

Partnership of Media with the Public

Bajram Kosumi¹, Dukagjin Leka²

Abstract: In this paper is addressed the new media status, which is created in the digital age. Media in the digital age tends to be a business and policy partners, whether for traditional reasons, or because with new digital technology is not known where media is divided from the technology, so where is divided journalism as a profession from the business journalism. Media has become an equal partner with business and politics, but has lost its partnership with the public. Where is leading the journalism this partnership? Theoretical approach in this paper is within the critical cultural school and in which are intended to be detected trends, messages and ideologies of new digital media.

Keywords: media; politics; business; partnership

1. Background: The Era, when Journalism Loses its Role of Controlling the Power

Linking the narrative strategy of Scheherazade with the sphere of public communications and with the media has already been done. Scheherazade, according to Arab-Persian literary tradition, every night have to invent a story, in order to live for another day. In the story on this tradition, Tzvetan Todorov has made the theory of a unique model of narration (Todorov, 2000). While Ira Chernus, professor of religious studies at the University of Colorado, also on this tradition has created the metonymy which in the theory of communication is called as *storytelling*. Communication of *storytelling* with the public, under his assumption, is starting from the premise that politics is sentenced to death by the public and, to escape from the execution, it should every day invent a story for the public. This is "the story of the day" of Ronald Reagan (Tomgram, 2006). Ronald Reagan, soon after he sworn as President of the United States asked by his Office

¹ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bajram Kosumi, Rector of University "Kadri Zeka" Gjilan, Republic of Kosovo, bajram.kosumi@uni-gjilan.net

² Prof. Ass. Dr. Dukagjin Leka, Law Faculty, Vice-Rector for International Relations of the University "Kadri Zeka" Gjilan, Kosovo. Address: Kosovo, Pristina, 10000. Email: dukagjin.leka@uni-gjilan.net.

for Public Communications to invent "*line of the day*", which will be distributed to the media, in order the last will deal with that news. After the success of "*line of the day*", Reagan team invent the "*story of the day*". After that, media did not have time to see more into the backstage of the White House, because they were dealing with the "*story of the day*".

With this action, the Reagan ended the Golden Era of journalism, the era that is identified with investigative journalism and the symbol of this time is the Watergate Affair and the obligation of the president of USA, Nixon to resign. This is the era, when media and journalists have been in public service and on its interests, so many times have been the voice of the powerless, and have often been the bugaboo for strong people. This was the period when the media was called as the "fourth power". The hero of this period was the *investigative reporter*.

But, Reagan has "captured" the media and this marks the end of the golden era of investigative journalism. Office of Public Information of the White House has been creating each day a story about the president, in order that media and the public to deal with that story, by orchestrating the media life and the public interest. Exactly the Scheherazade's strategy. Theory of *Agenda Setting* of the media fell to the ground. Now the media could not do the agenda for the White House, but the opposite was happening, the White House was doing the agenda for the media. This is the second media period, when it is under the dictate of politics and is powerless to control it. According to John Anthony Maltese, at the time of Reagan, Office of Public Relations of the White House "has helped to be created the counter-reality", so the reality, which is distracting the people's attention from the real problems and creates the world of symbols and myths, by which people would be so proud with theirself and with their country (Salmon, 2010). The hero of this media era was Reagan, the man who is deemed as one of the greatest orators of the XX century, and his students later, Clinton, Bush, Blair and even Obama and Sarkozy (Salmon 2010).

2. The Era when Journalism Gets a New Role

With the discovery of the tremendous impact of news portals (on-line journalism) begins a new era in journalism. Media no longer controls the power, as in the golden age, but neither is subject to power, as it was in Reagan time. It has found a new way, is connected with government and business, serves and assists to government and business, of course for its own interests. Already have been

reformulated the jargons of "embedded journalism" and "embedded reporter" in the pejorative sense: according to this concept, journalism goes together with politics and business, it is in touch with them, or is connected to them.

This journalism has a prehistory and a hero. The first hero of this era is Rupert Murdoch (Kosumi, 2016), not for the fact that he managed to become the biggest magnate of the global media and to control about a quarter of all the world's media, but for the fact that he drew media from political subjugation and made them as partner with business and politics. This claim appears as cynical, especially when you have in mind a mountain accusations addressed to this gentleman about the negative role that he has played in world journalism¹, but the truth is that he made journalism as partner of policy and business, and with this he made the grave to journalism. Murdoch, first of all, was a journalist and later industrialist of the media. From this position of the media magnate, he began to coquet even to influence, the global politics. There are talks about his connections with powerful politicians of the world, among whom Bush Blair, and the role that he had in "the creation of opinion" on various issues. The news and media themes not **reveal** journalists, but are **dictated** by the owners, in cooperation with their business and policy partners. It is known the fact that the directorate of Fox News every day has circulated a letter to all editors, producers and reporters, with notes about the topics that should be discussed during the day, and with which people have to be spoken during the day, etc. (Salmon, 2010).

Murdoch soon after he bought the newspaper *The Sun*, has asked from the managing editor that at the newspaper's front page wants to be a naked woman and a gossip about the Royal Palace (Barbier & Lavenier, 2004). Obviously, Murdoch has had to make a newspaper for the low taste of the public. With this he intended to conquer the market, which has succeeded: from a newspaper with union trends, he created a tabloid, which is sold in millions of copies. On the other hand, he wanted to create an amorphous audience in terms of public engagements: an audience that enjoys seeing naked women and gossips about the political elite.

The same syndrome has emerged and repeated in all countries of the world, including Kosovo. Kosovo newspapers in the postwar period began to devote more

¹ On July 19, 2011 the British Parliament interrogated Rupert Murdoch, owner of News Corporation, James Murdoch, chairman and CEO of News Corporation (International), and Rebekah Brooks, the former editor of News International, for the scandal of wire tapping. See: House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, News International and Phone-hacking, Eleventh Report of Session 2010-12. Volume I, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmcmds/903/903i.pdf>

space to the life of the worlds VIP, by publishing *pseudo-news* about their intimate life, photos of well-known naked or half naked girls. *Kosova Sot* newspaper created the VIP supplement in the newspaper, with some color pages (and pages of information in the newspaper were in black and white), to increase the newspaper circulation and this example was followed by all other newspapers. In other hand, if we see *TV 21*, television with national frequencies in Kosovo, you can persuade that you are living in Hollywood or New York, and that our neighbors last night were quarreling badly, because Rihanna has fled from her violent man and fell into the arms the new lover, while Kim Kardashian or Jessica Alba has this week became pregnant, etc..

This journalism, today many theorists calls as *pseudo-journalism*. It wins the reader through irrelevant information and rumors, and when it wins the reader, it has on its hand "the creation of opinion". In fact, it corrupts the audience: instead of the news, it sells to audience the *pseudo-news*, and audience enjoys with entertainment pseudo-news in front of "difficult" political and economic news. From this position, the media (owners, editors, etc.), approached to politics and business: the media have in their hand the capital, which is called as audience, through which they can create the public opinion, and for this are in need all the politicians and businessmen's. Already this media position is not the position of subordinates or position of the controller to the strong, but the partnership position: politicians and businessmen they have the need of the media, and the last is ready to make deals with them. Already journalism is not subject to politics and business, but it is their partner. This is not cynicism! It's really painful for the fate of journalism, because the essence of the problem is elsewhere: the goal and ideal of journalism to serve the public finally ends here. Journalism is the business partner and the partner of politics, but it is not the partner of the public. This position of journalism is at the harm of the public. Why to harm the public? Not for the reasons of conspiracy theories, but simply because the public in the nineteenth and twentieth century, in front of government and business, has been having a partner, and that partner has been journalism. The public has had a strong voice through journalism, even when business and politics have shut down the public mouth or newspaper. After the new position of media, as partner with business and politics, the public is not protected anymore.

3. The Era when Journalism is Losing its Partnership with the Public

Exactly, this postulate derives from the period when journalism betray the public to the interest of business and policy, especially from the beginning of XXI century, and this is the main thesis of this paper. The main question is: did journalism lost its way? Is it a business activity, like any other business activity, whether it is a tool for enrichment and domination, as it is the policy and business, etc.? Is the media partner with public or partner with capital magnates and politicians?

The above questions are not new nor unexpected. A simple click on the Internet and we can find a lot of such questions. More meaningful answer to these questions can be given to us, by the information portals and their effects on the public. After the invention of the internet, journalism, before all others, took its effect. For now there is still a war between the printed newspaper and the digital news, but do not mind that this war is already hopeless for the printed newspaper. *Financial Times* already has long time now that has written its own epitaph:

"After a long battle with declining of advertisement, with the always higher reader's age, with the internet competition, with the high level of debts, higher costs, inflated ambitions and stress, the newspaper industry passed away" (Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2009).

Most space of the daily information for all the people around the world increasingly are getting the information portals. The mobile phone invention, as Apple and Android, and mobile computer, like the iPad, and the WAP network (Wireless Application Protocol), has made it very easy sending and receiving of a massive information's, in any possible situation and from any place in the world, has facilitated the access to so much information's that modern people in every minute are connected in the flow of these information's. Never before has there been such a wide range of information's. It is created the *hyper-media* society. Already there is talk not about the impact of information technology in modern human life, but to the modern human dependence from the information technology. In a survey done by the professors and students of journalism branch at the University of Prishtina (Kosovo) for the "media diet", the student respondents could not imagine their life without access to information technology, and when they tried, they could not stand without it. This information technology, alongside with the most efficient possible distribution, has created also the dependence of people and of the information it disseminates. This means that the media, in our case an information portal, is having public under the control, serves the public

with information every minute and the public cannot live the modern life without that access and without such information's. It is not here to question the quality of the information. The goal is public invasion. The audience is overwhelmed by information portals and it is inclined to accept information's even when they are suspicious, inaccurate, or even gossip. It is no secret that most clicked news information of portals in Kosovo are not those that has to do with a government decision or a law approved by the Assembly. Also, it is not most clicked news, the news for the killing of ten or twenty people in a terrorist attack in Iraq, in Syria or in one of the European capitals. The most clicked news is a rumor, or a VIP, or simply false constructions from top to bottom, *pseudo-news* as the discovery of a creature that resembles to human-but that is not human, and until to even the media perversions like the video footage from almost all the Balkan portals, which represents a snake that ate itself!

It is significant the behavior of digital news portal, *Express newspaper* to its readers, bringing in mid-2014 almost every day the comments of "*Assumptions of Ms. Mary*" for the politics scene and political actors in Kosovo. Lady Mary is an astrologer, who after several appearances on Klan Kosova Television, became a regular commentator on politics in Kosovo in the *Express* digital newspaper, based on its astrological experiences. A click on Express shows 26 reviews of Ms. Mary, under the title "What predicts Ms. Mary for..." for a period of two months (June 8 - August 6, 2014).

A commentary of an astrologist for the political processes can be understood as a parody that *Express newspaper* makes to political scene, but so do not understand the vast majority of its readers: her comments are accepted and distributed to other social networks. In this case, instead of serious comments on the political scene, *Express newspaper* has offered charlatan and paradoxical reviews of an astrologist, and all this to gain clicks of the readers. Sensing that Ms. Mary predictions can draw multiple clicks, the paper which calls itself as the elite newspaper turns into a gossip club.

4. Are Informative Portals our Taste or our Bosses?

These *pseudo-news* are most clicked and through clicks the audience is "bought" much easier and cheaper. This is why all information portals in Kosovo (but also in the world) follow greedily the Murdock concept: the front page of a newspaper with a naked woman and a gossip about the Royal Palace. All this has one purpose:

buying of public. By offering the *pseudo-news* and entertainment news, from one, and serving with digital technology and mobile telephony to create connection to the network every second, informative portals have created ideal conditions to buy the public. They have conquered the public and now can affect it. "Informing" the public is not the purpose of these media, but that is a strategic weapon to conquer the public, in order to move to other victories. This media cannot create "public opinion" with its audience, as they are afraid Theodor Adorno and others, who continued his school, but the media uses the public as an asset in the market. It has on its hand these assets - clicks, and now is ready to trade it with business and politics. The strength of this media, thus their value as an asset is measured by clicks, the more clicks has one portal, a bigger value has that portal in the market.

The most profitable businesses in the field of communications are now "media consultants", i.e., companies that undertake public relations of a politician or a party, a business company or a government. Political parties in Kosovo do not show openly their payments for media companies, but from the half of the information's, they are breathtaking.¹ In this new media situation gains politics and business, because it can spread quickly and beyond their messages and create favorable clientele with the help of the media, and in other hand wins also the media, because it is paid by politics and business to spread this message and to create opinions. Here only the public loses: the public has no powerful allies anymore. This is the second time in media history, after the golden era of the years 1830-40, when the newspapers reach the circulation of millions of numbers and when Alexander Dumas Pere won millions from his adventurous novels published as feuillets in the daily newspapers, so the second time, when the media people became millionaires and powerful people that have influence on major policies. It's worth mentioning Silvio Berlusconi, who the media power made possible that several times became Prime Minister of Italy. In Kosovo and Albania have already seen the millionaires created by journalism and the ambitions of these millionaires - owners of journalism are not related to "inform the public" but with business and politics.

Of course, these millionaires are not created by selling of newspapers or from multiple clicks users (readers) who buy news. The reader does not buy the news, but does not even read them even when are free. Especially in Kosovo it is difficult

¹ In Republic of Kosovo is limited the expenditure of political parties in the election campaign at 0.5 Euro for voters, according to Law no. 03 / L-073 / For the general elections in the Republic of Kosovo and the Electoral Rule no. 12/2013 / Limiting of expenditure during the election campaign and financial statement of the Central Election Commission.

to find a reader that reads, but this is a show that is worrying the whole world, not only Kosovo and Albanians. The user of portals in Kosovo click a rumor before than a story. So, the newspapers millionaires are not made from their assets, like newspapers or portal, cars, etc., but from the introduction on the market of their asset, known as public through the clicks earned from them. The more clicks, the greater is the capital of an information portal. In the end, based on the clicks, these media have gained partnership with business and politics. Portals conquer the public in all possible ways (without asking for the quality of the news or to journalist ethics) and after having in hand the public, they do offer the public to business and politics, as a goods for the market. Evaluation measures for promoting a company in a business portal is the amount of clicks portal: the greater is the amount of clicks the greater is the possibility of advertising, because no company wants to advertise in the media that is not clicked. The more clicks, the more businesses that advertise it to the media and the profit is much greater. Here is the key: the more news that attracts clicks, profit is greater. It does not matter whether the news is true, whether is important, whether it is ethical, or is not news at all! More important than all this, it is to show how much can attracts clicks the text or that image? If so, that is the ideal news. Because, as many clicks as the greatest opportunity for businesses advertising in the media, then the greater possibility of profit. On the other hand, the more clicks and the more advertising, the public asset as the value increases, and thus opens a new avenue: politics. Media already approached to politics as a partner. Policy invests in new media and media helps policy through the creation of public opinion. Some of these investments are legal (if you want to have more "friends" on Facebook, you can make payment of various fees, from 5 to 100 euros per day, so that Facebook can "impose" to its users to make friends) and some others as illegal (the hidden payments to create the public opinion).¹

5. Conclusion: Media is winning - public is losing!

Finally, with digital information technology and with mobile telephony connected to the WAP network, media and journalism has become legally binding partner with business and politics. There are three factors that are working together.

¹ At the beginning of the use of "My Space", to each user was "imposed" the first friend, one of the founders of My Space, Tom Anderson. In 2008 there were 221.036.100 Tom frends. From this event was created in football dresses the inscription: "Tom is my only friend." When R. Murdock's New Corporation's bought My Space, Tom "forgot" all his friends and became presenter of the company. See: Charlie Ger, Digital Culture (2008), Multimedia Clio, Belgrade, 2011, p. 209.

Journalism is becoming rich and dominant, but it is losing its soul! Journalism is no longer a partner of public and helpless people, but is partner of business and policy, and for the self-interest. The Scheherazade model to survive, by telling a story, in journalism has become a model of audiences fraud by selling them "the story" as an information, which is actually an investment in asset-called public. Everybody wins a little or more, only the public, the audience is the one, which is losing and lose more and more.

With the greatest information revolution - digital information technology, journalism is removed more than ever from its ideal: to serve the public interest. Media people (owners, directors, managers, show-men, etc., but not journalists) can now become millionaires or powerful and align with businessmen and politicians, but are not anymore with the public.

Also in Kosovo, in the Albanian space there are some cases where the owners of the media, directors or their editors are lined with politics and business, have won money and a dominant power in society, have become powerful people, but have lost the ideal of journalism - alignment with the public and helpless people.

Would this lining be the end of journalism? Of course not. Journalism has helped, the information, education, socialization and civilization of billions of people around the world in the last two centuries. In whatever form it may be, a modern man cannot live and prosper without information from every corner of the world. In desperate call to competition between the print and the digital journalism that "*journalism is dead*" has already been created also the response for that: "*Journalism is dead, Long live Journalism*".

However, when human society is in front of fundamental situations, turns and looks back on its history for analogous situations. Often talking about the old rhetoric of journalism with the students at the University of Pristina, I stopped at the brightness and the end of the Sophists. Sophists were originally orators and disseminators of knowledge. Later, as they so well mastered the skill of oratory that have made the audiences to believe also in false things and have started to sell their knowledge, and in that way have obscured their fame. It seems they have done this, and this has been their deadly crackdown: the public has not believed on them anymore. This is one reason why Socrates and Plato hated the Sophists. Oratory, a comparable discipline with philosophy itself, after two hundred years of brightness loses itself and does not exist for nearly a hundred years more, until the new redefinition that has been made by Aristotle.

Historical experiences are not repeated, but they should be kept in focus as points of reference. Journalism has been and is, first and foremost, a mission to serve the public. Market Journalism of nineteenth century (American) is a consequence not intent, the advertisement have always won against the news in American newspapers, but this is not the purpose of that journalism, on the contrary, its purpose was to afford the advertisement. Also today, the purpose of journalism is a noble and far beyond financial gain: informing the public, by completing with this information one of the most important human needs for modern life. Journalism even when is threatened by policy and businesses, or even when is tempted by both, have to stay in its mission. Avoiding this mission is suicide and a betrayal of the public.

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