nine or ten daily newspapers, one state-owned TV station and four private ones. Customers also include many regional TV stations, radios, newspapers, state authorities, international news agencies, banking and financial institutions in Bulgaria and from abroad, Bulgarian embassies abroad, as well as foreign diplomatic missions in Bulgaria. Subscribers' interests change and BGNES always tries to change what they

offer accordingly. Two years ago Vodafone Live started with their service in Bulgaria. This service includes made-for-mobile web pages on the mobile internet where one can download music, games, video clips and ring tones and the BGNES offers it as well. In addition, customers care about having access to exclusive material, so every time Agence France Presse or Reuters have some special package, whether it is for the Olympic Games or for the World Soccer Championship, BGNES is the one buying that exclusive material. Every subscriber of [www.BGNES.com](http://www.BGNES.com) is able to use the archives of more than 600,000 news articles and about a million photos. The agency has the copyright for hundreds of photos, TV interviews of presidents, political leaders, ministers, popular public and cultural figures and athletes.

*Even today, when someone talks about 'News by SMS' everyone knows it is BGNES.*

This is a model that currently works very well for BGNES. However, when large event take place or the big news story breaks, the agency sends their correspondents to the location. For example, in 2008 BGNES covered five to six events in Serbia, among them the elections and the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. In addition, they also covered the development of events in Kosovo. On top of this, their correspondents covered events other than politics, such as entertainment and lifestyle that are garnering increased interest from the audience. For example, a video of a Madonna's concert in Montenegro was watched by 80,000 visitors to the BGNES website in only three hours, while presidential elections in Serbia had the audience of just 1,000 people in 3 days. Those are substantially different numbers. This shows how much such business depends on the audience.

As Lyubcho Neshkov explains: "BGNES is [a] 100 percent private and 100 percent commercial agency and we must know what people expect from us, because if we don't know what people expect from us then we cannot offer them what is in demand."

Obviously, for this type of business it is also very important to have good IT specialists because a photo cannot take too long to download or a video cannot stop every three seconds, because no one will ever come back to your website. Material has to be of good quality and it has to download quickly.

The agency covers 10 percent of the information required by protocol and related to the work of the parliament, president and political parties, but they also have to cover other areas of interest such as health, social life, sport, entertainment, and according to Neshkov, this area is rapidly expanding while 10 percent covering the politics is shrinking. One of the problems for the agency is that there is no real professional sport in this part of Europe. Bulgaria has a problem with corruption in sports like that which exists in Serbia, Croatia and other countries in the region. While private news agencies in other countries worldwide rely on covering sport for 40 percent to 50 percent of their business, BGNES can only dream about that number.

BGNES customers pay for all the news and information including text, photo, and video. BGNES asks for the IP address of a subscriber and then the customer receives a password, which allows access to the material. The majority, around 80 percent, of BGNES customers pay for the content monthly, while a very small number, 10-15 percent of those who can afford it pay in advance. Video is available in two formats: web format and TV format. If a customer is a website portal or a radio with its own website, they will receive a password that allows access to the web version of the video. If a customer is a TV station, they will receive access to the TV version of the video in high

resolution. BGNES sells this in a monthly package. In the year 2007, the biggest investment for BGNES was purchase of cameras and equipment for the work in the provinces. This enabled them to have special category of news called "Obstina" ("District") focusing more on the domestic market and offering information from 28 districts in Bulgaria in the areas such as show business, politics, crime, and fashion.

All news available on the BGNES homepage is provided free of charge and since September 2007 this content has also been available in English. In addition, BGNES offers two videos free of charge as examples of the material that is available, so potential customers can see what the quality of the material is before they decide to subscribe.

As for the current media business climate in Bulgaria, according to Neshkov, the market is constantly changing. In 2008 many new media companies started and many new websites were launched. "Not all of them will handle the pressure of news business and in one to two years from now the situation should stabilise. Those that have the quality will survive", says Neshkov.

One thing BGNES management have learnt is that achieving success in news business is in two things. Number one, a person has to work like mad, not one, two, or three days, but 365 days a year, and number two, person has to be objective and stay true to the work they are doing.

Unfortunately, many states in South-Eastern Europe are still economically and politically unstable. The biggest problem in Bulgaria right now is not unemployment, but corruption, which also affects the work of the news agencies. People in this business sometimes have to choose between receiving corrupt money and enjoying financial security, and not having extra money, but enjoying editorial freedom. BGNES has chosen to have less money and be independent. That is the answer as to what BGNES is today. ■

## Bulgarian Civil Society Battles to Limit Data Retention

By Colin Peters

Press Freedom Advisor for Europe and Americas at the International Press Institute

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

The adoption of EU directive 2006/24 in March 2006 caused an outcry among media freedom organisations. Introduced to ease police investigations into terrorism and organised crime, it obliges EU member states to pass laws ensuring that telecommunications providers store - for a period of up to two years - information on the date, time, duration and user identity of all electronic telecommunications traffic they handle.

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

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

"One of the paragraphs [of Article 5 of the regulation] gave the Ministry of the Interior direct access, through a computer, to all the data retained - which was really very bad," says Alexander Kashumov, head of the legal team at the Access to Information Programme (AIP), the organisation that led a March 2008 appeal against Regulation 40 at the Supreme Administrative Court.

"Another paragraph gave the criminal investigative authorities access to the data, and the third paragraph gave the security services access to the data. In these two cases the access could be exercised on the basis of a written request," continued Kashumov.

AIP's appeal resulted in the overturning in December 2008 of all three disputed paragraphs of the regulation, the Supreme Administrative Court finding that they contravened Article 32 of the Bulgarian Constitution and Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

"Basically the Court interpreted that both the Constitution and the European Convention of Human

Rights require precise grounds on which data can be accessed, and the Court stated that even written requests for data are not enough without specifying these particular grounds," explained Kashumov.

The potential for the authorities to abuse access to telecommunications data was exposed before the Supreme Administrative Court returned its December ruling, following the gruesome attack on journalist Ognyan Stefanov, editor-in-chief of online news site "Frognews", in September 2008. Several masked men armed with metal rods and hammers beat Stefanov unconscious outside a Sofia restaurant, not long after the Bulgarian National Security Agency (DANS) claimed he was responsible for publishing a DANS critical website, "Opasnite Novini". Stefanov denies these claims.

In the official inquiry following the attack, information came to light revealing that DANS had been spying on the telecommunications of some 50 journalists, as part of an operation to find out which of their own agents had been supplying "Opasnite Novini" with confidential information.

It is not yet clear to what extent DANS spied on the journalists, but the ability and readiness of them to do so is itself a threat to investigative reporting. "The more power they have, the more they use this power not for the specified purposes," says Kashumov, who points to a number of other cases where the police have used these laws to uncover the identity of internet users expressing opinions on Blogs.

Unfortunately, despite the Supreme Administrative Courts' decision, the authorities desire to see the retention and use of telecommunications data applied as broadly as possible continues.

On 22 January 2009, AIP were again involved in fending off an attempt by the Ministry of the Interior to see the three overturned paragraphs of Regulation 40 turned into law - this time the ministry attempted to persuade a parliamentary committee to introduce amendments corresponding to the provisions into a draft law on electronic communications.

The committee decided not to adopt the provisions in the face of the public pressure from AIP and others. They did, however, make changes that weaken safeguards contained in the original EU directive - such as the requirement that all data be deleted automatically after the 24 month retention period expires.

Given these developments, AIP, for one, intends to take the battle further. "These amendments have been adopted by the committee, but they are not yet voted on at the second reading, so our intent is to continue with this," says Kashumov. Their success so far leaves room to hope that their efforts will pay off. ■

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

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

The City of Vienna is considered to have one of the best functioning city administrations worldwide. Its complex political and administrative structure, counting around 60,000 employees, gives city’s managing body feeling of a small city within the city. Vienna is divided into 23 residential districts, each ruled by the District Chairman. The City Administration is subdivided into eight Administrative Groups headed by an Executive City Councillor overseeing housing, education, finances, health care, cultural affairs, and environment, among others. These Administrative Groups comprise a total of 70 Municipal departments.

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

City Councillors, including the Mayor Michael Häupl.

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



Fred Vavrousek, Head of Press and Information Services

Andrea Leitner, responsible for coordination of international activities at PID, explains the importance of well-organized action as important task for the department “...because each of the Executive Councillors is promoting different areas of interest and each municipal department is conducting projects year around, so teamwork prevents the launching of multiple campaigns simultaneously and in uncoordinated way, and helps to avoid the danger of overwhelming the public with the amount of information provided.”

The City of Vienna bases its communication and PR work on a Contemporary Communications Philosophy, which boils down to three main messages: get into dialogue with public, present customized information, and do the city branding. Dialogue with public works through the city’s Compliance office. Here, Viennese can communicate with city officials by presenting their wishes and complaints over the phone or via mail. These requests and complains are regularly read, registered and answered. The presentation of customized information works through strategic placement of information at the right time to the right audience groups, using topics of interest to the citizens and topics that require long-term focus.

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

The city branding aspect of communication philosophy started in the year 2000 with the goal of having target audience groups associate a project or a campaign with the City of Vienna. The aim was to develop a comprehensive tool to convey Vienna’s image, but also to strengthen the city’s corporate culture and improve internal communication and contacts among the city personnel. This led to a corporate umbrella branding covering all 70 municipal departments. This branding effort includes corporate design, corpo-

Michael Häupl,  
Mayor of Vienna



rate identity, and corporate communication. According to Andrea Leitner, using corporate design and corporate logos for various city services allows workers performing these services to feel more likely as part of a larger city community. Also, for the residents it is now easier to associate services being performed by the city with the City of Vienna.

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

Examples of city’s communication philosophy are found in various communication outlets used to promote its work. One of many success stories for the city is its website located at [www.wien.at](http://www.wien.at). Designing this website was a challenging project due to the amount of information and documentation that needed to be presented in the electronic format and made available online. The site currently consists of 43,000

pages and 25 million page impressions per month. It is also available in English, but this version offers limited amount of information compared to its German language counterpart. The City of Vienna also owns 18,000 apartment buildings (Gemeindebau) and provides wall newspapers within the entrances to these buildings for their residents. New project in development includes TV sets/screens inside these city buildings that will be used to inform residents about what is going on in their neighbourhood and the city. In addition, an effective way for the city to communicate with its employees is an outlet called City Hall TV. It is a program for internal broadcast, shown within the intranet, with the content mainly including weekly presentations of new city projects via videos.

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

*RK - ratbauskorrespondenz*, is a daily municipal newsletter published by the city that covers compilation of latest press releases and daily-politics items through the news agency run via network of the Austrian Press Agency (APA) to the Austrian media. The newsletter is published in a hard copy and it is also available electronically.

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

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

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

International visitors to Vienna are welcomed by a bilingual publication *Enjoy Vienna* that comes out 12 times a year on 16 pages with ten pages devoted to the City of Vienna. Magazine covers places to visit and events to attend in Vienna, and it is available at various visitor entry points such as the airport, train and bus stations, and hotels. One of the new projects for international community in Vienna is publication of brochures in English

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that cover various areas of interest, such as Business Location Vienna, Medical Excellence in Vienna, and many others.

For city's seniors over 60 years of age, PID also practices direct mailings of individual birthday cards, printed in circulation of over 5,000, congratulating Vienna's oldest residents on reaching milestone birthdays.

In addition to publications for external audience, the city also publishes *wien.at aktuell*, a magazine for all city employees distributed in 130,000 copies. Under the motto "Information is motivation", the city uses this channel to inform its employees about current internal developments, new job openings and more. Many journalists subscribe to this paper, and it is also distributed to all former city employees, now retired.

Another aspect of the city's comprehensive communication and PR strategy is its well-developed international program. The Press and Information Services have many partners included in the international strategy, among them the Vienna Business Agency, the Vienna Economic Chamber, and Vienna Tourist Board. When Vienna officials visit a city abroad, they and their partners market different platforms together and in doing so create stronger marketing presence. In describing a new marketing tool created for PID and its partners, Andrea Leitner explains how the city officials recognized the importance of cultural exchanges and networking for the city promotion and came up with a product consisting of 18 video spots called The Vienna Collection: "The film offers all the clichés one would expect about Vienna, but presents in a slightly different way, showing, for example, the Vienna Boys Choir playing football." City officials use this video as a promotional material on their visits abroad. "The Vienna Collection" has already received five international film awards.



*Another aspect of the city's comprehensive PR strategy is its well-developed international program that includes partners such as Vienna Business Agency, the Vienna Economic Chamber, and Vienna Tourist Board.*

The department also has a network of 11 Press and Information Services liaison offices in the region of South East Europe, specifically in Belgrade, Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest, Krakow, Ljubljana, Moscow, Prague, Sarajevo, Sofia, Zagreb. These offices serve as mediators and contact points for economic, tourist and press requests. Liaison offices program started in the mid-80s, during the 'Iron Curtain' period, to enable an easier exchange of information or enable local offices in different cities to offer help when a delegation is coming for a visit or a new project is being planned. People employed at these liaison offices are knowledgeable about their local city administration, economic, and the media situation, and are acting as ambassadors of the City of Vienna. One of their tasks is to assist in organizing cultural and social events. Next to liaison offices, the Vienna House in Brussels enables easier access to the European Union administration and it is run by the City of Vienna. Representative Offices in Hong Kong and Tokyo, whose task is to strengthen foreign and economic relations and improve communications, are also primarily run by the City of Vienna in cooperation with the Vienna Business Agency and the Vienna Economic Chamber. The website that serves 11 liaison offices is available at [www.wieninternational.at](http://www.wieninternational.at), and the information on this portal is provided in all 11 languages.

- > Welt & Stadt, special interest publication for migrants
- > Enjoy Vienna, magazine for international visitors
- > Business Location Vienna, brochure for English-speaking Business community

The Advertising work of PID includes many innovative campaigns to emotionally involve target groups with clever approaches, such as those against discrimination based on people's fear of immigrants or the one promoting building of the thermal power plant in Vienna that was opposed by the majority of city residents for a very long time. The campaigns are developed by advertising agencies in consultation with PID staff and can sometimes cause quite a stir among city residents, providing a testament to their effectiveness. One such example was an attempt by the city to advertise the fact that

Vienna's green areas cover about 50 percent of city's overall territory. The campaign was launched during one of the political election periods and with the sign reading: "Green: 50 percent" caused an avalanche of protests and negative reactions from the residents. After the campaign in its initial form attracted more than enough attention, the original poster was replaced by a new one reading: "Green: 50 percent - Vienna has more green areas than most big cities". Now, Vienna residents knew what their city was trying to communicate to them and the campaign turned out to be one of the most

memorable ones, not an easy task considering the number of other commercial advertisements the city has to compete with every day.

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

## Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity

### How the City of Vienna communicates with immigrant communities

One probably little known fact among the residents of Vienna is that about 500,000 people, or 32 percent of the Viennese residents, have another country of birth. Similarly, about 310,000 residents of Vienna have foreign citizenship. These numbers are a reason enough for the city of Vienna to take its work with immigrant communities very seriously. The department that works with immigrant communities in Vienna is the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity and it is one of 70 municipal departments. This department works closely together with the Press and Information Services, as both departments acknowledge the importance of good communication practices with local immigrant communities.

The department for Integration and Diversity has about 54 employees, speaking 23 languages and coming from 14 different countries. Central department office houses the Press Department, in addition to two other centres in the East and the West part of the city charged with covering districts in these areas of Vienna. Each centre has eight to ten employees speaking different languages.

The Department's website is available in main languages of the largest immigrant communities (Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, Turkish and English). According to Goran Novakovic who is responsible for coordinating the work of the department, the largest immigrant community in general is ex-Yugoslavian (123,000), and the largest among those is the Serbian community (90,000), Bosnian (16,000), and Croatian (16,000). Turkish community in Vienna counts 49,000 people.

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

The program also offers orientation sessions about housing options in Vienna and the mentality of Viennese, but it is not just for new immigrants. As Novakovic points out "orientation sessions are also opened to "old" immigrants, not just new, so out of 40-

50 people attending lectures, 20 of them are there to get a stamp and another 20 because they have interest in the topic."

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

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

The department also has connections and contacts to immigrant mother-tongue media such as press (newspapers), TV, radio, and Internet. They provide these media organizations with information on what is new with department programs and different actions they take in Vienna. Immigrant media outlets are interested in promoting this information, often at their own initiative and without paid advertisements. They also frequently attend press conferences organized by the department, and, according to Novakovic, it is overall a very good cooperation.

Important websites for immigrants in Vienna include [www.startwien.at](http://www.startwien.at) (available in 15 languages), and [www.integration.wien.at](http://www.integration.wien.at). These sites contain the most important information for starting a new life in Vienna. Information focuses on finding German courses, finding living and childcare options in Vienna, and other information important for starting a new life here.

Important information resource for immigrants is the magazine *Welt & Stadt*, a joint publication of the Press and Information Services, the Immigration, Citizenship and Registry Offices, and the Department for Integration and Diversity. It is available free of charge, and published mainly in German language with short excerpts in languages of main immigrant communities: Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Turkish and English. It is being printed in 60,000 copies and provided to new immigrants during the first three to four years after their arrival in Vienna. *Welt & Stadt* comes out every three months. According to Goran Novakovic, immigrants are the special target group for this publication, as they always look for information on what is going on in Vienna, city activities or any new regulations coming up. Such publications are available in local immigration offices and immigrant organizations and are a good resource for new immigrants to stay informed on what is going on in the city and their community.

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



## State of the Media

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

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

[Mr. Schindler, how would you describe the print media environment in Bulgaria? What is the quality of print media in general?](#)

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

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

Second, all of the news formats compete with reality-shows, tuning the audience to a spectacle and entertainment mode. Also, 'yellow press' weeklies are flourishing. Third, the economic or political interests of several print media's owners are a natural restraint on providing information of public interest in its completeness.

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

[What is the current situation with the print media market in Bulgaria in terms of the number of publications available, circulation numbers, readership structure, etc?](#)

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

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

[Please tell us a little bit about the daily \*24 Hours\*. When and how was it founded, and is there anything different about it distinguishing it from other daily newspapers?](#)

**Schindler:** *24 Hours* was launched on 18 April 1991 by the Press group "168 Hours". With regard to the very successful and profitable *168 Hours* weekly paper, the publisher made the logical de-

### Interesting facts about *24 Hours*

- Poll's data show that *24 Hours* has a particularly great number of readers among the younger audience and people in active age living in the cities.
- In 2004 *24 Hours* developed in close partnership with a team of university instructors and sociologists the first Bulgarian media rating of the universities in the country using European criteria - a ranking similar to those ones made by well-established western publications.
- On tens of thousands motor vehicles in Bulgaria there are the *24 Hours* stickers, distributed during initiatives aiming at reducing road accidents, with the following appeals: "Drive wisely, come home alive!", "If you have drunk, come off, I want to go home alive!", "No TIRorism in my days off" (for limiting heavy trucks "TIR" on the road during weekends).
- The series of booklets about popular traditional healers, distributed by *24 Hours* is particularly successful.



Axel Schindler, CEO of the Newspaper Group Bulgaria

cision to issue a daily newspaper as well. *24 Hours* was the newspaper that introduced modern professional standards to the Bulgarian press after the 1989 change in political landscape, such as the clear separation of facts from comments, verification of information by using at least two independent sources, mandatory provision of news space to aggravated parties, etc.

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

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

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

However, there is one more point to be highlighted - the *24 Hours*' initiatives of public importance, which are invariably de-

finied in target group research as the most essential part of the newspaper's trademark. The newspaper involves its readers and the society in general, often in cooperation with electronic media, into attractive and important projects and enterprises.

[Who was the owner of dailies such as \*24 Hours\* and \*Daily Trud\* before WAZ took over? How did these dailies change since WAZ took over the ownership?](#)

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

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

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

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

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

In the last case we had, some completely unfounded, however sensational stories about politicians, businessmen, etc. got reprinted by non-anonymous sites, with reference to the anonymous one and started circulating as stories "if not 100 percent accurate, then somewhat true". The anonymous site was stopped upon an investigation by the State Agency for National Security on the matter.

[Perhaps this problem just reflects the situation with professional and ethical journalism standards in Bulgaria? How](#)

*Continued on page 82*

Continued from page 81

much and how successfully are they being followed, in your opinion?

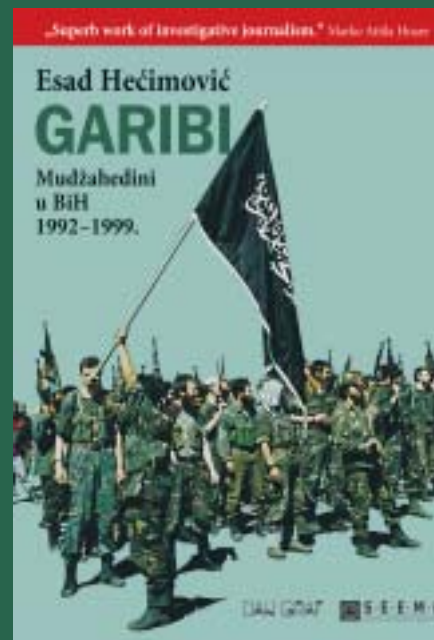
**Schindler:** Competition on the market and the 'yellow press' factor mentioned, provide the natural ground for decisions in favour of unverified sensation instead in favour of standards. The economic and political interests of several publishers beget pressure against the provision of objective information, honest comments and independent investigations.

A large part of the Bulgarian media (including 50 from the print media sector) have already signed to a Media Code of Ethics, developed in accordance to the European standards and supported by National Council on Journalism Ethics. The Council for Journalism Ethics has already reviewed 15 cases. The outcome is a relatively high degree of awareness of ethical norms in the journalistic guild.

The weakness of the judicial system and the corruption are also factors working against journalistic standards. As a result aggravated economic or political interests may achieve a verdict, or at least harass journalists and publications through endless litigation, even for accurate, socially important, however critical information.

What does the future of 24 Hours and other dailies look like? Are you foreseeing any new challenges, which would require some changes?

**Schindler:** The changing media consumer's attitudes, the competition through electronic media and new communication channels (internet, Mobile Virtual Network Operator - MVNO) are among the issues, which are to be considered in the further development of the print media in general. The audience is increasingly demanding vision, entertainment, different news and news approaches, without lowering journalistic quality. This is the direction in which newspapers are going to change. ■



## GARIBI: Mudžahedini u BiH 1992-1999. (Mujahedeens in Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Lot of articles, comments and books have been written about *Garibi*, mujahedeens who came to Central Bosnia in 1992 as Islamic volunteers and missionaries. How did they come, what have they been doing and whom they terrorized there? And, even more important, with whose approval? Too many questions, not many reliable answers.

Who are *Garibi*? Find out finally in a book recently published jointly by the Belgrade daily *Danas* and South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) from Vienna. *Garibi* is, undoubtedly, the book we have waited long for. The book with many elements of striking thriller, but with content made of documents about real events and real people. Mysterious deaths, enigmatic societies, ritual beheadings, people with countless names, organisation that covered the whole planet with its net.

The book of prominent reporter from Zenica Esad Hecimovic is the first one in the new *Danas*-SEEMO Edition „Investigative Journalists“.

Esad Hecimovic was born in Zenica in 1963. Studied philosophy and sociology in Sarajevo. Worked for different printed and electronic media in former Yugoslavia, today's BiH and abroad. As co-author and author, published the books „Quiet, they are killing“ (Tiše, ubijaju) about the genocide over Bosnian Muslims in the area of Prijedor and Kozara (Preporod, Zenica 1992); and „How they sold out Srebrenica and saved the power“ (Kako su prodali Srebrenicu i sacuvali vlast), special edition of magazine *BH Dani*, Sarajevo, September 1998.



NEW!

The latest publication of *Danas* and SEEMO - „Journalists Investigators“

The second edition of Esad Hecimovic' book

## Golden Decades of Bulgarian Electronic Industry, Documentary

Milena Dimitrova, Sofia, 2008, Trud Publishing house, 270 pages

Although it may seem strange, it is in fact no surprise that a sudden computer revolution occurred in Bulgaria while the world was living in two divided parts. During the Cold War this country took first place in computer production among the other eastern European countries. According to UN statistics, Bulgaria became a world leader in exports of computing machinery per capita in the 1970s and 80s.

From only seven megabytes of disk memory Sofia used to import seven cars. The profitability of the factories reached an unlikely level of 400%. The statistics demonstrate that each dollar invested in this branch brought a 20 times bigger return.

In the book *Gold Decades of the Bulgarian Electronic Industry*, the author Milena Dimitrova, combines documentaries with her own unique analyses. A considerable industry, recognised world wide, has grown in John Atanassov's fatherland and a skilled generation has emerged and ripened in the years following his ground-breaking innovations. Dimitrova reveals the essential facts and factors that led to the flourishing computing industry in Bulgaria. She identifies the cleverly chosen priorities and the inventive strategy of success which ultimately led to a leap into a previously unexplored branch of science.

The book also includes twenty first-hand stories told by the real heroes of this achievement. For example the first Minister of Electronics in Bulgaria recounts his experiences. This is followed by a report from the constructors of a series of electronic calculators ELCA exported in the 1970s from Bulgaria to Switzerland, France and even to other countries. There is also an account from a chief engineer who created the very first electric appliances plant in Bulgaria. Several general managers, including a general from the intelligence service and five astronauts also share their experiences.

Their stories answer the following questions:

- Why exactly was Bulgaria the first to attain proficiency in high technologies among the former socialist countries?
- How was the path forged so quickly, starting from the manufactories, going through the new factories, and eventually evolving to trade holdings and even to striking sales operations during the embargo?
- Who was the strategist of the revolution in Bulgarian electronics?
- What helped to keep the leadership and what impeded the growth in late 1980s?
- How did Bulgarian electronics reach the open space?



In fact, they are still operating in orbital stations. Nowadays, the Japanese scientists still seek to buy those devices for their new modifications. Mentioning Japan, this book offers amazing disclosures about the real trade balance of Bulgaria with the Japanese company Fujitsu.

For the first time the book relates how the President Francois Mitterand came to Sofia on 20 January 1989 and requested an extraordinary meeting with Bulgarian scientists and academicians. He insisted on taking a bow in front of them because it was due only to Bulgarian navigation appliances that the French astronaut Jean-Lou Chrétien managed to land alive and well after his second flight into space. In fact, Mitterand is not the only one among the heads of state who paid tribute to the Bulgarian computing achievements. ■



*Decentralisation and Regionalisation in Serbia: Compliance with International Standards in the Light of the European Integration Process,* written by Anita Kocic

By Mirjana Milosevic, SEEMO

“Democracy begins in the towns and villages of Europe. There is no democracy without local democracy”  
Giovanni Di Stasi, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe from 2004-2006

The book starts with this interesting quote by Giovanni Di Stasi. According to the author, local and regional democracy is a pillar of democratic societies.

Serbia is facing specific domestic difficulties since the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. The difficulties comprise mainly structural, historical, cultural, political, socio-economic as well as legal challenges. These complexities are identified with regard to the distribution of power and the book analyses the reached achievements on the basis of various examples. The book presents a comprehensive evaluation of the situation on Serbia's competence to comply with internationally set standards as one of Serbia's objectives is to join the EU and to be considered as a reliable player on the international political scene.

The analysis is mainly focused on the Council of Europe commitments to be fulfilled by Serbia (initial obligations were originally designed for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). What is very interesting is that the author describes the efforts towards decentralisation and regionalisation in Serbia and provides an overview of different initiatives. The book is particularly useful for international organisations, governments, journalists and media workers dealing with Serbia. The book is also recommended for readers with a genuine interest in Serbia.

The references used include, next to a large number of specialist literatures, a list of specific official documents, reports and data provided from the Serbian government as well as from various domestic and foreign organisations.

Anita Kocic was born in 1980 in Berlin, Germany. Kocic has Serbian nationality and she graduated from the Free University in Berlin majoring in Political Science and International Relations.

The book was published by VDM Verlag Dr Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co.KG in the year 2008. The book has total of 81 pages (including references). ISBN: 978-3-639-08161-9 ■

## The Body of War. Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia

Dubravka Zarkov, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007, 287 pages

by Brigitte M. Holzner

In the *Body of War*, Dubravka Zarkov analyses the representations of female and male bodies in the Serb and Croatian press of the late 1980s and during the 1990s. Her central thesis is that the media produced ethnicity and nationalism and did this by intersecting representations of female and male bodies as central symbols. The actual violation and killing of women and men was then a result of the meaning they have acquired as ethnic human bodies.

The book builds on primary research through interviews with women from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, and secondary data in the form of texts and visual material (cartoons, caricatures and press photographs) from the main daily newspapers and weekly magazines of Croatia and Serbia (*Vjesnik*, *Danas*, *Politika*, *NIN*). Although the focus of the book is on the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, some reference is also made to other regions of the world (India, Pakistan, Rwanda, Iraq) as well as to historical periods of colonialism and the Second World War in order to confirm similar representations of women's and men's bodies in times of armed conflict.

Zarkov shows how male and female bodies were used symbolically for the construction of meanings around gender and sexuality, of ethnicity, nation and the state. She asserts that there were two wars - a media war, starting much earlier than the actual fighting, and an ethnic war, the latter not possible without the former. And both had produced ethnicity that ended in the construction of new states along ethnicity, although those states still struggle with ethnic compositions and border demarcations as the actual problems in Kosovo tell us.

So what is a media war? When media engage in nationalist politics, portray living or dead leaders as



heroes, defend their own citizens and attack those from other countries, provinces or regions, and heavily engage in portraying members of the own ethnicity as different in comparison with members of other communities, then the media are part of war machinery. This creation of 'other' is not just a description of differences, but immersed with values and hierarchies, the own community always as the better, more sophisticated, more heroic, or greater suffering. This media war had another core element - it brought so-called women's issues like maternity, childcare, sexuality, sexual violence, rape and abortion into discussion in newspapers, journals, TV, booklets and posters. This particular discourse framed sexuality and motherhood with population statistics and nation building, and questioned abortion rights and the right to paid work, achievements of the socialist government of Yugoslavia. Raising sexuality and reproduction as issues of survival means 'engendering' nationalism. But in the break-up of Yugoslavia, this mechanism was, as Zarkov shows, also reverted: "nations and territories were referred to as raped or pregnant, as virile or virginal; states became mothers or step-mothers" (p.4).

Zarkov asserts that the construction of the disintegration of Yugoslavia was in the beginning portrayed as a 'civil war', but was labelled quite soon internally as well as outside the country as an 'ethnic war'. Ethnic homogeneity in a territory of the former Yugoslav republics became the goal of war, with the expulsion of 'minorities' through force and violence as consequence. In order to make the nationalist goal successful, rape and sexual violence - about 1,000 cases were documented, 600 of those in detention camps - were the instrument of terrorising the 'others', of establishing dominance, and making sure that the amount of suffering would prevent reconciliation. But without the media that reported such acts of sexual violence in the form of articles, testimonials, pictures and cartoons, the link between ethnicity and gender would not have been successful. The site, where those notions of gender and ethnicity conflate, is the human body, female and male. The ethnic body becomes the target of war on which power is exerted and yet, the body is also a construct, a product of imagination infused with meanings.

The author shows various constructions of the human female body, the maternal body, the victimised body, the armed body (women fought as soldiers in all armies!), connotations that are titles of separate chapters. She also draws attention to the sexualisation of the male body through rape, sexual violence and castration in a chapter titled 'The body of the other man'. Raped men, quite different than the raped women, never caught the attention of the international press, and only found little coverage in the Croatian and Serb press. Although men of all ethnicities suffered sexual assault, only the sexual assault of Moslem men caught some media attention, allowing for a symbolic 'feminisation' and 'homosexualisation' of men whose religion is associated with the orient, which has for a long period and especially in colonial times been portrayed as a female, non-masculine territory. This attention to men as victims is one of many examples in this book that challenge gender stereotypes.

In some cases, the author compares how the same incidence is portrayed differently by different media and thus reveals the political message behind the interpretation. For example, when in the summer of 1991 the JNA (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija), the Yugoslav National Army, after return from Slovenia fighting in Croatia, street demonstrations against the fighting occurred all over the country. Among the demonstrators were women/mothers who demanded the release of their sons from the army. Women lined up in a so-called 'Wall of Love' in cities in all Yugoslav republics and protested against the fighting and for peace. The Croatian press portrayed those women as either Fierce Mother, Mother of Tears and or as vulnerable woman, whereas the Serb press portrayed women as sexualised bodies, as manipulated and False Mothers of non-Serb origin, or the Serb True Mother of a son-soldier-hero.

This book demonstrates accuracy in the collection, selection, and use of records, sensitivity to language, linguistic expressions and meaning, and ingenuity in the interpretation of visual material (pictures, cartoons). It is particularly interesting for social scientists with a focus on international relations, politics, conflict studies, and gender studies. It is also a rich source of information for historians providing them with many pieces for the puzzle of the break up of Yugoslavia.

For journalists, Dubravka Zarkov's book should be obligatory reading, making them more careful to identify the discourses they are serving and the metaphors they are using, and making them aware of the responsibility they have in contributing to peace and non-violence instead of hatred, violence, and war.

At last, for politicians as well as for peace activists, this book can also function as a guide for early warning: when the media portray national symbols with images of the gendered body, whether male or female, one should be alerted for the emotional power of such images in preparing the mindset for the feeling of threat and the willingness to fight. ■

## Media Scene for the Bulgarian Community in Vienna

By Tunde Kiss

Student, University of Vienna

In this as well as future *deScripto* introduces numbers several media scenes made by and for immigrants and minorities living in Vienna.

In this issue, the article focuses on media for Bulgarian community in Vienna. An estimated 13,000 to 15,000 of the Austrian inhabitants have a Bulgarian background, although this number is just an estimate, because accurate demographic figures for the Bulgarian minority, especially in Vienna, do not yet exist.

Research into publications and other media for Bulgarians in Vienna revealed a small, but very dynamic mix of products and projects put together for and by this community.

The magazine *Bulgaren in Österreich* was founded by Elitsa Karaeneva and her colleagues for a class in Project Management at the University of Vienna in spring 2006. From that time on it has been published every two months and is available free of charge by subscription, and for pick-up at the Bulgarian cultural centre *Haus Wittgenstein* or at any of Bulgarian churches. Every circulation contains at least 5000 copies. Around 49 percent of its subscribers live in Vienna, 12 percent in northern Austria, 11 percent in Upper Austria and 28 percent in other Austrian states. The editorial staff is made up of freelancers who work mostly free of charge while the revenue for the magazine is collected through advertisements.

Since one of the editors' aims is to improve both intercultural communication and language exchange between Austrian residents and people with a Bulgarian background, most of the articles are written in both Bulgarian and German. As a result, the magazine aims to contribute to better understanding between the two groups and to make the information about Bulgaria available to Austrian audience.

Regarding the magazine format, every edition consists of five parts devoted to different topics: People, Nations, Law/ Business/ Finances, Projects and Culture and Information.

One to two articles in each issue cover news from Bulgaria and are mostly reported by local correspondents. In addition, the editors publish at least one interview per number. As Elitsa Karaeneva, the editor-in-chief of *Bulgaren in Österreich* points out: "Ideas for the topics come from magazine contributors, but also from the readers and

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Shaping the future of the newspaper - Analysing strategic developments and opportunities in the press industry, The annual yearbook is a special report published by WAN (World Association of Newspapers)

## World Digital Media Trends 2008

By Mirjana Milosevic, SEEMO

The World Association of Newspapers' Shaping the Future of the Newspaper program (SFN) continues to examine the ever-changing digital media landscape and the various ways newspaper companies can take advantage of emerging trends while digital media is becoming more mature. *The World Digital Media Trends 2008* (WDMT) includes highlights from 71 major digital media studies from leading research companies showing statistical facts and projections. Therefore, we would recom-

mend this report for everybody working in the media industry. The first two chapters describe the media advertising landscape with a focus on digital media. The third chapter goes into deeper detail about media consumption and consumer usage patterns, continuing on what factors drive the revenue that are described in the previous chapters. The fourth chapter focuses on the impact of digital trends on the global newspaper industry as such. The fifth chap-

ter highlights some savvy newspaper companies that would serve as role models for the whole industry in the digital era as they are achieving success with digital revenue-making and an audience-building strategy.

The report was published by WAN in May 2008. The report has five chapters, consisting of 125 pages, and when including the appendix the book consists of in total 128 pages. ■

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*friends of the Bulgarian community*". In addition, readers are encouraged to give feedback, which is mainly positive.

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

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

Apart from the immigrants' portraits, *Bulgaren in Österreich* also focuses on different projects concerning intercultural exchange and communication. For example, they reported on the so-called *European*

*Year of Intercultural Dialogue* and the ten-year long project *youthNET South East Europe* (2001- 2011). According to the information on the project's website <http://www.iz.or.at>, *youthNET* is a network for *European SEEtizens* created by the intercultural centre in Vienna. The aim of the project is to establish better relationship between NGO leaders and youth workers and to develop successful network of non-governmental organisations between countries of western and eastern Europe, as well as support intercultural communication.

*Bulgarians in Austria* also promotes projects involving some local members of Bulgarian community. One example is the cultural project *Pangaea*, which has been created by the community called *IDEA of society*, a society for international development and enhancement of arts whose members want to promote intercultural exchange. With this in mind, artists involved in this project act as ambassadors of cultural heritage. By means of their works they promote intercultural dialogue as well as better appreciation for different traditions. *Pangaea* is financially supported by UNICEF. Apart from establishing close contacts, relationships with many artists and galleries are supported and furthermore extended. As a saying goes "We are most afraid of what we do not understand", *Pangaea* is supposed to diminish such fears.

*WIEN heute- Die Bulgarische Zeitung* (Vienna today- the Bulgarian newspaper) is a print and online magazine published monthly and it has about 500 subscribers. Its first edition came out in summer 2008. As one can find out on the magazine homepage [www.vienmadnes.com](http://www.vienmadnes.com) and as the Director Sawka Zhurkov maintains, the editorial staff attaches importance to impartiality and variety of topics. Magazine content focuses mostly on every day life of Bulgarian immigrants in Austria. Articles cover local culture, laws and history of the host country, so that every member of the

Bulgarian community, regardless of his or her social status, can and does read as well as understand the articles.

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

Apart from publishing online and print magazines, the Bulgarian community also produces one radio programme called *Radio Bulgaria- Linz*, and one television programme called *Brigada*.

*Radio Bulgaria* was founded in Linz in 2004. It is still the first and only broadcast programme in Bulgarian and German language in Austria. The editorial staff, including Dimiter Dunkov and Brigitte Allerstorfer, broadcast on the first Saturday of every month from 18.00 to 19.00. The main motivation for its start was, for the most part, the lack of information about Bulgaria and its culture. Even if there some appeared, it was mainly one-sided.

The team thematically focuses on present, past and historical events in Bulgaria. This also includes part about cultural life and developments in southern Europe. In addition, Dimiter Dunkov presents his contribution about European civilisation. He is also creator of *Radio Bulgaria- Linz* and moderates the programme in the Bulgarian language. As a former lecturer at different universities, including the university in Vienna, he found his way to Austria. His theories concentrate upon eastern and southern Slavic languages as well as their

culture. Those interested can read about his career at <http://dunkov.slaviaverlag.com/>. For Austrian or German listeners the programme goes with Brigitte Allerstorfer, who finished her Slavonic and Bulgarian studies in Salzburg and has participated in projects of *KulturKontakt Austria*.

The radio programme is made up of three parts:

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

Bulgarian and German periodicals and further scientific publications set ideas for themes of current interest. Contributions by Dunkov and Allerstorfer frame the broadcast, which is accompanied by Bulgarian and other Balkan lands' folk music. The broadcast can be received via the internet at [www.fro.at](http://www.fro.at) or on MHz 105.0.

The information- and culture- magazine programme *Brigada* is broadcast on the *Okto* Channel by Bulgarian students living in Vienna. *Okto* is a non- commercial television channel that aims to complete and extend the offers of commercial and television under public law in Austria.

*Brigada* creates content for all types of audiences that are interested in the Bulgarian community. Cultural and artistic works in Bulgaria constitute the main topics. According to Luydmila Handjiska, student of journalism and political science, as well as former contributor to

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



Also worth mentioning in this review is the cultural institute *Kulturinsitut- Haus Wittgenstein*. As the information on the homepage <http://www.haus-wittgenstein.at> points out, the institute offers its physical space for exhibitions and events concerning Bulgarian culture, sciences and arts. Recently they also increased the number of discussions, conferences and congresses held at their premises. Like the media scene, the institute also aims at better exchange and cultural interrelationship between Austrian inhabitants and the Bulgarian community. Almost all famous artists, authors or musicians, who visited Austria, presented their work in *Haus Wittgenstein*, which was renovated in autumn 2002. Visiting hours are Monday to Thursday from 10.00 to 12.00 but one can also book a tour.

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

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

Apart from the media created by the Bulgarian community in Vienna, one can also read newspapers and magazines, and receive radio and satellite TV channels coming directly from Bulgaria. One such channel is *Kanal 1*, the national Bulgarian satellite channel, which also has a website that offers the most important news. On <http://www.bg-televizia.com> those interested can listen to radio and watch television programme. Another broadcast from Bulgaria is radio *Horizon*, which in Austria can be received via the internet at <http://www.bnr.bg/>.

The wide range of print media offer in Vienna includes daily and weekly newspapers, as well as magazines and yellow press publications. Bulgarian dailies that can be bought in Vienna include *24 Chassa Daily*, *Sega Daily*, *Monitor Daily*, *Standart Daily*, *7 Dni Sport*, and *Meridian Mach*. Weeklies available in Vienna include *Capital Weekly*, *168 Chassa Weekly*, *Politika Weekly*, and *Trud Weekly*. Magazines selection includes *Paraleli*, *Biasak* and *Tema*. Popular yellow press publications available in Vienna include *Shock Show*, *Paparack*, and *Weekend*. ■

## Erhard Busek and SEEMO Award Brankica Stankovic

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

The VI “Dr. Erhard Busek-SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe” was presented to Brankica Stankovic in Vienna on 16 November 2008 by Dr. Erhard Busek former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, former Coordinator of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Chairman of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) and President of the European Forum Alpach, and by the SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic.

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

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

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

### Who is Brankica Stankovic?

**Stankovic:** One completely normal person, I'm joking... I don't like to talk about myself this way, so I really do not know what to say.

Perhaps the more adequate answer would be that, in my opinion, it is the most important to be true to yourself in every sense.

**Where does your interest in investigative journalism come from? You grew up in Belgrade in a time of crisis and wars, and the items you investigate are part of your life. Back then many things that happened within society were hidden from the public. Were you even then interested in what was hiding behind all the secrecy?**

**Stankovic:** Investigative journalism is important segment of every society, and especially the one that strives to be democratic. Journalists exist for the public and the duty of a journalist is to discover everything that representatives of government, public institutions, privileged individuals and many business people are trying to hide. That is the way to discover and prevent embezzlement, corruption and crimes because there is a public interest for it. That is the only reason I do this kind of journalism. I think this is my obligation and I believe journalists have very important role in making sure justice is done.

### Former recipients of “Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe”

- 2002 – **Denis Latin**, Croatian journalist
- 2003 – **Kemal Kurspahic**, former editor-in-chief of the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*.
- 2005 – **Brankica Petkovic**, Head of the Center for Media Policy at the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- 2006 – **Danko Plevnik**, international relations columnist for the Croatian daily *Slobodna Dalmacija* in Split.
- 2007 – **Milena Dimitrova**, commentator for the Bulgarian daily newspaper *Trud* in Sofia.

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

**How difficult is it to make a good serial or one broadcast of *The Insider*? How much time do you need to do your research and get the information that will make a big impact?**

**Stankovic:** We work on one serial for a long time, sometimes for months. We investigate, talk to several dozen individuals, make analyses, crosscheck information, and then we start to record. It is very demanding work considering it involves only three people: the producer, journalist, and myself. Lawyers first view every broadcast we make and we have established this procedure since the very beginning because we cover complex topics and the credibility of the broadcast is the most important to us. That is the reason nobody ever contradicted information presented in our broadcast. On the contrary, information we presented was, in time, officially confirmed.



Brankica Stankovic accepts the award from Erhard Busek and Oliver Vujovic

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

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

**You are currently within a professional specialisation. How important is it for you to learn and improve in your work? Often times, journalists think they accomplished everything once their stories are**

**published and do not feel the need for specialisation.**

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

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

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

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

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

That is the situation in Serbia and, I assume, in the region as well. We, *The Insider* team, have it somewhat easier because the medial house we work for, *B92*, supports the type of journalism we do. ■

# SEEMO Award for Human Rights presented to Spomenka Hribar

By Selma Koric, SEEMO

The 2008 “SEEMO Award for Human Rights” was presented to Spomenka Hribar on 10 December 2008 in Ljubljana by Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, at the event hosted by Joze Mermal, president and CEO of BTC company.

The „SEEMO Award for Human Rights“ is an annual award dedicated to International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, and SEEMO has been presenting it since 2002.

This year’s recipient, Spomenka Hribar, is a Slovenian journalist, writer and human rights advocate born in Belgrade in 1941. She received much publicity in the 1980s with her essay *The Guilt and the Sin*, which critically exposed the post-war liquidation of Nazi collaborators by the communist regime. The essay described all liquidations as a crime, demanded an apology and emphasised the importance of public remembrance of these events, especially for purposes of national reconciliation. The essay was initially forbidden in the former Yugoslavia, then published three years later in 1987. Ever since, Hribar has been active in the media with her critical analyses, first of aspects of communist rule and later of conservative, fundamentalist and nationalistic tendencies within Slovene society.

Her endeavours and criticisms are based on a consistent respect for human rights, human dignity, freedom and responsible autonomy. She strives to promote ethics amongst all levels of soci-

ety, and her endeavours aim to further respect for all minorities, equality of the sexes, as well as more tolerance and conciliation in Slovenian society.

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

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

## How would you best describe yourself?

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

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

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

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

**Hribar:** You see, if you want to attain the respect of minorities, gender equality and tolerance in the society, you have to change



Spomenka Hribar accepts SEEMO Award

the core of the social structure if it obstructs those human rights of any minority. Therefore, in our society it was necessary to change the authoritative, even totalitarian, structure of society. That meant abolishing latent civil war that is typical for one-party systems. In that context was my first public controversy at the end of seventies.

My strongest influence on public and on politics itself was with my essay *Blame and Sin* (Blame and Sin, 1984), which was under an “embargo” for three years. In that essay I analysed the post-war elimination of the returned domestic fighters and civilians, and I asked for the merciful treatment for them. Not because they were fighters and collaborators but because they were human beings. The Bolshevik-style government of that time eliminated them without fair trials and was hiding that crime for thirty plus years including the locations of their graves. I think that the mercy for those who are dead is the basis for any civilisation. On a symbolic level this principle exists from the time of Antigone and onwards. The man became a man when he started burying his dead. And of course, since we were not in peace with the dead, there was no peace among the living. Until today there are around 600 locations evidenced as possible gravesites, of course not only graves of Slovenians because post-war eliminations did happen on Slovenian ground but also to members of other Yugoslav nationalities. Relatives of those eliminated, who were mostly Catholics, because Catholic Church here collaborated with occupation forces, and Catholics in general were in Socialism treated as the

second-class citizens. Other citizens who also opposed the power of one party received the same treatment. You see, the revelation of that crime and the taboo-style of hiding it is what, in our case, started destroying the totalitarian pyramid of those in power. As you know, the communist rule was based on the victory in the liberation struggle of the Second World War and the victory of revolution, which was presented as error-free and completely “pure”. The Communist party used that “purity” argument for its absolute, a priori legitimacy and legality of its rule. When the horrible, post-war elimination of tens of thousands people became a part of public consciousness, revolution was not innocent and “pure” anymore...and if it is not “pure” anymore, then the party has to legitimize its power in free elections, and they require participation of more parties. And that was the beginning of the end for the ethical, principle and political foundation of one-party system. Of course, on the level of practical advocacy for democracy there were many people, groups and movements asking for the end of one-party system and installing of democracy.

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

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

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

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

**Hribar:** Yes, I am trying to write a study, an analysis of spiritual, totalitarian sequences in our history, which caused the civil conflict here during World War II. Those chapters are exclusivist Catholic ideology at the end of the Nineteenth Century and, on the other hand, Communism, Bolshevism. The crash of the two exclusive ideologies and mutual revenge-seeking relationship brought the bloody conflict at the most critical time for all our nations, including Slovenian. To avoid making the same mistake twice, we needed to end the civil war here, so in the same essay I asked for national reconciliation, which on the society level means democracy and equality of all ideological beliefs as such, and of course, the right of political organisation for everybody

*Continued on page 92*

## Former recipients of the “SEEMO Award for Human Rights”

- 2002 - **Christine von Kohl**, editor-in-chief of the Vienna-based *Balkan-Südosteuropäischer Dialog* magazine.
- 2003 - **Nebojsa Popov**, founder of the Belgrade-based magazine *Republika*.
- 2004 - **Fatos Lubonja**, an Albanian author
- 2006 - **Abdulhalim Dede**, a journalist and member of the Turkish-Muslim minority living and working in Western Thrace, Greece.
- 2007 - **Seki Radoncic**, author of the book ‘The Fatal Freedom’ and active in investigating war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.

Continued from page 91

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

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

**Hribar:** It means a lot to me, but I also feel humble because on the territory covered by SEEMO there are many journalists and media people who deserve this award. I feel especially honoured because this award was previously given to my long-time friend Dr. Nebojsa Popov, who gave me support 30-years ago and who, almost single-handedly publishes the magazine *Republika*, and through his analysis and commentaries keeps open at least one window of light shining from human and scientific intelligence and mutual tolerance, everything we think of when we say "European spirit". And now, I have also received this SEEMO award. In that sense I feel a special honour as one of the recipients. ■



Central European Initiative: Promoting Cooperation and European Values in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe

**The Central European Initiative (CEI) was established in 1989 as an intergovernmental forum for political, economic and cultural co-operation among its Member States (currently 18).**

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

The CEI Presidency 2009 is held by Romania.

In a recent interview, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Cristian Diaconescu** expressed his views about this important role. In describing the benefits such a task could bring to Romania, he stated that "before becoming a CEI Member State in 1996, Romania received valuable support from the CEI by working together for a common purpose as well as by complementing Romania's efforts in the European integration process." According to Diaconescu "the CEI Romanian Presidency is a new opportunity to promote cooperation and European values beyond the borders of the CEI Member States as well as to consolidate cooperation between the CEI EU and non-EU Member States." This would "facilitate know-how transfer and give non-EU CEI Member States assistance in specific fields such as transport, energy, agriculture etc. in order to boost their relations with the EU", he added.

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

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

For more information: [www.ceinet.org](http://www.ceinet.org)

#### CEI News:

##### CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence - Call for Proposals 2009

The Slovene Writers' Association has recently launched the Call for Proposals 2009 for a CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence. The fellowship is endowed with a cash award of 5.000 EUR offered by the CEI for a three-month stay in a CEI Member State chosen by the candidate. Eligible applicants are writers under 35 years of age from non-EU CEI Member States. The award will be presented on the occasion of the opening of the Vilenica International Literary Festival on 2 September 2009.

**Deadline for submission: 1 June 2009**

The Call for Proposals and Application Form are available at: [www.vilenica.si](http://www.vilenica.si)

## A Review: Contemporary Serbian Photography in Vienna

by Christopher G. Wastian  
Student, University of Vienna



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

Notwithstanding, this exposition is rather a matter of contemporary photography from Serbia. Recent themes and ideas of

the Serbian art scene are found at this small but subtle exhibition as well as elaborate interpretations of the title, which turn out to be symbolic on the one hand and endowed with a massive dose of irony on the other.

As the main importance is attached to socio-political and social issues, the photographers' chosen topics are multifarious and range from (childhood) memories, basketball (one considers the repeated parallels between Serbia and the US), the "other", Balkan-style, private gardens, populism and pop culture to atomic shelters.

"With that expression (*Land of Promises, NB*), one may link another, alien country, but not that country in which he or she actually lives," explains Ana Adamovic.

Generally speaking, it is about identity. Identity through future, the past? "*The past doesn't exist as a fact – it is a construction,*" says Vienna-based Dejan Kaludjerovic, who, with his photo project, proposes the question: "*What did tomorrow bring us?*"

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



## Book Presentation

Bauer, Thoms A./Ortner (Hg.): *Bildung für Europa. Politische Ansprüche und Anregungen für die Praxis*, Düsseldorf: B+B MEDIEN 2008.

From the author:

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

The book can be ordered at the *deScripto* editor's address.



## SEEMO Regional Meeting: “Private News Agencies in South East Europe”

In June 2008, the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) organised, in cooperation with the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC)/ Austrian Development Agency (ADA) the SEEMO Conference “Private News Agencies in South East Europe”, in Belgrade, Serbia.

During the conference, representatives of various news agencies from the South East European region were present and they introduced their news agencies. Eric Nyièn from the European Alliance of News Agencies (EANA) introduced EANA and spoke about the tasks of the organisation. After this conference the representatives of private news agencies, supported by SEEMO, sent a letter to leading political representatives in the region, asking for the equal position of private news agencies on the market. ■

## SEEMO Regional Conference: “Public Broadcasting in South East Europe”

*By Mirjana Milosevic, SEEMO*

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

During the conference several topics were discussed as all participating countries are dealing with similar issues concerning public broadcasting. Therefore this conference was a good opportunity to brainstorm together on how to deal with certain issues in the best possible way. Topics during the conference included; “The current state of affairs in the field of public

broadcasting in South East Europe”, “Future of new media activities and PBS”, “EBU and PBS in the region”, “ERNO and the future of the trans-border cooperation”, and “The experience of the governing bodies of the PBS in the region”.

Boris Bergant from RTV Slovenija mentioned, for example, that the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is under permanent threat as everybody wants gains and advantages so the PBS has to anticipate changes and requests in advance. Problems are many faceted and of both a legal and financial nature, as well as being affected by the economic crisis and replicable advertisements but problems are also of a nature of principle. The South East and Central European region are countries still in transition. The region has a difficult history, a recent history of hate and war and transition will take longer here. That is why



everybody needs to help each other, learn from each other, learn from more experienced public service broadcasters, but also from the positive examples that are there. Benchmarking is necessary. Jean Reveillon, Director General of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), stated that EBU is committed to answering freedom of expression and is very concerned about journalists’ safety. All conclusions from this meeting were put together in a document called the ‘Ljubljana Recommendations on Public Broadcasting’ and have been distributed to all the participants as a guideline. ■

# DigitPrime Consulting International

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## Upcoming Events

**III South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF)**  
**Tirana, Albania**  
 2-4 November 2009

**Regional Conference on Human Rights, Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion**

„Integrating Differences - Human Rights, Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion in the Balkans on its Road to the EU“  
 Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia - FYR Macedonia  
 28-31 May 2009

For more information please visit:  
<http://www.seesoc.org.mk>  
*(Source: The Euro-Balkan Institute for Social and Humanities Research)*

**Transitions Online Journalism Training Courses**

**Foreign Correspondent Training Course**  
**Prague, Czech Republic**  
 26 July - 3 August 2009

This is a highly popular 9-day course brings together students from around the world and features practical training and advice from experienced foreign correspondents, whose careers include stints at The Economist, Reuters, CBS and the BBC.

**Investigative Journalism Prague, Czech Republic**  
 19-24 July 2009

More than just theory, the Investigative Journalism course offers practical training. Learn to put together a piece of investigative journalism, use sources and build a publishable case from a team of highly respected journalists.

**New Media Essentials Prague, Czech Republic**  
 12-17 July 2009

This intensive five-day course will teach you everything you need to know about new media techniques and tools - including blogs, podcasts, video, social networks, RSS feeds, online promotion, Twitter, and much more.

**Photojournalism - practical training**  
**Prague, Czech Republic**  
 4-7 August 2009

Like all TOL courses, the Photojournalism course will be light on theory and heavy on practical training. You'll learn how to choose a saleable subject, take and edit photographs, and then how to sell them.

For more information about these courses, please contact Joann Plockova: [plockovaj@tol.org](mailto:plockovaj@tol.org)  
 For more information please visit:  
[www.tol.cz](http://www.tol.cz)  
*(Source: Transitions Online)*

**EU for Journalists**

The EJC has launched a website to help journalists reporting on the European Union. The EU for journalists - Brussels in brief website simplifies the maze of information available on the EU so reporters can easily get a grip of the key issues and players. The site also has a Forum for EU-related questions, comments and to advertise your services.

Visit EU for journalists - Brussels in brief at <http://www.eu4journalists.eu>  
*(Source: European Journalism Centre)*

**Human rights workshop, Geneva, May 2009**

Experienced, open-minded, English-speaking journalists are invited to apply for workshops on human rights in Geneva from 4 - 8 May 2008.

Journalists from the following countries are encouraged to apply as soon as possible: Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, Bangladesh, China, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Canada, Germany, Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Vietnam, Yemen, Afghanistan, Uruguay, Chile, Malta and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The workshop will be held during the UN Human Rights Council session focusing on the Universal Periodical Review. The journalist will get an opportunity to cover the Council for their respective media. The workshop consists of briefings and interactions

with the UN, NGOs, government and diplomatic missions.

More information available at:  
[www.media21geneva.org](http://www.media21geneva.org)  
*(Source: Media 21 - Global Journalism Network, Geneva)*

**International Conference: New Media & Information: Convergences and Divergences 6-9 May 2009, Athens, Greece**

The Conference is organised by the Department of Communication, Media and Culture of Panteion University with the support of Megaron Plus.

Conference will address questions of influence of economic and political conditions on digital media, connection between new media and traditional ways of informing, and socio-economic consequences of these processes.

Information available at:  
[www.media2009.conferences.gr](http://www.media2009.conferences.gr)  
*(Source: Media Centar Online)*

**Deutsche Welle Master's Program „International Media Studies“**  
**Deadline for applications: 31 May 2009**

The International Media Studies Master's Program is a four-semester, full-time program for further education. The program combines topics like media and development, journalism, communication science and media economics, while developing practical skills and competencies that are important for the world of media. It is a joint project from the University of Bonn, the Bonn Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and Deutsche Welle, Germany's international broadcaster with its headquarters in Bonn

For further details please visit:  
<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/0,2692,12276,00.html>  
*(Source: Deutsche Welle)*

**Grants for cultural journalists**

The aim of this programme is promoting the Romanian cultural phenomenon in the foreign media.

Therefore, the Romanian Cultural Institute awards grants to foreign cultural journalists who submit working projects dealing with Romanian and Romanian culture.

Deadline for submitting the applications: May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009  
 Grant's value: 1 500 euros/person  
 ICR awards 10 grants on a yearly basis.  
 The field for which the evaluation and selection is performed: journalism  
 Length of the grant: max 1 month

For more details please visit:  
[http://www.icr.ro/icr/burse/Burse\\_jurnalisti](http://www.icr.ro/icr/burse/Burse_jurnalisti)  
*(Source: Romanian Cultural Institute)*

**UNICEF Events**

**Celebration of World Press Freedom Day**  
 Doha, Qatar, 3-5 May 2009

**Information Society Forum**  
 France, 3 May 2009

*(Source: UNICEF Communication and Information Sector)*

**Council of Europe**

**1<sup>st</sup> Council of Europe Conference of Ministers in charge of Media and New Communication Services**  
 Reykjavik, Iceland, 28-29 May 2009  
*(Source: COE Media and Information Society Division)*

**International Conference: Culture and Security Sector Reform: Political, Strategic and Military Culture in Transitional Countries**  
 Sremski Karlovci, Serbia 7-10 May 2009

Organization: Centre for Civil - Military Relations, Belgrade  
 The aim of the conference is to explore the linkages between political, strategic and military culture in post-Communist states, and in particular in the Western Balkans.

If you are interested to attend the conference, please send us a short motivation letter together with your CV to [office@ccmr-bg.org](mailto:office@ccmr-bg.org)  
 Application forms available at:  
[www.ccmr-bg.org](http://www.ccmr-bg.org)  
*(Source: Centre for Civil-Military Relations)*

## Your Excellencies!

**September 2008**

**Serbia - BETA - Press Release**  
*Vienna, 9 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is deeply concerned about actions directed against the media in Serbia by members of the hard-line nationalist movements „Obraz“ and „1389“.

According to information provided to SEEMO, members of „Obraz“ and „1389“, wielding a placard that read, „Zuta novinska agencija Beta“ („Yellow News Agency Beta“), forced their way into the offices of the Beta news agency in central Belgrade on 30 August and demanded the coverage of their ongoing protests against the arrest on 21 July of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb wartime leader.

Commenting on the incident, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said, „SEEMO condemns these aggressive actions taken against the independent news agency Beta. There are other, more peaceful, ways of ensuring that one's voice is heard by a media outlet.“ He went on to urge the authorities „to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of media practitioners in Serbia.“

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**SEEMO Expresses Concern at Several Recent Legal Developments in Moldova**  
*Vienna, 17 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned about several recent legal developments in Moldova that contain threats to press freedom, freedom of expression, and the right of access to information.

According to information before SEEMO, Moldova's Parliament has passed an amendment to the Law on Editorial Activity that came into effect on 26 June 2008. The Law on Editorial Activity now includes a ban on printing material that challenges or defames the state and the people, incites war, aggression, national, racial or religious hatred, discrimination, territorial separatism, public violence or in any other way that threatens the constitutional regime. SEEMO supports the Publishers' Union of Moldova in their claim that this amendment could result in self-censorship.

SEEMO is also alarmed by the recently adopted restrictive regulations concerning the assessment, selection and publication of textbooks for pre-university education, which favour the state publishing houses subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism over other publishing houses. In recent years, several Moldovan publishing houses invested money and human resources in projects concerning textbooks and created a complex editorial system. The government, however, has discounted these efforts by introducing the new regulations, which could negatively affect the education system in Moldova.

Furthermore, SEEMO would like to express its concern at a worrisome draft law, the Law on Preventing and Fighting Crimes Committed by Means of the Information System, which is soon to be passed by Parliament. According to the draft law, internet service providers will be required to store the personal data of users and provide this information to the authorities upon request.

Moreover, the draft Law on State Secrets, which is soon to be adopted by Parliament, would result in a limitation of public access to official information. The draft would provide far-reaching powers to public authorities and the Security and Information Service by enabling them to declare as classified any information they consider to be a state secret.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic expressed concern about these recent legal developments in Moldova. He emphasized that „a free and independent media is a crucial component of a modern democratic society“ and that „it is important to ensure a pluralist media environment, since it contributes to an educated and informed public.“

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**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: Upcoming SEEMO Events and Publications**  
*Vienna, 30 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), would like to announce the following upcoming SEEMO events and publications.

**The II South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF) in Sofia, Bulgaria**

The topic of the II SEEMF is „Media and Democracy in South East Europe: Professional Standards and Education of Journalists.“ The II SEEMF will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 5-6 November 2008. This annual event is organised by the WAZ Medien Gruppe, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), and SEEMO. The local partners of this year's SEEMF are the Newspaper Group Bulgaria and the Media Development Centre, Sofia. Over 150 participants are expected, including editors-in-chief, media executives, and representatives from media education centres and university schools of media and communication in South East and Central Europe.

**Presentation of the VI Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Media Award for Better Understanding in South East Europe**

The VI Dr. Erhard Busek - SEEMO Media Award will be presented in Vienna on 16 November 2008 by Dr. Erhard Busek, former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Coordinator of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Chairman of the Institute for the Danube Region and Central Europe (IDM) and President of the European Forum Alpbach, and by Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General.

**SEEMO Conference: Public Services in South East and Central Europe**

The SEEMO Conference on Public Services will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 9-11 December 2008. SEEMO is organising the conference in cooperation with Radio-Television (RTV) Slovenia and the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) - Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The directors of public services, representatives of regulatory agencies and media experts from South East Europe are expected to participate. This is the third conference organised this year by SEEMO and ADC-ADA. Two successful conferences were already held in Belgrade in June 2008: the conference on „Media, Marketing and Business“ and the conference on „Private News Agencies in South East Europe“.

**Presentation of the VI SEEMO Human Rights Award for Media Professionals in South East Europe**

The VI SEEMO Human Rights Award for Media Professionals in SEE will be bestowed upon a media professional from South East Europe on 10 December 2008. The SEEMO Human Rights Award is presented annually on the occasion of International Human Rights Day.

**Upcoming SEEMO Publications**

In the coming weeks, a new edition of the media magazine De Scripto will be published by SEEMO. In addition, SEEMO will soon publish the „SEEMO Investigative Reporting Handbook“, a book on „Media and PR“ and a book on „Media, Marketing and Business in South East Europe“. Furthermore, publications on „Public Broadcasting in South East Europe“ and „Women, Men and Media“ are in planning.

Finally, SEEMO would like to announce the publication in two volumes of the 2008 edition of the „South East and Central Europe Media Handbook“ („SEEMO Media Handbook“) in October 2008. The Media Handbook includes media reports and contact details of selected radio and TV stations, newspapers, magazines, media organisations, media schools, journalists' organisations, and internet service providers and other new media from Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Bulgaria. SEEMO publishes this book annually in cooperation with its partners, the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, and the ERSTE Foundation.

**SEEMO General Information**

The current SEEMO staff members in Vienna are: Krasimira Plachetzky, SEEMO assistant; Sara di Pede, SEEMO assistant; Sadjana Matejevic, SEEMO conference and financial coordinator; Elva Hardarson, press freedom and fundraising coordinator and Selma Koric, coordinator De Scripto magazine.

The SEEMO Board members are: Radomir Licina (senior editor Danas daily, Belgrade), Agron Bajrami (editor-in-chief Koha Ditore daily, Pristina), Boris Bergant (deputy director RTV Slovenia, Ljubljana and EBU vice-president), Pavol Mudry (founder and board member, SITA news agency, Bratislava), Marta Palics (editor, RTV Novi Sad, Novi Sad), Jorgos Papadakis (journalist, Athens) and Zrinka Vrabec Mojzes (editor, Radio 101, Zagreb).

The SEEMO Coordinators are: Albania - Frok Cupi (director, Agon newspaper, Tirana), Bulgaria - Ognian Zlatev (director, Media Development Center, Sofia), Bosnia Herzegovina - Samra Luckin (director, BORAM, Sarajevo), Croatia - Ante Gavranovic (former president of the Croatian Journalists Association (HND), Zagreb and of Croatian Publishers Association, Zagreb), Greece - Jorgos Papadakis, Moldova - Alina Radu (director, Ziarul de Garda newspaper, Chisinau), Romania - Marina Constantinoiu (editor-in-chief, Jurnalul National, Bucharest), Serbia - Veran Matic (editor-in-chief, Radio TV B92, Belgrade), Montenegro - Zeljko Ivanovic (director, Vijesti daily, Podgorica), Kosovo - Haqif Mulliqi (RTV Kosovo, Pristina), Ukraine - Aleksey Soldatenko (Programmes Director, International Institute for Regional Media and Information, Kharkiv).

The SEEMO Ethical Committee includes: Danko Plevnik (commentator, Slobodna Dalmacija daily, Split - Karlovac).

The SEEMO Advisers are: Hari Stajner (former director Media Center, Belgrade), Boro Kontic (director, Media Centar, Sarajevo), Donika Shahini (OSCE Media Department, Pristina) and Mitja Mersol (former editor-in-chief, Delo daily, Ljubljana).

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**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: BULGARIA IPI/SEEMO Condemns Brutal Attack on Bulgarian Editor**  
*Vienna, 30 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), condemns the recent violent attack on Ognyan Stefanov, editor-in-chief of the on-line news site, Frognews, in Sofia, Bulgaria.

According to information before SEEMO, Ognyan Stefanov was beaten unconscious by several men in masks with hammers and rods as he was on his way out of the restaurant „Kiparisite“ on the evening of Monday, 22 September 2008.

Ognyan Stefanov was taken to the Military Medical Academy in Sofia with serious head injuries and broken limbs. According to information from the Bulgarian News Agency, BGNES, the director of the Military Medical Academy, Stojan Tonev, said Ognyan Stefanov underwent a crucial operation on 23 September 2008.

Commenting on the incident, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said that „heinous attacks on media representatives such as this one against Ognyan Stefanov must become a thing of the past in a democratic society.“ Furthermore, he called on the authorities to „initiate an immediate and thorough police investigation to bring to justice those responsible for this crime.“

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**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: ROMANIA IPI/SEEMO Condemns Violent Attacks on Sports Journalists in Romania**  
*Vienna, 30 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), condemns the recent violent attacks on sports journalists in Romania.

According to information before SEEMO, sports editor Ionel Lutan, working for the newspaper Monitorul de Prahova, was physically and verbally attacked by Stefan Chitu, president of

*Continued on page 98*

*Continued from page 97*

the football club CSM FC Ploiesti and a member of the executive board of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), on 2 August 2008.

Journalists were again attacked on 6 September 2008, the day of the World Cup qualifying game between Romania and Lithuania in Cluj, Romania. Players of the Romanian national team threw stones at several media representatives and verbally abused them. The incident happened after the FRF allegedly incited football players to act aggressively against the media.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic stated that in the last few years „sports journalists have frequently been victims of violent attacks in South East Europe. The recent attacks in Romania are a worrying reminder that this problem needs to be addressed urgently, so that media representatives are able to report on sports events in a peaceful and non-violent environment.”

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**SEEMO PROTEST BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
IPI/SEEMO Alarmed at Death Threats Against Media  
Representatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina**  
*Vienna, 30 September 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned about death threats against several media representative in Bosnia.

According to information before SEEMO, several media representatives from eFM Studentski Radio, Radio Sarajevo, BH Radio and the magazine Dani received death threat letters following media coverage of the „Queer Festival”, which was held in Sarajevo from 24-28 September 2008 and focused on the issues of identity, sexuality and human rights.

Commenting on this incident, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic state „It is unacceptable that media representatives fall victim to intimidation and harassment simply for doing their jobs.” He further said that „a free media, educating the public and raising awareness of diversity, is an important benchmark for a modern democratic society.”

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**October 2008**

**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: MONTENEGRO  
IPI/SEEMO Expresses Concern over Hostile Media  
Environment in Montenegro**  
*Vienna, 1 October 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned about recent incidents concerning the media in Montenegro.

According to information before SEEMO, on 21 September, a demonstration by supporters of the Montenegrin and the Serbian Orthodox Churches in the region of Niksic was broken up by the police, who prevented reporters from taking photographs of the incident. The police also confiscated cameras and other equipment belonging to the journalists from the Belgrade-based newspaper Vecernje novosti and the Podgorica-based Vijesti and Republika. The police later claimed it was not possible to identify the journalists in the crowd, although their press badges were clearly displayed. The confiscated equipment was later returned, although some pictures were erased from the cameras.

At the same event, Miodrag Baletic, a representative of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church, verbally attacked a correspondent of the daily newspaper Dan, sources said.

Commenting on these incidents, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said, „It is intolerable that journalists are prevented from performing their professional duties.” He went on to say that „this incident demonstrates that Montenegrin journalists continue to operate in an often hostile environment” and recalled the unsolved murder in 2004 of Dusan Jovanovic, publisher and editor-in-chief of Dan, as well as several other unsolved attacks against journalists during the past year.

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**SEEMO PROTEST MOLDOVA**

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*Vienna, 2 October 2008*

Your Excellencies,

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), wishes to express its concern at the recent harassment of journalists working for the investigative newspaper Ziarul de Garda.

According to information before SEEMO, journalists from the weekly investigative newspaper have suffered from continuous harassment by phone and e-mail since the publication of an article on 4 September 2008. The article discussed Moldovan students’ misgivings about the fact that their personal data was given to the Security and Information Service (SIS) by the Ministry of Education. The threats against the journalists included anonymous phone calls and entries on the newspaper’s internet forum warning Ziarul de Garda’s staff that they should stop discussing the SIS in their articles.

SEEMO is deeply concerned about this intimidation of journalists and calls on Your Excellencies to initiate an immediate investigation into this case. We further urge Your Excellencies to do everything in your power to create a safe media environment and to prevent incidents like this one from occurring in the future.

We thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,  
Oliver Vujovic  
SEEMO Secretary General

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**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: MONTENEGRO  
SEEMO/IPI Expresses Concern at Proposed  
Amendments to the Public Service Broadcasting Law of  
Montenegro**  
*Vienna, 3 October 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned at several proposed amendments to the Public Service Broadcasting Law of Montenegro. Although the draft amendments are generally in line with international standards on public broadcasting, a number of provisions are problematic.

Radio Televizija Crna Gora (Radio and Television of Montenegro) (RTCG) should be able to decide more freely over the use of its own budget, except from funds from the state budget that are earmarked for certain functions, such as minority-language programming.

The procedure for appointing members of the governing RTCG Council is problematic, as it does not ensure the independence of the public service broadcaster. Candidates for the RTCG Council are nominated by various institutions, including academic bodies, NGOs, sport organisations, and unions, but Parliament has the final say in deciding the candidate for each position. Since Parliament is responsible for an important decision that could be influenced by party affiliation, mechanisms that ensure transparency and fairness, such as open hearings and the possibility for members of the public to voice their opinion, are essential.

Commenting on the proposed amendments to the public broadcasting law, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said, „It is essential that the legal framework governing public service broadcasting ensures editorial independence and institutional autonomy. Before adopting the draft law, it would be important to take into account the relevant European and international documents relating to public service broadcasting.”

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**SEEMO IPI PRESS RELEASE SLOVENIA**  
*Vienna, 8 October 2008*

The International Press Institute (IPI), the global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists in over 120 countries, and its affiliate, the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), condemns efforts by Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša to initiate criminal proceedings against Finnish journalist Magnus Berglund in Slovenia.

„This latest development represents yet another unnecessarily aggressive attempt to redress the Finnish media’s handling of the Patria Affair,” said IPI Director David Dudge. „We call on Mr. Janša to drop the threat of criminal proceedings and to pursue his claim in a manner that supports freedom of the press and editorial independence.”

According to information before IPI, on 7 October 2008, Mr. Janša’s attorneys filed a request with the Slovenian state prosecutor’s office, seeking the initiation of criminal charges against Berglund under sections I, II and III of Article 171 of the penal code. These code provisions penalize assertions, circulated through the press, radio, television or other means of public information, which may cause „grave consequences” for the defamed individual. The maximum penalty imposed for such a violation is imprisonment of one year.

The charges stem from the 1 September 2008 broadcast of a segment entitled „The Truth about Patria”, by Finnish public broadcaster YLE, which alleged that members of the Slovenian government, including Mr. Janša, accepted bribes from the Finnish defence contractor Patria. The allegations have been vehemently denied by Mr. Janša. Berglund, a journalist for YLE, authored the report.

Last month, the Slovenian government used diplomatic channels to exert pressure on the Finnish government in response to the broadcast, sending a diplomatic note to the Finnish Embassy in Slovenia warning that the documentary „could shake mutual confidence between the two states”. (See the IPI 11 September statement: „IPI Concerned at Slovenian Government’s Use of Diplomatic Pressure in Response to Finnish Media’s Handling of Patria Bribery Affair” at ([http://www.freemedia.at/cms/ipi/statements\\_detail.html?ctxid=CH0055&docid=CMS1221125917435](http://www.freemedia.at/cms/ipi/statements_detail.html?ctxid=CH0055&docid=CMS1221125917435))

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**SEEMO PRESS RELEASE: SERBIA  
SEEMO/IPI Voices Support for Amendments Proposed to  
the Draft Law on Personal Data Protection in Serbia**  
*Vienna, 9 October 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), voices its support for proposed amendments forwarded to the Serbian National Parliament on 18 September 2008, altering the Draft Law on Personal Data Protection.

SEEMO particularly welcomes the proposed amendment to remove section 2 of Article 45, which restricts the role of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance, who generally acts on behalf of Serbia’s citizens. Under this Article, the Commissioner is prevented from scrutinizing information collected by State representatives for purposes of clarifying whether such information was appropriately collected if State representatives have classified this information as important for national security. Such a restriction on the Commissioner’s oversight capabilities potentially facilitates illegal and uncontrolled activities by State representatives, including against journalists.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic lauded the proposed changes, emphasizing that, „journalists in Serbia are particularly vulnerable to State efforts to access their personal data for inappropriate purposes, and so we welcome this effort to ensure that they are better protected from such activity.”

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**SEEMO PROTEST: MOLDOVA**

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*Vienna, 11 October 2008*

Your Excellencies,

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), wishes to express its concern at the violence recently perpetrated against media representatives in Moldova.

According to information before SEEMO, in the late evening of 8 October 2008, Mihai Sambra, a cameraman for PRO TV, a television station, was arrested by a police patrol in Chisinau. He was detained, and beaten during the night. Sambra was released the following morning, without receiving any explanation for his arrest. He suffered trauma from the incident, and sustained a broken nose. Other PRO TV staff was reportedly also intimidated by the police while reporting on a trial in Orhei during the morning of 8 October 2008.

SEEMO calls on Your Excellencies to initiate an immediate investigation into these incidents, and to send a strong signal that such violence against the media will not be tolerated.

We thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,  
Oliver Vujovic  
SEEMO Secretary General

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**IPI/SEEMO Expresses Its Concern at the Recent  
Detainment of Journalists in Greece**  
*Vienna, 15 October 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is alarmed at recent restrictions on reporters’ ability to freely carry out their work in Greece.

According to information before SEEMO, four journalists from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/Republic of Macedonia, Goran Momiroski of A1 TV, Meri Jordanovska of Nova Makedonija newspaper, and two other crew members of A1 TV, were arrested in the afternoon of 13 October 2008 by Greek authorities. The journalists had intended to cover a protest against a disputed army training site and gunfire exercises by the Greek Army in the village of Lofi, near the Greek-Macedonian border.

Despite carrying valid press cards and visas for Greece, the media representatives were detained because they did not have a special filming license and requested to hand over the material they had gathered at the demonstration. After their release, a police escort strongly advised them not to talk to eye witnesses of the protest and eventually escorted them to the border.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic voiced his concern over this clear infringement of the free movement and freedom of expression of journalists and hoped the Greek authorities will adopt strong measures against such interference with media efforts to report on a story of public interest.

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**IPI/SEEMO Condemns Deadly Car Bomb Attack on  
Publisher of NACIONAL Weekly in Croatia**  
*Vienna, 24 October 2008*

The South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a regional organisation of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe, and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), strongly condemns the car bombing that killed Ivo Pukanic, journalist and owner of the NCL Media Group in Zagreb, and Niko Franjic, marketing director of the weekly newspaper Nacional, which is published by NCL.

According to information before SEEMO, Pukanic and Franjic were killed, and the two other Nacional employees injured, at 6.20 pm on 23 October 2008, when a car bomb exploded in front of the offices of the NCL Media Group in the centre of the Croatian capital Zagreb.

SEEMO views this bombing as one of the most serious attacks on press freedom in the past years, not just in Croatia, but in the entire South East European region.

Pukanic had in the past repeatedly informed SEEMO about threats he received, starting in 2002. On 9 April of this year, an unidentified assailant carrying a gun with a silencer approached Pukanic on the street in front of his apartment, threatened to kill the journalist, and then shot at him from a distance of several metres. Pukanic fortunately escaped injury at that time.

Pukanic started his career with the weekly Start and, beginning in 1991, worked for the weekly Globus. He was the co-founder, in 1995, of the weekly Nacional. Pukanic was named journalist of the year in Croatia in 1999, and received several other awards for investigative reporting, among other achievements. Over the years he built a media company with several regular publications, and last year also opened the NCL Journalism School.

SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic condemned the killings in the strongest possible terms, noting that he was „alarmed about this heinous crime.” He emphasized that many Croatian journalists were attacked or seriously threatened during the past year, and that Croatian authorities had not yet found those responsible. He said this made it particularly important for „Croatian authorities to initiate a swift and transparent investigation into the incident, and to bring those responsible to justice.”

**November 2008**

**SEEMO / IPI PRESS RELEASE GREECE**  
*Vienna, 3 November 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), condemns the assault on Makis Nodaros, a local journalist for several media in the region of Iliia (also known as Ileaia or Elia ) on the Peloponnesian Peninsula of Greece

According to information before SEEMO, Nodaros was beaten by two unidentified men at 11 am on 23 October 2008 in his home town of Lechaina (also known as Lechena or Lehena). The men first asked the journalist if he was Makis Nodaros before beating him and attempting to destroy his laptop. The attackers also stole his mobile phone. Nodaros was taken to hospital, treated for injuries to the head, arms and legs, and then released.

In the past, Nodaros, who works for the Athens-based daily Eleftherotyia and the local daily Imera, as well as for the radio stations Radio Gamma and Ionian FM and the television station Teletime, has been the target of several defamation actions. On February 2006, he appeared before a court to face defamation charges stemming from his 11 September 2004 article about the sexual exploitation of a minor. This was only one in a series of trials against Nodaros since 1999 related to his investigative reports on corruption among local authorities.

Nodaros recently published several articles about corruption involving a local politician and the mismanagement of relief efforts for victims of the Greek forest fires in 2007, which destroyed parts of the Peloponnesian peninsula.

Speaking about the assault on Nodaros, SEEMO Secretary General Oliver Vujovic said, „SEEMO views this attack as an appalling example of how journalists are being targeted for speaking out about problems in local society. SEEMO joins Nodaros’s colleagues in Greece in calling for a full investigation into this incident to find out not only who attacked the journalist, but also the identities of those who ordered the attack.”

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**SEEMO/IPI Concerned About the Potential for Further  
Violence against the Media in the Region**  
*Vienna, 28 November 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is deeply concerned about a string of threats issued against journalists in the region, rendered particularly ominous by violent attacks on journalists throughout 2008.

Yesterday, Drago Hedl, a columnist for the Croatian Jutarnji list, received an SMS threatening to „massacre” him, just as a parliament member accused of war crimes was holding a press conference during which he singled out for criticism Hedl’s writings.

Other threats included those made against Hrvoje Appelt, a Croatian journalist for the Zagreb-based weekly Globus. On 20 November 2008, Appelt found a device that turned out to be a fake bomb under his car. Appelt has in the past published several articles about smuggling activities in Croatia.

Also on 20 November, a verbal threat was issued against editors of Story magazine by a Croatian football player. According to sources from Story, the football player made his threats during a visit to the magazine’s newsroom, where he harassed Vladimir Milinovic, the editor of the magazine’s webpage, as well as a photojournalist Tino Banic.

These threats follow several physical attacks against journalists in Croatia during 2008, underscoring the seriousness of the risks faced by the media in that country. The violence peaked with the 23 October murders of Ivo Pukanic, journalist and owner of the NCL Media Group in Zagreb, and Niko Franjic, marketing director of the newspaper Nacional, which is published by NCL.

Threats have also been issued in Serbia. Vukasin Obradovic, owner of the weekly Novine Vranjske, and his family, who live in Vranja, Serbia, have received several threats during the last few months. In one incident, an unknown person warned Obradovic’s daughter that her father would be killed within ten days. Obradovic has been the target of numerous death threats during the past years.

Also in Serbia, Slavko Savic and Cedomir Savic of RTV Kursumljija were threatened by a group of local politicians and five army reservists. The men, who were unhappy about a particular report aired on the station, entered RTV Kursumljija’s premises during the evening and threatened to murder Savic, the station’s editor.

Harassment against journalists also continues to come in other forms. Cristina Dumitrescu, a Romanian journalist for Radio Romania, the country’s national public radio broadcaster, was informed by telephone that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Moldova had declined to issue her an accreditation card. She applied for accreditation, which is necessary to work in the Republic of Moldova, on 13 October, when she arrived in Chisinau. SEEMO condemns this decision, which comes after several other journalists working for Romanian media faced denials and delays when seeking accreditation to be able to work in Moldova.

SEEMO is concerned that these developments, which further tarnish the region’s press freedom record, could lead to further violence against the media. It urges the relevant authorities to take seriously the potential risks these incidents represent.

**December 2008**

**SEEMO&IPI PRESS RELEASE CROATIA**  
*Vienna, 19 December 2008*

The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), a network of editors, media executives and leading journalists from South East Europe and an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), is concerned about the continuous pressure exerted on Denis Latin, editor and host of the television programme, Latinica, by the management of the Croatian public broadcasting company HRT.

According to information brought to the attention of SEEMO, HRT prohibited Mr. Latin from inviting an investigative journalist on his show. After expressing his disapproval of the decision, Mr. Latin lost an exclusive contract as editor of the programme and was prohibited from making appearances in several other radio and TV programmes in Croatia.

SEEMO has reported about the pressures exerted on Latin in the past. Commenting on this latest incident, Oliver Vujovic, SEEMO Secretary General, said that HRT’s actions were an undue interference in the editorial process. SEEMO regards such interference as an attack not only on Croatian investigative journalism, but on freedom of speech in general, he said.

SEEMO hopes the issue will be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides.

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