

The Role of Media in European Integration Process: Kosovo Case

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Abstract

The paper "The role of media in European Integration process: Kosovo case" is a case study scientific research, which addresses media determinism on important political processes. By looking into the media importance in European Integration within the Euroscepticism's threats and the EU criterion regarding freedom and pluralism of media in Kosovo case context; this paper aims to prove the main hypothesis on the irreplaceable role of media on ensuring civic support. For this research purpose, several methods were used, including Comparison and Analysis, whereas empiric research consisted on monitoring mainstream media, a survey with citizens and interviews with journalists and other representatives of media organizations.

This paper proves the conditioned relationship between media freedom and the democracy scale, and the interdependence of relationship between politics and media in important processes as European Integration. This issue is of a paramount importance when bearing in mind that Kosovo – as the last country which emerged from Yugoslavia's disintegration and which is moreover faced with serious challenges deriving from the non-recognition of its independence by five Country Members of EU – is the last one regarding European Integration by having the status of potential candidate.

Keywords: Media; European integration; opinion; public sphere; communication

Introduction

If "media is a stream, not an ocean"¹, as Berisha states, then if not managed properly, it can be more harmful than beneficial. This "stream" - especially in the aftermath of Internet emergence - presents a serious concern for European Union, who by its side has been long attempting to "manage" it in function of Integration. The split of linguistic communication by Television emergence in mid of XX century, as Giovanni Sartori observed, was amplified even more with Internet emergence that has globalized man. According to him, homo videns has defeated Homo sapiens, thus stating the dominance of the act of seeing over that of understanding [1].²

Internet has made the McLuhan's "global village"³ real, and now its dimension consisting in a "neighborhood" named European Union, constitutes a serious challenge for its upcoming relationship with society [2]. Beyond the television influence, through networks Internet has connected people with each world's nook, thus making them increasingly more dependent from technology on one hand, and by making them independent from the necessity of socializing on the other hand. In analogy with Sartori's notions, homo-net (the networked man) will defeat its homo videns because homo-net is subdued no longer to image's authority, but rather to multimedia's opportunities. If television had transformed the Cassier's "symbolic animal"⁴ by informing through seeing, then homo net will reestablish human symbolic capability, thus also "re-establishing" pre-televised media in a single medium everywhere-accompanying. Homo net, today, possesses newspaper, radio and television integrated in a small device which is dependent on network. Hence, the question lies on whether technology – that has eliminated geographical borders and provides a universal library – will be used for cultural growth or entertainment solely. Only when this

question receives a response by states or European institutions, we can more accurately approach the future of the triangle of politics – media – society relationship [3].

Dealing with the role of media in the context of European project's threats by Euroscepticism, and tackling EU media policy as an endeavor towards the ideal choice between fundamental values and fragmentary effects of internet technology; is of a particular importance, especially for countries that aim membership [4]. Moreover, for Kosovo, tackling this issue does not merely provide the necessary proof for hypothesis, but rather may serve as a practical solution for building the politics-media relationship, which strengthen democracy [5].

Main hypothesis

The role of media in European Integration process is irreplaceable both in preserving internal cohesion of EU, and regarding civic awareness and mobilization in enlargement countries [6].

Helping hypothesis: If free and plural media is a precondition toward European Integration, then media and politics have interdependent relationship within this process.

Methodology

Since media domain is of an interdisciplinary character, it is than necessary to use a combined methodological approach, which includes Comparison and Analysis [7]. As it pertains to the theoretical part, well-known western literature in the role of media in social processes

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¹ Berisha, Ibrahim (2007) Media dhe tranzicioni. Universiteti AAB, Prishtina 5.

² Sartori, Giovanni (2013) Homo videns, *Televizioni dhe postmendimi*, DITURIA, Tiranë 34.

³ McLuhan, Marshall (1964) *Understanding Media*, McGraw-Hill, New York 106.

⁴ Sartori, Giovanni. Homo videns (2013) *Televizioni dhe postmendimi*, DITURIA, Tiranë 17.

was reviewed. Meanwhile, for empirical research, several methods were used to test hypothesis, to begin with monitoring mainstream media during 3 months period of time October-December 2016, classified as: televisions, RTK 1 and KTV; radio stations, Kosova Radio and Dukagjin Radio; newspapers, Koha Ditore and Zëri; online news media, gazetaexpress.com and indksonline.net.

Moreover, a questionnaire with 215 respondents was conducted in two major urban centers of Kosovo: Prishtina and Prizren and in two rural settlements which geographically gravitate in these centers: Rimanishta and Hajvalia, and Reçan and Fortesa. The research sample was selected according to the percentage of urban and rural population, as referred to the Kosovo Statistics Agency, with 38 percent for the city and 62 percent for the village⁵. Respondents were not categorized by gender or age, since the Random Selection method was used to approach inclusively gender and age and aimed to reflect the citizens' opinion as objectively as possible [8].

Media and Integration

In European Integration, scholars have been focused on the relationship between media, politics and public; a triangle that enables political communication and from which the future direction of European project is depended. The increasing interdependence of media and politics made the British scholar, Brian McNair, to conclude that "media is politics and politics is media."⁶ Politics needs messages distribution in order to ensure public support for its objectives, whereas media influences politics through public opinion formation [9].

This interaction takes place within the Public Sphere, where media have outstandingly increased their predominance as a result of informational technology [10]. But, how does this relationship evolve in European Union level and in lack of a European Public Sphere?

The (dis) integrating role of media

The traditional assessment of media as the motor of integration is related to Public Sphere. According to Berisha, "there exists a great heterogeneity within the public where media plays the role of a very important integrative component, by influencing the model of monolith, linearity and homogeneity"⁷. Nevertheless, there already exists a long tradition of critical studies that make media responsible for the lack of social cohesion and the alienation of public in modern societies [11]. As to Hans-Jorg Trezn, the integrative role of mass media in modern societies has been challenged by two current developments [12]. The first challenge consists on the displacement of politics and democracy. "Political integration of Europe has advanced more rapidly than the social and cultural integration of Europe of citizens, and while the political authority has gradually shifted from national level to supranational one, there is not any respective community that would support this process [13]. In the aftermath of this, the public opinion remains fragmented within National Public Spheres", suggests Trezn, by adding that the second challenge consists on the shift of media effects: "National state does no longer constitute the unitary space of production and medial distribution. With the emergence of new media, the imaginary community entitled as a nation, is anew fragmented in different users' communities and this differential usage of media is seen

as one of the driving forces of social disintegration"⁸ [14].

In this line, does this explain the Brexit referendum in United Kingdom and the dissemination of euroscepticism? Coutto and Matkovic interconnect euroscepticism with the existing limited knowledge on EU, the lack of trust toward politicians and aggravation of social and economic indicators. In their study, they emphasize that media coverage is an important factor to understand the formation of public opinion regarding EU. As per Brexit referendum, Coutto and Matkovic suggest that the victory of "Leave" campus falls to the coordination of experts and extensive discourse on the idea of taking back the control over policy-making. "The pro EU forces were uncoordinated and failed to use media to explain to people that membership's benefits are not financial advantages merely"⁹. In this regard, another scholar, Barry, emphasizes that media had an agenda-setting role during the campaign by focusing the attention to particular politicians and issues and also by reporting more arguments that supported Leaving campus: "The audience was exposed more to arguments against EU, rather to those in favor of it; meanwhile, Remain supporters failed to be plain and simply narrated regarding benefits of EU membership"¹⁰, argues Barry, adding that in this line, it should be taken into consideration the long-term influence of British media approach towards EU and immigration. But, beyond this development in Britain, is there room to discuss for media as facilitators of European Integration and moreover, which are the possibilities of a European Public Sphere?

Scholars who maintain communicative interchange as an opportunity towards a European Public Sphere, have followed mainly two study paths: while one of the groups has analyzed the communication political process by including EU level actors and citizens, the other one has been focused on quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis of media coverage on EU issues and debates. In both cases, researches on European Public Sphere imply the interaction of EU media and politics, which shapes the governmental system representation and possibilities for its public legitimation. In this regard, Trezn holds that this is related to the mediatization of EU governmental system and before setting the stage on tackling the way media influence EU decision-making; he firstly emphasizes the approach with which EU actors and institutions will interact with media. "This will give rise to a different perspective on EU democracy, not being merely direct, representative or participative; but rather as mediatized. In the meantime, this also applies to EU government, not being solely intergovernmental, polyarchic or deliberative, but also mediatized."¹¹

This conclusion further displays the importance of media as the permanent and embodied companion of our lives. They have influenced the globalization of societies through surpassing national borders. In European Union, the democratic deficit¹² and the lack of a European Public Sphere constitute two obstacles toward European

⁵Kosovo Statistics Agency, http://askdata.rks-gov.net/PXWeb/pxweb/sq/askdata/askdata_14%20Census%20population_Census%202011_2%20Republic%20of%20Kosova/census01.px/?rxid=2bff59ef-3f60-4a9a-a015-c3f71caf4f2b

⁶McNair, Brian (2002) *Journalism and democracy, an evaluation of the political public sphere*, Taylor & Francis e-Library London.

⁷Berisha, Ibrahim (2012) *Ajensët e komunikimeve, Media, Prishtina*.

⁸Trezn, Hans-Jorg. *New media dynamics and European Integration*, <http://institucional.us.es/revistas/comunicacion/10/7-47-2-PB.pdf>

⁹Coutto, Tatianna et Matkovic, Blanka. *Euroscepticism in Old and New member States: The Role of the media in the United Kingdom and Croatia*, <http://euanddemocracy.ideasoneurope.eu/2016/09/08/euroscepticism-old-new-member-states-role-media-united-kingdom-croatia/>

¹⁰Berry, Mike. *Understanding the role of mass media in the EU Referendum, Understanding the role of the mass media in the EU Referendum*, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/08/12/understanding-the-role-of-the-mass-media-in-the-eu-referendum/>

¹¹Hans-Jorg Trezn. *New media dynamics and European Integration*, <http://institucional.us.es/revistas/comunicacion/10/7-47-2-PB.pdf>

¹²Democratic deficit refers to the lack of democratic legitimacy and accountability of EU institutions, which is used to criticize the shift of legislative competencies from national governments to European Council.

Union development. The preclusion of citizens' participation in political debates for European issues, in consequence declines citizens' support and their identification with EU.

Thus, a joint study within "FutureLab Europe" program; concludes the necessity of a European Public Sphere which would provide room for citizens to discuss different ideas and perspectives on European matters. In this line, the study suggests that: "These debates have to take place where the citizens are and new social media offer the best possible means for it. The basis for such debates is the availability of transparent, reliable information covering multifold perspectives. In order to manage the broad variety of information, citizens have to be provided with substantial media skills. Traditional media, such as radio, television, print media and their online outlets, as well as institutions, have to open their current one-way communication and start to interact with their audience [15]. This interaction has to be personal, because communication and debates take place between humans. To protect citizens from online violence, common European legal standards of communication need to be defined and implemented."¹³

The opinion-making role of media

The fundamental role of media on European Integration establishes from the EU political and cultural background. With freedom of speech as a fundamental value and with media as the main platform for enabling this right, media becomes irreplaceable in public opinion formation. Media fulfill their main role, in this regard, by being a 'watchdog' towards political institutions [16]. By continuously informing on institutions' activities and performance, also by accurately mirroring events of high importance in citizens' life; media influence opinion formation and change. For German sociologist, Jurgen Habermas, media plays the main role on implementing democracy; therefore it is essential for citizens to possess information in order to make the right political choice. "Public engagement of citizens creates the public sphere which functions most effectively in societies where media is institutionally independent from state and economic powers of society. BBC provides an example."¹⁴ If Habermas' argumentation is to be held, the European project success is conditioned by a European Public Sphere and an EBC (European Broadcasting Corporation) which are independent from EU and its economic powers.

Nevertheless, in the "Media effects on Public Opinion about the Enlargement of European Union,"¹⁵ Claes and Boomgarden have confirmed the causal relationship between media and citizens' opinion. They hold that the media role in shaping public opinion is conditional. They conclude that when European Integration matters make their way to media agenda, they also become important for citizens: Consequently, media becomes important only when citizens are highly exposed to news that takes consistent evaluating approach. Moreover, they add that the contrary happens when messages are less clear and confusing.¹⁶

The role of Media in Kosovo's European Agenda

As the newest country of the "old continent", Kosovo has prioritized

¹³ FutureLab Europe, The Role of New Social and Digital Media in European Public Sphere, http://www.frittord.no/images/uploads/files/Position_Paper_-_The_Role_of_New_Social_and_Digital_Media_in_the_Europea...pdf

¹⁴ Habermas, Jurgen (1991) the structural transformation of the Public Sphere, First MIT Press, Paper back edition 236.

¹⁵ Claes, Hubert, Boomgaarden, Hajo Media Effects on Public Opinion About the Enlargement of the European Union. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/4764245_Media_Effects_on_Public_Opinion_About_the_Enlargement_of_the_European_Union

¹⁶ Ibid.

European Integration, even though it is the last region country in this process. All Western Balkan other countries have stepped further in European agenda with their candidate status (Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia) besides Bosnia and Hercegovina, which still holds the potential candidate status – as same as Kosovo – but, it received visa liberalization since 2010. Kosovo made an important step forward into European perspective by signing the Stabilization Association Agreement (SAA),¹⁷ which was ratified in April the 1st, 2016. Nevertheless, Kosovo has failed to get visa liberalization because of non-ratification of Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro, and also because results on the fight against organized crime and corruption did not prove to be sufficient¹⁸. The National Strategy on this process states as follows: "The experience from the region and new EU Member States shows that maintaining both the vision and consensus, though difficult, has been proven to be essential in the European Integration process."¹⁹

On the other hand, within EU Enlargement Policy, Freedom of Expression has been assigned as a key indicator for a country readiness for membership. "Guaranteeing freedom of speech and media is one of the main challenges enlargement countries face. Political interference in media, ownership concentration and different forms of pressure - including threats against journalists - are of a real concern for Western Balkan and Turkey."²⁰ These two stands constitute the research framework on the media role in Kosovo and their relationship with politics within the Copenhagen Criteria context [17].

Media as a criterion for enlargement countries

In the aftermath of satellite television broadcasting and especially with Internet emergence, the development of media has developed their interdependence with democratic processes, by prioritizing the Theory of Social Responsibility [18]. This theory sets requirements on media regulation without violating freedom. The European Union standard on media has evolved in fairly proportion with technological development and the scale of modernity within societies that constitute EU. While European project was Western solely, the media domain was regulated in national level by preserving the models' specifics, which were identified by Hallin and Mancini. In a comparative study of contemporary societies, including United States of America, Canada and Western Europe countries, these scholars proposed a typology on relations between systems of media and politics. In this line, they classify these relations on: Polarized Pluralist Model, Cooperative Democratic Model and Liberal Model. "Media systems of individual countries are not homogenous. Even countries themselves are not homogenous and their systems are characterized by regional variations: media in Quebec and Catalonia vary in some aspects by other media that function in other parts of Canada, respectively Spain."²¹

Nevertheless, freedom and pluralism as constituting fundamental attributes of democracy; reflect as well fundamental values of EU. The

¹⁷ Countries that sign Stabilization Association Agreement with EU, are automatically entitled with potential candidate status for membership.

¹⁸ Brussels (2016) European Commission proposes visa-free travel for the people of Kosovo http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1626_en.htm

¹⁹ National Strategy on European Integration, f. 4, http://www.president-ksgov.net/repository/docs/Strategjia_Kombetare_per_Integrimin_Evropan_Kosovo_2020_ALB.pdf

²⁰ Neighborhood and Enlargement Strategy Paper (2013) European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/speak_up_2/20130801_speakup-conclusions.pdf

²¹ C. Hallin, Daniel et Mancini, Paolo (2004) Comparing media systems, Three models of media and politics, Cambridge University Press, UK 71.

point 2 of Article 11 of European Charter on Fundamental Rights established the legal obligation on respecting the freedom and pluralism of media.²² Fulfilling this obligation, therefore, implies a state with a consolidated democracy, where media acts as a public good and in the interest of public. Freedom of media implies a condition where there is no state monopoly or extensive interference of state in media domain, whereas pluralism of media means the lack of private control on media or a condition where there is no ownership concentration on media.

EU, therefore, has undertaken concrete actions to 're-regulate' media domain within its framework of fundamental values, but also by establishing these norms as "rigid conditions" for countries aiming to fulfill the requested criteria toward European Integration. The establishment of Media as a special criterion on the process of negotiations for membership; is not more than an explicit requirement for real transformation towards democracy of candidate countries, imposed by bad experiences of some Member States and of uncontrollable influence of digital époque.

Media landscape in Kosovo

According to Independent Media Commission (IMC), in Kosovo are currently operating 20 Televisions, 78 Radio Stations, 34 Cable Operators and 54 Program Service Providers, which provide their programs only through cable network. 3 out of 20 televisions with terrestrial broadcasting have national frequency (RTK, KTV, RTV21), 10 others with regional frequency and 7 left with local frequency.²³ While on one hand, Radio Television of Kosova (RTK), is a public broadcaster that consists of four TV channels (RTK 1, RTK2, RTK3 and RTK4), two radio programs (Kosova Radio 1 and Kosova Radio 2) and also its online platform rtklive.com. On the other hand, Radio Television 21 (RTV21), which also includes a radio with national frequency (Radio 21) and Koha Vision (KTV), are commercial broadcasters. So, similarly to European system, the media system of Kosovo is as well dualist, consisting of public and private media. Their relationship lacks of balance due to the private sector's financial instability. In this line, OSCE mission suggests that: "With a limited audience – less than circa 1.8 million habitants – the ad market is pretty small and this makes media realm financially instable."²⁴ In the meantime, while media legal framework is estimated to be consolidated, even though its segmentation into several acts; remains a challenge to come.

Despite all serious concerns due to international subjectivity as a result of non-recognition from five EU member states²⁵ and also of lacking membership in UN due to Kosovo's independence objection by China and Russia; Kosova by its highest legal act, has pledged to apply all international agreements and instruments on human rights and freedoms (Article 22).²⁶ These constitutional principles and dispositions have established the basis of laws and regulations that aim to regulate media domain. The Law on Radio Television of Kosovo,²⁷

Law on Access to Public Documents,²⁸ the Law on the Protection of Journalism Sources²⁹ and the Law on Independent Commission of Media,³⁰ along with decriminalizing defamation and insult within the Penal Code, which was approved in 2011; are estimated to be important developments within media legal framework, but it is of a serious concern its lack of implementation.

Freedom and (in) dependence of media in Kosovo

In 2016 Kosovo was rated by Freedom House organization as being partly free regarding media freedom; Kosovo scored 49 points in a scale with 0 being the most free and 100 the least free.³¹ Kosovo scored same points in 2014 and 2015, while the major aggravation on region was identified in Macedonia that in 2016 was rated not free, scoring 62 points (Table 1).

On the other hand, the 2016 Progress Report – the main EU tool for evaluating Kosovo's progress – drafted by European Commission in annual basis, has identified serious stagnations regarding the lack of dependence of RTK. "RTK is directly state funded which undermines its independence, weakens its long-term sustainability and leaves it prone to political influence. The Assembly tendency to make state funding a permanent solution contrary to law is a concern. A solution for the premises of the public broadcaster is yet to be found."³² In the meantime, Augustin Palokaj holds that Kosovo institutions' lack of addressing these concerns has to do with the very early phase of integration process. "Just because Kosovo is far from integration, EU has not shown any great willingness to take measures towards Kosovo authorities."³³

Moreover, even citizens believe that media is dependent from politics. In the survey conducted for this research purpose, 47.2% of respondents have stated that media is dependent from politics and groups of interest (Figure 1).

Media coverage

Survey's results suggest that Kosovars are little informed on European Union. Respondents who live in cities result to be more informed than those in villages (Table 2).

Nevertheless, media remains as their main information source on this process. 89.4% of respondents stated that they get informed by media, especially through televisions and new online media with a percentage of 53.0%, respectively 41.5%. The survey's results are further supported by results of media monitoring, with the latter suggesting that European Integration process is not provided with the necessary important space in media. Table 3 contains refined data on this process' mediatization, classified by its interrelated topics: Brussels' facilitated Dialogue for Normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, Visa Liberalization and Stabilization-Association Agreement.

²²Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, (2000/C 364/01), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

²³ICM: Work Report 2015, <http://kpm-ks.org/materiale/dokument/1432128309.6233.pdf>

²⁴OSCE: The freedom of media and the safety of journalists in Kosovo, June 2014, pg.7, <http://www.osce.org/sq/kosovo/122391?download=true>

²⁵ Member states of EU that have not recognized Kosovo yet: Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus.

²⁶ Constitution of Kosovo, <http://www.kushtetutakosoves.info/repository/docs/Constitution.of.the.Republic.of.Kosovo.pdf>

²⁷Law No. 04/L-046 on Radio Television of Kosovo, <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Law%20on%20Radio%20Television%20of%20Kosova.pdf>

²⁸ Law No.03/L-215 on Access to Public Documents, <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2010-215-eng.pdf>

²⁹ Law No.04/L-137, <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/Law%20on%20the%20protection%20of%20the%20journalism%20sources.pdf>

³⁰ Law No.04/L-44 on ICM, <http://www.kpm-http://www.kpm-ks.org/a/dokumentet.inc.php?id=447&gjuha=3&iframe=true&width=400&height=130>

³¹Freedom House, Kosovo, Freedom of the Press 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/kosovo>

³² Kosovo Progress Report 2016, p.25, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_kosovo.pdf

³³ Interview with Augustin Palokaj, regular correspondent on Brussels for "Koha" Group in Prishtina.

Country	Year 2014		Year 2015		Year 2016	
	Score	Rating	Score	Rating	Score	Rating
kosovo	49	Partly free	49	Partly free	49	Partly free
Albania	49	Partly free	49	Partly free	51	Partly free
Maqedonia	57	Partly free	58	Partly free	62	Partly free
Montenegro	39	Partly free	39	Partly free	41	Partly free
Serbia	37	Partly free	40	Partly free	45	Partly free
Bosnia-hercegovina	50	Partly free	51	Partly free	50	Partly free

Source: with 0 being the most free and 100 the least free

Table 1: Freedom house: freedom of the press

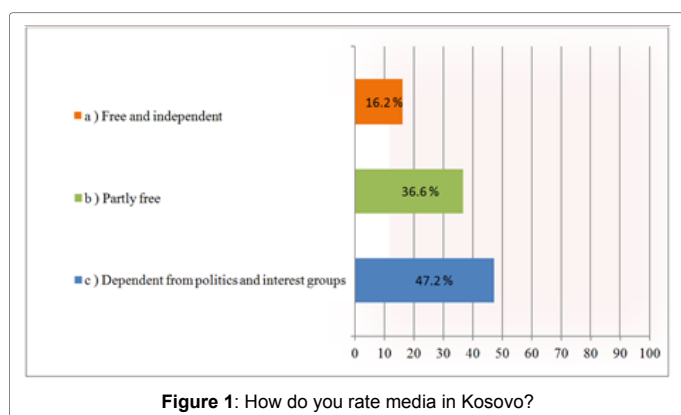


Figure 1: How do you rate media in Kosovo?

A lot		Little		Not at all	
30.80%	17.30%	67.40%	72.50%	1.80%	10.20%
City	Village	City	Village	City	Village

Table 2: How much you are informed in european union (EU)?

Media	Prishtina-belgrade dialogue	Visa liberalization	SAA	Comments	The total of reports	
RTK1	22	17	23	0	1525	4.10%
KTV	26	14	24	0	1298	4.93%
RADIO KOSOVA	26	25	26	0	964	7.98%
DUK	28	14	15	0	476	11.97%
KOHA DITORE	49	32	27	51	2757	5.76%
ZERI	44	45	24	8	2679	4.52%
EXPRESS	68	57	89	143	12125	2.94%
INDEKS	51	64	64	140	10426	3.06%

Table 3: Mediatization of european integration (October – December 2016)

News hierarchy does not reflect any big discern in Radio Television of Kosovo as a public broadcaster on one hand, and KTV as a commercial television on the other, despite their different editorial policies. The same amount of space is given to “mirror” reporting of events such as EU officials visits in Kosovo and those of Kosovo in Brussels, political debates on interrelated issues to European Integration process or its evaluation by several political and non-political factors. Nevertheless, reporting lacks of thematic background and analytical approach on the process. Politics-related information proceeds by dominating all media contents, thus by constituting the most predominant realm within

sectors’ “hierarchy”, the same being suggested by Stephan Russ-Mohl.³⁴

“Kosovo is far from EU integration and politicians misuse this process for their own promotion and not in purpose of advancing it”, holds Palokaj, who holds that media often served as a tool for politicians by creating confusion among citizens. “Media broadcasted politicians’ statements without sufficiently verifying the truth and thus conceiving expectations for visa liberalization. However, even six years after politicians started to “grant” that visa liberalization is soon to take place; it did not.”³⁵

On the other hand, due to the internet large expansion in Kosovo,³⁶ new media appear to be winning the battle with traditional ones. In this line, Krasniqi holds that technology pressure, that has challenged not only journalism ethics, but also its scope borders, has resulted into emergence of innumerable new online media.³⁷ “Gazeta Express” (gazetaexpress.com) is one of them, which in its printed version never made it to the top of most read newspapers in Kosovo. This online media is distinguished by others by focusing more on EU-themed news. In each month of monitoring, the amount of news on EU events, statements and responses; resulted to be higher than those of news on Prishtina – Belgrade Dialogue, Visa Liberalization or SAA process. In the meantime, “Indeksonline” (indeksonline.com), results on providing less space to EU Integration process. While EU events and its role in international issues have been mostly covered similarly as by “Gazeta Express”; “Indeksonline” reported less on European Integration process (Prishtina-Belgrade Dialogue, Visa Liberalization and SAA). Its informational content was mainly predominated by internal and Albanian’s region developments. Meanwhile, in its thematic plan, reports on political development in Kosovo prevailed, often lacking its regional and international context.

Politics-media interdependence

Interaction and interdependence between politics and media is proven by the transition process of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe countries in the aftermath of the Cold War. By determining EU integration process as a strategic objective, these countries had to carry out political, economic and social reforms in compliance with union standards. It was vital for these countries to successfully carry them out in order to show their people the importance and dynamics of this process. On Communication Strategies on EU process, media was

³⁴Russ-Mohl, Stephan. *Gazetaria*, K&B, Tiranë, 2010, pg. 197

³⁵ Interview with Agustin Palokaj, regular correspondent on Brussels for “Koha” Group in Prishtina.

³⁶ Kosovo Progress Report 2016, pg. 61, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_kosovo.pdf

³⁷ Krasniqi, Milazim. *Gazetaria nën trysinë e aleatëve të saj – teknologjisë dhe publikut*, Media 5-6, 2013-2014, Prishtina

entitled as a key factor on ensuring civic support through accurate and thorough information.

Through a comparative analysis of Communication Strategies of Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Lithuania; Tomiq, Sadiku and Malnar concluded the media role and importance on European Integration Process, let it be as informing tools or as communication channels mediating between officials and citizens.³⁸ Their study shows that these countries used mainly the same communication purpose, objectives, target-groups, channels and techniques for informing people.

Each of strategies adopted respective country's political, economic and social specifics. However, their objectives and means were approximately in common. All of them emphasized the key role of media, the importance of internet and new media versions that emerged along with it, and also of columnists on influencing society mobilization. The analysis was conducted aiming to provide useful material for the upcoming strategy of Kosovo in this regard. Authors suggest that: "In small countries as Kosovo, it is necessary that through information to emphasize possibilities of partaking in global and European economy, also into European political and cultural dimension. In countries that hold high enthusiasm on EU membership; it is of a paramount importance for architecture of information to be build in purpose of enforcing European mindset and establishing a transparent and clear dialogue between people regarding requirements for integration, criteria, benefits and responsibilities".³⁹

Conclusions

Last two decades, informative technology has influenced substantial changes in media shape and content. Nevertheless, it did not weaken their political and social role. Contrary to it, communication has become dynamic and personal by unveiling a gradual predominance of new media. As to the emergence of a European Public Sphere; social media along with traditional ones, which must interact with audience, might build the necessary infrastructure that would replace EU democratic deficit.

Digital revolution has greatly influenced societies in their globalization by surpassing national borders, thus also being able to serve to the "Europeanization" of the Public Sphere within the union. Brexit has shown that media coverage is an important constituent on understanding the public opinion formation regarding EU. While EU political integration has highly advanced, civic integration is a step behind due to National Public Sphere. If we refer to Habermas on European level issues, European project success is conditioned by a European Public Sphere and an EBC (European Broadcasting Corporation), independent from EU and its internal economic powers. The consolidation of a media policy - which would be able to assimilate media interests towards the Eurocentric aim - is of a paramount importance on the future of the European project.

The international Kosovo rating as 'partly free' regarding to democracy and media, proves the interdependence of politics and media. Media in Kosovo are neither free nor independent. Institutional power approach toward media is instrumentalist and manipulative. The government and state institutions lack of a policy that incites partnership with media toward democratic improvement, they instead apply a controlling and submission policy with media.

³⁸ Tomic, Zoran, Sadiku, Muhamet et Malnar, Dario. Comparative Analysis of Communication Strategies for Acession to the EU – Lessons for Kosovo, <http://aab-edu.net/assets/uploads/2016/12/02-2009-EN-06-Zoran-Tomic-Muhamet-Sadiku-Dario-Malnar.pdf>

³⁹ ibid

The public broadcaster is politically influence through state funding, whereas private owned media are in pressure of politics and interest groups because of their dependence on ads. In the current phase of integration process, the role media in Kosovo is orienting, but insufficient, while their agenda is set by political agenda. Nevertheless, free and pluralist media are a set as one of the criteria of Copenhagen Criteria, whereas media plays a crucial role as it pertains to the public opinion. Consequently, as it has been argued above, media is in an interdependent relation with politics in this process. There is no possibility of European Union Integration without the support of citizens, whereas civic support cannot be ensured in lack of the mobilizing and integrative role of media. This has been proved by regional countries case (Communication strategies), and moreover by the survey conducted for this research purpose.

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