

Abstract

In this paper I will focus on the results of my four-year doctoral project *Autonomy of Journalism and the Journalist's Action in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. My doctoral project comprised various methodological approaches (interviews with former journalists, historical conceptual method and critical analysis of archival material) and theoretical explanations of two central concepts: (journalistic) autonomy and action. As part of the research project, I formulated the hypothesis that Yugoslav journalists are both observers and actors of social and political developments/events; their professionalism and the role of journalism are conditioned by self-reflexivity, which is shaped according to external, social and political foundations.

In the framework of my research project, I conducted 69 non-anonymous interviews for the purpose of oral history research and the historicization of journalism in Yugoslavia (1945–1992). I conducted the interviews in three former socialist republics: Slovenia (43), Croatia (12) and Serbia (14). The interviewed journalists were mostly professionally formed during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [SFRY] (1963–1992), which was simultaneously a time of pronounced political factions, economic liberalisation and crisis, the rise of explicit nationalism, war and finally the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation. The three-decade period under investigation makes it possible to observe the genealogy of journalism, what role journalism played in the social and political transformations and how the professional identity of Yugoslav journalists was shaped in relation to these political changes.

My analysis focuses on identifying the *lifeworld* situations, general lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) and professional experiences of the interviewed journalists, paying particular attention to two fundamental aspects: Firstly, their relation to the social and political system of the time and to the self-governing socialist ideology as the fundamental vision of this historical period. And secondly, their comparative experience with the entry into liberal democracy and capitalism after the collapse of Yugoslavia. The historicization of journalistic autonomy, which is strongly conditioned by the question of journalistic professionalism in the SFRY, takes place, among others, in the direction of a Yugoslav normative analysis of who a journalist should be and what role journalism should play in this historical period. The one-party political power considered and labelled journalists as “socio-political workers” and their primary role was supposed to be directed towards the creation of the *political*, i.e. the awakening of an engaged and a committed role and political participation in each individual and, more broadly, in the public sphere (the so-called creation of self-governing socialism). It is precisely the oral-historical approach and the elaboration of the notion of autonomy, which I consider as a relational concept (Cornelius Castoriadis) in which the journalistic *nómos* is shaped according to social and political coordinates, that makes it possible to resolve and at the same time thematise journalistic professionalism and professional self-identification, in the sense of, how the (interviewed) journalists – regardless of the Yugoslav political visions and, for example, the formulation “journalists as socio-political workers” – understood their role and professionalism while participating in social and political changes/events and, eventually, *ruptures* such as independence (“Spring of Nations”), the war and the collapse of the Yugoslav project.

In my presentation I will focus on the genealogy (modernisation) of journalism and forgotten journalists who enjoyed high social prestige and status in Yugoslavia, observed and participated in key and ground-breaking social and political events, and at the same time experienced the transition from self-governing socialism to liberal capitalism, which also transformed the sphere of journalistic work and thus the professional identity and role of journalists in the new multi-party system.

Bio

Nina Žnidaršič (1993) is a researcher at the Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana. The title of her PhD project is *Autonomy of Journalism and the Journalist's Action in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*. During the PhD project, she has presented papers and preliminary research findings at national and international conferences and doctoral schools: CEECOM, ECREA, CEU in Vienna (Austria), Centre for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism in Pula (Croatia), Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana (Slovenia), etc. She was a three-month research fellow at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana (2023) and participated in various research projects.