

FIGHT FOR MEDIA PLURALISM OR JUST “JANŠA’S WAR ON MEDIA”?

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Abstract

Since Janez Janša's government has been installed, not a day has gone by that the ruling coalition party, SDS (the Slovenian Democratic Party), has not been accused of undermining the freedom of media or threatening media pluralism. Sometimes, critics go even further in condemning Janša as wilfully subordinating media to politics. Regarding subordination, independent media studies from 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008 and lastly 2020 have clearly indicated that the media in Slovenia are to a certain extent already under the influence of politics, namely those close to the left circles. Whilst scientific conclusions prove the fact that changes in media legislation are more than needed, the question that arises is whether the proposers are looking at the concept of media pluralism from the right perspective. Leaning on the most recent Media landscape research, this article stands out from the rest as it draws parallels with the state of political pluralism, demonstrating how partial and imbalanced covering of news could lead to the domination of one political spectrum. Further, we do a historical review of the right-wing media policy and bring to light those aspects that have undergone the sharpest criticism when it comes to media pluralism. In addition, new ideas for future research are discussed.

Keywords

plurality • democracy • media • media pluralism • political pluralism • political elites • right-wing politics • media landscape • media legislation

1. Introduction

‘There cannot be a war between one person and the media, just as there cannot be a war between one person and the army of a country’ (Janša in the web Portal GOV.SI2020), were the introductory words of a storyline entitled ‘War with the Media’ written by the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša. This soon triggered a real hurricane of responses in the mainstream media (e.g., 24ur.com 2020, Dnevnik 2020b, rtvslo.si 2020) as the storyline openly questions the imbalance and partiality of Slovenian media, targeting, in particular, those funded by taxpayers whilst offering public service.

In his storyline, Janša revealed memories from a conversation he had with a friend of the former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Based on example about the assumed invincibility of the Roman legions, Kohl’s friend explained to the Slovenian Premier that fear is stronger than swords and spears. To illustrate, he described how the premise of invincible Romans, spread by word of mouth, sowed fear among barbarian tribes, by creating belief that Roman legions could not be defeated. According to the former Chancellor’s old colleague, the same applies to the media. Instead of presenting the truth, the media create a belief in line with their particular interest. If someone criticizes or disagrees with them, they may

be labeled as insane or reckless, or be accused of starting a war with them.

Based on this example, Janša drew a parallel with the minority groups which deal with the dominant view of the mainstream media. Whilst mainstream media look at issues through the lens of the majority, it is obvious that the perspective of minority groups will, as a rule, be neglected or even presented as false. According to the Prime Minister, the neutral perspective does not exist and therefore, *‘(. . .) different values and beliefs (. . .)’*, created by an individual or a group of people *‘(. . .) should enjoy the equal opportunities of expressing and defending one’s ideas to the greatest extent possible’*. He continues that this is only achievable with the competitiveness of the media, which is seen as the *‘(. . .) prerequisite of a democratic social system and a free society in general’* (ibid.).

This storyline serves as an introduction to the sensitive question of media pluralism and the issues Janša’s government has regarding approval of proposed bills amending media legislation. It also gives us an insight into Janša’s understanding of media pluralism, ressed in the last, section of this article, which presents both a historical review

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and perspectives about right-wing media policy in the future. The following section deals with the conceptualization of media pluralism in the context of politics. Some issues that have appeared with the rise of digital media are also discussed. Taking into account the insights of all authors included in the theoretical part, we derive three basic assumptions that guide our research. The first and principal assumption refers to the relationship between the extensive, freely accessible information sources and democracy as the most desirable and prominent social order in the Western world. The flood of information that constantly bombards our awareness and shapes our behaviour, interests, values, and political perspectives, makes it utmost priority, at least in democratic societies, to provide us, citizens of diverse backgrounds, with the plurality of media. The second assumption is based on the first one and is set in the context of politics. It says that in democratic societies, no one political perspective, neither the right-wing or the left-wing, should receive greater attention in the media, even less so when favoured by a specific journalist, editor, or any third person with a particular political interest. The precondition of the third assumption is that any government, being empowered to propose, decide and implement media policy, does not abuse its role imposing legal mechanisms that would rather undermine than uphold media pluralism. Putting it differently, in representative democracies, it is the responsibility and accountability of the government to preserve, promote and praise the plurality of media.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques is considered as the most appropriate for our research, as it encompasses three different topics, namely political pluralism, media pluralism and right-wing media policy. The latter is included in our research because we want to (1) present the historical background of amending bills proposed by the current coalition led by the right-wing SDS, and (2) explain why the content of changes has triggered such a sharp response both at the national as well as the European level. Furthermore, only the right-wing media policy is taken into account for a simple reason, which is the fact that (3) media legislation is one out of three previously discussed topics taken into account by the annotators of the Media landscape research (Tomšič et al., 2020) considered as the basis for our research). Last but not foremost, referring to the storyline written by the Prime Minister, we want to (4) draw a comparison between Janša's abstract understanding of the concept of media pluralism and the content of proposed bills as well as the already adopted laws.

The methodology of the research is explained in three subsections listed below. Based on the introduction, the

theoretical part and all three of the above-mentioned basic assumptions, we continue the research with the following two hypotheses, H1 and H2.

H1: Relating to the fact that we are living in an information-saturated world, and in consideration of the role digital media play in terms of shaping citizens' political perspective, we presume that the state of media pluralism in Slovenia, measured in terms of the attitude expressed toward political authorities or political parties by mainstream media, reflects the level of political pluralism, referring to the number of days either the right-wing or left-wing political parties have executed the responsibilities and duties of the Slovenian government.

H2: Referring to the responsibilities and duties, governments are supposed to have representative democracies; we presume that there must be a certain media policy that explains the continuous efforts carried out by the right-wing political parties, expressed through the proposed bills and amended laws, to improve the level of pluralism in media and consequently, increase their chances to be elected more often, whereby the period of their governance shall be evaluated in a more neutral and balanced way.

3. The Concept of Media Pluralism in the Frame of Politics

One can hardly disagree with the premise that public opinion comprises many different political perspectives, values and interests, represented by citizens of various backgrounds. The same applies to politics. The numerosity of political perspectives, values and interests, in a narrow sense, and the diversity of people, in a broader sense, calls for the conceptualisation of the word pluralism.

Plurality, media and political pluralism

As noticed by Raeijmaekers and Maesele (2015), pluralism has become a buzzword in political, public and academic discourses. The latter, however, does not come as a surprise as the word pluralism is considered to be an undisputed value (Karppinen 2007) and one of the pillars of democracy (Tomšič 2007). Nevertheless, a great deal of interest in pluralism does not mean that this term is any closer to a clear definition. Disparate perspectives and understandings of pluralism and its function in a democratic society arise from the ambiguity of the concept itself (Karppinen 2007). On the one hand, it deliberates over the question of how to

be inclusive about the existing diversity of groups and views in civil society (Raeijmaekers and Maesele 2015) whereas, on the other hand, it is concerned with the question of how to enable these differences to be expressed in politics in a balanced way, meaning that no one political view would dominate others (B. Hrvatin and Petković 2008). To be more specific, plurality in politics can be understood in a sense that not a single political perspective or political ideology has an unearned advantage or privilege to be heard, to rule, or manage public affairs.

In a democratic policy, political pluralism is ensured when all political perspectives or political ideologies have an equal chance to be heard, to be elected and to be changed, which can be understood as the circulation of political elites (Tomšič 2007).

One can define elites as an eminent group of tightly interrelated individuals who hold strategic positions in key social institutions (Kramberger and Vehovar 2000), allowing them to exert control over such spheres as the judiciary, academia and, the economy, let alone media (Tomšič 2011, Adam and Tomšič 2012). Kubik (2003) defines elites as most prominent cultural entrepreneurs who '(. . .) *may not choose to "transmit" certain types of cultural narratives built upon certain historical events, thereby muting or even eliminating their impact on current political behaviour*' (ibid.). In order to prevent such 'indoctrination', Adam (1999) advocates for the greater extent of flow among elites of different political views. The so-called "flow dynamics" is also what is meant in this article with the concept of elite's circulation.

The fact is that we are living in an information-saturated world. Exposure to information and the possibility for active participation is something as natural as drinking water or eating food nowadays. This, in particular, applies to democratic societies. Referring to Barber (1989), one can say that information and communication with and through media is the essence of democracy as it represents means of making informed political decisions (O'Neil 1998).

The media are able to reflect both, the plurality of civil society and the plurality of politics. In consideration of the existing diversity of society, either in the civil sphere or in politics, the first and foremost function of media is to be inclusive in the sense that they enable all the voices to be heard. As stipulated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), the media play a significant role both in terms of fulfilling the right of freedom as well as fulfilling the right of freedom of expression. In this connection, we can also understand the second paragraph (Article 11) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union 2010), which stipulates that the freedom of media, along with media pluralism, shall be respected. Relating to Slovenian Constitution (Ustava Republike Slovenije 1991), this means that every entity (e.g. media) shall be provided with freedom of gathering, receiving and transmitting information (see Article 19).

Tomšič (2007) understands media as mediators between civil society and political authorities, whereby the media have a double nature. On the one hand, they serve as the environment for the articulation of opinions, ideas or critiques arising from civil society, whereas on the other hand, they can be considered as the messenger of their own opinions, ideas or critiques.

Referring to Erzikova (2018), we can understand the media as the gatekeeper of information, meaning that they play the role of information filters. As explained by Bayer (2019), the inner structure of media outlets functions in such a way that every single piece of content written by a journalist is first checked by the editor before being published. B. Hrvatin and Petković (2008) add that editors are not just gatekeepers but also explainers of information.

Nevertheless, even editors of media outlets can sometimes find themselves in a subordinated position, which means that the decision regarding which aspect to highlight and which to neglect is made by someone else. According to Erzikova (2018), exercising gatekeeping in a media is a role that can be attributed either to individuals, organisations, or a government. In this regard, Habermas (1989) warns that the content of such media is not only reduced but also narrowed in a sense that it presents the issue from only one perspective, or as illustrated by Lombardi (2018): '(. . .) *information sources frequently have an innate bias explained by an intellectual, political, or market affiliation, which may benefit the information source both in its relationships up-stream (e.g., with a political party) and on the demand side.*' Such content is mainly succumbed to a personalisation of customers' experience, is considered to be out of the context, and is simple to consume, meaning that there is no need for rational thinking (Habermas 1989).

With the rise of digital media, there is one more thing to consider: the creation of echo chambers. As stated by Lombardi (2018), each internet user succumbs to algorithms that provide for such media environments where an internet user is exposed only to content which confirms and solidifies his or her existing beliefs, values and perspectives. To put it in simpler terms, we are bombarded with content based on our personal experiences. In the past, there were neither algorithms nor echo chambers. Still, the concept remains the same: '*What better criterion does the man at the breakfast table possess than the newspaper version checks up with his own opinion?*' (Lippmann 2004, 178).

In this respect, B. Hrvatin and Petković (2008) warn that the lack of exposure to different information sources can result in the limitation of an individual's political or cultural choice and, therefore, represent a direct threat to democracy. However, even frequent exposure to different information sources can sometimes bring more harm than good. The study conducted by A. Bail et al. (2018) has shown that exposure to opposite views has no significant impact on the pre-existing beliefs,

values or perspectives by an online user, whilst increased political polarisation was not proved.

On the other hand, the creation of the so-called echo chambers is not unfamiliar to political authorities, whereby this can be achieved with strict media legislation. Haraszti provides such an example from Belarus where the government is stipulated to give a warning or even cease those media outlets misusing freedom of the press. As Haraszti (2011) adds, this stipulation is often used just to get rid of the media that are negatively disposed towards political authorities. By way of illustration, just on 21st August 2020, amid a huge wave of demonstrations, the Belarusian government decided to block 85 online news sources, labeling them as extreme (Gigitashvili 2021). The cessation of media outlets is not something new to the Hungarian government, which blocked the operation of a radio station due to the violation of compulsory registration law (Wiseman 2021).

Both the Hungarian and Belarusian political elites have in common a long period of ruling the state. In the case of Belarus, one can think of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has been in the office since 1994, whilst in Hungary, the title goes to Viktor Orban, whose Fidesz Party has been leading the government since 2010. Referring to Tomšič (2007), the long-term rule of one political option, either left or right¹, is not desirable. As Tomšič explained (ibid.), the circulation of political elites is the precondition of sustainable and quality democracy. Furthermore, the legitimacy of any political regime is, among other things, based on providing citizens access to different information, opinions and, perspectives, as well as the protection of freedom of expression (Calderaro and Dobrova in CMPF 2013),; the latter being considered as the essence of democracy.

To understand what it means to operate media in unfavoured conditions, for instance, under the communist regime of Yugoslavia, one can think of the case of the Slovenian weekly magazine Mladina during the 1980s. This media outlet was very progressive in the sense that it enabled journalists and intellectuals to articulate Slovenian national questions. Whereas in democratic societies: such a practice would hardly raise any concern, this did not apply to political authorities of the Yugoslav Communist Party. That is to say, Mladina was risking the intervention of the state. With the revelation of the secret documents of the Yugoslav federal army, which took place in 1988, the Slovenian weekly magazine stepped out of the line as its journalists violated the infamous Article 133 written in the Criminal Code. As the outcome, three of them (among whom was Janez Janša) were accused of betraying military secrets and thus, arrested (Istenič 2012).

¹ As regards the differentiation between the right and left political spectrum in the context of Slovenia, see for instance, Adam and Tomšič (2012).

The Conceptualisation of media pluralism

The easiest way to conceptualise media pluralism is to get the impression of what it is not. Based on Haraszti (2011), media pluralism is anything but the domination of a couple of media outlets that turn either into 'propaganda mouthpieces' or 'unethical money-making machines'. In this regard, Gaur (2014) explains how media can intentionally frame content in a way to induce negative sentiments toward the government. Media pluralism also has nothing to do with the above-mentioned echo chambers as well as gatekeeping philosophy, although the latter is hard to regulate. The same also applies to the concentration of ownership and the creation of a monopoly (Bayer 2019).

An independent Study on Indicators for Media Pluralism in the Member States (Directorate-General Information Society and Media 2009) defines media pluralism as '(...) diversity of media supply, use and distribution, in relation to (1) ownership and control, (2) media types and genres, (3) political viewpoints, (4) cultural expressions and (5) local and regional interests'. Given the foregoing, B. Hrvatin and Kučić (2005) suggest that the definition of media pluralism stands on two fundamental premises:

1. No political perspective, religious belief or economic interest accessible to society should prevail over other political perspectives, religious beliefs or economic interests (ibid.) It can be argued that media consumers should be exposed to diverse and inclusive content in all its aspects. Therefore, gatekeeping of information (Erzikova 2018) should be done impartially and objectively, meaning that no voice is excluded only because it is not in line with the stance of an editor.
2. No corporation or interest should have control over information sources transmitted to each individual separately (B. Hrvatin and Kučić 2005). That is to say, the operation of each media outlet should be independent and remain untouchable in a sense that neither political nor economic interest affects the content written by journalists and managed by editorial policy.

Media pluralism is created for, and is in interaction with, people of diverse cultures, beliefs, values and interests (Calderaro and Dobrova in CMPF 2013). According to this, we can understand media pluralism as an idea aiming to mirror the diversity of society with and through media. Referring to the Hutchins Commission Report (Metzgar and Hornaday 2013), one can evaluate the plurality of media by asking these five questions: (1) do they provide truthful and comprehensive coverage of news; (2) do they enable the expression of comments and criticism; (3) do they portray social groups in a representative way; (4) do they present and explain social values and norms; and (5) do they provide full access to information for every member of society?

Further, media pluralism can be divided into two broad categories. The first is internal pluralism which refers to the diverse, balanced and impartial content within a singular media outlet, meaning that journalists look at the issue from different perspectives, whereby no perspective is favoured over another or covered to a greater extent. The second is external pluralism. The latter concerns diversity of the media environment within a certain market, composed of independent media outlets, whereby the ownership is dispersed and separate from one another (Haraszti 2011, Czepek et al. 2019).

As far as the first category is concerned, the emphasis has to be given to journalists whose objective should be to cover news in a way to induce rational debates (Haraszti 2011) whilst not hesitating to accept comments and critics of others (Metzgar and Hornaday 2013). Referring to deliberate scholars (Raeijmaekers and Maesele 2015), journalism should be two-way rather than one-way and participatory instead of professional. In this vein, one can also understand the right of reply or the right of correction, which not only equates the relationship between journalists and consumers but also contributes to a more inclusive discussion on different issues (Youm 2008).

Concerning external pluralism, it has to be stressed that a larger number of media outlets does not necessarily mean a greater variety of content. In this regard, we are referring to the issue when a group of private media, although separated in terms of ownership, mainly rely on the same source of information, namely national press agency, controlled by the state. For instance, the study conducted by Boumans et al. (2018) has shown that almost a quarter of Dutch print media mainly rely on a national news agency whilst the percentage is even higher among online media, namely circa 70%. According to Boumans et al. (ibid.) the danger of extreme reliance on one information source can result in the homogeneity of the content in terms of lack of diverse viewpoints (ibid.).

Everything considered, this article is based on the following three assumptions:

1. In the information-saturated world, media pluralism is considered one of the pillars of democracy and a safeguard against autocratic tendencies (e.g. B. Hrvatin and Petković 2011, Karpinen 2008, Haraszti 2011).
2. Media play a crucial role in introducing and consolidating new political regimes (Calderaro and Dobrev in CMPF 2013). Therefore, the lack of media pluralism, in the sense that one political perspective receives greater attention whilst others are neglected, can result in a dominance of one political option (Adam 1999, (Adam in Kramberger and Vehovar 2000, Tomšič 2007).
3. In societies with representative democracy, it is the responsibility and accountability of the government to change a law in a way to ensure, preserve, promote and praise media pluralism (Haraszti 2011, Raeijmaekers and Maesele 2015).

3.1. Political Pluralism

As regards political pluralism, it has to be emphasised that our analysis encompasses only the period between the approval and oath of the 1st government led by Lojze Peterle (Democratic opposition of Slovenia DEMOS), which happened on 16th May 1990 and the approval and oath of the last 14th government led by SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party), which took place on 13th March 2020. Because the current ruling coalition is still in force whilst the future is not clear, its days of ruling are not considered. That is to say; our analysis covers all together 11,380 days which are further divided into three periods. The first period covers the time between 16th May 1990 and 7th June 2000 (4,161 days distributed among four governments), the second period the time from 7th June 2000 until 10th February 2012 (4,265 days distributed among five governments), whilst the last period encompasses the time between 10th February 2012 and 13th March 2020 (2,954 days distributed among four governments).

3.2. The State of Media Pluralism in Slovenia

To analyse the state of media pluralism, we use a part of the statistical data from the Media landscape research² (see Tomšič et al. 2020) conducted by the Faculty of Media in 2020, which covers the period from 1st March 2020 until 30th September 2020. Whilst the research encompasses

² It has to be stressed that the recent Media landscape research is one among many researches that were focused on the state of media landscape in Slovenia. In 2002, for instance, a special issue of *Dignitas* magazine (no. 13/14) was dedicated to the media research, conducted by the Institution for the Revival of the Civil Society (orig. Zavod za ožvitev civilne družbe). The results showed that media outlets in Slovenia leaned predominantly to the left, namely supporting the following two political parties: LDS (successors of Communist Youth Organization) and SD (successors of the League of Communists of Slovenia) (see more in Aplenc and Jerovšek 2002, Tomšič 2007). In 2006, the Institute for developmental and strategic analysis (orig. Inštitut za strateške in razvojne analize) carried out a research focusing on the media content analysis of four dailies in terms of the attitude toward the government (led by SDS) and its 'infamous' socio-economic reforms. Additionally, the research also picked one specific daily (i.e. *Dnevnik*) in order to study the content of columns. Again, the research findings revealed that Janša's first government had to face with adverseness, if not strong resistance, expressed by media under consideration (see more in Adam et al. 2006). In the following years (i.e. 2007 and 2008), the School of Advanced Social Studies (Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije) carried out two additional media research studies, namely *The Study of Media Freedom and the Autonomy of the Media Space in the Republic of Slovenia* (orig. *Študija medijske svobode in avtonomije medijskega prostora v Republiki Sloveniji*) and *The Media Freedom in Slovenia* (orig. *Medijska svoboda v Sloveniji*), conducted in 2008. Whilst both proved the aforementioned imbalance of the media space, they also revealed some sort of pressure on media organisations, applied by the political as well as economic sector (Tomšič 2007, Tomšič et al. 2020). However, for those more interested in the content of the first research, we suggest checking also a comprehensive book written by Makarovič et al. (2008).

articles (no. 1434) of the 10 most clickable websites, we only consider those websites that are also present in the print or broadcasting market (i.e., Dnevnik, Delo, Večer, Slovenske novice, RTV Slovenija, 24ur.com, siol.net). All the selected articles cover one of the three following topics: the migration (i.e., the attitude of the government towards migration crisis or/and the migration in general), media legislation (the proposed bills on media laws), or the pandemic (i.e., government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic). What they all have in common, is that they are triggering heated discussion as their content continuously polarises the citizens.³

3.3. Right-Wing's Media Policy Analysis

In the last section of the article, we will review right-wing media policy using qualitative methodology, meaning that we will take into consideration the different secondary sources, ranging from scientific papers and publications to news websites and laws. The last section aims to cast the right wing's media policy into a broader context with reference to the previous two subsections relating to media and political pluralism.

4. Media Pluralism: Evaluation of Media Landscape Research

The present section is based on the statistical data gathered by Zeilhofer and Zajc (2020), Media landscape research (Tomšič et al. 2020) and data collection available on MOSS (2021). To draw parallels with the situation in recent history, qualitative material is used. It must be pointed out that we only consider the most dominant (print and broadcasting) media in terms of market share (print media) and audience share (broadcasting media). Since the Media landscape research (Tomšič et al. 2020) focused on the online content only, we also take a brief look at how these so-called mainstream media are performing in terms of the website's daily reach.

³ As regards the methodology, articles were distributed to five independent annotators for critical annotation of content, whereby the instructions written in the coding list were respected. Altogether there were five codes, namely (1) topics, (2) attitude toward national political actors, (3) ideological orientation, (4) intensity of the standpoint, and (5) visibility of the topic. For the purpose of this research, we only take into account the attitudes toward the national political actors. At this point, it has to be stressed that instead of five different categories (i.e. neutral, pro-governmental, anti-governmental, pro-opposition, anti-opposition), we find it reasonable to present data in a simpler, yet more effective way. That is to say, whilst the neutral category was kept, we have merged the pro-governmental category with the anti-opposition category as both are looking at issues from the same perspective (in our case right-wing). The same applies to the anti-governmental category and pro-opposition category which represents the left-wing perspective: (a) neutral perspective = neutral category; (b) right-wing perspective = pro-governmental + anti-opposition category; and (c) left-wing perspective = anti-governmental + pro-opposition category.

4.1. The Plurality of the Print Media Market

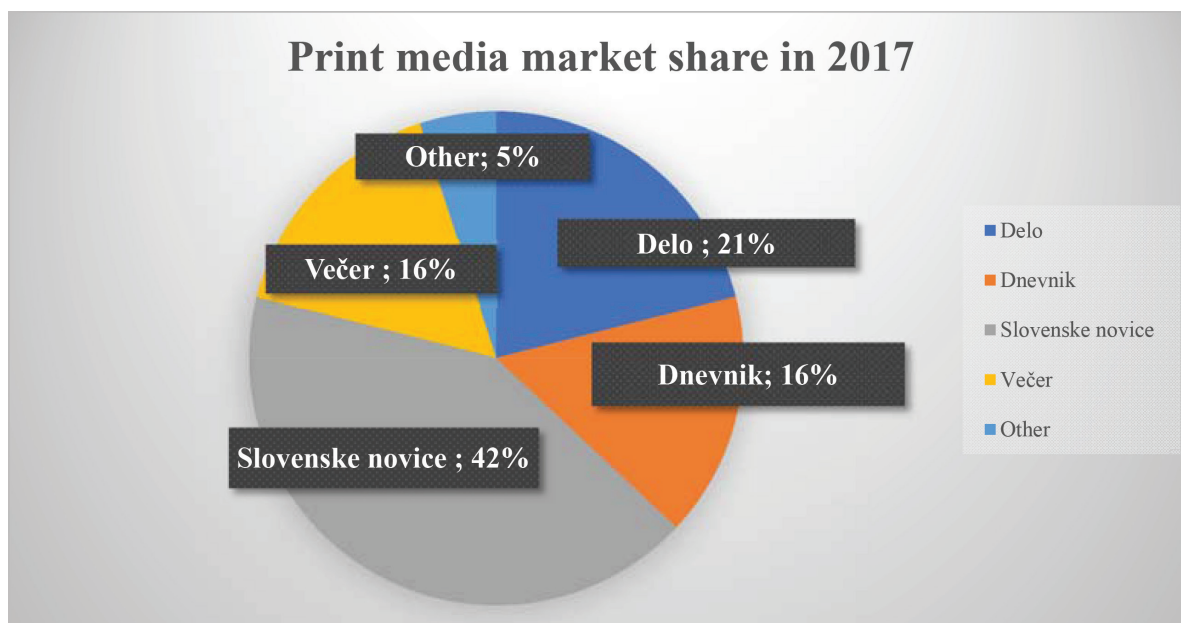
As far as print media is considered, there were four daily newspapers (Delo, Dnevnik, Večer and Slovenske novice) in the 1990s, which controlled more than 90% of the daily newspaper market. Interestingly, besides Slovenske novice, all the newspapers were established and operating already at the time of the communist regime (Istenič 2012), which is one of the reasons why Delo, Dnevnik, Večer and Slovenske novice are labeled as left-leaning newspapers.

In light of this, it is possible to explain the attempts by the right-wing parties to establish new daily newspapers such as Slovenec and Jutranjik, whereby the main idea was to balance the media market. The daily newspaper Slovenec was the project launched and financially supported by Slovene Christian Democrats (SKD) led by Lojze Peterle; due to lack of political will and low initial capital Slovenec held on the market only for 5 years (1991–1996). The story of Jutranjik is even more miserable as it ceased to exist after only one month of operation (May 1998–June 1998) (B. Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001).

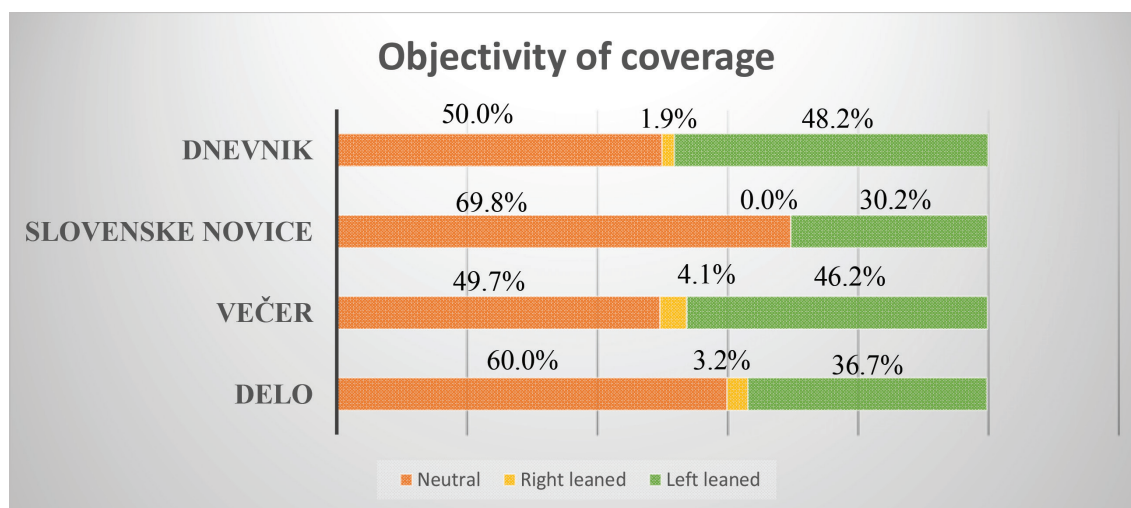
At the other end, the left-political wing did not stand aside. The daily newspaper Republika was established in 1992 and was considered a response to the foundation of Slovenec. For its operation, Republika counted on the money provided by Gianni de Michelis, a member of the Italian Socialist Party, who was, at that time, also the minister of foreign affairs. This had never happened before. Instead, Republika followed the same tragic path as its rival Slovenec (and later Jutranjik) and ceased to exist in 1996 (B. Hrvatin and Kerševan 1999, B. Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001).

Nowadays, the print media market is still dominated by the same players as in the 90s. According to the statistical data considering the sold circulation of newspapers in 2017, Delo (21%), Dnevnik (16%), Slovenske novice (42%) and Večer (16%) together covered 95% of the market share whereas only 5% remained for other newspapers.

The fact of the matter is that more and more Slovenians consume news digitally. In other words, daily newspapers in order to keep in step with the times, had to move their content online. The same applies to Delo, Dnevnik, Večer and Slovenske novice, whereby their daily reach share is less dominant yet still influential. Part of the reason for lower ranking may be the reliance on pay-per-view articles. According to data collection that measures daily reach, all four internet sites can be found in the top 15 of the most visited Slovenian websites for June 2021. Slovenske novice is in 4th place with 43,1% of daily reach whilst Delo is in 7th place (36,3%). Further on, Večer is placed in 10th position (29,6%) and Dnevnik with 21,0% in 15th place. It has to be stressed that the research encompasses all the websites and not only those providing general information (MOSS 2021).



Picture 1. Print media market share in 2017.
Source: Adjusted after (Zeilhofer and Zajc 2020).



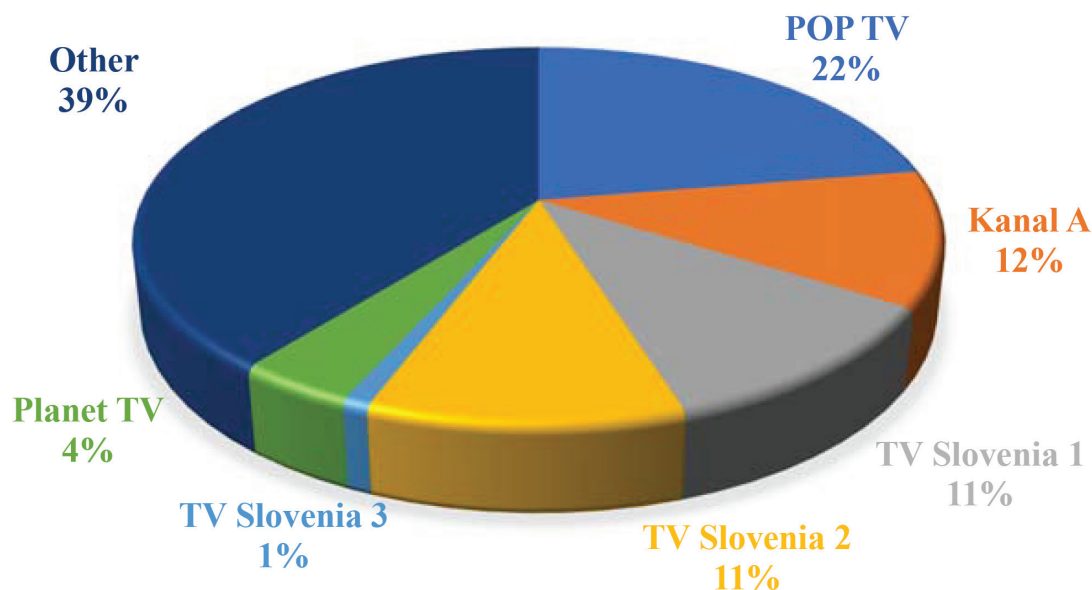
Picture 2. Objectivity of coverage (neutral, right leaned, left leaned).
Source: Adjusted after Tomšič et al. (2020).

As can be observed, Delo, Dnevnik, Slovenske novice and Večer are considered as important and influential news sources. For precisely that reason, they were also chosen for the Media landscape research conducted by the Faculty of Media in 2020 (see Tomšič et al. 2020). Below we present the main findings of the research, adjusted to our needs.

As one can see, the neutral stance prevails among all four media outlets. In this regard, we have to emphasise the performance

of Slovenske novice (69,8%) and Delo (60%), where more than two-thirds of the articles were evaluated as neutral. In the remaining part, both Slovenske novice (30,2%) and Delo (36,7%) represent a left-wing standpoint. This, in particular, applies to Večer (46,2%) and Dnevnik (48,2%), where almost half of the collected articles look at issues (Covid-19, media legislation, migration) from the point of view of the left. It becomes clear that the right-wing perspective is underrepresented and

AUDIENCE SHARE IN 2013



Picture 3. Broadcasting audience share in 2013.
Source: Adjusted after (Zeilhofer and Zajc 2020).

marginalised. Considering all four media outlets together, only 9,2% of articles represented the view of the right.

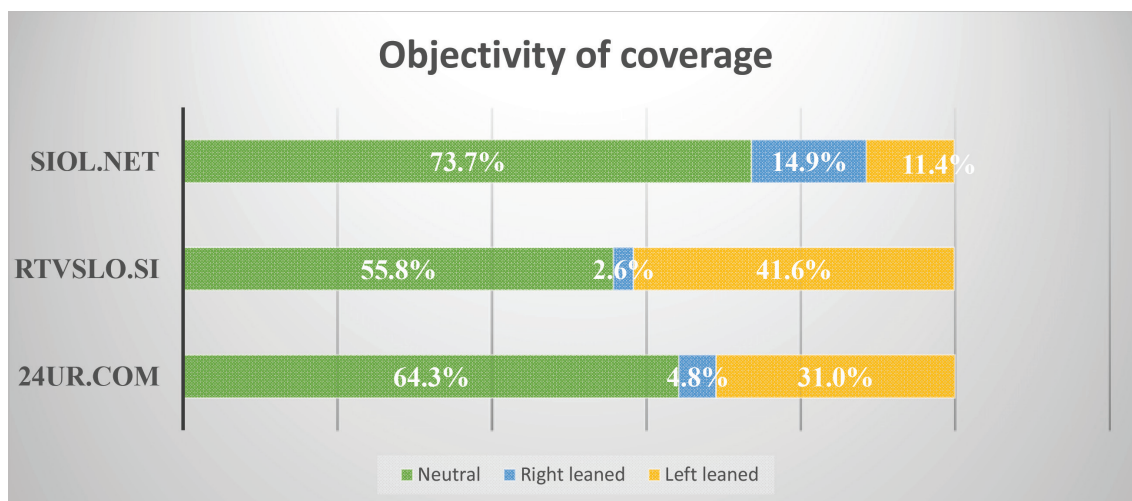
The Plurality of the Broadcasting Market

As regards the broadcasting market, things were a little bit different as there were even fewer players competing for the attention of the television viewers. Literally, up until 1995, the broadcasting market was more or less controlled by RTV Slovenia. Things significantly changed with the establishment of the Pro Plus media company and the ambitious entrance of the commercial television programme POP TV. Moreover, with the merger of another commercial channel Kanal A (which happened in 2001), Pro Plus developed into the most dominant and influential player on the commercial broadcasting market and a serious competitor for RTV Slovenia. If Pro Plus and RTV Slovenia solidified their positions, commercial TV 3 played a marginal role. According to B. Hrvatin and Milosavljević (2001), one of the reasons for the failure of this commercial television was its image of the right-wing channel linked to politics and the Church (ibid.). From the beginning of the century up until recently, the situation remained unchanged. Except for Planet TV, established in 2012, RTV Slovenia and Pro Plus (with television channels POP TV and Kanal A) still dominate the broadcasting market. Whilst the audience share of all three RTV television programmes was 22,7%, the audience share

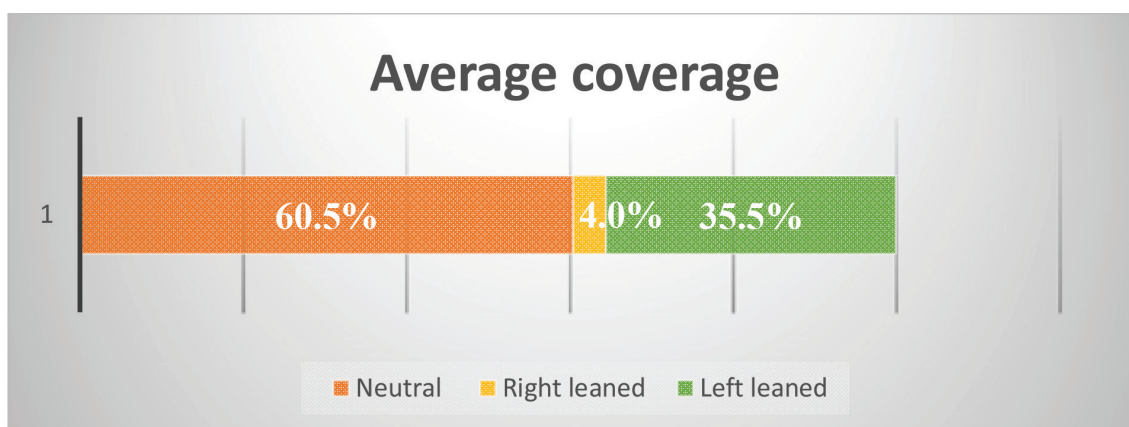
of Pro Plus programmes (taking into account POP TV and Kanal A only) was 34%. Together with Planet TV (4%), these media cover more than two-thirds (60,7%) of the broadcasting market (Zeilhofer and Zajc 2020).

Let us now take a look at the webpages. Equal to daily newspapers, the broadcasting media also move their activities online. Whilst POP TV and Kanal A are represented by the website 24ur.com, the content of all three national broadcasting programmes (TV Slovenia 1, TV Slovenia 2, TV Slovenia 3) can be reached by clicking on rtvslo.si. As far as Planet TV is concerned, one can find its content on siol.net. To check the level of media pluralism in the broadcasting market, these four websites will be taken into consideration.

Before we analyse the findings of the survey, let us consider the website reach share gathered for June 2021. In comparison to websites operated by print media, 24ur.com, siol.net and rtvslo.si are all positioned in the top 5. The most clickable website in Slovenia is 24.ur (61,0%); in 2nd place is siol.net (51,6%); and rtvslo.si (42,4%) is positioned in 5th place (MOSS 2021). According to this, it is not a surprise that all three were also taken into consideration Media landscape research. As in the case of print media websites, we again keep the neutral option and do a merger of the pro-governmental and anti-opposition category (right-wing perspective). The same applies to the anti-governmental option, which is merged with the pro-opposition category (left-wing perspective).



Picture 4. Objectivity of coverage (neutral, right leaned, left leaned).
Source: Adjusted after Tomšič et al. (2020).



Picture 5. Mainstream media: Average coverage.
Source: Adjusted after Tomšič et al. (2020).

Considering a neutral stance, siol.net (operated by Planet TV) stands out with 73,7%; 24ur.com follows with 64,3%; and public rtvslo.si published 55,8% of articles that did not contain any political preference. In comparison to rtvslo.si and 24ur.com, siol.net is also more balanced in terms of political orientation. Whereas 11,4% of articles leaned towards the right, 14,9% were left-oriented. Surprisingly, out of all three websites, the public rtvslo.si. had the worst performance in the context of politically oriented articles. In comparison to private 24ur.com (35,8%), more than two-thirds of such articles (44,2%) leaned either to the left or the right. Out of that 44,2% (i.e. 100%), 94,1% looked at issues from the left-wing perspective whilst only 5,9% represented the stance of the ruling right-wing coalition.

The Performance of Mainstream Media in Terms of Political Plurality

The analysis has shown that the majority of articles (60,5%) that were taken into consideration were neutral. This means that the content did not induce any specific sentiment either in favour of either the left political spectrum or the right. However, out of the remaining 39,5% of articles, 35,5% are classified as leaning left (attitudes expressing either anti-governmental or pro-opposition stance) and 4% as leaning right (attitudes expressing either pro-governmental or anti-opposition stance). Based on that, one can conclude that Slovenian mainstream media are generally neutral, yet when it comes to politically sensitive topics, the perspective taken by journalists is more or less left.

5. Circulation of Political Elites: Balance of Power in Slovenian Politics

The collected statistical data presented using tables and pie diagrams are the outcome of our calculation, aiming to evaluate the state of political pluralism in Slovenia and analyse the circulation of political elites. The key data were found on the official page of the Slovenian government (Portal GOV.SI 2021) as well as on the page of the State Election Commission (Državna volilna komisija 2021).

The fact of the matter is that in the first period from 1990–2000 (considering the first four governments up until the approval and oath of Slovenian Christian Democrats or SKD), the most dominant political party was the left-wing LDS (Liberal Democratic Party), which stayed in the office for 3,432 days or 82% of the time. The rest was left to DEMOS that ruled the state for 729 days or 18% of the time.

As far as the second period is considered, we can say that it was the most balanced in terms of days spent in the office either by the left or right-wing government. The period consisted of five governments. Two represented right-wing politics (Slovenian Democratic Party or SDS and Slovenian Christian Democrats or SKD) whilst the remaining three represented left wing-politics (LDS and Social Democrats or SD). It has to be pointed out that out of 4,265 (i.e. 100%) days, 1655 were intended for right-wing governments (39%) and 2,610 for left-wing governments (61%).

The third period considers the time from the composition of the government led by the left-wing PS (Positive Slovenia) that took place in 2012 up until the formal ending of the 13th government led by the left-wing LMŠ (List of Marjan Šarec),

which happened in 2020. This period consists of four different governments. Besides LMŠ and PS (both in force for 547 days), there were also the right-wing SDS and the central-left SMC (Modern Centre Party). Whereas the right-wing government led by SDS only stayed in office for 404 days (14%), the left-wing PS, LMŠ and, SMC coalitions together covered 2,550 days (86%).

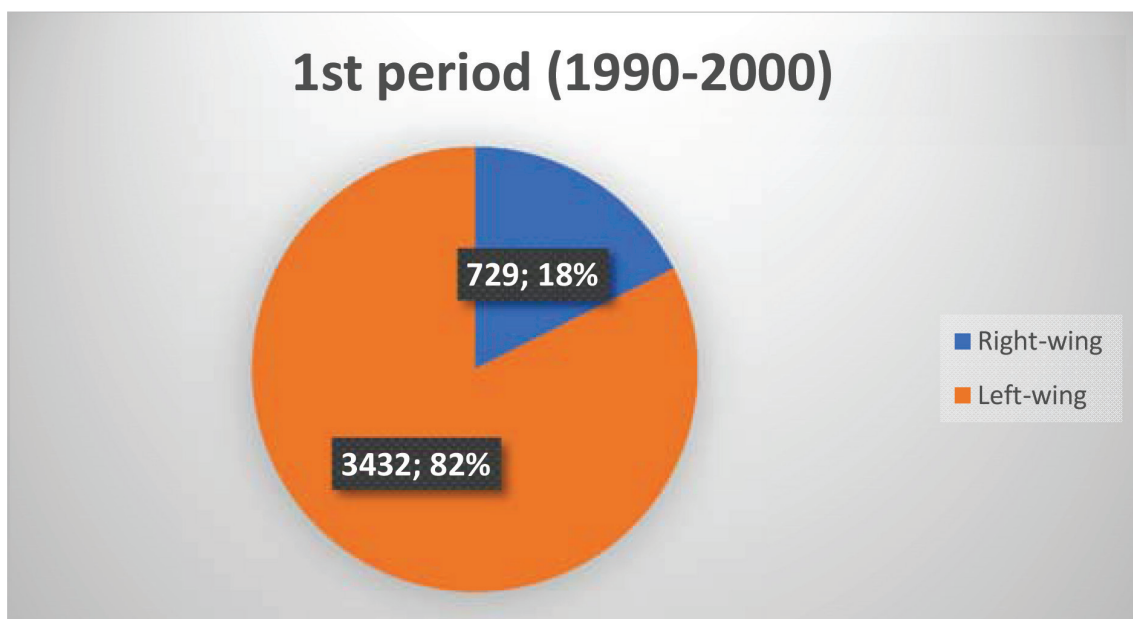
Everything considered, out of 13 governments arranged along the period of 11,380 days, 9 governments were led by the left-wing political party whereas 4 governments were composed of right-wing coalition partners. Comprehensively, the left-wing governments were in office 76% of the time (8,592 days), whereas the remaining 24% belonged to the right-wing coalitions (2,782 days). It has to be pointed out that out of 4 right-wing governments, 2 of them (DEMOS and SDS) received the mandate for the formation of a coalition based on the parliamentary election results, whilst the other 2 governments took over the executive branch due to a vote of no confidence (ruling coalition party SKD in 2000 and SDS for the second time in history in 2012). On the other hand, Janša's government (SDS 2004–2008) up until recently remains the last one that successfully finished a full mandate.

As far as the winners of parliamentary elections are considered, the results reflect the findings illustrated above. Out of 9 parliamentary elections, 6 were won by left-wing political parties whilst the other 3 went to right-wing political parties. When taking into account the fact that from 16th May 1990 up until 13th March 2020, Slovenia had 13 governments in office, considering the number of elections (i.e. 9), one can claim that the circulation of political elites is more than obvious.

Table 1. Ruling coalition parties at the helm of the Slovenian government

Ruling coalition party	Political orientation	No. of days in office	Start date	Finished date	Percentage
DEMOS	Right-wing	729	16. May 1990	14. May 1992	6,3%
LDS	Left-wing	376	14. May 1992	25. Jan. 1993	3,3%
LDS	Left-wing	1,860	25. Jan. 1993	27. Feb. 1997	16,3%
LDS	Left-wing	1,196	27. Feb. 1997	07. Jun. 2000	10,5%
SKD	Right-wing	176	07. Jun. 2000	30. Nov. 2000	1,5%
LDS	Left-wing	749	30. Nov. 2000	19. Dec. 2002	6,6%
LDS	Left-wing	715	19. Dec. 2002	03. Dec. 2004	6,3%
SDS	Right-wing	1,479	03. Dec. 2004	21. Nov. 2008	13,0%
SD	Left-wing	1,146	21. Nov. 2008	10. Feb. 2012	10,1%
SDS	Right-wing	404	10. Feb. 2012	20. Mar. 2013	3,6%
PS	Left-wing	547	20. Mar. 2013	18. Sep. 2014	4,8%
SMC	Left-wing	1,456	18. Sep. 2014	13. Sep. 2018	12,8%
LMŠ	Left-wing	547	13. Sep. 2018	13. Mar. 2020	4,8%
Total		11,380			100%

Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).



Picture 6. The balance of power between 16.05.2000 and 07.06.2000.
 Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).



Picture 7. The balance of power between 07.06.2000 and 10.02.2012.
 Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).

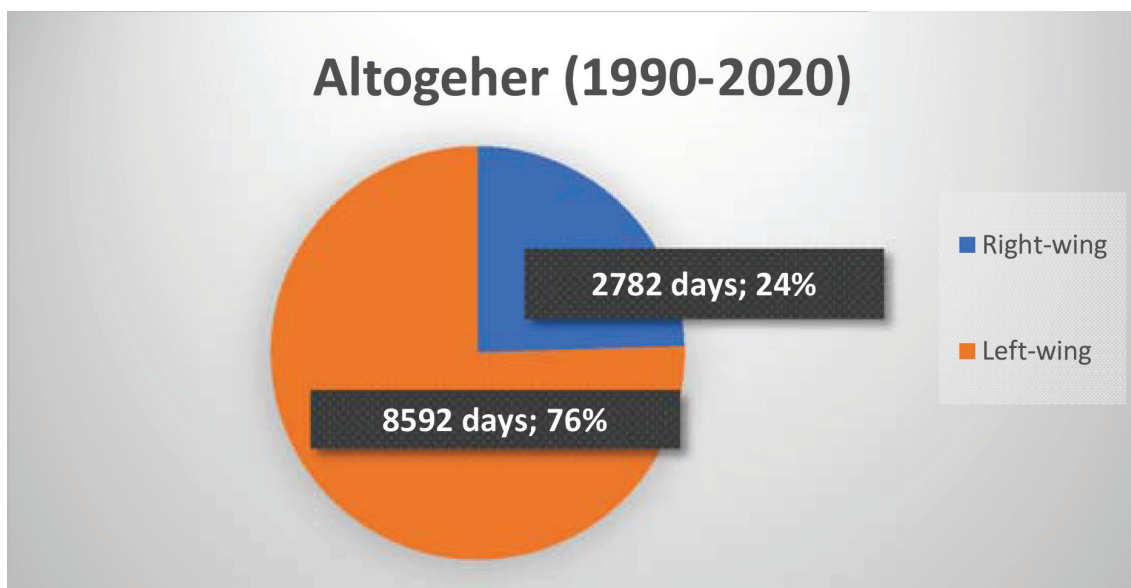
Yet, the fact of the matter is that the circulation of political elites was one-sided, meaning that the changes of the government were only visible in terms of different political parties, mainly representing one political spectrum (i.e. the left). This, in particular, applies to the last period (2012-2020), when 3 left-wing political

parties (i.e. PS, SMC and LMŠ) led the government although this was not much obvious in the first period (1990–2000), which was marked by the domination of LDS.

Based on that, we can conclude that the level of political pluralism in Slovenia is relatively low in the sense that the



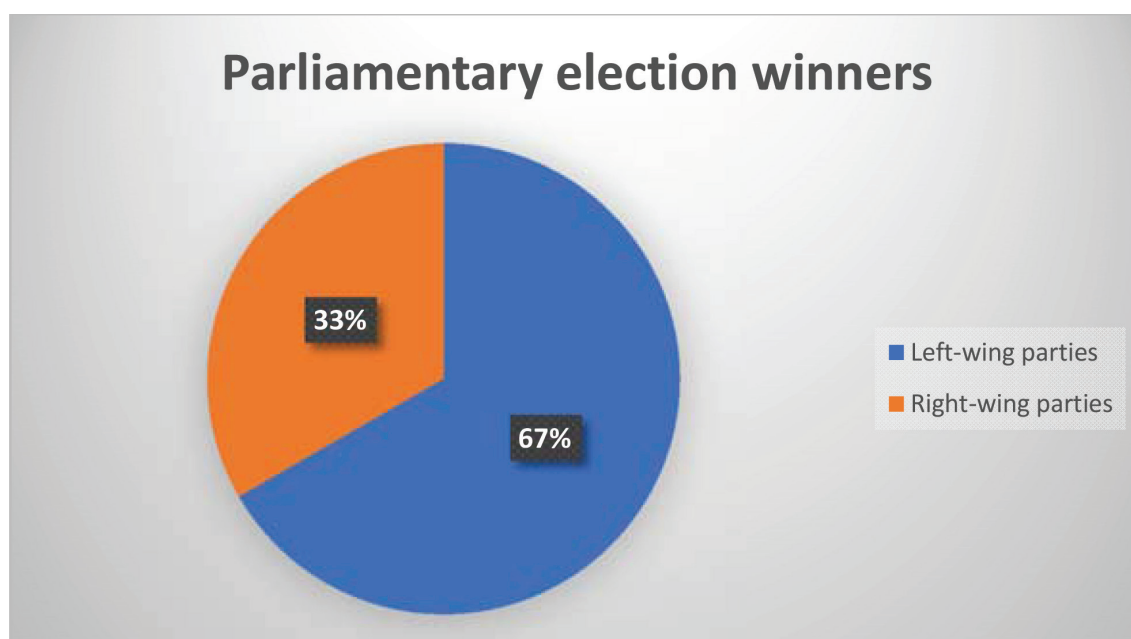
Picture 8. The balance of power between 10.2.2012 and 13.03.2020.
 Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).



Picture 9. The balance of power between 16.05.1990 and 13.03.2020.
 Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).

circulation of political elites is mainly happening on the left side of the political spectrum. Considering the period between 1990 and 2000, the circulation of political elites was mainly limited within the inner structure of the left-wing LDS. The latter won three consecutive elections (1992, 1996, 2000) whilst ruling the state 82% of the time or 3,432 days. In the

last couple of years, one can see that this trend is continuing, meaning that governments are pretty much led by left-wing political parties. However, in comparison to the first period, the circulation is not limited to one political party, as was the case of LDS, but is more dispersed. In this regard, one can think of governments led by the left-wing PS, SMC and



Picture 10. The winners of parliamentary elections shown in percentage.

Source: Adjusted after Državna volilna komisija (2021).

Table 2. The review of all winners of the parliamentary elections (1990 – 2018)

No.	Year	Pol. party	Pol. orientation
1	1990	DEMOS	Right-wing
2	1992	LDS	Left-wing
3	1996	LDS	Left-wing
4	2000	LDS	Left-wing
5	2004	SDS	Right-wing
6	2008	SD	Left-wing
7	2011	PS	Left-wing
8	2014	SMC	Left-wing
9	2018	SDS	Right-wing

Source: Adjusted after Portal GOV.SI (2021).

LMŠ. Except for the latter, both PS and SMC composed the government after they had won the elections (PS in 2011 and SMC in 2014).

As far as the right-wing political spectrum is concerned, the circulation of political elites is even less visible. This is especially vivid after 2004 when all three right-wing governments (also taking into consideration the current structure) were/are led by the same political party, namely SDS. The same applies to the elections, as both (2004 and 2018) were won by SDS. Thus, the supremacy of the latter on the right-wing political spectrum can only be comparable with the dominance of LDS on the left side.

Historical Review and Future Perspectives of Right-Wing Media Policy

The change of the governmental structure in the middle of 2000 resulted in the composition of the right-wing coalition led by SKD + SLS (Slovenian Christian Democrats + Slovenian People's Party). In cooperation with its coalition partner SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party), the right-wing government proposed new media law. Among other things, we have to point out the amendment which stipulates the establishment of a Media fund. According to the proposals, the Media fund would be used to guarantee a plurality of media and, thus, balance the media market (B. Hrvatin and Milosavljević 2001). It has to be said that this was not the first proposal referring to the establishment of a Media fund. Something similar was proposed in 1998 when a member of the SKD Party introduced to the parliament the idea to create a special fund aiming to support the operation of small and medium-sized media with a circulation between 10.000 and 25.000 issues (ibid.). The latter was, however, not the case for the proposal from 2000, as there was no special stipulation defined in terms of issues circulation. In other words, all media outlets, regardless of circulation, could apply for funding (ibid.).

The idea to establish a Media fund was alive also in 2003 and 2005. In 2003, the parliamentarians from SDS and NSI (New Slovenia) proposed a new media law, whereby one of the stipulations also defined the formation of a Media fund. The state would provide 1 billion SIT (i.e. circa 4,2 million €), which would be allocated among different print

and broadcast media. To receive financial support from the state, media outlets should take into consideration regular, objective and impartial coverage of news. The budget would be managed by a steering committee consisting of 1 president (proposed by the President of the state) and 6 members, whereby 3 members would be suggested by the opposition parties and 3 members by the ruling coalition parties. In such a manner, there would be few chances for the steering committee to make partial decisions, favouring only certain (i.e. loyal) media whilst neglecting others (24ur.com 2003, Rtv slo.si 2003).

The first draft on amendments to the Mass Media Act was published by the Ministry of Culture in 2005 (Rtv slo.si 2005b, Rtv slo.si 2005c). Besides the establishment of the Media fund, greater attention was given to the introduction of the right of correction or reply. The latter stipulates that anyone whose interest and the right would be upset by the content of media has the right to demand a correction from the editor free of charge (Zmed-A 2006).

As written in the fourth paragraph (Article 26), the correction is not only about the negation of wrongness or falsehood of statements but also includes any text that wants to present an opposite statement. As stipulated in Article 27, the correction shall be published in the same place and cover the same amount of space as the referring article. The editor shall, apart from some exceptions (stipulated in Article 31), guarantee that the correction is published in the visible or at the same place. If not, the interested person has the right to bring charges against the editor (Article 33) (ibid.).

Referring to Youm (2008), the introduction of the right of correction or reply in the media law is considered a positive thing. As we have already pointed out, the stipulation aims to equate the relationship between journalists and media users, whereby enabling a more inclusive exchange of ideas. This is also totally in line with the understanding of media as the marketplaces of ideas (Raeijmaekers and Maesele 2015, Lombardi 2018).

On the other hand, critics warn of exploitation of Article 26 in particular by those with personal interests in politics and business. As explained by Tomaž Ranc, at that time the editor of a daily newspaper Večer (Ranc in Petković 2011): *'This institute is abused by those with money: politics, strong interest groups or associations, very rare individuals. This is a kind of pressure that is allowed by law. If we journalists make a mistake, we are due to correct it.'*

As it turns out, Article 26 caused quite a stir among journalists who complained that this stipulation abuses the freedom of expression written in the Constitution (Article 39). Additionally, they were accusing Janša's government of interfering in the editorial policy of media, saying that this article represents a threat to the editorial's autonomy. On the opposite side, the proponents claimed that Article 26 enabled anyone to present their standpoints or correct false statements. (24ur 2006).

Considering the launching of the Media fund, it should be noted that the idea was to set the budget worth of 1 milliard SIT or circa 4,2 million €, which would be allocated based on a decision made by a special commission. The latter would be composed of 5 members, all appointed by the Minister of Culture. To guarantee impartiality, the proposal stipulated that the decision about the funds would follow the yearly research on media pluralism as well as the importance of the applied projects in terms of realising the public interest (Rtv slo.si 2006). The government accepted the amending bill in February 2006. One month later (March 2006), it was also approved by the parliament, yet without the inclusion of the Media fund. Nevertheless, the Act Amending the Mass Media Act still includes stipulation (Article 4.a.), which imposes the state (i.e. the ministry in charge) to support the media with the same amount of budget (i.e. 1 milliard SIT or circa 4,2 million €) and similarly appointed commission (Rtv slo.si 2006, Delo 2006, ZMed-A 2006).

Regarding the changes in media legislation in general, one has to take into account the amendment of the RTV Slovenia Act in 2005. One of the most conspicuous changes was the abolishment of the RTV Council, which was substituted by the Programming Council consisting of 29 members and enhanced powers of Director General, now able to intervene in the decision-making process of Programming Council. The act also stipulated greater involvement or influence of ruling coalition in terms of appointing members of the Programming as well as Supervising Council (Dukić and Dresun 2013, B. Hrvatin and Petković 2008, Ribač 2019).

Regarding this, we can mention the concerns expressed by the Slovenian Union of Journalists (Sindikat novinarjev Slovenije) and Slovene Association of Journalists (DNS), cautioning about possible subjection of public service to the interests of every ruling coalition (Rtv slo.si 2005a).

On the other hand, less emphasis was given to the fact that the right-wing coalition led by SDS stipulated the establishment of a parliamentary programme (TV Slovenia 3), which enables citizens to have an insight into the work of the parliament (rtv slo.si 2013).

At the time of Janša's second government (2012-2013), there were no changes to media laws, yet this does not mean that he was not active in the media sphere. Moreover, according to Kučič (2021), Janša was personally involved in establishing Planet TV operating by the state-owned Telekom Slovenije. To find foreign investors, Janša met with the executive director of Antenna, a multinational company from Greece (Potič 2015). Bearing in mind the above, it was not a surprise that Planet TV was, at least at the beginning, understood as the political project of SDS (Kučič 2021).

Ironically, the recent research on the media landscape has proven that Planet TV (i.e. website siol.net) is actually performing the best in terms of impartial and balanced

coverage, and can, therefore, be considered as an example of good practice. Considering the ownership, Planet TV has since 2020 been in the hands of Hungarian TV2 Media (Dnevnik 2020b).

As regards the broadcasting projects, we have to mention the establishment of Nova24 TV in 2016. In comparison to Planet TV, where Janša, as then Prime Minister, played an important role in terms of finding relevant foreign investors, Nova24 TV was a pioneer project where Janša was only one out of many stakeholders who provided initial capital (circa 100.000 €) for the launch of the television. One year later (i.e. 2017), Nova24 TV was taken over by three Hungarian companies; Modern Media Group, Ripost Media and Ridikul Magazine, each having 15% of the share (Kralj 2015; Cirman, Modic and Vukovic 2017).

Considering the coverage of news, it has to be emphasised that Nova24 TV does not hide its right-wing orientation. This has also been proven by the Research on the media landscape where online content (website nova24tv.si) was taken into consideration. Based on the research findings, one can understand the establishment of Nova24 TV as the response to the imbalanced media market dominated by left-leaning media. As explained by Aleksander Rant, managing director: Nova24TV '(. . .) was founded on the initiative of people sick of one-sided reporting (. . .) aiming to (. . .) achieve partial pluralization of media space, (Rant in Rančigaj 2021). Though Nova24 TV has brought diversity in terms of political perspectives, one cannot mix at this point the concept of this project with media pluralism. Putting it differently, impartial and balanced coverage is just one of the criteria which Nova24, at least in comparison with Planet TV, is neither reaching nor willing to achieve.

In March 2020, after the resignation of the former Prime Minister Marjan Šarec, Janša returned to the office. Since the approval and oath in the parliament, the ruling coalition led by SDS set itself to prepare a new media legislation. The amendment bills concern three media laws, namely the Mass Media Act, RTV Slovenija Act (National Public Broadcasting Organization) and the Act on STA (Slovenian Press Agency). In a nutshell, Janša's government has proposed establishing a special fund to support television production. According to the proponents, one of the main reasons to introduce a budget like this is the lack of pluralism in the media market. In this respect, the critics expressed by the government mainly refer to RTV Slovenija as well as STA. Regarding the former, Miro Petek, working as the Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, says: *'TV viewers do not have the chance to hear other or different opinions. There are no different views; we are witness to a media defect with no equal access to media for which we are all paying RTV fee. This is a typical agitation or agitprop which has been experienced on our grounds in recent history'* (Petek in SDS).

To launch a fund for television production, the proposer intends to reduce the yearly budget of RTV Slovenia by 8% (circa 7,7 million €). More specifically, out of 8%, 5% would be allocated to the fund, whilst the remaining 3% would go for the operation of STA (Veselič 2020). According to the proposer, 25 million € would be available each year to support television production. It is stipulated that the allocation of money would be in the domain of the Minister of Culture, whose decision would be made following the proposal of the expert commission (ZMed-E 2020).

The idea to launch a special budget for televisions—its funding—and the way the money would be allocated has triggered a sharp response (Pengov Bitenc 2020, Veselič 2020, Vladislavljec 2020, Orešnik 2020). As regards the reduction of the RTV budget Igor Kadunc, the then chief executive of RTV Slovenija explained that *'(. . .) it is not about the percentage and money, it is about the question of whether we want a public RTV in Slovenia which we are managing to keep, or do we want commercial TVs to get stronger!'* (Kadunc in Veselič 2020). In this respect, the opinion of the left-wing LMŠ is as follows: *'the goals of Janša's government (. . .) are two: to weaken the public media and the paid-in fees for RTV (. . .) to redirect to media close to SDS and take control over the information and their interpretation'* (Zupan, Kamenarič and Vorkapič 2020). Or put in simpler terms, the critics are cautious of the possibility that the public money will also be allocated to such media as the right leaned Nova24 TV.

To be honest, Janša's government, if we consider the recent Media landscape research, has little to choose from. The fact of the matter is that television companies in Slovenia lean either to the left (e.g. RTV Slovenia, Pro Plus) or to the right (e.g. Nova24 TV). Yet, the one bright spot that raises the bar in terms of impartial and balanced coverage is Planet TV (referring to its online platform siol.net as it was part of the Media landscape research). To promote media pluralism, this television station deserves additional support and promotion as an example worth following (see more in section 4 on media pluralism above).

7. Discussion

Referring to Lippmann (2004), Spengler (2010), Tomšič (2007) and Gaur (2019), among others, it can be said that the will of the people is shaped and influenced with and through media. Putting it another way, the public opinion, either leaning to the left or the right, cannot be taken for granted as it is always a production of media. Besides, any public consensus is always made at the expense of exclusion, meaning that marginal groups are left out of consideration (Mouffe in Raeijmaekers and Maesele 2015). As demonstrated, this is exactly the case of Slovenia, whereby the mainstream media play a

significant role in terms of guaranteeing political elites from the left to preserve their dominant position in the state.

Bearing this in mind, the question that arises is whether the right-wing media policy, ranging from legislative proposals to passed amendments, and from the establishment of newspapers to the launch of television channels, is solving the issue of media pluralism. For instance, a stipulation that defines greater involvement of government in the operation of public media, namely RTV (see ZRTVS-1 2005), could be misused in a way to transform public service into the propaganda machine of every ruling coalition. Besides, the right to correction and reply (see Zmed-A 2006), although aiming to call media for greater accountability to civil society, can also be interpreted as the attempt of political authorities to pressure the editorial policy of critical media whilst pushing them to change their rhetoric.

On the other hand, some of the positive examples need to be considered. In the first place, this was the establishment of a parliamentary programme (TV Slovenija 3), ensuring the citizens the possibility of keeping an eye on what is going on in the parliament. In other words, the launch of TV Slovenija 3 has brought politics in general and the decision-making process in particular closer to the interested audience.

Out of three mechanisms to increase plurality of media suggested by B. Hrvatin and Petković (2008), one also refers to subventions. From this perspective, it is possible to claim that the launch of a media fund is a good idea. Yet, one has to consider whether the expert commission, either appointed by right or left-wing government, will make its decision in an impartial and balanced way. If yes, then television programmes such as Planet TV, referring here to the web portal siol.net and its performance in a recent Media landscape research, will get a reason to perform even better whilst those neglected will be forced either to change their editorial policy or to seek other ways of funding.

To conclude, the fact is that our research findings have some limitations that need to be pointed out. This, in particular, applies to the state of media pluralism, where we rely mainly on the Media landscape research (see Tomšič et al. 2020). In this regard, one has to consider that the above-mentioned study only encompasses articles that were written during the time of the pandemic and that the performance of the political authorities around the world was mainly evaluated through the lenses of this particular issue. As the context of the pandemic is without saying negative, one has to consider conducting similar research under more favourable circumstances. In addition, the research was done in a time of the right-wing government, so we suggest carrying out a similar research once the ruling coalition is led by the left-wing political party. Moreover, referring to the study conducted by Boumans et al. (2018), it would be interesting to analyse the relationship between national press agencies and mainstream media.

More precisely, it might be asked to what degree the Slovenian mainstream media rely on the STA (Slovenian national press agency) and how this affects news coverage.

Though our article says differently, it is hardly possible to argue that the state of media pluralism always reflects the state of political pluralism. Leaving aside the autocratic regimes where the media are by rule controlled by the state, the relationship between media and political pluralism in democratic societies may vary from state to state. To test our findings, more similar research in other countries should be done.

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