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COMPARING SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST TELEVISION CULTURE

FIFTY YEARS OF TELEVISION IN CROATIA

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Abstract: This article builds a theoretical model for comparative analysis of media culture based on the notion of genre, and applies it to a comparative analysis of television as a cultural form in socialist and post-socialist Croatia. The paper explores how the shares and generic composition of programme modes of information, entertainment and fiction change in time, and how the contribution of different genres to programme flow and modes varies with the changes of political, economic and technological context. Longitudinal trends in television flows are comparatively

evaluated in relation to trends in genre developments in Europe and their relationship to the changes in the cultural role of television. The results show a decrease in the information and an increase in the fiction mode between socialism and democracy, with some similarities of the Croatian and western television culture in relation to genre and mode composition and flow, albeit with a belated introduction of *neo* television genres. Notwithstanding the limited freedom of expression and ideological content, which necessarily influenced socialist media culture, television as a cultural form in Croatia developed in concert with the global programme flows.

The article is based on original content analysis of television schedules where the unit of analysis is a television programme listing. The analogue television universe is represented by longitudinal data for 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009. The stratified systematic sample (N=3934) for each chosen year consists of two constructed weeks from a universe of all listed programmes broadcast on all free to air television channels with a national reach license.

Key Words: television genre, comparative television culture, media culture, post-socialism, Central & Eastern Europe, longitudinal content analysis, Croatia

1 Introduction

At the very beginning we must engage with the following question: can the history of television in eastern Europe be viewed within the same optic as television in the west? Some authors think it cannot. In the introduction to his book on the cultural history of European television, Bourdon¹ suggests that the history of post-communist television should be viewed within the framework of wider world history instead of the European framework because of the difference in the basic media models. This view echoes the one that post-socialist media systems can't fit into the same typologies and models as the western ones². Recent research shows, however, that the same structural variables of media and political systems apply in the European new democracies, and that the media systems of post-socialist European countries can fruitfully be analyzed and understood with the same optic even if the media systems perhaps exhibit certain unexpected contradictions in comparison to the three western models.³

Did television cultures in European socialist countries develop differently then in the western European countries? Is television programming predominantly related to national politics, or to global trends? Comparative research into socialist and post-socialist media culture is needed in order to answer these questions. While most analyses of post-socialist media or media systems focus only on the post-1990 period and changes that happened in democratic transformation, in order to truly understand their development trajectories it is necessary to also engage with the socialist period as well as with the earlier period of modernization which is in many respects formative for eastern European media and political development as it is for the western European media.⁴ Peruško argues elsewhere⁵ against the attempts to see all (post)socialist media systems as being the same, as the types of socialism had different roots, came to be implemented in different historical cultural and political contexts, and had manifested in different ways in different countries.

Within the eastern European socialism, the one in Yugoslavia after 1948 (the year of the breakup with Stalin) was very different again. Its economic system was based on social and not state ownership; private ownership extended to small private business and craft shops; citizens were free to travel freely to the west, have foreign currency accounts in the bank, listen to foreign media and read the imported journals, newspapers, and books. The economic development of Yugoslavia also differentiated it from other socialist countries, even if the availability of consumer goods was much more limited than in the west.⁶

Comparative media and communication research has gained momentum in recent years⁷. While increasingly including also eastern and central Europe, most comparative research focused on democratic aspects of transition, journalism or media policy, with few exceptions

where focus is on issues of culture, nation and transnational trends⁸ or media systems and audiences⁹.

Media culture has been explicitly theorized as a unit for comparative research.¹⁰ Media culture as posited in this paper is different from journalism culture, which has received much research attention and is included in media system analyses.¹¹ The transcultural comparative media research approach¹² is a complementary viewpoint, which sees media cultures in transnational global media flows of media products and practices. Hepp and Couldry¹³ see media cultures as the results of territorial or deterritorialized thickenings or amalgamations, which change in time: television first contributed to a “territorialized cultural thickening of a nation”¹⁴ while the global media connectivity promotes deterritorialization. While highlighting that “contemporary cultural forms are increasingly generated and communicated across various territories”¹⁵ Hepp and Couldry mention in this regard especially celebrity cultures, popular cultures and fan practices, the context of the national media system is in their approach not discounted but supplemented. In spite of the twists to its identity, television can still be seen as persistently national.¹⁶

Following the most similar case design¹⁷ this article compares longitudinally the television culture of self-management socialism with that of post-socialist transition and capitalist democracy. This comparison is based on the empirical analysis of television flows in Croatia using the same analytical instrument in a longitudinal research design, described in more detail below. This analysis provides a unique comparison of television programming in the two political and cultural periods, at the same time distinct (both in terms of the structural aspects of the political and the economic system) and continuous, happening in the same geographic locale, with (some of the) same media institutions, in the same, yet transformed, media system. In itself, this analysis provides some of the first insights into developments in European socialist television flows to date.

The second comparison is between Croatian television culture – as continuous from socialism to present day – and “western” television culture. This is a theoretical comparison where the empirical findings of the longitudinal analysis of Croatian television culture are related to the theoretical accounts and analyses of the development of western television cultures.

Both serve as an empirical test for our model for comparing media cultures, introduced in the second chapter, conceived as a new dimension for media system comparison.

1.1 The Croatian Context: Development Of A Socialist Mass Culture

National historiographies of socialist mass cultures and their post-socialist continuities are a necessary first step for cross-national comparative research. In Croatia, several authors contributed with historical accounts of the development of television. In this brief sketch of the context for the development of television culture in Croatia we rely on the accounts by Vončina¹⁸ in matters relating to television production. Academic attention to the Yugoslav¹⁹ socialist period has only recently gained attention in contemporary Croatian media and communication studies, with some more presence in ethnology and cultural studies,²⁰ but with no attention to television history. More information and analysis regarding television is available for the post 1990 period.²¹

In Croatia, television developed at a similar time as in other countries of Mediterranean Europe²², but in the environment of self-management socialism²³, an economic and political system with more flexibility and entrepreneurship possibility than the usual state directed economy of eastern European socialism, enabling a large degree of market influence in the print media sector.²⁴ The media system in Croatia follows well the historical development of the Mediterranean polarized pluralism model of media system from the Hallin and Mancini typology²⁵ even with the socialist twist, developing from a common authoritarian model, through a peculiar socialist period in which the television and press became true mass media, to

a post-socialist democratization and a consolidation of mild polarized pluralism.²⁶

Croatia introduced democracy in 1990, and gained independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991. During the turbulent 1990s with the contested statehood and military conflict, authoritarian regressions and retarded democratic consolidation²⁷, the media field was also under pressure from the state²⁸. The media entered a new commercial era after 2000.²⁹

The state broadcaster, already in the 1990s renamed Croatian Radio Television (HRT) from the earlier Radio Television Zagreb, started its public service transformation after 2000. This period coincided (and not by chance) with democratic consolidation in the political field and influenced the expansion of the pressure of the economic field on the media.

The first nation-wide commercial television, Nova TV, started broadcasting in 2000, and RTL Televizija in 2004. In 2009, the last year covered in our empirical research, there were four television channels with national coverage broadcasting in Croatia: two public service channels HTV1 and HTV 2 and two foreign owned commercial television channels, Nova TV and RTL Televizija. In the socialist decades, the only broadcaster with national coverage was the state broadcaster: TV Zagreb 1 started broadcasting in 1956, TV Zagreb 2 in 1979, and TV Zagreb 3 in 1989 (discontinued in 2003).

Radio and television broadcasting in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was not institutionally centralized, but organized in the Federal Republics.³⁰ In spite of the centrally and politically driven trend to unification, Radio and Television Zagreb remained institutionally independent, as did broadcasters in the other federal republics. The establishment of JRT (Yugoslav radio and television) as a common programme exchange and broadcasting umbrella for all broadcasting organizations in the federal republics in 1958 marked the beginning of an attempted unification trend in programming.³¹ JRT was neither a television channel nor a broadcast organization. Unlike the television organizations of the Eastern European countries, the JRT network of the broadcasting organizations in the federal republics was a member in the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the organization of public service televisions of western Europe, and participated in its news exchanges (TV Zagreb was the coordinating organization), as well as in the Eurovision song contest (a strong symbol of western European television culture).

The theoretical and methodological justification for analyzing television culture in socialist Croatia, and not Yugoslavia, should perhaps be explained further. In this we fall back on the notion of a media system, as consisting of all the media available to the population in a certain territory. In the case of Yugoslavia, broadcasting and newspaper publishing were organized within the federal republics. While newspapers were often available outside of the original republic of publication (though those in Slovene and Macedonian languages had less possibility to attract audiences outside of their territories) and some had pan-Yugoslav audiences³², television content was available only through the national broadcasters in the republics and within their borders (and also to all who could receive their television signals so that bordering regions benefited sometimes from a wider selection of television programmes). Editorial decisions of TV Zagreb, which shaped the programming available to citizens of Croatia, were not necessarily the same as those in the other socialist federal republics. Television in the Socialist Federal Republic of Croatia used the same frequency spectrum as it does in the Republic of Croatia after 1991, and the broadcast signal covers the same territory. The extent of the programmes from other Yugoslav television centres in the Croatian television culture will be explored in the analysis below.

Television broadcasting was self-financed from the beginning – the radio license fee funded the introduction of television until 1961 when the mandatory license fee was introduced also for television; advertising – a regular source of income from the start and the very first original programme genre (first broadcasts were commercial programmes transmitted from the Zagreb Fair in September 1956) – contributed some 10%, and rare inputs from state or federal budget were related to significant technological expansions.

Audience research was developed by media companies with the aim of finding out their

preferences, so that their numbers could be increased, including at Radio Television Zagreb. Its Department for Programme Analysis and Relations with Listeners and Viewers was established already in the radio days. The unfortunate loss of quality of popular press was seen as a result of commercialization and the competition for the attention of audiences already in the 1960s.³³

Television was from the start seen by its audience as entertainment (51% of all audiences in 1965), while only 20% saw it as a means to be informed. Entertainment programmes, including popular music and dancing, were the most popular programmes among Croatian audiences, which were already familiar with their Italian and Austrian role models, as well as with imported American series and soap operas.³⁴

This very brief institutional account shows a complexity of influences that shaped television culture in Croatia, from the local programming and independent organization, to the processes of unification or convergence at Yugoslav level, to the international and transborder influences. How did these contextual developments relate to the television flow in socialism and post-socialism, and how does this help us to understand the specific television culture that developed in Croatia since the 1950s?

In the following text, we develop the theoretical argument for embedding the comparative analysis of media culture in the notion of genre. We show how genre can be used as a variable in comparative research of media cultures, and how media culture can be constructed as a dimension in comparative analysis of media systems. Next, we operationalize it and describe our research approach and method. We then present our results in an analysis of the development of television culture during socialism and post-socialism. In closing we highlight our main findings and offer some tentative conclusions on the Croatian socialist and post-socialist media culture and its correspondence to western European trends.

2 Television Genre As Cultural Indicator

In order to compare media cultures as a dimension of media systems we focus on genre as an indicator of media culture. We base this in a long tradition of cultural analysis of television, including the 1960s George Gerbner's Cultural indicators project³⁵, Raymond Williams' concept of television flow and his genre based on the analysis of British television³⁶, Umberto Eco's³⁷ two ages of television defined in relation to the dominant genres and their relationship with the audiences, Jean-Louis Missika's work³⁸ which extended the *paleo* and *neo* television with the *post-television* age, and Wood's analysis of the hybridization of New Zealand television based on generic transformations.³⁹ Recently Bourdon⁴⁰ analyzed the cultural history of European television through changes and differences in genres.

Genre as a concept in media studies denotes a class of texts that share certain characteristics⁴¹ that can be observed and compared empirically. As the basis for television programming (in particular), genres are present in all television systems and on all television channels, irrespective of the character of the channel (public, private, state, community), or the political or cultural environment. Thus it figures as a common structural dimension, whose variations can provide a basis for grouping not only genres into broader programme categories or modes, but also countries with more similar or dissimilar media cultures. This cultural dimension of media systems can then be considered in media systems typologies.

In this article we explore only one aspect of the cultural history of television, and that is the one of co-text⁴² or the flow of television as manifested in the generic composition of broadcasts units of programmes.⁴³ The concept of genre is useful as an indicator as it already includes aspects of production and reception in addition to the textual aspects of the programme itself.⁴⁴ Further research engagement with the text itself will show variations of generic adaptations or innovations in different cultural and social contexts and contribute to understanding different media cultures, both in terms of comparisons across countries/states, as well as in relation to

translocal production or consumption practices.⁴⁵

In addition to the textual differences in genres in relation to historical, geographic, cultural or media systems variations, we can examine variation or similarity at the level of co-text or flow. In order to approach this dimension of television culture, we include the following indicators: the relative share (frequency and duration) of a genre and mode in total broadcast time, the relative share (frequency and duration) of a genre and mode in prime time, and the source of production (domestic, European, American, other; and in-house or independent production).

As television culture is but one of the dimensions for comparing media cultures (if perhaps the most important in terms of media system analysis which is traditionally more interested in the flow media than in cinematic production), a comprehensive set of indicators for the media culture dimension would include the film sector, as well as digital networked media cultures – games, on-line content sharing or subscription sites, twitter fiction - with the similar kind of information: sources of production and revenues, dominant genres, and audiences. The audience is a crucial part in the trimensional definition of genre, and is also a key element in analyzing media cultures and media systems.⁴⁶

In this article we empirically test the feasibility of analyzing socialist and post-socialist television culture in the proposed way, as one aspect/dimension of a more comprehensive dimension of media culture for media system comparison. The best way of testing the model would be to undertake an actual historical longitudinal empirical comparison with other television cultures, a project that would contribute a lot to our understanding of the similarities/differences between western and socialist and post-socialist media cultures and media systems. At this point, however, we shall limit ourselves to comparisons based on existing theoretical accounts and available pieces of empirical data.

For our purpose, periodization of television cultures in regard to generic changes provides a useful theoretical framework. In the time of the *paleo* television (public service, when as Eco⁴⁷ writes, television was 'subject to censorship and considered ideal for its obedient and catholic audiences', when there were "few things to see", the division of genres into modes of fact and fiction was easier to maintain than in the advent of commercial neo-television in the 1980s when the content changed not only in size but also in type. Missika identifies the *paleo* stage of television with the mass audience and few channels; television as a sacral place where the audience does not enter. The full logic of television has not yet developed, and information and entertainment genres transferred from other media to television do not include new formats and formulas. The same is with fiction programmes, which do not yet venture into new topics and possibilities offered by television. With the end of the state monopoly and advent of commercial television comes the fragmentation of the audiovisual landscape and the time of the neo-television begins. "Normative and pedagogical tone of the audiovisual messages is abandoned and replaced by the convivial, intimate tone of agreement which is at the foundation of neo-television".⁴⁸ The genres that best depict this new relationship are talk show and reality show. Television becomes increasingly intimate in its role as a missionary, and gives voice to those members of the audience who want it. Post-television as conceptualized by Missika denotes an age after neo-television in which the reality genre takes television to new lengths of transformation of individuals in public view. While the exposure talk show epitomizes the neo age in television, the post age is recognized by Big Brother and other formats in which the individual is transformed from an average person into a celebrity.⁴⁹

Wood⁵⁰ follows Eco in the understanding that how a genre "deals with" reality is the central point of their differentiation, as well as the central area of blurring of the lines between the genres. Wood builds his analysis of hybridization of New Zealand television on this differentiation between genres. In our model, which builds the framework for comparative research of television cultures, we posit that how genres compose broader programme modes of information (fact), entertainment and fiction will change in time in relation to the theoretical ages of television. In our research we explore the empirical relationship between theoretical television ages and the generic composition of the three main programme modes of information, entertainment and fiction in socialism and post socialism. We compare the results to television ages of western European television history, and draw conclusions regarding socialist and post-socialist television culture.

3 Research Design: Method, Sample, Data

How can we translate these ideas into an empirical research design? Theoretical accounts examine predominantly the textual aspect of genres and their domination in terms of production and audience engagement. As genre theory and approach draws mainly from the qualitative strand in cultural and media studies, quantitative empirical classifications of genres in television programming are mainly found in studies with administrative aims, i.e. in regard to viewing shares in terms of commercially motivated audiences measurements, or in relation to media policy concerns like violence content or programme diversity. Such is the case also with the study led by David Ward⁵¹ in 2005, which looked at programme diversity in four television systems in Europe, including Croatia. The present study adapted the list of programme categories used in this study, while retaining a large number of original categories. While the data sets are in different years, and obtained with different sampling procedures (the Ward study uses one consecutive week in autumn of 2005), which precludes a comparison at the level of datasets, the findings could contribute to some tentative comparative conclusions as well.

The empirical research we conducted is based on some assumptions that shaped our design, data gathering process, and interpretations, and should be clarified before we proceed. First, we presume that published television schedules correspond to programmes actually broadcast: thus, in our results we bridge over this assumption and discuss the programmes as actually broadcast (though in some instances, it is possible that some of the scheduled programmes were in fact not broadcast; this assumption is shared by all studies of this type). The second assumption is also in relation to the organization of television flows: we expect that programming varies according to the time of day, the day of the week, and seasons in the year. This aspect of time is important for the sampling of units to analyze.⁵²

Sampling was conducted with the aim to enable inference to the yearly broadcast output or flow, and the year in the sample is interpreted as an indicator for the whole decade (although we have no way of knowing, from this data, whether any one year is a “normal” year or an anomaly in the decade sample; still, we believe that tentative conclusions regarding the decades’ character can be formed). A ten-year step was chosen as a sufficiently long period in which generic changes would be visible.

While there is no definitive rule for the sampling procedure or size of television programme schedules, previous research offers adequate guidance. Stempel⁵³ found that 12 issues of newspapers adequately represent the average proportion of topics covered; Riffe et al. found for television that “one constructed week adequately predicted the population mean, and two constructed weeks worked even better,”⁵⁴ and Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox and Signorielli found comparable results from a consecutive week or a random yearly constructed week sample.⁵⁵

In order to satisfy the assumptions about the type of content and the constraints of the time on television flow, a representative systematic sample of two constructed weeks was chosen, stratified per day in the week and month in the year. The sample was drawn for 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009. A step of 26 days was used ($k=26$) to select the same dates for each analysed year starting on the 1 January of each year. In this way, two full weeks were constructed: each 14-day sample in a year includes one Monday from the first part of the year, and one from the second part, etc. In 1959 television was not yet broadcast daily but only occasionally, therefore in the sample for 1959 only five days with broadcast television programmes are included in our sample. In order to retain the coherence of the sample we did not attempt to correct for this.

The last year of the decade can be expected to show most of the trends that have built up during the preceding ten years. It also includes interesting juncture years, i.e. 1989, which is across eastern Europe considered the year of the start of visible democratic transition, 1999,

the last year of the transition decade in Croatia. This is, alas, retrospective thinking; the years were chosen backwards from 2009 as the first full preceding year when we began our project in 2010.

The universe of analyzed television broadcasts is consistently defined in the socialist as well as the post-socialist period to include all free to air television channels broadcasting at the national level in Croatia. Radio Televizija Zagreb/ Croatian Radio Television broadcast on one television channel in 1959 and 1969, on two channels in 1979, on three television channels in 1989 and 1999, and two in 2009.

Commercial television at the national level appeared only in 2000, and RTL TV and Nova TV are included only in our 2009 sample.

For the chosen days, television schedules were analyzed according to the prepared coding scheme, described below. The unit of content analysis was a television programme as it was announced in the TV listings. Since the newspaper archives or television schedules have not been digitized into publicly available databases, library archives were consulted to obtain copies of daily newspapers, and the pages with television schedules photocopied or photographed.

The data on genre distribution was obtained by content analyzing television schedules published in the daily newspaper *Večernji list*.⁵⁶ The coding protocol included the following variables: genre, channel, length of the broadcast, start and end time, origin (geographical) of the programme, whether it was a first run or a repeat programme, high and low social significance, and prime time/non-prime time.⁵⁷ The list of the genre categories and modes is included in Table 1.

3934 units of programmes are included in the sample. The obtained data were statistically treated and a descriptive analysis performed in SPSSv.17.

Table 1. Television genres and modes used in content analysis

Fiction	Comedy
	Drama (including series and miniseries)
	Films (cinema and television)
	Soap opera
Entertainment	Breakfast TV
	Sports
	Chat & talk show
	Children's
	Hobbies & leisure
	Light entertainment (includes reality programmes)
	Music (not classical or jazz)
Information/ Factual	Quiz & game shows
	Art and culture (classical music & jazz, theatre, books, dance and programmes informing of them)

Consumer affairs
Current affairs
Documentary (on any topic, except art and culture which was coded in its own category)
Education and science
Mosaic type of programmes
News
Religion

The modes are defined according to Wood:⁵⁸

Fact: “factual programming privileges the sense of an objective world outside the confines of the content and to which that content refers.”

Fiction: “fictional programming conveys the sense of a world that is imaginatively constructed within the confines of the content itself.”

Entertainment: “entertainments represent people who exist beyond the confines of the content itself.”

Trained coders, graduate students of journalism, and members of the Croatian cultural community performed coding. A database was created in Excel with the variables from the coding sheet, including the original titles of the programmes. Coding decisions were in some cases revised by the authors of the paper to ensure that each programme was consistently coded into one programme category or genre.

A caveat is necessary: sorting of individual programmes into generic categories is open to possible disagreement, especially in later samples when new hybrid genres of programming start to appear. Also, even if the sorting was conducted by trained students and later by trained academics experienced in subject matter, and in consultation (when appropriate) with the **International Movie Database** we cannot discount possible cultural bias in sorting decisions.

The results of the analysis of Croatian television culture in socialism and in post-socialism are presented below.

4 Changing Television Flows

Regular television broadcasting in Croatia started in 1956, but establishing a regular daily flow took much longer. Out of the 14 days of our target sample in 1959, a television programme was broadcast only on 5 days. The daily flow is attained by 1969. In the first decade from 1959 to 1969 the time of broadcasting increased almost 10 times; this kind of increase has only been paralleled after the introduction of digital terrestrial television in 2011. The increase of the first decade was not repeated in the second, where in spite of the addition of a second TV channel total broadcast hours decreased. After 1979 the steady increase of broadcast hours was supported also by the introduction of the third television channel, as well as by the extension of daily hours of broadcasting. A significant increase seen in 2009 is again the result of new, commercial channels, and the 24 hour broadcast mode has been already established as a norm on all national, private as well as public channels.

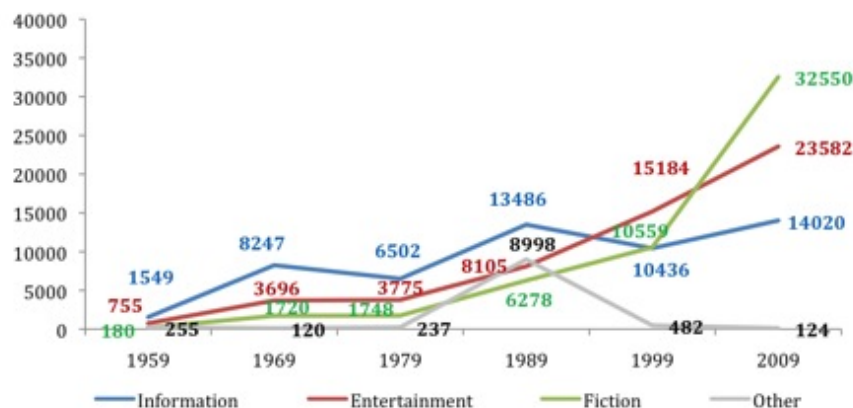


Chart 1. Programme modes on Croatian public service and commercial channels 1959-2009
(minutes of two week composite sample per year)

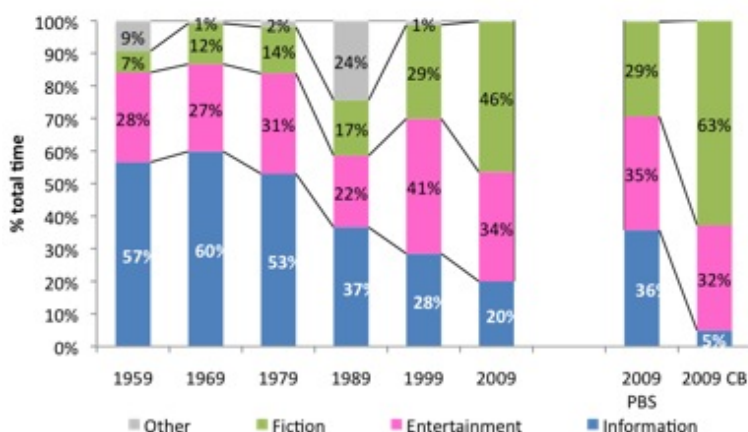


Chart 2. Share of programme modes in total broadcast time, all televisions with national reach in Croatia (1959-2009), PBS and CB 2009

Two related trends are visible in this longitudinal view on the data. The first is the decrease in the share of the factual/information mode that dominated the first decades of television broadcasting in Croatia. The second is the rise of the fiction mode, visible but modest in the socialist decades and dominating the flow on commercial televisions after 2000.

Total shares in terms of programme supply of the information mode on Croatian television decreased from 57% in 1959 to 20% in 2009. The most significant drop was in 1999, the last year before the beginning of democratic consolidation, when the commercial adaptations of the HTV in terms of increased entertainment content have already started. In 2009 the total share of the information/factual mode in the combined PSB and commercial broadcasters output dropped to 20%, mainly due to a very small share of information genres on commercial televisions (5%) but a small increase was evident on PBS in relation to the previous decade. Information mode is an important part of prime time even on commercial televisions where the share of information genres in prime time is more than twice higher than in total time (11% of prime time vs. 5% of total time), a direct result of the media policy in Croatia, which requires a significant share of domestic production in prime time as well as daily news programme broadcasts also from commercial televisions.⁵⁹ This appears somewhat different from the example of the Netherlands where Santen and Vliegthart⁶⁰ found that informational programmes were moving out of prime time. A low share of information programmes on commercial television is in line with trends Aalberg et al.⁶¹ found in western countries where the share of news and current affairs has the lowest scores in countries with most commercialized television systems. In the 2005 comparative study by David Ward, the share of news and current affairs on both public service, but particularly commercial televisions in Croatia, was found to be “shockingly low.”⁶²

Share of the fiction mode in total broadcast time rose from 7% in 1959 to 46% in 2009, and that of entertainment from 28% in 1959 to 41% at the end of transition (1999) and then dropped to 34% (35% on PBS and 32% on CBs). For PBS, the fiction share rose to the 2009 percent of 29% already in 1999. The category of programmes listed as “other” is for 1989 composed mostly of fiction and news from retransmitted western channels broadcast on the TVZ 3, which were not individually listed. This trend of the rising share of fiction programming appears at first glance to be in contrast to some western examples; Wood shows a drop of the share of television fiction in New Zealand from some 50% in the mid 1960s to some 29% in 1999.⁶³ However, it has to be acknowledged that commercial television had just recently been introduced at the time of analysis, a period of less than a decade. Although there are differences in their programming strategies, as shown in other studies⁶⁴, both foreign owned commercial televisions rely on (cheap) imported fiction to fill their flow of television programmes.

Prime time shows a similar relative positioning of the programmes, but with higher shares of fiction in prime time, while the share of entertainment was lower in prime time during the whole socialist period. After socialism, in 1999, entertainment in prime time reaches 40%, and is higher than in the total programming. In 2009 the share of entertainment is 32% while fiction has the highest share in prime time.

This data show the prevalence of the information mode in television output in the socialist decades, and a prevalence of the fiction mode in the democratic era. Interestingly enough, the entertainment mode retains an average share of almost one third of the programme output both in socialism and in democracy, with an interesting increase in 1999, our transition decade sample.

4.1 Genre Diversity

Genre diversity of Croatian television increased from 1959 until the end of transition in 1999 when all our genre categories were actively represented. There are no significant changes in the share of different programme modes on the PBS between 1999 and 2009. Maintenance of genre diversity in the commercial period after 2000 is almost exclusively due to programme broadcasts on PBS while commercial televisions offered a limited range of genres, predominantly falling in the fiction and entertainment modes (Chart 3).

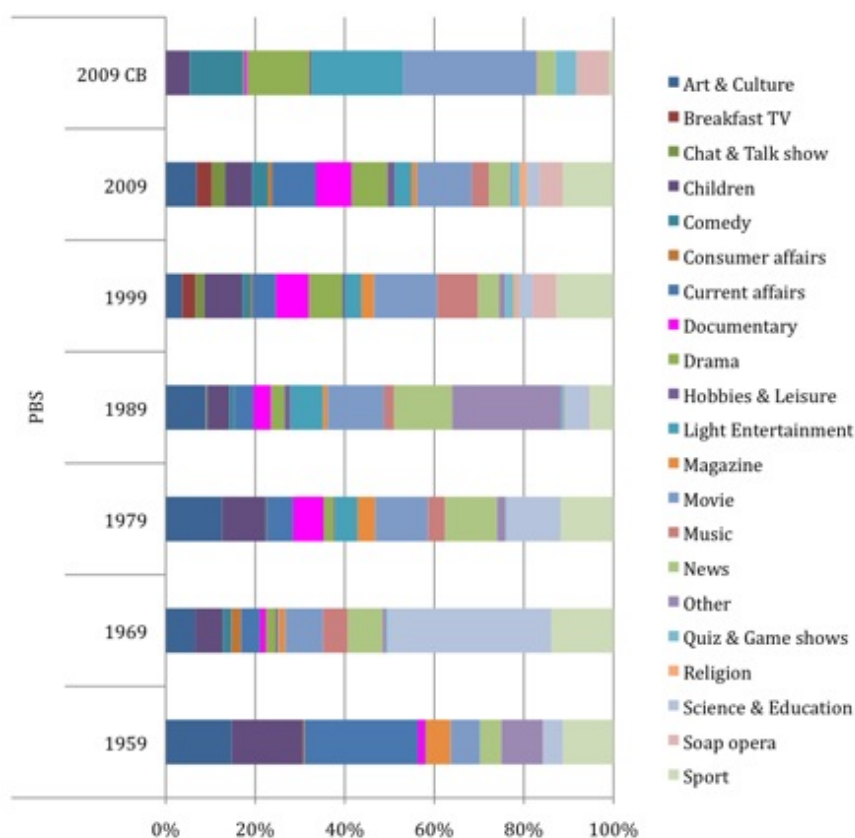


Chart 3. Genre distribution in total broadcasts 1959-2009, PBS and CB

Commercial television did not broadcast any (among the “hard” genres, also described as socially useful content, classified here as information/ factual mode) programmes in the genres of art & culture, consumer affairs, current affairs, documentaries, science & education and religion programmes, but also none of the “soft” genres like breakfast TV, chat & talk show, hobbies & leisure, mosaic programme, children programmes.

Genres like art & culture and science & education had already decreased during the socialist period, and are today present almost exclusively on PBS. Documentary programme exists since the beginning, with the largest share in socialism in 1979 when it reached 7%, where it remains.

Some “soft” genres like breakfast TV, chat & talk show, hobbies & leisure, quiz and game show, soap opera, and religion appeared for the first time in the transition period. In 2009, most of these “new” genres were available to nationwide Croatian audiences almost exclusively on the channels of the PBS (breakfast TV, chat & talk show, hobbies & leisure, religion).

Light entertainment programmes appeared in our sample for the first time in 1979, to become the second most prominent category on commercial TV in 2009 (20%) after films. This includes the majority of the *neo* TV hybrid programmes like reality TV, including the post-television Big Brother. While homemade reality genres were present already in the 1970s (Hidden Camera), light entertainment programmes increased greatly with the advent of commercial television.

4.2 Programme Modes And Their Changing Generic Composition

In the first decade of socialist television, current affairs are the dominant genre in the information/factual mode, while the second largest category of programmes is devoted to art and culture. The genre of news shares a similar position (around 10%) with mosaic type programmes (consisting of a mixture of short formats and content topics) and programmes

devoted to science and education. The later became the dominant genre in 1969 with the largest share of any genre in this mode in the past 50 years. In 1959 and 1969 the category “consumer affairs” includes advertising films and spots, which were at that time separately announced in TV schedules, in addition to programmes devoted to consumer rights. This category of programming is on the rise from 1999. From 1979 until the end of the socialist era the news genre is the most dominant, while the documentary genre and current affairs are the most dominant information genres in post socialist period. News genre was dominant in 1989. We might tentatively interpret this as reflecting the opening of public discussion and the increased need for orientation to the changes in the world in expectation of the coming democratization. A new genre of religious programmes appeared in 1999. Further research regarding the textual characteristics of individual genres, their changes in time in relation to audience reception as well as the production justifications will be necessary for more solid conclusions.

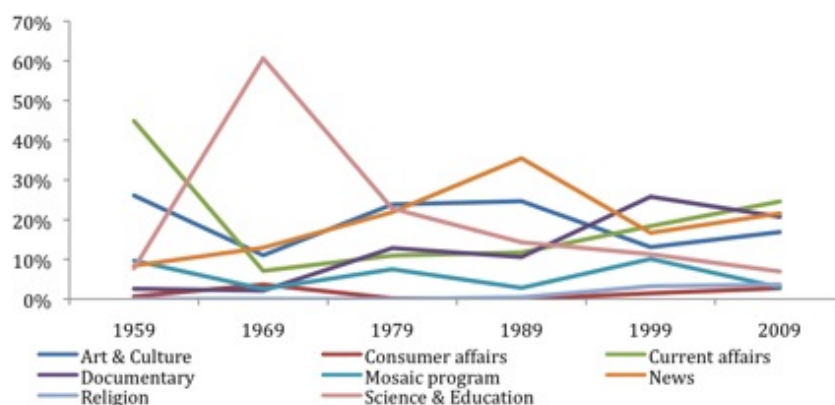


Chart 4. Generic composition of the information/factual mode

The dominant genre of the entertainment mode in 1959 were children’s programmes and sport, which remains the most prominent in the category until 2009, with the exception of 1989 when light entertainment was the most dominant among entertainment genres.

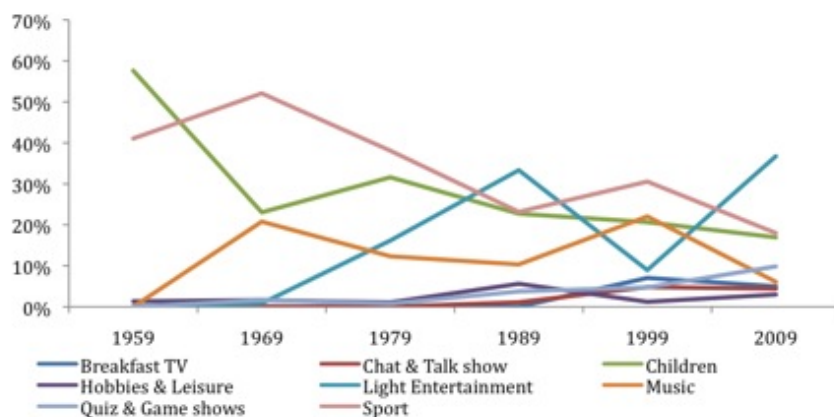


Chart 5. Generic composition of the entertainment mode

The entertainment mode shows some interesting trends: at the beginning, there was children’s programming and sport; music was added into the mix in the 1960s, and light entertainment in the 1970s. This was the decade when the *contest* genre began with a very popular quiz show (*Kvískoteka*) and a popular competition (*Jadranski susreti*). This was also the time of the first domestic hidden camera programmes. Chat and talk shows have a modest share in the post-socialist television flow when they appear for the first time, but reality television as light entertainment shows a sharp increase in 2009, comparable to 1989. As the main genres of the

second phase of commercial *neo* television they are following an upward trend. The largest decrease is seen in the genres from the first decade of television, i.e. sports and children's programming, as well as music (an explanation is probably related to the change in the television environment: with an increased multi-channel environment specialized music channels became available on cable).

Films were first the only, and are still the most dominant genre in the fiction mode from 1959 to 2009 but their share has decreased to 46%. Share of drama in the fiction mode rose to 26% in 1989 and has maintained that level to date. Comedy gained prominence in 1989, and the share of soap opera rose during transition to 19% and remains stable.

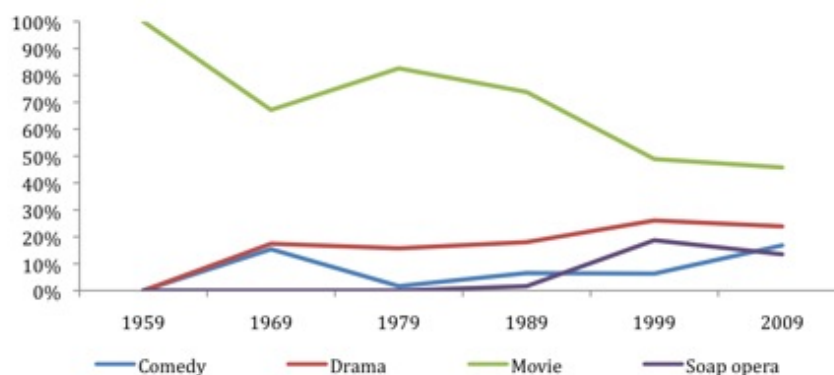


Chart 6. Generic composition of the fiction mode

Much more should be said about the mode of fiction in which we find some of the most memorable television from the socialist times – in the 1970s the drama/comedy *Naše malo misto*,⁶⁵ to date the most acclaimed and popular Croatian television production, and the drama/crime series *Kuda idu divlje svinje*,⁶⁶ the first Croatian series to be a subject of a monograph⁶⁷ as well as the American genre classics which were enjoyed by Croatian audiences in socialism, like *Peyton Place*, *Dynasty*, or *Kojak*. Post-socialist Croatian soap opera, which appeared first on the public service broadcaster, also merits our attention. We must however leave it for another exploration.

4.3 Sources Of Programming

Sources of programming are the next important indicator of the character of television flow. Raymond Williams in his book on *Television* sees the expansion of the American communication system since the 1950s as the main determining factor of television broadcasting in the non-communist world.⁶⁸ American programming, if in small shares, was already present on Croatian television in 1959, with a steady increase until it became the dominant source of programming for commercial televisions after 2000. The share of western and eastern European programmes was increasing during socialist period and is decreasing since 1989.

The share of programmes from other republics of former Yugoslavia increased during the socialist era to between 30 and 40 % (higher in prime time, and with programmes from TV Belgrade, Serbia, contributing the largest share). After stronger increase in 1969 a decrease is noticeable after 1979, and the programmes from the post-Yugoslav states are almost completely absent in the sampled post-socialist period. More research is needed in order to unravel the complex conditions that can explain these influences on the findings on Croatian television culture.

Share of programmes from other countries is slowly increasing during the whole period, from

the 1990s to present day due to popular Latin-American *telenovelas*.

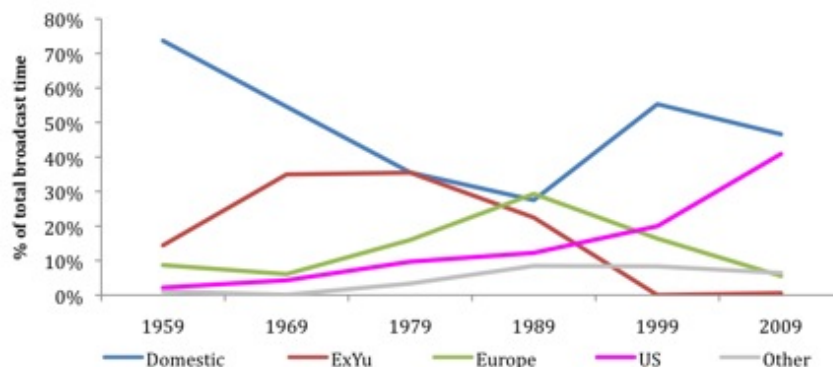


Chart 7. Origin of broadcasts in total daily programme, all televisions with national reach, 1959-2009

In prime time, a more significant role of broadcasts from other Yugoslav republics is more prominent in the first decades of broadcasting, and the share of American programmes more pronounced starting in 1999.

The difference in 2009 programming sources between PBS and commercial broadcasters is striking, where commercial broadcasters show between 54 and 58% of American programmes (higher in prime time) and some 34 % of domestic, and the public service broadcaster shows between 62 and 72 % of domestic programming (higher in prime time), while the American programmes make for 27-21 % (Chart 8).

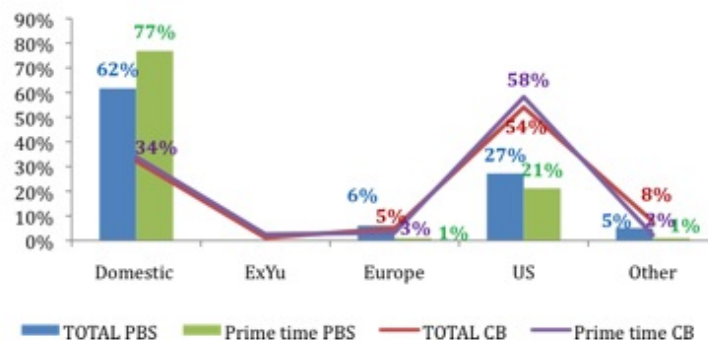


Chart 8. Origin of total and prime time broadcasts on PBS and CB in 2009

5 Conclusion: Comparing Media Cultures

Several clear trends are seen in the history of television culture in Croatia. The analysis shows an increase in the diversity of genres offered on television in Croatia with the passing of the decades. The early years show the majority of programmes in the information category – news, documentaries, educational and political programmes, art and culture, even if the entertainment and show programmes were present from the start. The sharpest decline of information and the increase of fiction programming were evident in the period after commercialization of the Croatian television market during the second decade of the post-socialist period.

The 1999 sample, although already in the post-socialist decade, does not exhibit a significant

change in the distribution and share of modes compared to 1989, except in the increased diversity in genres offered – soap operas and light entertainment programmes gained some programme shares. This shows that the age of neo-television was late in coming to Croatia, and only arrived after commercial televisions Nova TV and RTL TV started broadcasting in 2000s. With the advent of neo-television, there is a significant decrease of the share of programmes offered in the segment of art and culture and science and education, and a tremendous rise in fiction programmes. While reality television has also appeared on our screens, the modest share of talk shows (the second harbinger of neo-television) is conspicuous.

We can find some similarities of Croatian socialist televisions structures with those of Mediterranean European public service broadcasters, including a similar year of first broadcasts, introduction of advertising as a source of funding during the “golden age” of television, and the introduction of the second channel in the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. However, a more detailed comparison in terms of genre trends shown here for Croatia is not possible due to the lack of adequate comparable sources and data for other Mediterranean systems. The deregulation and new commercial private channels were in Croatia paralleled by the introduction of the third “youth” channel of TV Zagreb in 1989, though true privatization and commercialization only arrived after 2000 in the period of democratic consolidation. Membership in the EBU and its Eurovision News exchange and other projects (like the Eurovision Song Contest) contributed to a western optic on television programming. This was also advanced with the early broadcasts in the 60’, 70’ and 80’s of the European entertainment shows (especially Italian), and American television format innovations – series and soap operas. The extent of inclusion of American television culture seems to set Croatian and Yugoslavian socialist television culture apart from the rest of the “communist world,”⁶⁹ although further, more detailed comparisons with other socialist media systems are needed to ascertain exact differences in reliance on imported content from the west and the U.S. in particular.

Similarity of genres and their distribution in Croatian television during the socialist period, and after 1990, with that in western countries, tends to support the thesis that generic programming of television as a medium was significantly influenced by common (or global) characteristics of the medium itself, influenced certainly by the inclusion of Croatia in the global (American) television flow. On the other hand, the appearance of commercial neo television genres only after full capitalist market commercialization during democratic transition speaks at the same time of the importance of the national political and economic context for the development of a television culture. Television is, after all, a social, political and historical form, at the same time both national and global.

The similarities should not lead us to forget the significant differences in the position of the media towards the political realm and government in non-democratic regimes, control (heavier or lighter) of the information and current affairs programming by the ruling politics. In terms of the concept of genre, the challenge to information programming in authoritarian regimes is the problematic relationship of the factual to the genre, where the real is defined from the explicit position of political power.

The findings about the changes in television culture in Croatia, analyzed on the basis of generic definitions and compositions in the past fifty years, contribute to a better understanding of media culture in socialism and post socialism in Croatia. The article shows that there are sufficient similarities in the development of television cultures in socialism and post-socialism, which allow comparisons to be made with the historical ages and genre development of television in the west. Also, the article successfully test the comparative model based on genre as an indicator of changes in television culture.

A caveat is necessary. There is a tendency, based on the long status of eastern Europe as a black whole, to expect that all media cultures or all media systems in the socialist European countries are the same. Developments of research in the past decade have started to show also in the east the variety and detail we so naturally expect to find in the west. While this overview of a socialist and post-socialist television flow opened questions that warrant further comparative research, the findings about Croatian media culture should not be generalized without reservation to other European socialist or post-socialist media cultures.

Biography

Zrinjka Peruško is Professor of sociology and teaches communication and media studies at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. She is founder and Chair of its Centre for Media and Communication Research. Her research expertise covers media systems, democratization dynamics and media cultures in Central and Eastern Europe.

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14 Ibid. ↑

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17 Arend Lijphart, 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,' *The American Political Science Review*, 65, 3, 1971, pp. 682-693. ↑

18 Nikola Vončina, *TV osvaja Hrvatsku. Prilozi za povijest radija i televizije u Hrvatskoj III (1954-1958)*, Zagreb: Hrvatski radio, 1999; Nikola Vončina, *RTV Zagreb 1959-1964. Prilozi za povijest radija i televizije u Hrvatskoj IV*, Zagreb: Hrvatski radio, 2001; Nikola Vončina, *Najgledanije emisije 1964-1971. Prilozi za povijest radija i televizije u Hrvatskoj V*, Zagreb: Hrvatska radiotelevizija, 2003. Nikola, Vončina, 'Iz povijesti Hrvatske televizije. Prvi dio,' *Hrvatski*

- filmski ljetopis** 38, 2004; Josip Horvat, *Povijest novinstva Hrvatske 1771-1939*, Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2003. ↑
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- 28 On the political system dimension of the Croatian media system see Zrinjka Peruško, 'Rediscovering the Mediterranean Characteristics', 2013. On the semi-presidential media system in 1990s Croatia see Zrinjka Peruško, 'Croatia,' 2005; and Zrinjka Peruško Čulek, 'Croatia: The First Ten Years,' pp. 111-145 in David L. Paletz & Karol Jakubowicz, eds., *Business as Usual*, Hampton Press, 2003. ↑
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- 31 Vončina, *TV osvaja Hrvatsku*, 1999. ↑
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- 55 Quoted in Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction. Fourth Edition*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1994, p. 170. ↑
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