

# Three paradigms of journalistic objectivity in Slovenian press history



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**ABSTRACT:** The multifaceted character of journalistic objectivity is historically based on different philosophical underpinnings of communication, resulting in a variety of societal roles for journalists and competing notions of news. The article approaches journalistic objectivity in the context of Slovenian press history, which is often overlooked in conceptual debates on journalistic development in Europe. Three paradigms of journalistic objectivity within the 20th century Slovenian press are identified and presented, namely (1) the utilitarian approach to journalistic objectivity in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the 1920s and 1930s, (2) the objectivity of self-managed journalism in Socialist Yugoslavia from the 1950s to the late 1980s, and (3) the pragmatic objectivity of high-modern journalism from the early 1990s onwards. Each concept is assessed in terms of the societal roles of journalists from monarchical to socialist to capitalist societal settings; they are then interpreted through the prism of different prevailing conceptions of reality and evolving philosophical bases of understanding communication in Slovenian press history.

**KEYWORDS:** journalism, news, objectivity, paradigm, history, Slovenia



## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, journalistic objectivity has remained one of the central issues in theoretical and empirical investigations of the press (Hallin, Mancini, 2004; Christians et al., 2009; Schudson, 2012; Maras, 2013). Objectivity has been assessed within larger societal relations and political processes in terms of the prevailing conceptions of societal reality and order (Reese, 1990; Donsbach, Klett, 1993; Høyer, 2005; Josephi, 2005), and in relation to the notion of power in the changing technological environment (Papacharissi, 2009; Zelizer, 2009; Lee-Wright et al., 2012; Dahlgren, 2009). These studies illustrate that across time and space, journalistic objectivity has featured in a variety of forms and has been diversely defined in different countries, both by journalists (Donsbach, Klett, 1993; Weaver, 1996; Maras, 2013) and journalists-to-be (Splichal, Sparks, 1994). In scholarly work, however, despite being regarded as a global phenomenon (Ward, 2011), objectivity has

mostly been considered in the context of Anglo-American journalistic history and only occasionally within the journalistic traditions of Northern European (Høyer, 2005), Western European (Donsbach, Klett, 1993; Esser, 1998) and Central-Eastern European countries (Splichal, 1994; Jakubowicz, 2007; Lauk, 2009). Despite debates on the universality of journalistic objectivity (Maras, 2013, p. 201), such partiality indicates that more attention must be paid to the historical development of the journalistic objectivity paradigm(s), and to the often-neglected journalistic traditions of certain regions, in order to better understand the diversity of the notion. By focusing on Slovenian journalistic history, this article attempts to present different paradigms of journalistic objectivity, as well as their competing and overlapping manifestations in specific social and historical contexts of the Slovenian press.

The historical density of the phenomenon is often over-simplified and neglected in contemporary accounts, leaving objectivity as a context-grounded paradigm that is structurally under-theorized in communication, media and journalism studies. Specifically, scholarly reflections on the objectivity paradigm in journalism tend to reflect “the dominance” of inquiries from Western Europe and the United States (Joseph, 2005, p. 576), which have historically defined objectivity as “a kind of industrial discipline” (Schudson, 2012, p. 75) or “occupational ideology” (Reese, 1990, p. 390) that has bound journalists to established facts and opinions, as well as infused them with “a bourgeois ideal of professionalism” since the late 19th and early 20th century (Høyer, 1996, p. 74). By approaching journalistic objectivity as a paradigm, this article aims to show that objectivity does not necessarily appear as a feature of the “news paradigm,” a norm-based mindset grounded in liberal concepts of power and democracy (Reese, 1990; Berkowitz, 2000; Høyer, 2005; Maras, 2013), but as a continually negotiated, non-static and often self-contradictory framework of journalistic conduct. The multifaceted character of journalistic objectivity is historically based on fairly distinct conceptions of reality and differing philosophical underpinnings of communication, resulting in a variety of societal roles for journalists and competing notions of news (Donsbach, Klett, 1993; Høyer, 1996; Esser, 1998; Patterson 2000; Høyer, 2005; Maras, 2013).

In this sense, this text approaches journalistic objectivity in the context of Slovenian press history, which is often overlooked in conceptual debates on the development of journalism in Europe. Three paradigms of journalistic objectivity within the 20th century Slovenian press are identified and presented below: (1) the utilitarian approach to journalistic objectivity in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the 1920s and 1930s, (2) the objectivity of self-managed journalism in socialist Yugoslavia from the 1950s to the late-1980s and (3) the pragmatic objectivity of high-modern journalism from the early 1990s onwards. Each concept is assessed in terms of the societal roles of journalists from monarchical to socialist to capitalist settings, and is interpreted through the prism of different prevailing conceptions of reality and evolving philosophical bases of understanding communication in Slovenian press history.

## **JOURNALISTIC OBJECTIVITY AND DIFFERENT PARADIGMS: THE CASE OF THE SLOVENIAN PRESS**

Journalism has historically developed by being tied to larger societal relations, prevailing conceptions of reality, changing technological frameworks and other complex processes in political, economic and cultural life. In this sense, historical inquiry is central not only to establishing the “longevity of journalism” by using the past — its lessons, triumphs and tragedies — to understand contemporaneity (Zelizer, 2008, p. 257), but also to drawing detailed pictures of the conceptual frameworks in which journalism was established and has evolved over time (Schudson, 2005, p. 191). This article thus focuses on the case of the Slovenian press by sketching the conceptual development of objectivity as a central notion in relation to changing societal boundaries, and corresponding to the conceptual stratum of social order.

By taking the notion of paradigm as the main conceptual framework, the text provides insights into the dynamics between continuity and change, which have resulted in the process of reinventing journalistic objectivity paradigms over the last century. According to Reese (1990, p. 391), journalists in different contexts rely on particular paradigms that remain of value so long as they provide a useful practical guide, and as long as they share its underlying assumptions. Paradigms, or “norm-based mindsets” (Høyer, 2005), enable journalists “to act in an otherwise uncertain environment” (Sigal, 1973), since they rest on assumptions that are eminently compatible with the hegemonic requirements of a particular society (Reese, 1990). Furthermore, Bennett et al. (1985, p. 67) invokes the journalistic objectivity paradigm in terms of its character: a “paradigm organizes the world of social values systematically in favour of certain values and groups and against others.” In this sense, historical analyses (Sigal, 1973; Gans, 1980; Gitlin, 1980; Reese, 1990; Hardt, 1996; Høyer, 2005) show that a “new” journalistic paradigm is invented when it becomes clear that an “old” occupational norm-based mindset does not provide enough latitude to satisfy professional journalistic objectives, and fails to reproduce the prevailing ways of negotiating consensus and establishing order in society. This process is illustrated in the development of the three journalistic objectivity paradigms in Slovenian press history, indicating paradigmatic adaptations of journalism to larger normative and empirical changes.

### **Objectivity of utilitarian journalism**

In the intense societal and national atmosphere of 1929, Yugoslav King Aleksandar Karađorđević banned political parties and their newspapers, which presented the main linkage to the societal and cultural lives of Slovenians before the “proclaimed dictatorship” (Amon, 2004); for their part, the “big Slovenian dailies” (Amon, 1996) responded accordingly. For instance, the newspaper *Slovenski narod* [Slovenian nation] (1929) stated that “there should be no mediator between the King and the

people.” The most-read newspapers implied utilitarian changes toward journalistic objectivity, which signified the fall of the Slovenian political press. Until the 1930s, journalists functioned as publicists and news was represented as an interpretation resting on the idea that “objective or even neutral accounts of reality were not possible” (Donsbach, Klett, 1993, p. 57). With the rise of the collective-utilitarian mindset, Slovenian journalists began appearing as apolitical communicators, with news represented as unbiased. Those journalists working for the mass press normatively departed from the partisan character of Slovenian newspapers in the first decade of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Amon, 1996, pp. 95–98), which itself was established among particular societal conditions following the end of “military absolutism” during the Great War (Svoljšak, 2010, p. 55).

Unlike the political journalism that emerged in the early 20th century in some European countries, in which the journalist was seen as a neutral arbiter of political communication, standing apart from particular political interests by providing information and analysis “uncoloured” by partisanship (Hallin, Mancini, 2004, p. 26), Slovenian journalism in the 1920s continued to serve political causes in the narrow sense (Amon, 2004). It was not uncommon for party leaders or those who had carefully nurtured their “cults of personality” to become editors-in-chief of established newspapers (Amon, 1996). Hence, unlike in other countries where “scientific naturalism” was becoming a central paradigm in knowledge production (Splichal, 2000), and as the “objectivity doctrine” was being normalised in the journalism of the United States, Great Britain and France (Chalaby, 1996/2008), journalists in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia performed advocacy for groups defined more by ideology than societal intercourse, and acted as what Weber (1918/1992) terms “types of professional politicians.”

The rapid decline of the Slovenian political press and the rise of the journalistic objectivity paradigm consolidated during the “dictatorship of January 6” (Amon, 2004). Leading partisan dailies, such as the liberal *Slovenski narod* (1868–1943) and *Jutro* (1920–1945), and the conservative *Slovenec* (1873–1945), removed partisan mottos from their front pages, signalling the utilitarian adoption of journalistic objectivity. Almost overnight, the political press and its owners lost their legal and economic grounding; therefore, in order to continue, newspapers needed to be rearranged in terms of ownership, economic model, legal status and paradigmatic conception of journalism and news. Slovenian and other Yugoslav newspapers were placed in the hands of banking and stock market interests (Vatovec, 1967, p. 42), bringing the press under the control of, as Schäffle writes (1881/2001), a “degenerated form of capitalism” resulting in paradigmatic transformation of the “editor as politician” into “editor as manager” (Amon, 1996, p. 123). At the same time, it appears that “indirect collective utilitarianism” (Hooker, 2000) prevailed within the Slovenian journalistic community of the 1930s, which resulted in the mass press internalizing journalistic objectivity in order to maximize press utility.

At its 1937 conference, sponsored by the King, members of the Slovenian section of the Society of Yugoslav Journalists increasingly used phrases such as “reports,” “reporting” and “reporters,” and represented newspapers as “mirrors made out of paper” in order to stress the genuineness of the published content (Gaber, 1937). Furthermore, the division between “the public” and “masses” was strongly emphasized by the keynote speakers at the conference: “Salient newspapers” ideas sometimes hurt information objectivity in the fight between political and cultural ideas, but nevertheless the character of our press preserves us from the evil of newspapers serving to the instincts of the masses” (Borko, 1937, pp. ix–x). In this sense, Slovenian journalists appeared to be operating within a “coherence theory” (Maras, 2013, p. 85), that is, valuing a consistency of propositions and forming a perceptual belief that is not dependent on correspondence per se. The objectivity of Slovenian newspapers did not result in the growth of the news paradigm as witnessed in the United States and Great Britain in the late 19th and early 20th century (Schudson, 1978). Rather, it amounted to an attempt by the regime to impose the principle of disconnecting societal activities in relations between the state and the citizens, most notably through state censorship (Amon, 1996; Vodopivec, 2006; Luthar et al., 2008).

As a result, by focusing on international news, sports and entertainment, newspapers tried to address the audience with “objective” news of low political significance across social boundaries, while journalists of the regime continued to play a collaborative role with the political and economic elite (Amon, 1996). This created a close relationship between these journalists and the sources of power, and clashed with the idea of a free and autonomous press. As they “copied the pattern of French sensationalism on poor publicist and cultural level” (Vatovec, 1967, p. 42), Slovenian journalists started to reproduce power relations in society, resembling “prisoners of the evolution of journalism as entertainment for the masses” (Splichal, 2000, pp. 51–52) and narrowing the range of consensus negotiation (Amon, 2008).

The rise of objectivity in the Slovenian press of the 1930s, deriving from collective utilitarianism and grounded in coherence theory, resulted in a reduced variety of political dynamics and raised questions about the role of communication in a society faced with the state’s attempts to implement order through politically detached uniformity in public communication. Hence, the conduct of “depoliticized” dailies *Jutro*, *Slovenski narod* and *Slovenec* (Amon, 2008, p. 20); press agencies, most notably Havas (Amon, 1996, pp. 146–147); and Radio Ljubljana (Bizilj, 2004), slowed down the dynamics of political life and narrowed the range of consensus by disseminating apolitical stances, often with an enhanced entertainment function. On the other hand, the same uneasy political, economic and cultural environment before the Second World War spurred the rise of underground political movements and the emergence of the radical press, providing news with a persuasive and transformative character (Amon, 1996, pp. 151–220) that indicated the paradigmatic change to come both during and after the war.

## Objectivity of self-managed journalism

The end of the Second World War brought profound normative and empirical changes to the Slovenian press. On the basis of historical materialism, a new paradigm of journalism was constructed in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991). In the first few years after the war, Slovenian journalism in the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1963) was “mystified” by Lenin's conceptualization of the press as a collective propagandist, agitator and organizer (Vreg, 1990, pp. 205–216). However, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1991) established a socialist system that was distinct from those in the Soviet Union and their allies (Lauk, 2009). As a result, a refined normative foundation was put in place for “self-managed journalism” within a particular journalistic objectivity paradigm; journalists were understood as advocates of the working class in its historically inevitable struggle, and news was conceptualized on the philosophical basis of dialecticism of historical materialism (Močnik, 1985; Splichal, 1981; Splichal, Vreg, 1986).

In the first decade after the Second World War, Slovenian journalists operated as radical facilitators of social change. This was a period of a “revolutionary statism,” “state planning” and the “bureaucratization of social processes” (Vreg, 1980, p. 292), during which, there was a powerful tendency to establish a communication system with an accentuated hierarchical and centralized structure. Journalists, in principle, operated as collective agitators, propagandists and organizers who were expected to act as political instruments to invigorate the revolutionary movement of the proletariat as envisioned by Lenin (1901/1961). The press was to be open to anyone to participate in the communication of a new society (Hardt, 2000, p. 36). However, the idea of the press as “the tribune of the people” that could to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression was, according to Splichal and Vreg (1986, p. 51), dismantled under the political and economic post-war circumstances. Journalists worked, as Splichal (1981, p. 213) wrote, in material and spiritual dependency on the state and its bureaucratic apparatus: “The life of media organizations is parasitic; although the essence of their practice is not profit, the logic of their operations is a reflection of that in capitalistic monopoly.” (ibid.) Hence, the revolutionary nature of discovering propaganda as a basic condition for breeding the revolutionary activity of the masses transformed itself into a lever of centralized management in the hands of the state bureaucracy, which became the only “authorized critic” (Splichal, 1981, p. 244).

A significant change of journalistic paradigm came with the model of “self-managed democracy,” which tried to interlink often competing and even contradictory ideas of Marxism, Anarchism, Socialism and Yugoslav revisionism (Kardelj, 1973). The social stratum was grounded in the dialectical nature of historical materialism and the idea of the “self-managed society,” in which all “producers” would manage political, economic and cultural processes and institutions, and would take part in decentralized decision-making under the guidance of the League of Communists

(Splichal, Vreg, 1986, p. 33). In this context, the prevailing paradigm at newly established “societally owned” newspapers was grounded in a refined version of Marxism-Leninism, predisposing objectivity of communication as a historical inevitability and proclaiming its progressive nature based on collectivism. For instance, the daily *Delo* [Labour] stated in its first edition that its conduct is “objective” in its commitment to the “building of the socialist self-managed society” (Delo, 1958). Another daily, *Dnevnik* (1951), similarly asserted at the start of its publishing, “We really want to build a strong bond, so that the newspaper will breathe with all our working men and women, and will become a true mirror of our days.”

The 1973 Code of Yugoslav Journalists stated that journalists were “socio-political workers” bound to build socialism by providing objective news: “Objective communication is an inescapable essential characteristic of self-management, a constitutional right of citizens and the ethical law of our practice” (ZNJ, 1973). In this sense, journalistic objectivity was grounded in a revision of Marx’s (1859/1977) historical materialism and the accompanying dialectical conception of reality, in which change occurs through a process of internal and external conflicts and transformation from one form to another. In socialist conceptions, the concept of news was considered “common and universal” (Močnik, 1985, pp. 17–18). Thus, in principle, Slovenian journalists operated as advocates of the working people by “objectively informing on social phenomena, needs and relations, so they could better play their role in self-management” (ZNJ, 1973).

However, the realisation of self-management in news-making did not live up to normative predispositions, since many coercive measures were taken by the state. The League of Communists asserted that censorship was not possible in socialism, yet a much more comprehensive “informal censorship” was indeed carried out (Tomc, 2010, p. 332), turning self-managed journalists into “agents of bureaucratic class struggle” (Močnik, 1985, p. 18). Space for subjectivity and creativity in the societally owned media appeared to be narrowed by the “post-bourgeois censorship,” which was based on a “universal” and “bureaucratic” separation between “truth” and “untruth” (ibid.), and was sustained through business model-based state subsidies to the press, as well as, paradoxically, advertising (Splichal, Vreg, 1986). In this context, Močnik (ibid.) states that a journalist working as a “socio-political worker” who advocates for the working class by providing “common truth” (ZNJ, 1973) is in actuality “a rabbit from a cylinder of the bureaucracy.” Močnik (1985, p. 18) asks, “Why do we need a special emphasis that a journalist is a socio-political worker?” to which he replies, “To rob the journalist of his/her individuality and transform him/her into an advocate of common truth.”

An objectivity paradigm resting on the historical-materialistic basis of the Yugoslav version of socialism prevailed within Slovenian journalism for four decades. Despite changing dynamics in the dialogue between the normative and the empirical, Slovenian journalists as “socio-political workers” and news as “common truth” preserved the political system and maintained the boundaries of acceptable

political discourse until the 1980s, when the ideas of freedom of enterprise, private property, freedom of political association, parliamentary democracy and national unification, which were revolutionary in the 19th century, emerged as guidelines for the future development of Slovenian society (Splichal, 2001, p. 35). These larger societal shifts eventually resulted in the development of the independent Slovenian state, representative democracy, a capitalist economic system and a corresponding “new” paradigm of journalistic objectivity.

### **Objectivity of high-modern journalism**

With the fall of socialism, the foundations of Slovenian journalism shifted, substituting the objectivity paradigm tied to historical materialism with the high-modern conception of objectivity grounded in liberal ideas of participation, property and communication. Journalism empirically transformed during the “capitalist enlightenment” of the early 1990s (Splichal, 1995), which tried to speed up the historical process of societal change that had lasted many centuries elsewhere (Jakubowicz, 2007), and was gradually shaped by the liberal media model, which has intensified with the growth of complex transnational transactions in the 2000s (Splichal, 2012). These changes paradigmatically reshaped the societal roles of Slovenian journalists into detached communicators accountable to the public, and shifted the meaning of news according to a pragmatic understanding of the truth.

In a rather dynamic social environment, the transformation from “old” journalists, who performed as advocates of the working class and were regarded as “socio-political workers” (ZNJ, 1973, 1982), to “new” journalists following the principle of objectivity to provide “true” and “genuine” information to the public (DNS, 1991), has been anything but predictable (Splichal, 1992, pp. 78–94). The 1991 Code of Journalists of Slovenia represented “an immense change” (Poler, 1996, p. 109). There was no explicit definition of journalists’ roles, but rather an emphasis on their duties: “A journalist’s fundamental obligation is true and genuine informing of the public” (DNS, 1991). According to Poler (1996, p. 109) the code established journalists as decision-makers who were not committed to act on behalf of their homeland, nation and working class as they did during socialist self-management, but were instead obligated to act on behalf of the public, implying a paradigmatic shift in Slovenian journalism toward high-modernism.

The high-modern or classical paradigm of journalism is grounded in traditional liberal ideals of democracy, participation and citizenship (Dahlgren, 2009; Hallin, 2009). Through its narratives, classical journalism claims to provide accurate and impartial renderings of reality that exist external to journalism and its contributions in defining the public agenda. “It is aimed at heterogeneous citizenry that basically shares the same public culture, and citizens use journalism as a resource for participation in societal life,” writes Dahlgren (2009, p. 147), signaling a responding model of “competitive democracy” (Strömbäck, 2005, pp. 334–335). In this context,

the roles of journalists seem fully rationalized when it appears possible for them to relate to the powerful while remaining independent (Hallin, 1992). Such journalism places the emphasis on people's ability to judge their own self-interests and assumes that people have the potential to respond. As such, the task of the journalist is to gather, assemble and provide information, to comment in order to place news in a proper cultural context and to assist the public in understanding its relationship to societal life (Janowitz, 1975/2008). In this context, a larger societal transition toward pragmatism as a prevailing conception of reality reshaped the notion of news and its relationship to the truth (Poler, 1996).

Emerging signs of pragmatic philosophy reshaped the prevailing notions of journalism and news, in which the method of verification refers to what is to come, and what does not exist, but can be perceived as being brought into being (Maras, 2013, pp. 89–91). Hence, changes in Slovenian journalism toward pragmatism have emerged as the basis for distinctive functions of news and truth in Slovenian journalism (Poler, 1996). "Pragmatic objectivity" premises that everything we know is an interpretation of some aspect of our world, or as Ward (1999) puts it, "objectivity with a human face." All beliefs, descriptions, theories and points of view contain some element of conceptualization, theorizing and evaluation (ibid.). In this context, three codes of journalistic ethics adopted by the Society of Slovenian Journalists since the breakup of Yugoslavia have defined news as "practical truth" (Iggers, 1998); they do not refer to "objectivity", but rather to "truthfulness." The Code of Journalists of the Republic of Slovenia from 1991 required journalists to "report as eyewitnesses or on the basis of facts and reliable proofs"; according to Poler Kovačič (2005, p. 58), the Code of Journalists of Slovenia from 2002 implied objectivity, primarily its pragmatic character, through other provisions such as information verification, impartiality, source identification and separation between facts and opinions. The preamble of the code (DNS, 2002) stated "Journalists are required to present the whole picture of events." The code was revisited in 2010, additionally stressing the separation norm between "information" and "commentary": "The distinction between a factual report and commentary should be clear enough, so that the addressee of the message is able to distinguish between facts and the opinions of journalists" (DNS, 2010). In this sense, three standards of pragmatic objectivity as understood by Ward (1999) are implied in the evolution of Slovenian journalists' self-regulatory documents: empirical standards that test a belief's agreement with the facts, such as standards for careful observation; standards of coherence that evaluate how consistent an interpretation is with the rest of what we believe; and standards of rational debate that include a commitment to rational persuasion and tolerance, as well as fair consideration of rival views and counter-evidence.

However, writes Splichal (1999, p. 300), endeavours aimed at objective journalism have not abolished the ideological nature of the press exposed during socialism, but rather helped replace one ideology with another. In addition, as a consequence of the application of the objectivity principle and the separation within it,

“artificially arranged events intended exclusively for the expression of opinion (e.g. press conferences, election campaigns and party conventions) became ‘facts’ and reporting them ‘news,’ whereas a journalist’s or citizen’s direct statement remained ‘opinion’” (ibid.). In this sense, news from the Slovenian press that complies with the objectivity principle, says Splichal (1995, p. 113), “favours the interests of political, commercial and professional elites and enables them to transmit their ideas, attitudes and instructions to the people.” Despite stressing the concept of objectivity as a feature of the high-modern or classical paradigm, the corresponding notion of disinterested detachment, the separation of “facts” from “opinions,” and the balancing of claim and counterclaim in their conquest for the public good, research on Slovenian journalism implies doubt in the fulfillment of the normatively grounded and codified conduct and roles of Slovenian journalists (Poler Kovačič, 2004, p. 108).

The high-modern conception of objectivity in Slovenian journalism that has been established in the last two decades through what Sparks (1998, p. 102) calls “negotiated revolution” has centred on the notion of the public in negotiating journalists’ societal roles, and a pragmatic understanding of reality in conceptualizing the phenomenon of news. However, within market-driven societal dynamics, Slovenian journalists have turned from working for the good of the citizens to providing a service for the good of the consumers, which reflects political, economic and cultural subordination of journalism to the established power relations between the state, civil society and media.

## **CONCLUSION AND FURTHER OBSERVATIONS**

The study shows that “objective” conduct of journalists within a series of different norm-based mindsets has transformed considerably according to different conceptualizations of media, power and reality, and has responded to paradigmatic discontinuities in the ways people connect to societal life in order to maintain journalists’ monopoly as information and interpretation providers. The various paradigms of objectivity ensure the legitimacy of journalistic performance in societal life, strengthen the authority of journalistic (self-) representations in historical contexts, and maintain a media system and social order tied to larger transnational dynamics. Whether based on the indirect collective utilitarianism of journalism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the historical materialism of self-managed journalism in Socialist Yugoslavia, or the pragmatism of liberal conceptions of journalism in a market economy and Western-style democracy in the Republic of Slovenia, the historical case study shows that certain objectivity paradigms have remained of value so long as they provided responsive practical guides for journalists and their underlying assumptions of consensus negotiations. Particular paradigms have been compatible not only with normative frameworks of certain social systems, but also with power relations and hegemonic requirements in particular historical contexts. Therefore, these findings show that the

three journalistic objectivity paradigms indicate the paradox signalled by Splichal (1999, pp. 299–300): instead of the promised “impartiality” they bring “partiality.” By “objectively” approaching and mediating reality, journalists reproduce and legitimize established power relations in society, normalize central concepts and ideas of particular historical contexts and re-establish journalism’s position in the market. At the same time, as Splichal (1999) would stress, Slovenian journalists see in objectivity the assurance of their autonomy in relation to different press owners — whether private in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Republic of Slovenia, or state and societal in Socialist Yugoslavia — thus implying a coalition among them: “as a result, media systematically avoided complex and great ideological issues and placed everyday facts and events on the agenda” (Splichal, 1999, p. 300).

Furthermore, the study indicates that journalistic objectivity under different paradigmatic umbrellas provided journalists with discursive frameworks for authority building in their (self-) representations. Whether the conception of news rested on coherence theory in the Yugoslav monarchy, news as common truth derived from historical materialism of socialist self-management, or news as practical truth in the high-modern journalism of the last two decades, journalistic objectivity has functioned similarly as a press strategy of self-preservation within hegemonic dynamics in Slovenian society, and has legitimized journalistic discourse in social reasoning. As such, the study suggests that Slovenian journalists’ (self-) representations have been exercised throughout the past century within what Zelizer (1993) coins “interpretive communities,” united by shared discourse and collective interpretations of public life. Yet, historical assessment of Slovenian journalism shows that dynamics between continuity and change in community imagining and “objective” journalistic representations are embedded in the particular socio-geographical spheres of societal order, namely its conceptions and dynamics. The inquiry indicates that socio-geographical spheres of Slovenian journalistic interpretations and representations have been reshaped by larger conceptual frames that defined prevailing conceptions of social action, reality and cooperation among people on the one hand, and societal realities of the governed (sub- and supra-) entities and their larger territory on the other.

Despite exposing the paradigmatic diversity of journalistic objectivity development and its larger implications in Slovenian press history, this study has not sought to offer a comprehensive mapping of objectivity in Slovenian press history, nor a fully developed critique of the identified journalistic objectivity paradigms. The inquiry is not focused on paradoxes in certain paradigmatic periods and empirical deviations from the particular norm-based mindsets that are incorporated in the logic of the journalism paradigm, as Bennett et al. (1985), Reese (1990) and Berkowitz (2000) acknowledge. Scholarly research in Slovenia indicates that journalists have not only criticized journalistic objectivity, but have also intentionally departed from it. Most notably, in the transitional periods indicating profound social changes, Slovenian journalists departed from normatively presupposed action. For instance, Slovenian

journalism in the late-1980s acted as part of progressive forces explicitly favouring the new social movements that eventually resulted in an independent state, market economy and representative democracy (Splichal, 1995; Amon, 2004; Luthar et al., 2008). Furthermore, in the context of multi-layered and multidirectional online communication in recent years, journalists have increasingly critically questioned the established journalistic objectivity paradigm as “not fully realized” and “ideological” (Vobič, 2011). By analyzing examples that do not fall within the paradigmatic framework, but rather exploit anomalies of a particular paradigm, researchers could more comprehensively understand the logic and dynamics behind journalistic paradigms. Therefore, in future research, additional theoretical and empirical explorations, as well as further scholarly work on journalistic objectivity and its paradigmatic character, are needed not only in the case of Slovenia, but also transnationally.

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