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# Remembering Media and Journalism in Socialist Yugoslavia: Oral History Interviews with Audiences\*\*\*

## IZVLEČEK

### SPOMIN NA MEDIJE IN NOVINARSTVO V SOCIALISTIČNI JUGOSLAVIJI: USTNI ZGODOVINSKI INTERVJUJI Z OBČINSTVI

*Spominske študije so se v zadnjih desetletjih razvile v plodovito interdisciplinarno raziskovalno področje, ki je veliko analitične pozornosti posvetilo tudi socialistični Jugoslaviji in njenemu razpadu. Kljub obstoju večjega števila študij o Jugoslaviji pa je vloga medijev in novinarstva v svojem delovanju bila deležna občutno manj raziskovalne pozornosti. V študiji raziskujemo, kakšno vlogo so te osrednje družbene institucije igrale v vsakodnevnih življenjih prebivalcev Jugoslavije, v kolikšni meri so jim zaupali in kako so vplivale na procese tvorjenja individualnega in kolektivnega spomina. Te problematike se lotevava prek analize 96 polstrukturiranih ustnih intervjujev z medijskimi občinstvi. Intervjuvanci so v socialistični Jugoslaviji živeli večino svojega življenja in so imeli nanjo osebne spomine, zaradi česar so lahko prispevali edinstvene in dragocene vpogled v to zgodovinsko obdobje, ki bi jih le težko pridobili na druge načine. Interpretativna analiza intervjujev je temeljila na deduktivnem kodiranju intervjujev, razdelila pa sva jo na tri dele: vsakodnevno uporabo medijev; zaupanje v medije in novinarstvo; ter dožemanje jugoslovanske družbe. Študija predstavlja prvi celosten kratek pregled zbranih podatkov in poudarja potencialno vrednost teh podatkov tudi za prihodnje raziskave. Zbrani podatki razkrivajo tudi, kako intervjuvanci razumejo in vrednotijo jugoslovanski režim, in na splošno zagotavljajo veliko pestrejši*

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*pogled na socialistično preteklost, kot ga je ta najpogosteje deležna v danes pogosto polarizirani javni razpravi.*

*Ključne besede: spominske študije, tematizirane življenjske zgodbe, socialistična Jugoslavija, uporaba medijev, zgodovina novinarstva*

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## ABSTRACT

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*In recent decades, memory studies have become a prominent interdisciplinary field of research, with several studies focusing on the specifics of socialist Yugoslavia and its demise. Less attention, however, has been paid to the media and journalism in the life and functioning of the state. This study explores what role these central social institutions played in everyday lives of the population, what level of trust they enjoyed amongst them, and how they influenced the processes of forming collective and individual memory in socialist Yugoslavia. We consider these issues by analysing 96 semi-structured oral history interviews with media audiences. The interviewees had personal recollections of this era since they lived in socialist Yugoslavia for most of their lives and could thus provide unique and valuable insights not available by other means. Interpretative analysis was performed with deductive coding of the interviews and was separated into three parts: everyday media use; trust in the media and journalism; and perceptions of socialist Yugoslavia. This paper presents a short overview of the dataset and indicates its potential value for future research. The gathered data also reveal the interviewees' understanding and evaluation of the Yugoslav regime and, in general, provide a much more nuanced view of the socialist past than is most often found in today's polarised public debates.*

*Keywords: memory studies; themed life-story interviews; socialist Yugoslavia; media use; history of journalism*

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## Introduction

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In the last two decades, memory studies have become one of the most burgeoning fields of research, often bringing together a variety of disciplines and with them diverse perspectives on a range of historical issues. One such topic is socialist Yugoslavia, which has received ample attention in the broader field of cultural and media studies as an important source of memory and nostalgia of a bygone era. Similarly, there has been extensive historiographical research focusing on the specifics of Yugoslav socialism and the reasons for its collapse. In both cases, however, little attention has been paid to how media and journalism functioned in the socialist system, what role they

played in the everyday lives of its population, and what level of trust they enjoyed amongst them. It is therefore hardly surprising that only a few studies have analysed how audiences remember these arguably central social institutions.<sup>1</sup>

In the article, we explore how the memory of socialist Yugoslavia was created through the past use of media and especially how audiences used and perceived media and journalism in their everyday lives during the existence of Yugoslavia. We address these issues by analysing 96 semi-structured interviews with media audiences, where emphasis was placed on how the interviewees perceived journalistic reporting in socialist Yugoslavia, how they used various types of media, and whether they trusted these social institutions. Even though the focus of the interviews was on the media and journalism, their overall scope was wider. We wanted the interviewees to embed their memories in the broader context and provide an evaluation of the socialist system as a whole. We were thus also interested in the question of how the memory of the media in socialism influenced the processes of collective and individual identity formation in Yugoslavia.

The article is divided into three parts. In the following section, section 2, we present a brief synthesis of the key dilemmas that have emerged in memory studies and how they can be linked to our research. In the second part of the paper, section 3, we present the way the empirical material was collected, the framework used for conducting the interviews, and details of the method used. We gave considerable attention to these methodological and epistemological aspects because of both the largely experimental nature of the research and the sheer quantity of the unstructured data already gathered and which continues to grow. The last part of the article, which incorporates sections 4, 5 and 6, overviews some of the most notable topics addressed by the interviewees. Interpretative analysis of the interviews was done with deductive coding and leads to some general observations that may serve as an entry point for further analysis of the material.

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## Memory Studies and Media Remembering

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Recent decades have seen remarkable interest in memory as a topic of public discussion as well as a field of research. In an overview of the field, Erll emphasises that “the practice of remembering and reflection on that practice have become an all-encompassing sociocultural, interdisciplinary, and international phenomenon”<sup>2</sup> She therefore notes both the political and cultural prominence of memory in the public sphere and the fact it must necessarily be treated as a transdisciplinary research problem, bridging otherwise established academic fields.

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1 For exceptions, see Maruša Pušnik, *Kulturna zgodovina elektronskih medijev* (Ljubljana: FDV, 2019), Ch. 3. Sabina Mihelj and Simon Huxtable, *From Media Systems to Media Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), Ch. 8.

2 Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1.

There is a consensus on at least two interrelated assumptions made in memory studies. First, memories are socially constructed by nature. They “are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled”.<sup>3</sup> A related assumption was already made by Halbwachs, a founding father of what later came to be called memory studies. He stated that “a remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present”.<sup>4</sup> Second, the distinction between individual and collective memory is unclear and often blurred, with a constant interplay between them a prerequisite. Collective memory depends on individual remembering, but that remembering happens in a socio-cultural context where media and other institutions establish and shape knowledge of the past.<sup>5</sup> The past is always shared, making it therefore debatable whether our own memories exist at all since “there are social dimensions to the apparently most individual memories”.<sup>6</sup> A similar observation was also made by Halbwachs when noting that “our memories remain collective” even when we were the only participants in certain events, since “in reality, we are never alone”.<sup>7</sup>

A man must often appeal to others’ remembrances to evoke his own past. He goes back to reference points determined by society, hence outside himself. Moreover, the individual memory could not function without words and ideas, instruments the individual has not himself invented but appropriated from his milieu. Nevertheless, it is true that one remembers only what he himself has seen, done, felt, and thought at some time.<sup>8</sup>

These two assumptions are also very important for our empirical study. Since it is based on interviews with individuals, their recollections must be seen as interpretations, not statements of fact. Memory is deceptive and prone to various falsifications, with some authors observing that “talk is cheap”.<sup>9</sup> Similarly to other cases, the recollections of our interviewees were also shaped by the wider context in which they developed, by the groups they formed part of, and by the intersubjective micro-context in which they were uttered. Collective memory constructs history and typically depends on interpretative struggles,<sup>10</sup> which naturally extends to our interviewees and their own recollections. This can be likened to the approach of social constructivism, which explores “lived experiences and interactions with others”.<sup>11</sup>

It must be stressed that collective memory is not necessarily the same as the memory of the nation. Criticism of “methodological nationalism”, which posits a nation as “the

3 Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 8.

4 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 69.

5 Erll, *Memory in Culture*, Ch. 4.

6 Jérôme Bourdon, “Media Remembering: The Contributions of Life-Story Methodology to Memory/Media Research,” in: *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, eds. Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 64.

7 Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 23.

8 Ibidem, 21.

9 Colin Jerolmack and Shamus Khan, “Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy,” *Sociological Methods & Research* 43, No. 2 (2014): 178–209.

10 Todor Kuljić, *Kultura spominjanja* (Ljubljana: Filozofska Fakulteta, 2012).

11 John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007), 36.

natural social and political form of the modern world” became prominent in memory studies.<sup>12</sup> Many authors based their criticism on Anderson’s foundational study on the emergence of nationalisms.<sup>13</sup> For Anderson, nations as communities could be viewed as something that is necessarily imagined through various forms of mediated communication, which can bring about specific solidarities. A similar claim can certainly be made about memory since practices of remembrance can both create and preserve communities and identities.<sup>14</sup> Another point of reference was Hobsbawm, who pointed out that nationalisms are a result of the past, which is necessarily made by people, often professional historians.<sup>15</sup> They are the ones who are actively producing histories of particular nations, making any notion of them being somehow ‘natural’ impossible. Močnik’s analysis demonstrates that a similar logic of production of national histories was in place amongst prominent Slovenian historians.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Hobsbawm also noted that, contrary to common beliefs, modern traditions are typically invented and then ritualised to inculcate specific social values and norms in nations.<sup>17</sup>

We believe these issues are especially relevant for the post-socialist context where memory of the socialist past does not necessarily correspond with the national memory, which has usually been established by the mainstream official discourse in transitional societies. Even more, in these narratives the entire history of communism is often “reduced to its totalitarian dimension”,<sup>18</sup> reproducing a binary, black-and-white understanding of history. As Velikonja argues, Slovenia is today often perceived as the antipode of Yugoslavia, and this “ideological binarism” is further upgraded through an identity transformation: “We have transformed from former Yugoslavs into contemporary Slovenes”.<sup>19</sup> Even if this transformation is suppressed in the nationalistic discourse, which bets on the idea of stability of the national identity throughout history,<sup>20</sup> processes of modern identity formation, as it is also clear in our analysis of the interviews, were very turbulent even in recent history.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the aforementioned binary opposition is rarely emphasised by the interviewees themselves.

As a structural consequence of this suppression of the socialist past, the memory of this period became part of the “underground” discourse, excluded from mainstream

12 Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, “Introduction,” in: *Transnational Memory*, eds. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 1. See also Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond,” *Global Networks* 2, No. 4 (2002).

13 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, New York: Verso, 2006/1983).

14 Maja Breznik and Rastko Močnik, “Organized memory and popular remembering: The encounter of Yugonostalgia theories with socialism,” *Memory Studies* (October 2021): 2.

15 Eric J. Hobsbawm “Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,” in: *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London, New York: Verso), 255.

16 Rastko Močnik, *O pisanju zgodovine* (Ljubljana: Založba/\*cf., 2015), Ch. 4.

17 Eric J. Hobsbawm “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in: *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

18 Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 2.

19 Mitja Velikonja, “New Yugoslavism in contemporary popular music in Slovenia,” in: *Post-Yugoslavia*, eds. Dino Abazović and Mitja Velikonja (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 62.

20 Jernej Kosi, “Je bil proces formiranja slovenskega naroda v 19. stoletju res zgolj končni nasledek tisočletne slovenske kontinuitete?,” *Zgodovinski časopis* 64, No. 1–2 (2010), 154–75.

21 See Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, eds., *Memory and Political Change* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

discourses or what can also be called “official memory engineering”, where retrospective remembering is highly selective in the quest for shared memories.<sup>22</sup> These alternative practices of remembering were mainly reflected in the rise of Yugonostalgia on a cultural level, in informal settings, and in the non-institutionalised practices of remembering.<sup>23</sup> This is one of the main reasons that oral history interviews concerning the socialist past have become one of the methods most frequently used in the regional development of memory studies.<sup>24</sup> After 1989, namely, socialism remains present in this region generally in the form of a memory which “captures the meaning of the past as a lived experience”, or, more exactly, in the form of a “testimony of an experience related to history by an emotional link”.<sup>25</sup> The popularity of Yugonostalgia was followed by extensive research into post-socialist nostalgia, which differentiated itself from traditional political historiography, but also largely avoided any direct confrontations with their portrayals of history.<sup>26</sup>

The binary opposition between the (national, Slovenian) present and the (multi-national, Yugoslav) past, which is specific to the post-socialist context,<sup>27</sup> was already etched deeply into the framework for conducting the interviews, in which the binarism between the interviewer (grandchild) and interviewee (grandparent) structurally corresponded with the opposition between capitalism and socialism, together with a series of related oppositions and transitions.<sup>28</sup> Even if such a “bi-polar vision” is an unavoidable structural necessity in research on memory of the socialist past, it has often been acknowledged as an epistemological obstacle.<sup>29</sup> In recent years, an increasing amount of literature has focused specifically on the memory of media consumption in socialism<sup>30</sup> and that research – especially because the memory on media consumption is associated with the memory of leisure time, fun and relaxation – also reveals the complex and non-binary nature of the interviewees’ evaluation of the past.

Research on media consumption in socialism is important not simply because it constitutes an important source for memory studies, but also for media and communication studies that aim to analyse the perception of socialist media by audiences, which was rarely an object of concurrent empirical research in the socialist regimes.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, oral history interviews represent a basic source for understanding how public life functioned in socialism.

22 Breznik and Močnik, “Organized memory and popular remembering.” Compare to Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.”

23 Velikonja, “New Yugoslavism,” 57–95.

24 See for example Valeria Kasamara and Anna Sorokina, “Post-Soviet collective memory,« *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48, No. 2–3 (2015), 137–45.

25 Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia*, 97.

26 Breznik and Močnik, “Organized memory and popular remembering,” 6–9.

27 Maruša Pušnik, “Media memorial discourses and memory struggles in Slovenia,” *Memory Studies* 12, No. 4 (2017), 433–50.

28 Mitja Velikonja, “Lost in Transition: Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-socialist Countries,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 23 No. 4 (2009), 536.

29 Anikó Imre, *TV Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 3.

30 See Imre, *TV Socialism*. Mihelj and Huxtable, *From Media Systems to Media Cultures*. Pušnik, *Kulturna zgodovina elektronskih medijev*.

31 See Slavko Splichal and France Vreg, *Množično komuniciranje in razvoj demokracije* (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1986). Gertrude J. Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

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## Methodology: Oral History Interviews with Audiences

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People who followed the media in a certain historical period may be seen as valuable sources of insights into the past. They can provide explanations and interpretations concerning the everyday use of different media types, while also addressing the issue of trust in these institutions and subsequently the wider social system. Since such personal insights are hardly available using other means – and with the availability of suitable interviewees naturally diminishing over time – our longer-term research goal was to build a comprehensive archive of oral history interviews. Projects like this may prove to be even more important given that the “everyday practices of readers, viewers and listeners are typically beyond the remit of sources found in institutional archival collections”<sup>32</sup>

All of the interviews were transcribed for the purposes of future analysis and are continually being archived in the Social Science Data Archive located at the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana),<sup>33</sup> which ensures their future unavailability does not simply turn them into “dead knowledge”.<sup>34</sup> The empirical dataset currently consists of 96 semi-structured interviews performed in-person in Slovenian. We first constructed a general-purpose framework for conducting the interviews, with thematic areas defined very broadly so as not to miss certain phenomena with too narrow a focus. This opens up many possible avenues for future analysis of the archived material (e.g. by using focus groups) and means these interviews can serve as an initial exploratory step for studying more specific phenomena that here might only be mentioned in passing. Yet, a downside of this broadness is that the overarching insights into the material in the sections below are inevitably sketchy and introductory and thus call for further exploration.

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### Ethical dilemmas and framework of the interviews

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The interviews were conducted by first-year undergraduate students attending the History of Journalism course (Journalism study programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences). During this course, students received hands-on training and thorough instructions on how to carry out the interviews and transcribe the audio recordings, with attention paid to the possible ethical issues involved.<sup>35</sup> We aimed for complete transparency and tried to clear up any pitfalls of doing this kind of research as quickly

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32 Sabina Mihelj and Jérôme Bourdon, “Doing audience history,” *European Journal of Communication* 30, No. 1 (2015): 3.

33 See: Jernej Amon Prodnik, *Novinarstvo v socialistični Jugoslaviji in imaginariji medijev skozi občinstvo, 2019* (Ljubljana: Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov, 2020). Jernej Amon Prodnik and Jernej Kaluža, *Novinarstvo v socialističnih Jugoslaviji in imaginarij medijev skozi občinstvo 2020* (Ljubljana: Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov, 2021). Jernej Amon Prodnik and Jernej Kaluža, *Novinarstvo v socialističnih Jugoslaviji in imaginarij medijev skozi občinstvo 2021* (Ljubljana: Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov, 2022).

34 Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 4.

35 See Jernej Amon Prodnik “Nekaj etičnih dilem pri vključevanju študentov v raziskovalno delo,” *Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov*, <http://www.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/blog/2021/blog/nekaj-eticnih-dilem-pri-vkljucivanju-studentov-v-raziskovalno-delo> (20. 3. 2022).

as they appeared. Even though conducting interviews was part of the students' study obligations, archiving and thereby making them available for future research was entirely optional and had no influence on their grade. An informed consent form, which detailed the research project and future access to the interviews, was a prerequisite. In the form, interviewees had an option to remain anonymous.<sup>36</sup> They could also retract statements they deemed too personal or sensitive for the archived version of the interview. Where appropriate, strict anonymisation was applied throughout the interviews to avoid third parties being identified.

We developed a framework for conducting the interviews that assured a standardised structure for the future comparability of the interviews, while providing the interviewers with a general direction and an overview of the topics to be covered. This interview matrix included three broad thematic areas: 1) Media use; 2) Trust in the media and journalism; and 3) Perception of Yugoslav society. We provided the interviewers with a description of these areas and several sample questions. This gave them a sense of the topics that could be addressed, but also left them with enough leeway to have a genuine in-depth conversation with their interlocutors.

To provide more control and a tidier structure, the interview matrix further divided interviews into four stages of life: childhood, youth, adulthood, and senior years. All of the thematic areas mentioned above were to be discussed separately in these stages of life, which – depending on when interviewees were born – broadly corresponded with different historical periods of socialist Yugoslavia. Adulthood, for instance, in most cases overlapped with the peak of Titoist Yugoslavia in the 1970s, while senior years largely corresponded with the rise of nationalisms and disintegration processes. We also added “events of reference”, where the aim was to help interviewees remember particular historical periods better. These included the Vietnam War, the Space Race, or Tito's death amongst others. It was up to the interviewers to sensibly connect these events to a specific stage of an interviewee's life.

The interview matrix was also followed in the textual analysis of the interviews performed in NVivo, software for organising and analysing qualitative (unstructured) data. Such a deductive coding strategy is common while analysing interview transcripts.<sup>37</sup> In the analysis, the qualitative approach of life history was combined with the methods used in oral history and memory studies of media consumption.

## Properties of the sample

Our aim was to encompass as many time periods of media use in socialist Yugoslavia as possible, ranging from the early 1950s up to the independence of Slovenia in 1991. This is why the students were instructed to choose interviewees born between 1940

<sup>36</sup> Pseudonyms are used for those interviewees who opted for anonymity, as indicated by the use of quotation marks, for instance '*Prijazna Gospa*' (Eng. *Kind Lady*). In all other cases, interviewees are referred to by the first letter of their first name and surname, for instance *P. Bezjak*. In the majority of cases, the pseudonyms were chosen by interviewees themselves if they had decided on anonymity.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*.



and 1955 (the arithmetic mean and median of the sample are both 1947, the mode is 1946). It was recommended they spend approximately 1 hour speaking to their interviewees. The lengths of the 96 archived interviews vary between 29 minutes and 180 minutes, with the arithmetic mean for the interviews being 59 minutes, the median 54 minutes, and a standard deviation of 25 minutes.

Even though this was not intentional, since we had limited control over the sampling process and could not aim for true representativeness, the demographic characteristics of the interviewees in our study do not deviate significantly from those of the general population in the same age bracket (65 and older). Men are slightly overrepresented in the sample (53.1%) and the interviewees also seem to have a better education since one-third hold at least a high school degree. The large majority of our informants (around 95%) were already retired at the time of the interview. About 30% of them were living in urban areas and 70% in rural ones, which more or less overlaps with the shares in the general population (in Slovenia, two-thirds of the population lives in places with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants<sup>38</sup>). If we were to consider the place of birth and where the interviewees grew up, the number of people living in rural areas would be even higher.

We could expect overrepresentation of the informants coming from central Slovenia because they were chosen by students who study in Ljubljana, but this bias was in fact not so pronounced: 28 interviewees for instance came from the Central Slovenia statistical region, 20 from the Drava region, 11 from the Savinja region, 9 from the Southeast Slovenia statistical region, 8 from the Gorizia region etc. Apart from the Coastal-Karst and Mura statistical regions, which are underrepresented, these numbers roughly correspond to the general shares in the population.

In the majority of cases, students chose their grandparents or other older relatives as their interviewees, meaning the sample was generally based on convenience and ease of accessibility. It must therefore be stressed that people who were living a family life and had children and grandchildren are very likely to be overrepresented in the sample. Another source of imbalance was the explicit recommendation that talkativeness, accessibility, good memory, and openness to discussion should be considered while choosing interviewees so as to make the interviews richer in content.

Finally, it must be noted that the vast majority of interviews was conducted in the month of May in 2019, 2020 and 2021, when the summer semester was coming to a close. Although this was not the topic of the interviews, contemporary socio-political events such as SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the illiberal turn in politics and the continuous conflicts between the Slovenian government and the media were at least implicitly addressed by the interviewees and contrasted with examples from the past.

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38 See Ana Vučina Vršnak, "Slovenija ostaja ruralna dežela," *Dnevnik* 9. 6. 2012, [www.dnevnik.si/1042534899](http://www.dnevnik.si/1042534899) (20. 3. 2022).

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## Everyday Media Use in Socialist Yugoslavia

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Media use was the central topic of the interviews but, unlike some other research based on oral media history,<sup>39</sup> the focus was solely on the (journalistic) mass media, namely television, radio, and the press. Use of personal communication channels, for instance telephones, or storage media formats, such as LP records or cassettes, was not addressed. The development of the mass media was closely linked to the general development of socialist Yugoslavia and corresponds to the accelerated modernisation of socialist society between the 1950s and 1980s. In that time frame, a transition from rural to urban areas and the general transformation from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial society occurred.<sup>40</sup> The availability of the media thus saw considerable growth in Yugoslavia: in 1950 a total of 357 newspapers was published, while in 1974 this figure had risen to 1,988 newspapers, with monthly magazines seeing the biggest growth, from 61 to 633. In the same time frame, the number of radio sets rose more than tenfold, from 336,000 to 4,081,000, with a similar change happening with television sets, from 9.2 households per TV subscription in 1965 to 1.7 in 1980.<sup>41</sup>

The rise of the media accompanied broader socio-political processes, with radical changes also occurring in individual lifestyles. Even though this was not the topic of the interviews, these changes were implicitly or explicitly addressed. This is not surprising because remembering the media implies “remembering contacts with a certain world ‘out there’, which comes to exist through the television screen” (or, we might add, other types of media) and “generates a variety of interactions that cannot be reduced to simple viewing.”<sup>42</sup>

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### Everyday use of the radio and the role of the press

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The post-war situation in the early 1950s was a starting point for most of the interviews, with radio often mentioned as the most important medium in the childhood and youth of the interviewees. In 1963, namely, more than 90% of people living in Yugoslavia listened to the radio.<sup>43</sup> Radio was thus perceived as the most important media, even though newspapers also played an influential role in certain households. As one interviewee notes: “Radio was always in the kitchen; it was the centre of everything” (‘Športni navdušenec’). Similar domestication of radio can be observed in other interviews. Its use was often described as an event that unified the whole family: “Radio was a sacred thing, it was turned on only at certain times of the day, when daily reports or music shows were broadcasted; the whole family – and sometimes even some neighbours and friends – gathered on such occasions” (‘Planinski Sokol’).

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39 Pušnik, *Kulturna zgodovina elektronskih medijev*.

40 Eric D. Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999): 9.

41 Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media*, 20, 21. Splichal and Vreg, *Množično komuniciranje in razvoj demokracije*, 72, 80–84.

42 Jérôme Bourdon, “Some sense of time: Remembering television.” *History and Memory* 15, No. 2 (2003): 13. See also Alice Bardan, “Remembering socialist entertainment: Romanian television, gestures and intimacy.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20, No. 3 (2017): 10.

43 Splichal and Vreg, *Množično komuniciranje in razvoj demokracije*, 84.

Especially popular were radio programmes, which were suitable for group listening: radio broadcasts with folk-pop music such as *Četrtekov večer* [Eng. *Thursday evening*], testimonies of the Partisans fighting in the Second World War anti-fascist movement in *Še pomnite tovariši?* [Eng. *Do You Still Recall, Comrades?*], and the Sunday noon broadcast. “We gathered in the evenings after we had finished our work / ... / and we listened to the radio, especially to music shows. When I was a child, we sang a lot. In the evening one could hear singing in almost every house, particularly when people were busy with the tasks that were usually done together like pumpkin peeling or the husking of corn” (‘Prijazna Gospa’).

Listening to radio, therefore, fitted in quite smoothly with the existing social practices in the post-war period. Even though radio played an important role on various occasions and in specific social settings, media consumption was often restricted since it was regarded as something that encourages idleness. It was thus opposed to the urge to work as much as possible, as especially pronounced in the 1950s, a time characterised by modest living conditions in a mainly agrarian society. Interviewees who were still children at the time often described how their parents limited their media use: “There was not a lot of time for fun / ... / we had to work in the fields with our parents, we only relaxed in the evening or if it was raining” (A. Golež).

Like radio, print was often associated with a particular social function of connecting the community in this early period: “I still remember how my mother said: ‘the neighbour brought the newspaper!’ We didn’t buy our own newspapers, of course” (I. Markič). Newspapers, magazines and books were often shared or stored after reading so they could be re-used, and the topics appearing in them were often discussed by people. Reading was also regularly considered as part of leisure time: “We had time to read on Sunday afternoon, when we had fights over the newspapers from the previous week” (F. R. Steiner).

The interviewees often recalled their parents reading the press. In these memories, on most occasions the newspaper belonged to the *pater familias*: “My father was somewhat politically educated, and he sometimes read for us from the newspapers” (I. Trotošek). Everyday socialisation typically occurred in a common physical space in local environments and the interviewees often perceived their life as being separated from the topics discussed in the press, especially when it came to politics. One respondent stated: “Those were the years when I was not interested in political stuff / ... / I mostly struggled with my own things, with work, friends, and women” (‘Lojtra’).

Many interviewees recalled the role of the magazines, such as popular magazine *Tedenska Tribuna* (Eng. *Weekly Tribune*, popularly called *TT*), which gained in popularity because their approach adapted to their audiences’ needs and was lighter in nature. Magazines devoted to specific audience profiles also became more prominent in the 1960s, for example *Življenje in tehnika* (Eng. *Life and Technology*) for technically engaged people, or *Ciciban* and *Pionirski list* for children and youth. Religious books published by Mohorjeva družba and the (bi)weekly Catholic magazine *Družina* (Eng. *Family*) were also popular and were not prohibited in Yugoslavia, as some might assume.

## Television reigns supreme

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Certain interviewees, especially those who had lived in an urban environment, were already familiar with the moving image format that television brought to their lives early on as they had experienced it in the cinema. In most cases, the first memories of TV were very detailed and usually referred to the early 1960s when collective watching was common. This occurred in either the richer households of a village or town that could afford to buy a television set and allowed their neighbours (notably children) to join in watching or in semi-public spaces like community halls:

I was in seventh grade when our village got its first television set / ... / we had a club in the cooperative house [Slo. *zadružni dom*]. People bought a TV set together, with common funds. / ... / Adults watched daily reports and talk shows, and we watched movies and music. / ... / Later, my father came to the idea that we should buy our own TV set, but my brother and I were against it – we were afraid that we wouldn't be allowed to go into that club anymore. ('Rumena Magnolija')

As the above anecdote reveals, socialising was an important aspect of this ritual for many, but only the early experiences were collective. Towards the end of the 1960s and later, television became an essential item in most households, while the practice of watching TV became either individualised or at least reserved for members of the nuclear family. In this period, most interviewees moved out of their parents' houses and completed their education. They began to establish their own families, usually in their own dwelling. A living room with a TV set became the main venue for consuming media and replaced the rural kitchen where large families had gathered to listen to the radio. A predominantly rural lifestyle, related to the cycles of nature and farm work, was in many interviewees' stories replaced by a modern working lifestyle in which TV often represented the biggest source of evening relaxation, especially for men: "This is like a chronic disease or addiction / ... / I have always watched the evening news programme. At that hour, there had to be peace in the house" (D. Rajtmajer). Women, in contrast, were not so accustomed to watching the evening news and preferred movies or TV shows, which often started after the children had gone to bed. Of course, one can also find notable exceptions to this stereotypical pattern in the sample.

Television was crucial in the popularisation of sports fan culture in Yugoslavia, with interviewees mentioning ski jumping, skiing, the Olympic Games, football World Cups, and basketball World Cups as examples. There is little doubt that the most prominent example of a televised event was Tito's death in 1980, as announced by the TV anchor Tomaž Terček. With his recognisable and memorable voice and always serious manner, most interviewees could recall exactly what they were doing and how they felt when he uttered those famous words: "Comrade Tito has died". When the interviewees were asked which journalists they could recall from Yugoslavia, most remembered TV anchors and announcers, which goes far to demonstrate the role of TV in producing celebrities, even in a non-Western context. Memories of the most important public events – from the first moon landing in 1969 to the war for

Slovenian independence in 1991 – were in one way or another connected to television watching, but often quite vaguely, which confirms Bourdon's point that "much of our media experience, especially in an increasingly mediated world, is not encoded (or not primarily) as specific 'media experience'".<sup>44</sup>

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## Trust in the Media and Journalism

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There was no dilemma concerning whether "to believe or not". I would say that we trusted what we were watching and listening to. (A. Žabjek)

Memories connected to people's feelings and attitudes regarding the past are especially prone to falsification since emotions, opinions and beliefs we have of certain phenomena today can easily affect the perception of our past attitudes to them.<sup>45</sup> While these issues must be taken into account, the interviewees' responses seem unambiguous: most conceded that they believed in the information transmitted, particularly before Tito's death in 1980, and were generally not critical of journalistic reporting in socialist Yugoslavia. They did not look for alternative sources of information, but also did not regard themselves as being deprived of different worldviews. Statements like "We trusted the media, there was no alternative" ('Bela Lilija') or "We believed everything, there was only one TV channel" (A. Žener), were common in the sample.

Comparisons between trust in the media and the absence of diverse sources is one of the most frequent topics the interviewees noted, especially in their childhood and youth. When asked about their belief in the news, they often made comparisons with today's overabundance of information from many different – and often opposing – sources. It is only in such an environment that the question of belief in the news could even be raised. One interviewee for instance mentioned that her first doubts about credibility appeared when the media became similar to what it is today: "People who were supposed to inform us started to insult each other / ... /, the same event has many different interpretations, I don't know what is right anymore" ('Lepa gospa').

The everyday influence of the wider social context was frequently acknowledged by the interviewees as an important reason for them trusting the media and the Yugoslav system in general: "That's how we were raised" (P. Bezjak); "My father told me not to criticise / ... / I didn't like it when people were criticising things" (J. Krek); "We trusted the media because of the 'brotherhood and unity', we were unified: one for all, all for one" (D. Borovnik). Particularly for the earlier periods, it seems that criticism was often considered rude and unnecessary, as something tearing apart the social cohesion. That is why criticism of journalistic reporting did not form part of usual small talk, as is often the case today.

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<sup>44</sup> Bourdon, "Media Remembering," 61.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Ross, "Relation of implicit theories to the construction of personal histories," *Psychological Review* 96, No. 2 (1989): 341–57.

## (Lack of) Information diversity and sources of criticism

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The absence of information plurality was often mentioned while describing the media situation in the 1950s, when radio was the main source of daily news for many households. In this historical period, a diversity of political views was generally seen as a threat to social cohesion due to the devastating consequences of ideological differences during the Second World War. Older people who had lived through that epoch often discouraged any kind of political debate, even in private settings. Those in search of different worldviews frequently used foreign media and depended on the radio signals coming from across the borders. The influence of Western media was especially important for people living in the border regions: *Radio Trst* (Eng. *Trieste*) was followed in the Upper Carniola region and *Radio Graz* in Carinthia and some parts of the Styria region. Slovenian programmes broadcast on *Radio Vatican* and *Voice of America* were also often mentioned as sources of information with alternative, ‘Westernised’ political views, while *Radio Luxembourg* was important for introducing Yugoslavia to Western pop culture in the early 1960s.

At least to some extent, journalists could criticise specific local problems and flaws, but as the interlocutors realise today it was not possible to doubt the social system’s foundations. For instance, one interviewee noted: “There would be a special kind of problem if someone tried to criticise the ideal of brotherhood and unity among different nations / ... /, this ideal had to be preserved and respected” (H. Molan).

The first signs of criticism usually corresponded with youthful stubbornness and disobedience. In some cases, this was related with the reading of comics (Miki Muster and his famous comic *Zvitorepec* were mentioned many times) and satirical magazines like *Pavliha*, which enjoyed high circulation and popularity. In this context, Fran Miličinski – Ježek (Eng. *The Little Hedgehog*), the award-winning satirist, comedian, director, writer, chansonnier and self-proclaimed clown, was often mentioned as a figure whose jokes were seen as an implicit critique of the system. Similarly to how Bardan describes the New Year’s Eve television programme in socialist Romania<sup>46</sup>, it seems that what contributed to the popularity of Ježek’s performances was its mildly subversive nature, ambiguous expressions, and “the structure of feeling” describing the bittersweet life of an ordinary little man in the socialist reality, with whom audiences could easily identify. The structure of jokes circulating in non-formal environments (usually directed against important members of The Party, such as Stane Dolanc) followed the same recipe.

The rise of liberal politics and student social movements in Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and early 1970s was not perceived as a turning point for most of the interviewees, who also paid scant attention to the political crisis related to the Croatian Spring (also known as Maspok) between 1967 and 1971. They usually saw this as a conflict between the Croats and Serbs, which was not as important for the situation in Slovenia. Expressions of nationalistic tendencies were often recognised as a classic example of

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<sup>46</sup> Bardan, “Remembering Socialist Entertainment,” 11.

forbidden content in the media sphere of socialist Yugoslavia, but the interviewees often perceived this censorship as a positive side-effect of stricter control of the media content, particularly when they took account of the consequences of such nationalistic discourse later in the 1990s. Even the first memories concerning the diversity and pluralism of political views in the media are often associated with the rise of conservatism and nationalism during the 1980s, when, for instance, “Slovenian and Serbian views on the situation in Yugoslavia began to diverge radically” (‘Dušan Anon’).

The male interviewees’ experience of military service was often described as a paradigmatic example of the actual solidarity existing among the different Yugoslav nations where the principle of “brotherhood and unity” was, on one hand, manifested in practice, but where on the other any expressions of disobedience or rebelliousness were also strictly rejected. One interviewee mentioned that his hair had to be shortened due to the military rules, another had minor problems after criticising the quality of weapons, while many of them remembered the mandatory daily practice of group watching the evening news on television, which they regarded as a typical example of the authoritarian tendencies of the system.

### **Censorship and contradictions of freedom of speech**

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While discussing criticism and censorship, the interviewees often related these phenomena to interpersonal relationships. This seemed a bigger concern for them than potential control of the media content. Instances of undercover agents monitoring discussions in pubs and inns were frequently mentioned. Similarly, anecdotes were given about encounters with police or customs officers. Both were perceived as incarnations of the non-democratic system since they could act strictly if not treated properly. Problems that emerged with the work environment and career development due to the public expression of political opinions, religious affiliation or a controversial family history are another common theme discussed in the interviews. Still, these anecdotal cases were not very pronounced and were told almost as trivia that rarely had a defining influence on the interviewees’ lives or their overall attitude to the system. They should therefore be evaluated systematically against other historical sources, which lies beyond the scope of this article.

In general, answers regarding freedom of speech vary widely. Some interviewees stated they did not dare to be critical even in a private setting, especially in the 1950s. Others mentioned there were no particular issues attracting such criticism among friends or co-workers. Some interviewees did not regard themselves as being in any way deprived of free speech, while others noted they did not even have a need for any such criticism. This was explained as an outcome of their relative happiness, satisfaction with individual and social life, and feeling of social security: “As kids, we lived in a bubble, without problems, without deep considerations as to what was going on in the media” (H. Molan). “There were no [political] parties, no questions as to who to believe. I got my first job and went there immediately. Everything was pleasant” (R. M. Perlič).

Such favourable social circumstances not only led to a lack of interest in criticism, but also a broader absence of interest in journalistic reporting: “I wasn’t deeply interested in the reporting by the media. When you are young, you are not interested in that, but I never doubted whether it was true. / ... / We were living our lives, socialising, playing games / ... / we didn’t ask ourselves whether we trusted the media” (‘Cvetoča orhideja’). Especially news about domestic politics – a prime example being summaries of various Party meetings – were considered boring and separate from the interviewees’ actual lives.

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## Perceptions of Socialist Yugoslavia

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“To some extent, you’ll always be limited, remember that. Always!” (F. Mastnak)

As observed in the literature, self-consistency in identity presentation is a general tendency among the interviewees.<sup>47</sup> In our study, where the relationship between interviewer and interviewee also corresponds to the seemingly contradictory binary opposition between the present and the past (and simultaneously between capitalism and socialism), this tendency was even more pronounced: the interviewee’s perception of their own identity was in fact rarely caught in two paradigms opposed to each other. They did not regard themselves as being subjected to some radical transformation, such as what happened to the socio-political system in the transition years.

The interviewees’ opinions of the socialist regime and quality of the media reporting offer insights that reject simple and unambiguous black-and-white narratives of the past. They also partially reveal the complex logic of the identity-formation process during (and after) socialist Yugoslavia, while serving as a good illustration of why unequivocal anti-communism and demonising of the socialist past have difficulties becoming an attractive ideology in Slovenia with mass political appeal. As emphasised by Wilmer, “people living in Yugoslavia identified themselves in terms of multiple, intersecting, and sometimes overlapping identities”.<sup>48</sup> Even if their Slovenian identity was always important and not necessarily suppressed, people also identified as Yugoslavs, as workers, and as active builders of society.

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## Opinion on the regime and identity formation

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The Yugoslav identity based on the “normative foundations of anticapitalist Marxism”, which is also “anti-Stalinist” in nature, “emphasized the ‘socialist’ rather than communist basis for Yugoslav society, ‘self-management’ in the economy, and the coexistence, however uneasy, of national ethnic and socialistic civic identities”.<sup>49</sup> This identity

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<sup>47</sup> See Joshua Kaldor-Robinson, “The Virtual and the Imaginary,” *Oxford Development Studies* 30, No. 2 (2002): 177–87.

<sup>48</sup> Frankie Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State and War Identity, Conflict, and Violence in Former Yugoslavia* (London: Routledge, 2002), 81.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.



was expressed and maintained through many public rituals, for instance *the Relay of Youth* (Slo. *Štafeta mladosti*) or the *Train of Brotherhood and Unity*, and especially through admiration of the figure of the leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz – Tito. It was also related to the feelings of pride that emanated from the country’s international reputation as a unique, powerful and independent entity, that was neither East nor West. Even the Yugoslav communication system was unique and significantly different from the stereotypical image of the state-owned and centralised Eastern European media.<sup>50</sup>

In this sense, it is no surprise that regrets about the collapse of Yugoslavia, which the interviewees viewed as a respected society (and not on the periphery of the First world), were often present in the interviews. Similar arguments appeared when some interviewees tried to explain the quality of Yugoslav journalism. It was typically seen as a very respected profession and its interpretations of world events were mostly considered to be neutral. Yugoslavia was not part of the Western or Eastern bloc and Yugoslav audiences were supposedly receiving objective information about world events. One interviewee, for instance, stated that “reporting was objective / ... / Yugoslavia was not a fan of Russia, / ... / We were freer, we were not as repressed as people living in Hungary or Czechoslovakia” (A. Zupančič). One question many interviewees lacked an exact answer for was how and when this Yugoslav identity disappeared, or indeed, whether today it is still somehow present.

Even though the period of socialist Yugoslavia is often presented as a repressed and somewhat rejected part of Slovenian history – an obstacle to realisation of the 1,000-year-old dream that finally came true upon Slovenian independence – our interviewees’ memories of Yugoslavia were rarely marked by any significant traumas. As one interviewee noted: “None of our generation – in contrast with those born in the 1930s – experienced any atrocities” (‘Lojtra’). Even though the interlocutors had varying evaluations of the socialist regime – with many mentioning negative aspects of the system, for instance the Goli otok concentration camp for political prisoners – they had not undergone a radical experience (such as war) in their lifetime. A certain sense of reconciliation with the past can thus be discerned from the responses: “That’s how the system was. It was a one-party system and we agreed with that / ... / we thought it was just right back then. That’s how they taught us / ... / and that’s what we taught our children. / ... / It was considered normal” (‘Prijazna Gospa’). Even though such a stance dominates, some interviewees mentioned the discomfort they felt when they retrospectively realised the regime’s problematic aspects or the post-war killings of local collaborators with the Nazi regime.

### **The past is a foreign country? Comparisons and (dis)continuities**

The conversations ended with questions concerning how the interviewees view the past regime today. It seems that the students had often implicitly anticipated that

<sup>50</sup> See Slavko Splichal, “Media Research in Socialist Slovenia/Yugoslavia: Some Afterthoughts,” *Triple-C* 18, No. 1 (2020): 350–59.

their interviewees would emphasise the radical otherness of the past. Yet, on the contrary, they often rejected such simplistic assumptions and argued that the change might not be so radical after all. One interviewee for example said: “Some of us are satisfied and others are not. Those who are dissatisfied now, were also dissatisfied back then and will be dissatisfied in 10 years time” (A. Zupančič). Another stated similarly: “It was hard back then for working people like us, but it is the same today, we are living in difficult times” (‘Julijana’).

Such a stance, which stresses that ‘nothing ever changes’, is probably generally characteristic for the perspective of ‘ordinary people’ whose lives are not necessarily dramatically affected by the regime change. However, the reason for the frequency of this view in our sample might also be attributed to the fact that Yugoslav self-managed socialism was significantly more democratic and open than in the Eastern European regimes, which is why the transition to market capitalism was not necessarily seen as such a radical event. Similarly, differences between contemporary journalism and journalism of the past were often relativised by the interviewees, as evidenced by several similar statements: “The media is always the same / ... / you can never believe it 100%” (M. Martinšek). “The journalistic profession has always been under pressure” (J. Maj). “There have always been good journalists / ... / and there have always been poor journalists acting on the behest of someone” (S. Mlakar).

The idea of historical continuity is also seen in political opinions regarding the regime. The majority of interviewees were completely devoted to the unity of Titoist Yugoslavia before 1980, while the same people later also unanimously supported the Slovenian independence movement. This transition seems to hold a deep structural influence on the interviewees’ understanding of their individual and group identity. Memory regarding the gradual change in worldviews is especially murky. In general, the interviewees’ responses fail to provide deep insights into the precise course of historical development throughout the 1980s when this change was underway. They sometimes mentioned the influence of dissident media like *Mladina* and *Nova Revija*, and events that added to the liberalisation of civil society (the rise of alternative culture, the punk movement, JBTZ court proceedings etc.).

Yet, the interviewees even more often explained the beginning of the disintegration of Yugoslavia with anecdotes from their own lives. These examples often describe the rise of banal nationalism on the level of everyday life. They also involve simplified economic reasoning, with claims that Slovenia put proportionally more funds into the common Yugoslav budget than it received from it, while combining this with the supposed laziness of the ‘southerners’. Many jokes circulating at the time illustrate this well: “In Slovenia, a concrete mixer is spinning, while ‘in the south’, a piglet on a spit is spinning [Slo. *V Sloveniji se vrtijo mešalci, na jugu pa odojki*]” (H. Molan). This narrative seems to be so effective because it corresponds with two main arguments for Slovenian independence: first, with the idea that Slovenians are culturally different from the other nations of Yugoslavia and, second, that independence would be accompanied by rising economic prosperity, as implied by the notion of Slovenia as “The Switzerland

of the Balkans". It is therefore not surprising that the criticism of contemporary politics often referred to the failure to realise these hopes: "They promised us another Switzerland / ... /, but now we are closer to the Visegrad Group" (D. Pernek).

The other reason it is difficult to locate the exact point of the transition might relate to the fact that in both the period of Titoist Yugoslavia and the times of Slovenian independence public opinion was very homogeneous. In contrast to this, when the interviewees tried to explain the biggest difference between the past and the present, they often used the dichotomy between the homogenous society with a unified will (as something not necessarily negative) and the divided society in which we are currently living: "We experienced brotherhood and unity, and I miss that today" (V. Štiglic). "I am quite confused by the media reporting today – the news is so diverse / ... / as it suits the actor which supports or funds certain media. Today, it is difficult to know what the real truth is" ('Bela Lilija').

Individualism, which replaced unity and uniformity, was often presented as the main structural reason for the polarisation of society in which everyone has their own truth. Even if most interviewees agreed that they once missed plurality and diversity, they often still described the situation today as democratisation that "has gone too far". As one interviewee noted: "There is only one truth, there cannot be many truths" ('Želimir Anon').

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## Conclusion

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Many aspects of socialist Yugoslavia continue to be under-researched and deserve more attention in the future. Our aim in the empirical part was to add a small piece to this puzzle. We paid special attention to the influence media use has on the process of creating collective and individual memory, identities, and ideological positioning through time, and the evaluation of the Yugoslav regime compared to today's post-socialist Slovenia. We necessarily had to resort to certain generalisations when it came to the insights provided by the interviewees. Our study should hence be seen as an initial exploration, a roadmap presenting possible directions for other researchers, who should probe these topics further. The conducted interviews enable unique insights into the everyday use of the media by ordinary people, which often go missing in other approaches that, for instance, merely analyse institutional changes or use typical archival material. The interviews can thus serve as an inductive entry point for new ideas and possible avenues for research or as a supplementary source for other empirical material.

Since we were forced to make broad generalisations, we treated the sample in a homogenous manner. Still, all of the archived interviews include basic demographic data, which makes it possible to further analyse the sample from this point of view and construct different profiles based on gender, level of education, or geographical location. Generalisations made from a few individuals to the whole population always

carry risks and possible problems and thus it makes sense to put more focus on specific social subgroups and their memories.<sup>51</sup> Further segmentation of the sample or profiling of the interviewees could offer a possible solution in this regard, especially because we aim to continue with this project in the future and thereby expand the archive with additional interviews.

The drawing of firm generalisations seems especially tricky when it comes to the issues of legitimacy and questions concerning trust in relation to particular institutions. This is very much the case when opinions are polarised, at least among some groups and individuals.<sup>52</sup> To a considerable extent, socialist Yugoslavia remains such a contested and emotionally charged historical era, and significant differences might exist between the memories of certain social groups. Digging deeper into the dataset therefore seems necessary to provide an unbiased interpretation.

In our opinion, there seems little doubt, however, that the interviews provide a substantially more nuanced understanding of a contradictory social system than is usually afforded in public discussion. For a long time, this system enjoyed remarkable legitimacy amongst the general population and these interviews can help give some answers about why that was the case, and why – at least to an extent – it still remains so. The interviewees address many of these issues, yet in the broadest sense they also provide insights into how political opinions in the most general sense are formed, developed, solidified, entrenched and self-justified through an individual's personal history.

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# SPOMIN NA MEDIJE IN NOVINARSTVO V SOCIALISTIČNI JUGOSLAVIJI: USTNI ZGODOVINSKI INTERVJUJI Z OBČINSTVI

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### POVZETEK

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Spominske študije so se v zadnjih desetletjih razvile v eno izmed plodovitejših raziskovalnih področij, ki praviloma združuje različne discipline in s tem raznolike vpogledе v vrsto zgodovinskih tematik. V teh analizah je bilo precej pozornosti posvečene socialistični Jugoslaviji in njenemu razpadu, vendar sta bili vloga in funkcija medijev in novinarstva v delovanju te države največkrat spregledani. To je težava, še posebej glede na to, kako pomembno vlogo igrajo te institucije v modernih družbah. V študiji sva se osredotočila na vlogo, ki so jo te institucije igrale v vsakdanjih življenjih prebivalcev Jugoslavije, stopnjo, do katere so jim zaupali, ter na vpliv, ki so ga imeli ti spomini na proces vzpostavljanja identitet in vrednotenje socialističnega sistema kot celote.

V članku se teh problemov lotevava s pomočjo analize 96 polstrukturiranih ustnih intervjujev z medijskimi občinstvi, ki so jih študenti dodiplomskega programa Novinarstvo na Fakulteti za družbene vede (Univerza v Ljubljani) izvedli v letih 2019, 2020 in 2021. Intervjuji so bili izvedeni osebno in so v povprečju dolgi eno uro. V celoti so bili transkribirani in so v takšni obliki tudi arhivirani v Arhivu družboslovnih podatkov, zato so dostopni za nadaljnje analize. Intervjuvanci so po vnaprej postavljenem kriteriju morali biti rojeni med letoma 1940 in 1955, študenti in študentke pa so

jih izvajali predvsem s svojimi starimi starši, ki so v socialistični Jugoslaviji živeli večino svojega življenja in imajo nanjo torej prvoosebne spomine.

Interpretativna analiza intervjujev je temeljila na deduktivnem kodiranju intervjujev in je bila zastavljena že z matrico za izvajanje intervjujev, ki so ji morali pri izvedbi pogovora slediti izvajalci intervjujev. Na osnovi matrice sva empirični del razdelila na tri dele. V prvem delu sva se osredotočila na vsakodnevno uporabo medijev, kjer ugotavljava, da je v začetnem povojnem obdobju poleg tiskanih medijev v življenjih intervjuvancev osrednjo vlogo pričakovano odigral predvsem radio. Spremljanje tega medija je bilo pogosto kolektivno, podobno pa je veljalo tudi za prvo obdobje televizije, torej predvsem v šestdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja. Podobno kot na Zahodu televizija od sedemdesetih let dalje postaja osrednji množični medij. V drugem delu empirične analize sva se osredotočila na zaupanje v medije in novinarstvo in ugotovila, da so posebej v začetnem obdobju intervjuvanci kljub omejeni informacijski raznolikosti do njih gojili visoko stopnjo zaupanja. Novinarstvo kot profesijo so cenili tudi kasneje. Zaupanje je povezano tudi s tretjim delom, ki analizira dojemanje jugoslovanske družbe in poudarja relativno visoko stopnjo legitimnosti tega sistema med sogovorniki. Do prave erozije je pričelo prihajati šele v osemdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja.

V študiji sva bila zaradi dolžine in vsebinskih omejitev primorana v nekatere posplošitve, kar nama je omogočilo kratek pregled zbranih podatkov. Kljub omejitvam ti splošni zaključki nakazujejo visoko vrednost teh podatkov za prihodnje raziskave. Prvoosebni intervjuji namreč omogočajo edinstvene in dragocene vpoglede v to zgodovinsko obdobje, ki bi jih le težka pridobili na druge načine. Omogočajo bistveno pestrejše razumevanje tega protislovnega obdobja, kot pa ga je največkrat deležno v čustveno razvnetih in polariziranih javnih razpravah, ter odpirajo možnosti za razumevanje razlogov, zaradi katerih ta sistem še naprej uživa relativno visoko stopnjo zaupanja. Arhivska dostopnost intervjujev in cilj, da se projekt izvajanja intervjujev nadaljuje tudi v prihodnje, bi morala služiti kot spodbuda za nadaljnje raziskovanje teh empiričnih podatkov, ki je zaradi njihove količine in obsega nujno. Sama sva se lahko dotaknila le osrednjih poudarkov, zato lahko ti podatki služijo tudi kot dopolnilo k drugim osnovnejšim raziskovalnim virom ali kot induktivna vstopna točka za iskanje novih idej in raziskovalnih poti pri preučevanju tega zgodovinskega obdobja.