

MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS: WATCHING TV IN FORMER YUGOSLAV STATES

Lucia Vesnić-Alujević*

Independent researcher

Nataša Simeunović Bajić

Faculty of Culture and Media, University Megatrend Belgrade

ABSTRACT

The period after the collapse of the communist Yugoslav state was marked by wars in several ex-Yugoslav states. Therefore the state-building period overlapped with the transition from communism to capitalism and processes of reconciliation between the disputed states. This is reflected in the transformation of the media audiences in the Western Balkans region as well. Drawing upon the reception studies tradition, the goal of this paper is to explore media consumption in several ex-Yugoslav states, namely: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia and to find similarities and differences in audiences' behaviour. The changes in media consumption are connected to the transition processes in the media that brought new opportunities and challenges as well as different audiences' responses to them. The selection of countries was determined by their shared history, but also by the possibilities for audiences from those countries to easily access programmes broadcast by the other countries within the region. The research asks whether and what kind of connections can be established between the socio-demographic characteristics, cultural and lifestyle values of the audiences and the programmes that they watch. Quantitative and qualitative methods are combined here. Firstly, data obtained from an initial survey carried out in the four states with a representative sample suggests tendencies and patterns in audiences' consumption of television broadcasting in the aforementioned countries; these are then further explored qualitatively, using in-depth interviews with selected participants, to reveal common cultural values, based on collective memory, among those audiences. The research design employs a comparative approach that allows us to draw more generalized conclusions for the territory of the Western Balkans.

KEY WORDS

TV consumption – audiences – former Yugoslavia – cultural identity – watching patterns

Yugoslavia, a former socialist country, consisting of six republics and two autonomous provinces, dissolved in tragic conflicts during the 1990s. Many authors have been writing about nationalism in Yugoslavia (e.g. Bennett 1995; Eriksen 2002; Blitz 2006) and it has been often presented as a dominant factor in the breakup of the country. However, apart from it, there are other factors such as the economic situation, foreign policy, institutional rules, the role of personality and the role of culture that need to be taken into consideration when discussing this (Pejnović Stanković 2010).

The study of the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav social context is particularly interesting in

* Corresponding author Lucia Vesnić-Alujević, independent researcher.
email: lucy.vessal@gmail.com

the field of culture and cultural dynamics. Culture is a symbolic category; it relates to the production and exchange of meanings (Hall 1996) in different socio-historical periods. Yugoslav culture evolved through the development of the paradigm of “soft socialism” that allowed greater openness in relation to various cultural phenomena. Television, as the most powerful media of that time, had a major role in the creation and dissemination of culture. Thus the study of the shift between the culture constructed and shared by the Yugoslavs and that re-negotiated and constructed by individual post-Yugoslav states is particularly important from the perspective of cultural and critical media studies.

Although Splichal (1999) uses the term re-nationalisation when discussing the media situation in former communist states in Europe, the situation in former Yugoslavia was slightly more complex due to the war and growing nationalism in the region. The 1990s were characterized by the formation of opposite cultural values: on one hand a need for re-traditionalization, which Mitrović (2006) refers to as a regression period (the years of 1989 – 2006) and on the other hand orientation towards modernization, which Mitrović (2006) defines as a step forward in the process of transition that consists of growth and development. These values helped the creation of new cultural identities that served the building of new national identities. The individual national television stations played a big role in promoting this new identity, and disseminating nationalism and hate speech towards other ex-Yugoslav nations.

Our goal here is to explore how the audiences of the Western Balkans responded to the new opportunities and challenges brought to them by the transition and transformation of the regional media scene. There is no broader interest among scholars on the Western Balkans on this topic, and the research already done in the period before, during and after transition in the region is very limited and inconsistent, hence we aspire to fill a part of the gap with this contribution that might open the door to further research in the area. The focal point, here, is television embedded in the socio-cultural context and as a medium of everyday life. Following the approach of reception studies will allow us to see what television on the audiences from the four aforementioned states of Western Balkans watch, but also how, to subsequently compare them in order to see if there are similarities in the way they have been watching television, in their choices of channel, and programme preferences and motives for watching, in general.

In order to explore the attitudes of the audiences, seen as active from the cultural studies perspective (Hall 1973), we used two methods. First we conducted an explorative quantitative survey; subsequently, in order to provide more in-depth insights into the viewing context, follow-up qualitative research was carried out, consisting of in-depth interviews with selected survey participants. These methods helped to reveal some important general tendencies in watching television and motivations for doing so among the audiences of the Western Balkans.

1. Framework of the reception studies tradition

The imageries created in media are rich in connotative values. The issue of how active audiences receive media imageries has attracted many researchers, because while using different media in everyday life, different audiences make different meanings. What shapes interpretation is its complex cultural embeddedness that embraces experiences, shared beliefs, sociological and economic backgrounds and conditions (Pitturo 2008). Theorists

of cultural studies further developed the concept of active audiences by examining the ways in which meaning is created in the social practice in general.

Hall (1973), in his seminal essay “Encoding and decoding in media discourse”, argues that message decoding is a rather complex process that results from the negotiation between the polysemy of the text and the social, cultural and historical context of the recipient. Hall outlines three possible positions from which text, in this instance television content, can be decoded: dominant-hegemonic (viewer decodes the meanings encoded thereby reproducing the dominant definitions), contractual (the elements of acceptance and rejection are mixed) and oppositional (viewer decodes the message in a different way to the encoded meaning) (Hall 1973, 1996). Hall believes that the media construct reality through signifying practice (Hall 1996), but other than that, he sees the potential of the audience in the critical reception of media production, hence arguing that the meaning of a text cannot be fixed or universal to all recipients and just as importantly that audiences are not passive recipients of media texts.

We can say that viewers’ responses to television programmes are not uniform but rather complex (Barwise and Ehrenberg 1987), because different types of programme can provoke different attitudinal responses. Hall (1973) admits that the media texts suggest the “preferred” reading, that is to say the meaning of the text, through their structure, but the audiences bring into the decoding process what Hall (1973) calls “cultural codes”, their cultural and social context, and thus members of different audiences might decode the media text in different ways (see also Milivojević 2008).

Cultural studies, however, see media reception within a larger social context and are concerned with the question of the use of mass media in everyday life. Through the connection and interaction between power, culture and audiences, reception studies are interested in explaining the possible replications or changes in the dominant ideology through the reception of media content by the audiences. The focus is also on ways the audiences construct their cultural identities, their thoughts and feelings regarding media content.

We follow the reception studies’ approach that the audiences understand the same text differently, which could depend on the psychological and socio-demographic context (Livingstone 2000). In his well-known study of *Nationwide*, Morley (1992) showed how viewers within different social and cultural contexts decode a message from the same text differently. Livingstone (2000) also argues that the interpretative, everyday context frames the understanding of television and suggests that researchers need to examine the audiences’ activities to understand their interpretation of the text. Couldry et al. (2010) also stresses the different demographic characteristics (age, gender, social class, etc.) that shape audiences’ interpretation of media text.

2. The role of television in the everyday

In the current transforming media environment, where the role of new technologies and the internet is becoming increasingly more significant, television should not be neglected as it is still one of the most important mass communication media that plays a big part in people’s everyday life. Television has indeed a crucial role in people’s socialization (Perez-Ortiz 2002), in redistribution of information (Radojković and Miletić 2005), and in shaping cultural values (Hauk and Immordino 2011) and construction of social rea-

lity (Gulisano 2008). Watching TV has not stopped being a part of home rituals despite the convergences of new technologies and collective gatherings for watching broadcast events in public spaces.

Television viewing figures appear to be considerably stable over the past 50 years (Marshall, Gorely and Biddle 2006). The television is primarily seen as a common source of everyday information and socialisation for a heterogeneous population (Gerbner 1993). That is why it is often said that television could influence viewers' perception of reality (Radojković and Miletić 2005). Johnson and Holmes (2009), in the tradition of cultivation theory, claim that exposure to media content influences real-world perceptions.

Watching television has been integrated into audiences' everyday life and the use of media has become a part of their daily routines. The most important for watching television is free time. The institutionalisation of television is based on the difference between the number of television productions (which is relatively small) and the number of citizens (compared to the number of television productions, it is relatively big). Even though the dominance of television in people's private lives and the pervasion of it in the free time of individuals is slowly diminishing in favour of the internet, some scholars agree that with its messages and structure of TV spectacle and programming, television still "influences the individual and social life and human behaviour" (Radojković and Miletić 2005: 151). Besides, watching television brings satisfaction, as it offers the possibility to enter a multiplicity of different worlds and different lives.

There have been many studies on the role of television in identity construction. From the cultural studies' perspective, an identity is unstable and constantly formed, transformed and negotiated (Hall 1992). In that sense, television consumption can be seen as an active and important factor in identity building (De Bruin 2005). This has been noticed to a great extent in the process of establishing new national identities after the collapse of former Yugoslavia and in this study we are interested in exploring it further. Likewise, Gillespie argues that "media are being used by productive consumers to maintain and strengthen boundaries, but also to create new shared spaces in which syncretic, cultural forms, such as 'new ethnicities' can emerge" (1995: 208).

Social grouping and common collective signs are the prerequisite for the formation of cultural identity as a symbolic framework in which a community constitutes their cultural values. Therefore, language, collective memory, religion, customs, tangible and intangible cultural heritage constitute the basis of the formation of cultural identity (Manić, Simeunović Bajić and Aleksić 2012). In former Yugoslavia, since the creation of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War, the Yugoslav identity had been built through the cultural institutions of literature, film and media.

The ideas promoted through these forms remained as stable viewpoints in the society even after the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Rucker-Chang 2010). However, during the emergence of new post-Yugoslav states, the Yugoslav identity was aggressively destroyed by cancellation and abolition of many cultural forms that it was built upon. However, it is undeniable that the collective memory on the territory of former Yugoslavia, in the way Halbwachs (1992)¹ interprets it, has been created and still exists. Television representations interpret, redefine and construct the collective memory of members of the former

1 Halbwachs makes a difference between historical memory and collective memory, accentuating that history represents the totality of facts, and hence when collective memory cannot rely on a specific social group determined by space and time any more, it disappears and historical memory takes its place.

Yugoslav nations. This is important not just for reruns of the programme of the former Yugoslav productions but also because of new programmes that are available to viewers from a variety of post-Yugoslav countries.

3. History of broadcasting in former Yugoslavia

The Yugoslavian public broadcaster, Yugoslav radio-television (JRT), started television broadcasting in 1958 (Milošević 1984), first consisting of Television Belgrade, Television Zagreb and Television Ljubljana; later, three more studios were added: Skopje, Sarajevo and Montenegro (Prpič 2008). The programming was common and the most watched was the central news programme *Dnevnik* at 7.30 pm and movies on Monday evening after *Dnevnik*. The programming consisted of:

- 1) foreign imported programmes (films, series, reportages),
- 2) live broadcast events (sport, festivals, competitions, visits of foreign delegations, etc.), as well as
- 3) JRT's own production of movies, series and various news programmes.

The EU Monitoring and Advocacy program report from 2005 refers to the Yugoslav media system as follows:

Because of its multicultural character, federal system and less strict ideological system, there was a relatively diverse and liberal media system in former Yugoslavia with many regional and local media. TV channels broadcast a large number of Western programmes in their original language with subtitles.

(EUMAP 2005: 36)

The breadth and diversity of television programmes were growing during the years that followed and new television centres were created in the 1960s (Television Skopje in 1964, Television Sarajevo in 1969 and Television Montenegro in 1971). In 1971, 9250 hours of television programmes were broadcast in total in Yugoslavia, which was six times the amount of broadcasting time at the beginning. The following year, a second channel was introduced. This channel was in colour and produced with more modern technical equipment. The introduction of a second channel helped improve links between all members of JRT and cooperation with foreign television broadcasters, and put Yugoslav television on the same level as the Western countries' television systems (Pustišek 1984). The productions of Television Belgrade and Zagreb were very rich and consisted of diverse informative, educational, children, cultural and entertaining programmes. Many of them are still remembered as higher quality programmes than those broadcast today, especially children's programmes and TV series. Many programmes won prizes in international competitions.

During the 1960s, the first research on the popularity of certain programmes and audience measurement was conducted with users of all 850 TV sets registered up to the time. Owning a TV set at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s was a rare privilege, but the influence of television started to grow. At first TV sets were present more

in various public spaces such as restaurants, schools, clubs, and cultural centres, rather than in people's homes. The main informative programme was *Dnevnik 2*, broadcast every evening at 7.30 pm.

At the beginning, television programmes were broadcast live three times a week without being recorded and thus without the possibility for them to be run again and/or be edited; from 1963 the JRT broadcast six times a week, as Tuesday was a day reserved for imported programmes from Italian or Austrian television channels. In the realization of the common TV programming of JRT, Television Belgrade prepared 50 % of programmes, and Television Ljubljana and Zagreb 25 % each. Up to 1967, the daily schedule was no longer than 4.5 hours. The first direct transmission of a JRT broadcast from abroad happened during the European Basketball Championship in 1961 (Đukić 2007). During the 1980s, besides *Dnevnik 2*, programmes broadcast with the biggest success (as measured by the number of people who watched it) were the film *Nešto između* [Something in between] about a relationship between an American girl and two Yugoslav guys that showed the differences between the East and the West, as a Yugoslav-American co-production, as well as *Blue summer*, a children's series produced in Spain and various children's cartoons (mostly Disney productions).

The process of transformation and liberalization of the television market in the majority of European countries was happening during the 1980s and 1990s. The media transformation in former Yugoslavia started first in Slovenia where the first commercial television station started to broadcast as early as 1991. In other former Yugoslav countries, the process was mostly postponed due to wars in the region that caused a specific social and economic situation. The media transformation in Serbia, for example, started to happen at the beginning of the 2000s. However, watching television in former Yugoslavia has always been very popular and according to the EUMAP report, currently almost 100% of households own at least one TV set (EUMAP 2005).

In a similar way to many other states, in former Yugoslavia there was bigger trust in television in comparison to press and radio among audiences, during the last couple of decades of the 20th century. This trend can usually be explained by the characteristics of the medium itself, i.e. a mix of audio and visual appearances. According to the results of one public opinion survey conducted in 1973, Yugoslavian audiences favoured television to a great extent compared to other media (Bačević 2004).

But, with the economic crises in the 1980s and especially the socio-political situation at the beginning of the 1990s, trust in all kinds of media has been diminishing. Some scholars (Bačević 2004) assume that the power of media is not too great in a time of crisis, because it cannot overcome personal experience as a source of information. That is why a bigger lack of trust in media is seen among younger and more educated populations who feel that social reality is not well represented on television. This is the part of audiences who are opposed to accepting the reality as presented on television.

4. Research design and methods

This research relates to media consumption in four ex-Yugoslav states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The choice of countries was made based on their shared history as well as the possibilities and willingness of the audiences from one country to watch programmes broadcast by the other countries. By choosing a compa

rative approach we aim to make a larger generalization for the territory of the Western Balkans. The research was carried out in two phases: during the first, we conducted an online survey in these four states with a sample of 287 participants in total. The second phase consisted of in-depth interviews. We have used both qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to get a more complex understanding, and not to neglect any part of media consumption in the region of former Yugoslavia. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (for its application within audience and reception research see Barker 2006; Morley 2006; Ross, 2011) was determined by the focus of the study and by the research questions.

A web-based survey was used as a method of data gathering, because of its ability to give more refined polling data in less time (Howard 2005). Surveys are a popular research method in social sciences. Researchers who use surveys have lately started to use online technologies in order to speed up the procedure of obtaining the results. In the field of communication studies, the survey method is the most popular method for audiences' assessments. More precisely, it is used to understand audiences' attitudes towards reception and their reaction to certain programmes or advertisements (Vesnić-Alujević 2012). It can also be used to examine theories such as uses and gratification. The problem with the use of an online survey method is difficulty in selecting a representative sample of respondents because they are self-selected volunteers (Graber 2004). Graber (2004) claims that the sample can vary greatly in size, from several individuals to several thousand because the number of people that will reply to it in given time period cannot be predicted, and, similarly to "offline" surveys, there is a difficulty in phrasing questions appropriately so that the researchers understand the correct meanings of answers.

Our survey was conducted between April 27, 2012 and May 10, 2012. It was posted and distributed through social media sites and thus can be referred to as snowball sampling. The demographic variables included age, gender, home country and level of education. Variables linked to media consumption of different content were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "not at all" and 5 "always", "to a great extent", etc.

Participants were asked to what extent they watched the following entertainment content that was categorized as follows (Cronbach's alpha = 0,869): (1) history programme, (2) crime news, (3) sport – basketball, (4) entertainment shows and quizzes, (5) foreign movies, (6) foreign series, (7) telenovelas, (8) domestic movies, (9) domestic series, (10) sports, (11) geographic programmes, (12) travel reportages, (13) humour, (14) music, (15) sex, (16) celebrities, (17) popular science, (18) paranormal activities, (19) religious topics, (20) cars, (21) technologies, (22) fashion.

Informative programmes were categorized by an index of five items (Cronbach's alpha = 0,851). Participants were asked to what extent they watched the following content: (1) foreign politics, (2) domestic politics, (3) social issues, (4) informative programmes (news), (5) political talk shows.

Bartlett's test was highly significant ($p = 0,000$), so factorial analysis was appropriate for these items. At the same time, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was 0,820 which is considered to be a great value (acceptance > 0.5). This meant that correlation patterns are relatively compact and factor analysis should have yielded distinct and reliable factors.

In the second phase, in order to provide more in-depth insights into the viewing context and attitudes of participants, as well as to eliminate social desirability biases, we com-

bined the obtained quantitative results with follow-up qualitative research that included in-depth interviews with selected participants from the survey. We wanted to see if and what kind of connection could be established between watching a certain programme and socio-demographic characteristics, and cultural and lifestyle values of the audiences. The selection of participants was based on their demographic and lifestyle differences as well as their nationality (not ethnicity), in order to keep the balance between different participants in the study. The interviews were held both online and offline to maximize the number of participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed. There were 16 interviews in total, with six interviewees from Serbia, four from Croatia, four from Bosnia and Herzegovina and two from Montenegro. Table 1 shows their demographic structure.

Table 1: Demographic structure of the interviewees: gender, professional status, age, identification of the respondent in the text

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Montenegro	Serbia
M, unemployed, 43 (001)	M, student, 20 (005)	M, employed, 29 (009)	M, student, 21 (011)
M, retired, 65 (002)	M, retired, 73 (006)	F, employed, 58 (010)	M, unemployed, 47 (012)
F, student, 18 (003)	F, employed, 40 (007)		M, retired, 83 (013)
F, employed, 52 (004)	F, retired, 66 (008)		F, student, 29 (014)
			F, retired, 60 (015)
			F, retired, 78 (016)

5. Results

5.1. Demography

In our survey, the participation of females (59.2 %) was slightly higher than males (40.8 %). The majority of respondents were between 25 and 55 years old (79.4 %), with a mean age of 30.2 (SD = 1.16). The smallest age group represented is the one older than 55 years, only 2.4 %, which is a pity because of their interesting attitudes towards former Yugoslav programmes, as they spent a major part of their lives living in that period and with those programmes. When it comes to the distribution of participants by country, 71.1 % were from Serbia, 13.6 % from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 11.5 % from Croatia and 3.8 % from Montenegro. If we compare these results to the distribution of population in those countries (Serbia 44.6 %, Croatia 27.4 %, Bosnia and Herzegovina 24.2 %, Montenegro 3.8 %), we see that Serbia is over-represented while Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are under-represented, although we were aiming for a balanced distribution.

However, the snowball effect and the interest of users in participating led to a disproportionate number of Serbians in the sample.

5.2. TV consumption

Although according to some opinion polls conducted in 2003 the average TV consumption in the Balkans (including the four countries studied here) was 217 minutes/day, with 278 min/day for Serbia and 254 min/day for Croatia (EUMAP 2005), our results were slightly different, with 67.6 % of the research participants watching television up to 120 min/day (29.3 % < 60min/day, 38.3 % 60–120 min/day) and only 32.4 % watching it for more than 120 min/day (20.9 % 120–180 min./day, 10.1 % 180–300 min/day, 1.4 % > 300 min/day). However, the time spent watching TV is also dependent on how much free time the respondent has, for instance, whether he is employed or retired, what his role and tasks in the family are, etc. As the majority of our sample was in the group 25 to 55 years old, they spend less time watching television than the group of older, retired people. This can be illustrated by excerpts from the qualitative interviews:

I come back from work at 5.30 [pm], and then I need to cook dinner, eat with family, do the dishes, etc. By the time I finish, it's already 8.30 [pm]. But my husband never misses Dnevnik at 7.30 [pm]. Sometimes I catch some of it while doing other things

(respondent 007, 40-year-old employed female from Croatia)

I turn on TV when I get up around 8 am. I like watching the morning programme on the public broadcaster for an hour or so. Then I go shopping, prepare lunch, eat, rest and turn on the TV again around 3 pm. I watch two series, my favourite starts at 4 [pm], and then have a coffee with neighbours for an hour or so. After that, I turn on TV again and watch it until I go to sleep around 10 pm.

(respondent 016, 78-year-old retired female from Serbia)

I only watch TV when I'm bored of studying or I'm punished so I can't go out. Then I sit with my parents and watch movies, mostly after Dnevnik at 8 [pm]. Otherwise, I mostly sit in front of my computer chatting or uploading things on Facebook.

(respondent 003, 18-year-old female student from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

I prefer being online than watching TV. TV days are gone! I didn't even buy a TV after I moved away from my parents 3 years ago.

(respondent 014, 29-year-old female student from Serbia)

It was also interesting to look at the differences in television watching among participants from different countries. Croatian participants watch television the least, then participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Montenegrin and Serbian participants watch it the most. We were searching for other reasons why the people from Montenegro spent more time watching television than the other participants from the other countries; one

of them might be that they have the biggest, still present, trust in television compared to other media, expressed among our participants in the survey.

5.3. Watching entertainment vs. informative programmes

Among the participants in the survey, there is no big difference in the amount of time spent between watching entertainment and informative programmes. The entertainment programmes are followed to a medium extent ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.689$), while the informative programmes are slightly more watched among our respondents ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.049$). This is explained by two factors that we discovered through the interviews. First, some participants thought it is more socially desirable² to say they watch informative rather than entertainment programmes:

When people hear I don't watch news, they think I'm stupid. So, I keep saying I regularly do it, while in fact I spend that time playing video games.

(respondent 011, 21-year-old male student from Serbia)

Others explain it by the fact that during the very unstable process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, wars and the difficult period of transition, people got used to watching more informative programmes to stay informed of the current political and economic situation:

Despite my basic lack of interest in politics, I started to watch informative programmes intensively in 1990 or even before, when everything started in the parliament of Yugoslavia, I needed to... At first, I didn't believe the situation will continue the way it did. Later, during the war, we watched informative programmes on TV or listened to the radio whenever we had electricity because we needed to stay informed. Even after the war ended, there have been many things happening in the region, so we got used to watching news, informative programmes and political talk shows a lot.

(respondent 006, 73-year-old retired male from Croatia).

Younger participants stressed they use television more for watching informative programmes, while other media are used for the entertainment ones:

I watch news to stay informed about the political and economic situation in the country and abroad. For issues happening abroad, especially emergencies, I mostly watch CNN and their evening programmes. If I want to watch a movie or something, I go to the cinema or do it on a computer. It's easier.

(respondent 009, 29-year-old employed male from Montenegro).

The results show us that there is no significant difference between genders in watching television: for instance, when it comes to time spent watching television, it is mostly the same (for example, 40.2 % of males and 37.1 % of females watch it one to two hours per day).

2 The social desirability bias is an important one for this study. Although here we have a clear example of it, where a participant explicitly says he watches something other than what he actually does, it is often difficult to find these quotes. This is rather seen through the hesitation when answering the question, the uncomfortableness of the interviewees as well as differences between the results from the survey and the interviews.

During working days, I don't have much time for TV. After work, I help my wife with dinner, then I watch the Dnevnik and later I help my son with his homework. Only later do I have more time for television.
(respondent 001, 43-year-old unemployed male from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

When I work the second shift, I leave home at noon and come back around 10 pm. I'm exhausted so I watch TV for one hour at most. Sometimes, I even fall asleep in front of it.
(respondent 010, 58-year-old employed female from Montenegro)

However, there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between males and females in watching entertainment programmes. While 11.1 % of males say they do not watch entertaining programmes, only 2.4 % of females share their opinion. In fact, the interviews have revealed that the major reason for men saying they do not watch entertainment programmes is only to appear more “serious” or “intellectual” in the survey.

There is a statistically significant difference among different age groups in relation to their watching of informative programmes. While one half of participants younger than 25 do not watch them at all, almost 60 % of those older than 55 watch them regularly. These results are certainly influenced by the existence of Internet and its predominant use by young people but also the lack of interest of younger generations in politics.

5.4. What do we watch? The popularity of former Yugoslav channels

When it comes to watching different TV channels, the majority of respondents watch either national (49.8 %) or foreign (31.7 %), excluding TV channels of former Yugoslav countries. Those are actively sought for and chosen only by a minority of the survey participants (12.2 %), while only 6.3 % of the respondents watch local TV channels. Similarly, when asked to what extent they follow the programmes of TV channels from other former Yugoslav republics, the mean obtained is 2.21 (5-point Likert scale where 1 indicated “not at all” and 5 “always”) (SD = 1.430). We should bear in mind that watching these channels is not seen as socially desirable, especially in Serbia and Croatia and partly in Bosnia and Herzegovina³ (although cable operators have TV channels of other Balkan countries in their offer and these are “secretly” very much followed, especially because the language can be understood, as the in-depth interviews showed). Thus, for many respondents this is a sensitive topic and they openly admit that they watch TV channels from one or more of the other ex-Yugoslav countries only if they have enough confidence in the interviewer. When asked which programmes from other ex-Yugoslav countries in particular they follow, we obtained the following results: *Latinica* [Latin alphabet], a political talk show on Croatian HRT⁴; *Nedjeljom u 2* [Sunday at 2] an interview show on Croatian HRT; *Dnevnik* [News] on Croatian HRT; *Jutarnji program*, a morning show, an informative programme on Serbian RTS⁵; *Utisak nedelje* [Impression of the week] a political talk show on Serbian

3 Although the wars between these states have been over for approximately 20 years, there is still animosity between these countries and many citizens do not want to admit they watch the other countries' TV channels, listen to the other countries' music or read the other countries' books/magazines etc.

4 HRT is the Croatian public broadcaster.

5 RTS is the Serbian public broadcaster.

6 B92 is a Serbian private national TV network.

B92⁶; films on Croatian HRT; quizzes and sport programmes on Serbian B92, Serbian RTS, and Croatian HRT.

After gaining some confidence from the interviewees, when asked why they watch the programmes from former Yugoslav republics, among their other diverse motives, all respondents agreed that an important aspect is that the particular types of programmes either cannot be seen on their local or national TV channels or foreign TV stations outside the former Yugoslav republics, or in the case of foreign TV channels they do not have the capacity to follow it (e.g. lack of knowledge of foreign languages when it comes to movies). However it should be stressed that one of the main advantages for audiences here is the lack of a language barrier, i.e. the big similarity between former Yugoslav languages⁷ is a huge advantage over other foreign television channels, especially among the population who do not speak any foreign language, or among those whose knowledge of foreign languages is rather limited. For instance, a male respondent from Croatia states that he is watching a Serbian channel that plays Serbian folk music he likes, which is not broadcast elsewhere:

I like watching Serbian TV Pink because I like their music shows that are not broadcast on our TV channels.

(respondent 005, 20-year-old male student from Croatia)

Croatian public TV has much better films than any of the Serbian TV channels—that is why I often watch it.

(respondent 015, 60-year-old retired female from Serbia)

Another reason repeated through the interviews was that some respondents have higher trust in informative programmes from ex-Yugoslav countries other than their own, especially in relation to information concerning the political situation and events in the respondent's country:

I always watch Dnevnik on Croatian public television, because they are more reliable.

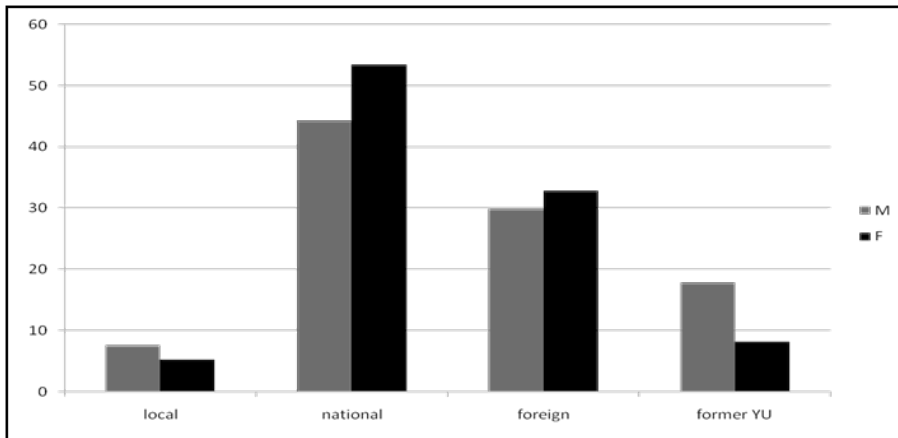
(respondent 012, 47-year-old unemployed male from Serbia)

This is slightly unexpected and illogical in the context of wars in the Balkans during the 1990s. Nevertheless, it is very common.

Graph 1 shows that both genders equally watch local and foreign channels. National TV channels are watched by 44.4 % of males and 53.5 % of females, while TV channels of former Yugoslav republics are more consumed by males (17.9 %) than females (8.2 %). This, however, could be influenced by the social desirability of watching such channels and because male respondents were more open and less scared to declare this in the survey (which was later seen in the interviews).

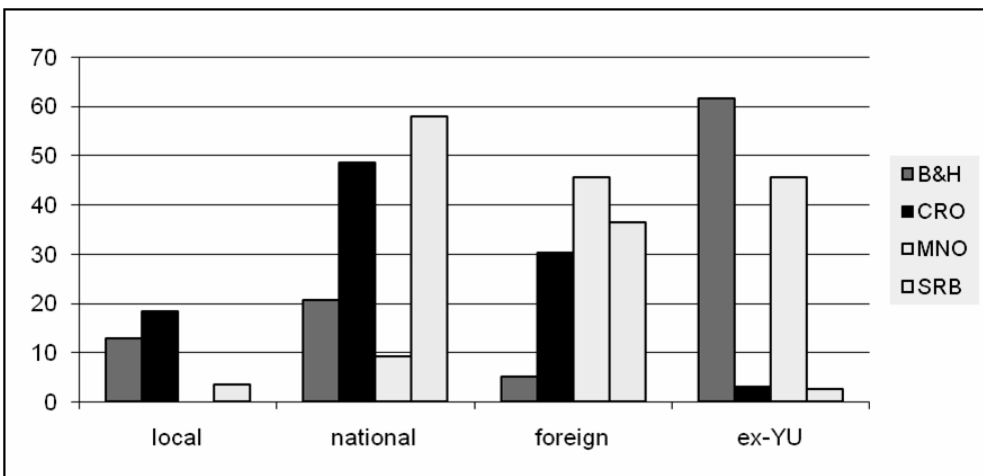
7 Before the 1990s wars, the official language in these four states was called Serbo-Croatian or Croatian-Serbian (depending on the country), despite there being certain differences in the rules, use and vocabulary. However, based on the linguistic rules, some scholars (e.g. Kordić 2005) argue that Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian languages are actually one language with minor differences. Kordić (2005) states that these four languages are political creations and the main basis of new post-Yugoslavian cultural and national identities.

Graph 1: TV channel consumption (%) according to gender



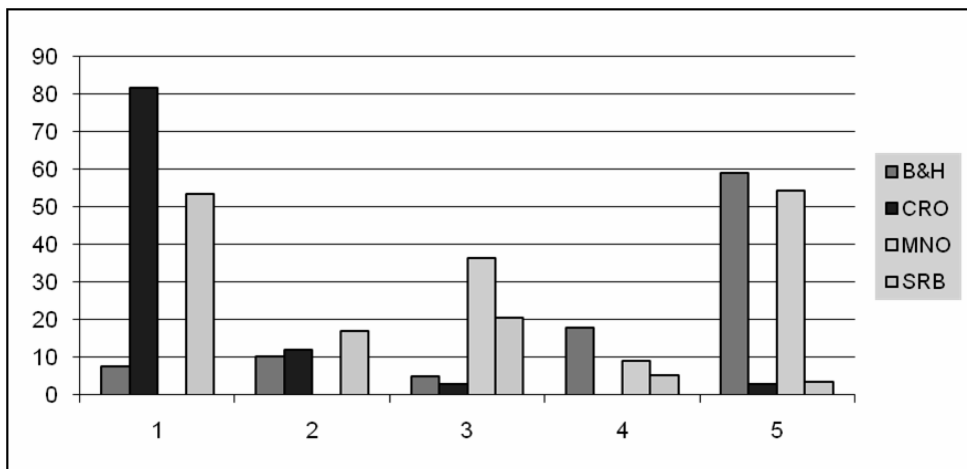
Cross-tabulating the country of origin of participants with the television channels they watch gave us statistically significant results ($p < 0.001$) (Graph 2). While participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina say to a great extent that they watch programmes from former Yugoslav countries, participants from Serbia and Croatia declare that very rarely. It is also interesting that participants from Montenegro and also Bosnia and Herzegovina do not watch their national TV channels to a great extent.

We also wanted to see how much time participants from each state spend watching ex-Yugoslav programmes and these differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) (see Graph 3). It seems that citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro watch former Yugoslav programmes daily, while citizens of Croatia and Serbia do so rarely. This could be explained by the fact that a big Serbian ethnicity lives in Montenegro and watches mostly Serbian television, or both Serbian and Croatian ethnicities living in Bosnia and Herzegovina are watching channels from Serbia and Croatia. However, there is also a social desirability bias that should be taken into

Graph 2: TV channel consumption (%) according to country, $p < 0.05$ 

account, according to which Serbs do not say they watch Croatian television (although two Croatian channels are in the basic offer of all cable TV providers in Serbia) or vice versa. This is due to the 1990s wars and the animosity that still exists between those two nations. Although they watch other nations' TV channels, they refuse to, or are scared to admit it. Similarly, they often hide the fact that they come from a mixed Serbo-Croatian marriage or have a part of their family in the other country, etc. These facts often come to the surface through conversations in which the interviewee feels that they have trust in the interviewer.

Graph 3: Consumption of former Yugoslav channels according to country (where 1 is "not at all" and 5 is "always"), $p < 0.001$



Interesting results that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) were obtained when comparing patterns of viewing former Yugoslav TV channels⁸ according to participants' age. While 75 % of those younger than 25 years old do not watch these channels, almost 30 % of those older than 55 openly admit they watch them every day. This is connected to the habit of watching those channels before the dissolution of Yugoslavia and in some cases nostalgic feelings that were confirmed through the interviews. We should also bear in mind that there are lots of mixed marriages on the territory of former Yugoslavia as well as ethnicities from one country living in another, as explained above, who watch the channels of their country of origin. Young people not only do not have a habit of watching these television channels, but also grew up in a country at war, and subsequently individual separated states, in a region marked by growing strong nationalism, where television broadcasting participated in promoting hostility, and hate discourse, towards the other nations within the region. Their notion that watching those programmes is not socially desirable is even stronger than in the case of the older generation.

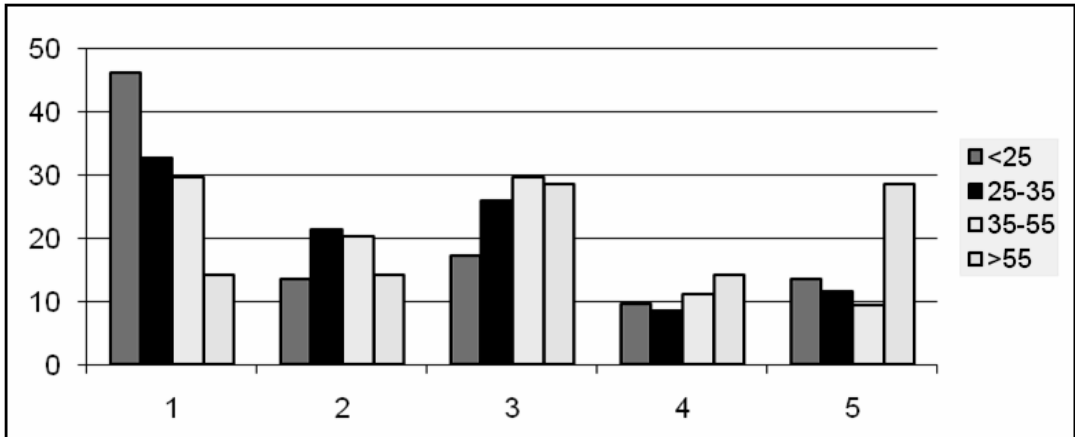
5.5. Nostalgia and watching reruns of programmes from the Yugoslavian era

Together with other factors, television participates in creating cultural policies on the level of every respective country towards the cultural heritage of Yugoslav television produc-

8 When we say former Yugoslav TV channels, we think of all TV channels of these four countries: both those that were founded during the existence of Yugoslavia and commercial channels founded after the dissolution of the country.

tion. When cross-tabulating the viewing of reruns with age, the difference in age groups is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, it is interesting that almost one quarter of all age groups watch reruns occasionally. This shows how much the reruns are still popular (Graph 4).

Graph 4: Consumption of reruns according to age group (where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “always”), $p < 0.05$



I watch reruns because those series and films were much better quality than those made today and they remind me of the period when I personally lived better than today.

(respondent 015, 60-year-old retired female from Serbia)

There is a popular general belief that the quality of such programmes was much higher and that their level, especially of those television series made by respected Yugoslavian directors with some of the best and most popular actors of the Balkans region, cannot be reached again. As reruns are broadcast more in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia than in Croatia, we were especially interested in what citizens of those countries think of it.

*I think there are too many reruns. However, every time they show again *Bolji život* [Better life] or *Naše malo misto* [Our little town], I have to see it!*

(respondent 015, 60-year-old retired female from Serbia)

I don't think we have more reruns than needed. I really enjoy every time I see something from that era.

(respondent 004, 52-year-old employed female from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Some of the domestic films from 1970s will never be replicated!

(respondent 013, 83-year-old retired female from Serbia)

It is important to say that when considering reruns, the most repeated are films, followed by television series, and then educative programmes. However, younger participants do not watch reruns to a great extent, because these do not represent the world in which they live, but also because of the saturation of programming with reruns, so that after being shown several times in a couple of years, a certain programme becomes “boring” to the younger viewers.

We also used Spearman’s test (rank correlation coefficient) to measure the (level of association) correlation between different variables. According to it, a moderate positive correlation has been found between the time spent watching television and watching TV channels in neighbouring countries, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.252$, $p < 0.001$). This means that people who watch television more in general also watch more channels of other former Yugoslav countries. There is also a low positive correlation between time spent watching television and reruns of television programmes from ex-Yugoslavia, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.157$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, viewers that watch more television in general, also watch more reruns. At the end, a moderate positive correlation has been found between watching television channels of neighbouring countries and watching reruns of television programmes, which is statistically significant ($p = 0.255$, $p < 0.001$). This can be explained by nostalgia for past times and the fact that people who like watching channels of other former Yugoslav republics are also those who like watching reruns that remind them of Yugoslavia.

6. Conclusions

Although policy makers have tried to make as big a difference as possible between former Yugoslav states, citizens of those states still share similar attitudes, beliefs and cultural values. Yugoslav radio-television (JRT) with its regional centres that existed until the beginning of the 1990s was first replaced by national public broadcasting services. Later, through the process of media transformation, privatization and digitalisation, the number of available channels in the Western Balkans increased to become a multitude of commercial and local TV stations.

Despite the obvious difference in the technical quality, according to general belief, the quality of programmes themselves is not much higher. This is confirmed by numerous reruns and has to do with the lower budget of public broadcasters and the low interest of commercial TV stations in quality production.

We conducted audience research that consisted of an online survey and in-depth interviews. The majority of participants were between 25 and 55 years old, probably because they are the principal age group of Internet users in the studied countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. As suggested by reception researchers (e.g. Livingstone 2000), while doing the analysis, we integrated the different socio-cultural contexts of viewers in order to illuminate their television consumption.

The results revealed that the audiences in the aforementioned countries follow very similar patterns of watching television. That allowed us to make a broader generalization about a typical user who mostly watches television one to two hours per day and focuses either on a national channel or a channel from one of the other three former Yugoslav countries. The watching of informative programmes increases together with age and education, while the watching of entertainment programmes does not vary according to other

socio-demographic factors. It is interesting that the difference between watching informative and entertaining programmes is not statistically significant.

When it comes to transnational viewing, language plays an important role (Madianou 2005). However, the languages of these four countries are very similar. Therefore, we can say there is no language barrier in understanding the programmes in their original language, although many politicians and even linguists have tried to make this artificial frontier. While the population from Serbia and Croatia admits with difficulties that sometimes they watch programmes on television channels from other former Yugoslav states, as this is considerably unpopular in the respective countries, a different situation is seen in the other two states. Audiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, tend to watch more Serbian and Croatian television channels, because of several reasons: large Croatian and Serb ethnic groups living in those countries, the better quality of programmes and habits from the past. The gathered data also shows that the willingness to watch more programmes of other former Yugoslav channels is higher in the case of older respondents. Therefore we argue that it is linked to collective memory (Halbwachs 1992). The social group that creates collective memory is still present and consists of mostly older generations. Although the television plays a big role in identity construction, and in building an imagined national identity, in this instance we can see that within the territory of the Western Balkans, people do feel a sense of belonging to their new nation, but simultaneously there is also a strong sense, or reminiscence of being Yugoslav expressed through the willingness to, and ease of watching television programmes from other countries within the region, however difficult it is for people to admit this behaviour.

Shared cultural heritage should be seen as a dynamic aspect of the past that creates possibilities for new generations to take an active part in interpreting and representing it (Simeunović Bajić 2012). Therefore the positive response of audiences to reruns of Yugoslav cultural television heritage is driven by the collective memory of people born in (post) Yugoslav societies. However, the main reason for showing reruns is economic – due to the lack of financial means for fresh production – showing reruns is far cheaper than producing new programmes and shows. The choice of repeated programme is not always adequate – it is there to fulfil mostly the entertaining function of television, so films and serial programmes are shown as reruns; nevertheless, the Yugoslav heritage is much larger than that shown to the audiences.

Consequently, we have seen that the formation of different cultural identities on the territory of former Yugoslavia is very difficult to establish because of similar contexts, language and interests. At the same time we saw that the audiences are active in constructing their own interpretations of television programmes and try to oppose to dominant ideologies by watching TV channels of other states, especially their informative programmes and constructing their own meanings out of it.

Lucia Vesnić-Alujević, PhD, is a researcher in the field of digital communications and online politics. She currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Her research interests include political communication, new technologies, online communication and political participation.

Nataša Simeunović Bajić, PhD, teaches Communication History and Cultural Politics at the Faculty of Culture and Media, Belgrade. She has published several significant works in national and international scientific journals and presented several conference papers in Serbia and abroad. Currently she is involved in two research projects of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

References

- Baćević, Ljiljana. 2004. *In media res – efekti medija*. Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka.
- Barker, Martin 2006. "I have seen the future and it is not here yet...; or, on being ambitious for audience research." *The Communication Review*, 9: 123–141.
- Barwise, Patrick T. – Ehrenberg, Andrew S. C. 1987. "The Liking and Viewing of Regular TV Series". *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (1): 63–70.
- Bennett, Christopher. 1995. *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.
- Blitz, Brad. 2006. *War and Change in the Balkans: Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Couldry, Nick – Livingstone, Sonia – Markham, Tim. 2010. *Media Consumption and Public Engagement. Beyond the Presumption of Attention*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- De Bruin, Joost. 2005. *Multicultureel Drama? Populair Nederlands Televisiedrama, Jeugd en Ethniciteit*. Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel.
- Đukić, Aleksandar. 2007. *Televizija*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2002. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- EUMAP. 2005. *Televizija u Evropi: regulative, politika, nezavisnost*. Belgrade: Medijacentar.
- Gerbner, George. 1993. "Society's Storyteller: How TV Creates the Myths by which we Live, Media Values". *Centre for Media Literacy*. <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/societys-storyteller-how-tv-creates-myths-which-we-live>. (31 May 2013).
- Gillespie, Marie. 1995. *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*. London: Routledge.
- Graber, Doris. 2004. "Methodological Developments in Political Communication Research." Pp. 45–67 in *Handbook of Political Communication Research* ed. by Lynda Lee Kaid. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gulisano, Lindsay. 2008. "Cultivation Theory: Creating Perceptions of Life from Reality Television." University of Colorado at Boulder. http://www.colorado.edu/communication/meta-discourses/Papers/App_Papers/Gulisano.htm (15 November 2012).
- Hall, Stuart. 2001 [1973] "Encoding/decoding". Pp. 166–176 in *Media and Cultural Studies Keywords*, ed. by Meenakshi Gigi Durham – Douglas M. Kellner. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hall, Stuart. 1992. "New Ethnicities". Pp. 252–259 in *Race, Culture and difference*, ed. by James Donald – Ali Rattansi. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "The question of cultural identity". Pp. 596–634 in *Modernity: An introduction to modern societies*, ed. by Stuart Hall – David Held – Don Hubert – Kenneth Thompson.

- Oxford: Blackwell.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On collective memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hauk, Esther – Immordino, Giovanni. 2011. "Parents, Television and Cultural Change." Working paper. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/35540/1/86811.pdf> (15 November 2012).
- Howard, Philippe. 2005. "Deep democracy, thin citizenship: The impact of digital media in political campaign strategy." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597(1): 153–170.
- Johnson, Kimberly R. – Holmes, Bjarne M. 2009. "Contradictory messages: A content analysis of Hollywood-produced romantic comedy feature films." *Communication Quarterly*, 57: 352–373.
- Kordić, Snježana. 2005. "I dalje jedan jezik." *Sarajevske sveske* 2005, 10: 83–89.
- Livingstone, Sonia. 2000. "Television and the active audience". Pp. 175–193 in *Formations: a 21st century media studies textbook*, ed. by Dan Fleming. Manchester: Manchester University Press. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/1004> (31 May 2013).
- Madianou, Mirca. 2005. *Mediating the Nation: News, audiences and the politics of identity*. London: UCL Press – Routledge.
- Manić, Ljiljana – Simeunović Bajić, Nataša – Aleksić, Marija. 2012. "Studentska percepcija uloge kulture i kulturnog nasleđa u formiranju nacionalnog brenda." *Kultura*, 137: 194–209.
- Marshall, Simon J. – Gorely, Trish – Biddle, Stuart J. H. 2006. "A descriptive epidemiology of screen-based media use in youth: a review and critique." *Journal of adolescence*, 29(3): 333–349.
- Milivojević, Snježana. 2008. "Kritička tradicija u istraživanju medija. Kulturne studije." *Communication Management Quarterly*, 8: 29–50.
- Milošević, Vladimir. 1984. "Razvoj ekonomske osnove Televizije Beograd." Pp. 97–183 in *Iz istorije Televizije Beograd*, ed. by Vasilije Popović – Slobodan Novaković – Srđan Barić – Slobodan Habić – Vlado Milošević – Ivko Pustišek – Bojana Andrić. Belgrade: Televizija Beograd.
- Mitrović, Ljubiša. 2006. "The geopolitical and sociological aspects of the transition process of a region: from the Balkans towards South-Eastern Europe." *Facta Universitatis, Series: Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology*, 5(1): 9–16.
- Morley, David. 1992. *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies*. New York – London: Routledge.
- Morley, David (2006). Unanswered questions in audience research. *The Communication Review*, 9: 101–121.
- Pejnović Stanković, Vesna. 2010. "Raspad Jugoslavije". *Teme*, 2: 601–618.
- Perez-Ortiz Pablo. 2002. "Television as an Agency of Socialization." Aberystwyth: University of Wales. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/pjp0101.html> (15 November 2012)
- Pitirro, Vincent. 2008. *The Audience and the Film: A Reader-response Analysis of Italian Neorealism*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest.
- Prpič, Marko. 2008. "Kako smo dobili slovenski TV dnevnik". *Javnost – The Public*, 15: 95–112.
- Pustišek, Ivko. 1984. "Međunarodna saradnja Televizije Beograd u okviru sistema Jugoslovenske radio-televizije 1958 – 1978." Pp. 185–249 in *Iz istorije Televizije Beograd* ed. by Vasilije Popović – Slobodan Novaković – Srđan Barić – Slobodan Habić – Vlado Milošević – Ivko Pustišek – Bojana Andrić. Belgrade: Televizija Beograd.
- Radojković, Mirosljub – Miletić, Mirko. 2005. *Komuniciranje, mediji i društvo*. Novi Sad: Stylos.
- Ross, Sven. 2011. "Unconscious Class Awareness? The reception of class dimensions in television fiction and news". *Observatorio*, 5(1): 285–304.
- Rucker-Chang, Sunnie Trinée. 2010. *Cultural Formation in post-Yugoslav Serbia: Divides, Deba-*

- tes, and Dialogues*. PhD Dissertation. The Ohio State University.
- Simeunović Bajić, Nataša. 2012. "Medijsko (re)konstruisanje jugoslovenskog kulturnog nasleđa i kolektivnog pamćenja: slučaj 'Dana mladosti'." Pp 193–224 in *Ogledi o jugoslovenskom kulturnom nasleđu. Okviri konstruisanja jugoslovenskog kulturnog nasleđa*, ed by Ivan Kovačević. Beograd: Filozofski fakultet and SGC.
- Splichal, Slavko. 1999. "Ownership, Regularisation and Socialisation. Rethinking the Principles of Democratic Media." *Javnost – The Public*, 6(2): 5–24.
- Vesnić-Alujević, Lucia. 2012. "Political participation and web 2.0 in Europe: A case study of Facebook." *Public Relations Review*, 38: 466–470.