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# **CROATIAN PUBLIC TELEVISION – LOST IN TRANSFORMATION**

A Thesis Presented for  
the Master of Science Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Iveta Imre  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and my family who have always been there for me, and provided me with encouragement.

Thank you for all your love and support. This would not have been possible without you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the influence of government, politicians and advertisers on the content of Croatian Public Television (HTV) news. This research examined whether HTV has remained state TV and under as strong government influence as it was in the former Yugoslavia? Or has it transformed into public TV, which has been the goal since Croatia gained independence in 1991? Or has it become commercial TV?

The data were gathered through 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists and producers in the HTV news department and through a content analysis of HTV's main newscast, Dnevnik.

The major findings suggest there is still a lot of coverage of politics in Dnevnik, but not as much as in the past. The political influence has been stronger again in the last three years; however, self-censorship is a bigger problem at HTV today than actual censorship.

The results indicate the big advertisers like the phone company Croatian Telecom or the gas company Ina influence the news programming at HTV, especially Dnevnik. The conclusion is that HTV today is state TV with commercial influences.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*“To understand Croatian Radio (Television), one must know its coffee bars. Three were located within the huge HRT complex in Zagreb, and the central coffee bar, which seats about 100 patrons, has always been known as The Square. It was busy most days, but was busiest on paydays, when "ghost employees" came to pick up their paychecks. Espresso, alcohol, and gossip were the food and drink of the disgruntled, those passed over for promotion, or those marginalized by politics... Everyone just moved to the coffee bars to wait for another assignment, which may or may not come...”*

*Leo A. Gher*

Television is the most popular medium in Croatia, with 87 percent of people watching television every day (Stantic et al, 2003). Croatian Television station (HTV) is one of three divisions of Croatian Radio-Television (HRT). Besides television, HRT consists of Croatian Radio (HR), and Music Production. HTV broadcasts on three national television channels, two terrestrial and one satellite, and it has five regional TV centers. It is primarily funded by subscription fees, receiving about \$150 million to \$170 million a year, for an average of \$12 per household per month. However, the law allows HRT to broadcast nine minutes of advertising per hour. Being the oldest and biggest national broadcaster, HTV dominates Croatia's advertising market, earning an estimated \$250 million per year (Stantić et al, 2003).

Television news in Croatia has been a ritual for many decades. Watching news is extremely important for people in Croatia. They watch news to find out about current political and economic problems. Every night, many Croatians turn on television at 7:30 pm when HTV's main newscast "Dnevnik" is broadcast. Dnevnik has been broadcasting for more than 40 years, and it is a tradition in Croatia. In addition, research shows that it is the most viewed show in Croatia with between 16.3 percent and 21.6 percent of average number of viewers per minute (Car, 2007). Zoran Šprajc, one of the producers and anchors of Dnevnik, often starts the show by saying "Good evening, the 30 most watched minutes are starting." However, recent audience research showed that Dnevnik lost 2.17 percent in viewership in the last 12 months, while the main newscasts of two national commercial stations Nova TV and RTL gained 1.73 percent and 1.53 percent according to audience research agency AGB Adriann (T-portal.com, 2009). In 2008, for the first time, Nova TV's main newscast had more viewers than HTV's Dnevnik. It was also the most watched show in Croatia in general (Tomljanović, 2008).

To understand the situation at Croatian Television station today, one has to know the history of Croatia and all of the events that have taken place since Tito, the president of former Yugoslavia, died in 1980.

## **1.1 Background**

After World War II in 1945, Marshal Tito, partisan guerilla leader, created the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a federation of six republics: Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. Tito successfully

stopped SSSR from taking over Yugoslavia and established communist rule of his own. Yugoslavia was in good relations with western countries for many years, allowing for economic growth of the country. Tito led the country until his death in 1980.

Federation country leaders could not decide who would replace Tito, producing a political deadlock. The next 10 years brought ethnic tensions, growing debt and increasing nationalism. Federation countries wanted to declare independence. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 was the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia. The final breakup of the federation began in May 1991 when Croatia and Slovenia declared independence from the Serbian-dominated central government in Belgrade (Thompson, 1999).

Television in Europe developed in the 1950s during the Cold War. State television stations were owned by the government, creating a monopoly for many years. Government leaders directly controlled the media and used them to manipulate information and create favorable public opinion (Car, 2007). The development of cable and satellite television in the 1980s affected the monopoly of public television and opened the doors to competition. However, in the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries, including Yugoslavia, television was still perceived as a means of controlling people (Matković, 1995).

In Yugoslavia, the media system was established similar to the Soviet Communist press system. The sole purpose of the media was to aid in the building of communism. The media were to “help to further economic and social development of the country” (Siebert, Peterson, Schramm, 1956). The media were not allowed to criticize party objectives or Tito. The media were controlled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia through the league’s branches in six republics. However, it is thought that the

media in Yugoslavia had greater freedom of expression than in other communist countries. The media system was more varied and less obviously controlled (Thompson, 1999).

Croatia declared independence in 1991. The new country bordered with Italy, Slovenia and Hungary to the North, Bosnia-Herzegovina to the South and Serbia to the East. Croatia inherited 1,000 kilometers of beautiful coastline on the Adriatic Sea from the federation. The declaration of independence was followed by the first multiparty elections where Communists lost without a fight. The winning party was the Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (HDZ) led by Franjo Tuđman. HDZ won the majority in the parliament, and Tuđman became the president of Croatia, with vast ruling power in his hands. In 1992, the Croatian government voted for a new constitution, and Croatia officially became a parliamentary democracy. However, the political party in power enforced a closed system of nationalism, ultimately not changing anything from the old system but the name (Thompson, 1999).

The new government in 1990 brought hope for positive changes in the media in Croatia. HDZ, the new ruling party, promised freedom of speech and free press in the new democratic system. The period between 1990 and 1992 was conceived as a new era for media in Croatia, taboos were gone, and censorship was a thing of the past. HDZ promised full privatization of radio and television licenses and a remake of the national broadcasting organization into an independent public service broadcaster following the footsteps of the BBC in United Kingdom. The national broadcaster “Radio-Television Zagreb” became “Croatian National Radio-Television” (HRT). In November 1990, HRT officially separated from Yugoslavian Radio-Television, but it continued to function as

state TV. When HDZ secured the majority in the parliament, all promises of free press and reforms fell through. HDZ disciplined media by positioning party followers on key positions in media companies, sabotaging the development of the private media sector, intimidating journalists through paramilitary means and restricting free speech (Gher, 2003).

The war that started in Croatia in 1991 was a result of political conflict between Serbia and Croatia. The war brought destruction, death and damaged infrastructure. At the end of the war in 1995, foreign markets and investments were paralyzed, the tourism industry was at a halt and economic losses added up to \$27.5 billion (Gher, 2003). The war and the government's political dominance delayed the democratization process of the country and the transformation of society and media for the next 10 years.

War worsened the situation at HRT. It enabled the government to tighten its control, advance its propaganda, and to misinform and lie (Thompson, 1999). Editing stations at HRT were under the strict control of an armed soldier who enforced censorship. Journalists were pressured to censor themselves for "the sake of the people though the beneficiary was the government, not the people" (Thompson, 1999).

The political influence and the war slowed down the transformation of HRT from state to public TV in the 1990s. The transformation became a very slow and complicated process. HRT was a non-functioning centralized organization highly influenced by politics with too many employees and no proactive leaders capable of handling the task. Economic losses slowed the process further (Car, 2006).

The end of the 1990s brought commercial broadcasting into the market. Commercial television ended HRT's monopoly, introducing competition for viewers and

advertisers. The big competitor was Nova TV, owned by US CME. This television station was founded in 1999, and it attracted 15 percent of the viewers with 24 hours of national broadcast (Stantic et al; 2003). The programming of another private television station German RTL, which started broadcasting in 2003, had 5 percent of the viewers (Stantic et al; 2003).

HDZ lost parliamentary elections to a coalition of six democrat political parties in 2000. The new government tried to minimize the political influence on HRT and introduced greater freedom of the press. Since then the political influence on HRT has been less obvious (Car, 2006).

### **1.1.1 Media laws and regulation**

*“The problem is that foreigners read Croatia’s media legislation, and when you read it, it is fine, even idyllic. By law, we do have freedom of the press and of expression. In practice, we don’t”*

*Tomislav Jakic, Forging war*

#### **Croatian Radio-Television Act**

In 1990, the newly elected Croatian government voted for the Croatian Radio-Television Act. The Act established HRT as a public broadcasting organization that was

to produce and broadcast radio and television programs. The ownership, however, did not change, and HRT remained state-owned.

By this law, the government appoints radio and television directors and proposes a general director as the head of HRT. The general director was mandated to run the company with an administrative council comprised of nine senior HRT staff members. Rules and regulations issued by the council had to be in accordance with the government. The law created a program council to set guidelines for the program. This council was composed of 15 members of parliament, 10 HRT personnel and 10 delegates from cultural associations, who reported to the parliament on a regular basis (Thompson, 1999).

Since then, the Croatian Radio-Television Act has been changed seven times. Changes were made to the selection of members of administrative and program councils. Most of the members of councils were selected among the HDZ's politicians in the parliament. The ruling party directly controlled the only television at that time with national coverage. The most important changes were made in 2001 and 2003 (Car, 2006).

The Croatian Radio-Television Act of 2001 was finally expected to prepare the ground for HRT to complete the transformation from state to public TV. Public TV was to be financed and led by the public for whom it should broadcast programs free from political influence. The task of this law was to ensure that selection of members of the program council was free of influence. Nongovernmental organizations were to choose 22 members of the Council, and the president of Croatia, premier, and the president of the Croatian parliament were to select three prominent community workers not affiliated with any political party. However, this law allowed for the parliament to choose seven

members of the administrative council, leaving room for political influence. The Act of 2001 offered some democratization, but it was not functional. The civil society did oversee the program, but administration was still under the political control (Popović, 2004).

The Act of 2003 attempted to get the transformation of HRT from state to public TV moving once again. The new Act was to define the purpose of the Program Council, improve professionalism in the news department, stop the commercialization of the program and minimize the political influence (Tomurad, Mucalo, 2004).

### **The Telecommunications Act**

The Telecommunications Act of 1994 allowed private ownership of radio and television stations in Croatia. Private ownership was prohibited in the former Yugoslavia because the country owned all electronic media at the time. The ability to compete for broadcasting licenses immediately affected the growth of radio and television stations. The Act founded the council for Telecommunications, the legal body in charge of granting licenses. Nine members of the council were appointed to the duty by the parliament. Out of nine first-time selected members, six were politicians mainly affiliated with HDZ political party. The obvious political connections and influence on the council aroused objections from the people and even massive protests. (Tomurad, Mučalo, 2004).

To quiet the protests in 1999, the new Telecommunications Act prohibited selection of politicians as members of the council. The nine members were now selected among independent experts in radio and television. The Telecommunications council is

independent; however, it is required to submit annual report to the government (Car, 2007).

## ***1.2 Statement of the problem***

The transformation of state television channels into public broadcasting services in post-communistic countries has been a long and difficult process. Most of these stations were giants, employing thousands of people. They were highly influenced by the governments, censored and took self-censorship as a given.

In the late 1980s, communism toppled, and countries started their way toward democratization and a free market economy. Electronic media began its transformation as well, and a whole new set of rules and regulations had to be made. Some countries went through the transition easily, while others, like Croatia, were still torn by wars that postponed transformation for years.

In 1991, HTV started the transformation from state TV to public TV. However, many problems slowed down this process. The transformation of HTV into a public broadcaster has been slow and challenging. The government influence on the programming, especially news, has remained an issue. The new government in Croatia in 1991 made sure that it had the right, by law, to control the media (Zgrabljic, 2003).

Today, it is still not clear whether television should be an independent public broadcaster or merely a tool for government propaganda. Croatians consider state TV and public TV as synonyms; therefore, HTV's main purpose is to advocate for political goals (Malović, 2005). HTV cannot be completely independent as long as the state is its owner.

State media ownership limits freedom of speech and undermines a journalist's credibility. "How is a journalist going to report critically about government's wrongdoings if his salary depends on local politicians?" (Matković, 1999).

Lately, some in Croatia have been criticizing HTV for commercializing its programs. The development of commercial television stations has significantly influenced HTV's programming. In 2007 Nova TV launched a reality show "Story Super Nova", a singing contest that attracted a lot of viewers. Soon after, HTV unsuccessfully launched a similar reality show called "Coca Cola Music Star," including the name of the main sponsor in the title. In addition, HTV started broadcasting a lot of imported programs, such as foreign movies, series, soap operas, game and reality shows, as well as reducing original programming at the same time. Some criticized the news as light with the purpose of entertaining the viewers rather than informing about actual and important issues in economy, politics or culture (Car, 2007).

The problems in the past suggest that Dnevnik might not be very independent or be an accurate source of information. The question remains about control over the news on HTV today. Is it the government, the advertisers or is it free from external influences? In other words, is HTV state, commercial or public TV?

The goal of this study is to determine the influence of the government, the politicians and advertisers on the content of HTV's news. The primary focus is on the main newscast, Dnevnik, which is broadcast on HTV daily at 7:30 pm. This newscast is perceived to be the most important part of HTV's news programming. If it appears to be influenced by the government that would suggest the viewers may be influenced as well.

Because the situation at HTV changes with every election and the limited research and data in this area, there is a need for additional research that would shed light on the current content of news at HTV. In addition, this research examines whether HTV has remained state TV and under high government influence as it was in ex-Yugoslavia, or is it transformed into public TV, which has been the goal since Croatia gained independence in 1991 or is it commercial TV. If it is perceived as public TV that would mean HTV has reached its goal to broadcast programs independently. Possible commercialization might suggest there is no place for public TV in Croatia anymore. Finally, if the results show HTV is perceived as state TV that would mean there is still a long way ahead towards free and independent broadcasting.

The issues examined in this research cover political and advertising influences on the news. Three research questions are addressed:

1. What influence does the government have on the content of news?
2. What influence does advertising have on the content of news?
3. What is HTV today – a state, public or commercial television station?

### ***1.3 Definition of terms***

State TV: State television is operated directly by a government ministry, and it is financed through state subsidization and through license fees. State television channels are generally under the influence of the government (Howell, 1986).

Public TV: A system that is nonprofit and noncommercial, supported by public funds, ultimately accountable in some legally defined way to the citizenry and aimed at

providing a service to the entire population – one that does not apply commercial principles as the primary means to determine its programming (McChesney, 1999).  
Commercial TV: Owned by private entities with government licenses, financed with advertising. Commercial television stations broadcast mainly entertainment programs (Howell, 1986).

### ***1.4 Significance of the Study***

This research will further the understanding of Croatian Television station. Answers to research questions should help explain the current situation in HTV's news department and the progress HTV has made towards being an independent public broadcaster of accurate and influence-free information. It might also help to predict the future of HTV's transformation into either public or commercial television.

Despite the fact that this research encompasses only Croatia, the findings might be applicable to other developmental countries that have been going through a similar process of transformation, especially other former Yugoslavian countries. The findings in this study might suggest to what extent Croatia has evolved to have free and independent press. By taking a closer look at the extent to which HTV is independent might indicate where Croatia is on its path to democracy.

The second chapter in this study explores relevant literature about Croatian Television station. Methodology used to gather data for this study is introduced in the third chapter. The fourth chapter explains findings, and it is followed by a discussion and conclusion of the findings in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of relevant literature directly related to Croatian Television station is limited. Most of the studies have evaluated HTV's transformation from state to public TV, political influence on state TV, especially on the news, and pressure from commercial television stations and advertisers.

In 2000, Hrvoje Šalković did a historical study of HTV's transformation into a public broadcaster. He conducted in-depth interviews and looked at media laws and HTV yearbooks. Šalković found that HTV has been throughout its history an instrument for government propaganda. The Communist government in Yugoslavia and the nationalist-autocratic oriented government in 1990s used HTV to promote political ideals. HTV was never an independent broadcaster. The author also found the reasons for that were war, a difficult economy, underdevelopment of democracy and critical reasoning. Šalković said the newly selected government in 2000 showed the determination to transform HTV successfully. For the first time, the government wanted to depoliticize HTV and transform it into an independent public broadcaster. "Its purpose is to protect and serve the public interest. "System functioning this way allows the direct public surveillance of the government" (Šalković, 2000).

The Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Croatia conducted a study in 2002 on politics in HTV's programs. The aim of the study was to establish how HTV

functions as a public television station in terms of political influences, especially after the government changed in 2000. Geza Stantić and associates did the research in the committee's name. To gather data, they did a content analysis of 140 shows on HTV including news, political, documentary, educational and entertainment programs. They also conducted in-depth interviews with 14 experts on media in Croatia. The results showed that HTV did not promote government interests in 2002 as much as it had in the 1990s. The frequency of politicians appearing on the program had decreased, and journalists had greater freedom to criticize the government. However, the researchers concluded that there was a need for a professional and permanent regulatory body to monitor television programs in Croatia independently (Stantić et al, 2002). This study took an outside look at politics at HTV and did in-depth interviews only with media experts. It did not interview people working at HTV who might have offered an inside view about the subject studied.

Fulbright scholar Leo A. Gher conducted a study in 2003 about Croatian Radio station (HR). In the study, he evaluated historical, political and legal issues of HR in the past decade and the transition of this radio channel from an authoritarian to a public broadcaster. In a six month period, Gher collected data from Croatian newspapers, web sites, magazines, law reviews, newsletters and archives from the Croatian Government and the U.S. Embassy. He also observed HR journalists and conducted three in-depth interviews with one public relations officer, one member of the regulating body of Croatian broadcasting and an American media expert. The results of his study suggest that HR did not complete the transition towards being a public broadcaster. This study found that HR had an element of a public broadcaster as it is regulated by an independent

regulatory authority (HRT Program Council). However, there was a commercial element because HR was allowed to broadcast commercials. There was an authoritarian element as well, state subsidies and taxation. Gher pointed out that the problem of political control over public broadcaster's programming still existed. He concluded that the development of Croatia as a democracy and its attempts to become a part of the European Union will help the transformation of HR into a real public broadcaster (Gher, 2003). In his study, Gher focused on the transformation of Croatian Radio station. While data gathered is valuable to understand the transformation of Croatian Radio Television station as a whole, Gher did not offer any data on Croatian Television station.

The Open Society Institute, a foundation that promotes democratic governance, human rights and economic, legal and social reforms, released an elaborate monitoring report in 2005 on television across Europe. The report monitored regulation, policy and independence of television— both public service and commercial broadcasting in 20 European countries. Croatia was one of these countries. According to the results of the report, HTV was not responding well to the pressures from commercial television stations in Croatia. The report pointed out that HTV in recent years increased commercialization, but it decreased program quality because it started producing programs such as game shows “Who wants to be a Millionaire”, and “The Weakest Link” consequentially neglecting educational programs. With commercialization of the programming, and the advertising war with the commercial stations, HTV was abrogating its public service duties. The report also found that in the recent years editorial independence and political impartiality have increased. However, there were some

indications that the government still influenced HTV's program decisions (Peruško, 2005).

In 2006, Viktorija Car conducted a historical comparative study of Croatian and Slovenian public television. She examined media laws, yearbooks and audience analysis records in Croatia and Slovenia to compare the public television transformation process in these countries. Car wrote that the transformation of public television in Croatia was delayed because of the war and political influence on the station, while Slovenian television went through the process faster and more independently. Car found that because of the nonfunctional program regulations on HTV, political influence was still present and left unnoticed. HTV's Program Council did not have a set of rules and regulations to follow while overseeing the program. The program overseeing process was voluntary and depended on personal judgments of the council members. She proposed establishing an independent media regulatory body on a national level as a solution to this problem. Members of this organization should be media experts who are to regulate public and commercial television systems in Croatia (Car, 2006).

The International Research and Exchanges Board, a United States nonprofit organization committed to international education and training, started a yearly publication in 2000 called Media Sustainability Index (MSI). This publication provides a detailed analysis of media systems in 76 countries across Africa, Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East. Research is conducted through panel discussions with 11 media experts in the country in question. The MSI from 2007 found that journalists in Croatia had editorial independence and that political censorship was rare. Nevertheless, the report described an incident about two news editors at HTV who were suspended because they

aired the current President's speech from the early 1990's where he represented views that were completely opposite from his current political standing. The MSI pointed out that self-censorship was more common. "Journalists are well aware of whom their outlet's editor or, more often, owner is siding with, and this fact could be very efficient in imposing self-censorship" (MSI, 2007).

The Media Sustainability Index from 2008 reported changes in the news department at HTV that resembled the 1990s period in Croatia. Parliamentary elections in November 2007 were followed by hiring government-loyal producers and journalists in key positions at HTV. Politics managed to infiltrate HTV easily, despite all the laws and regulations that clearly delineated editorial independence of public broadcasters (MSI, 2008).

The most recent MSI from 2009 reported an even bigger setback at HTV. There was no evidence of direct political influence on producers, but self-censorship was more common. "Politicians don't even have to make phone calls to the editors to give them instructions like in the 90s; producers now read their minds and implement the strategy mercilessly" (MSI, 2009). The main reason for self-censorship at HTV is that journalists don't want to risk being moved from the prime-time news to less important morning or late-night news because they were too critical. Many quality journalists have left HTV, and many more are considering doing the same (MSI, 2009). The MSI from 2009 also found that big businesses in Croatia influence HTV more than ever. "It would be virtually impossible to find a decent piece of unbiased reporting on some of the top five Croatian advertisers on public TV" (MSI, 2009). Consequently, journalists accept gifts, such as clothes with a sponsor's logo, free travel and free tickets to game shows or theater on a

regular basis. Product placements and side deals between producers and large corporations were obvious. The anticorruption police unit visited HTV in December 2008 following a report that one public relations company paid producers and journalists to secure positive coverage for its clients. The increasing pressure from commercial competitors resulted in sloppy reporting and a lack of in-depth investigation. Long-form public-affairs programs became superficial and predictable. “It is like reading yesterday’s newspapers, only issues that are harmless or neutral to the ruling party may appear in the prime time” (MSI, 2009).

## **2.2 Summary**

- HTV’s transformation from state TV to public TV has been long and challenging and has not finished yet. Throughout its history, HTV has been an instrument for government propaganda (Šalković, 2000).
- Since 2000, HTV has not been promoting government interest as much as it did in the 1990s (Stantić et al., 2003).
- The main problem at HTV throughout the years has been the political influence on the news producers and journalists. The main reason for that was a non-existent regulatory body that would monitor HTV’s programs (Car, 2006).

- Setback in editorial freedom at HTV came in 2007 when the government hired “loyal” producers and journalists in key positions at HTV. Since then self-censorship among journalists has been evident. Many quality journalists have left HTV, and many were considering doing the same (MSI, 2008).
- HTV increased commercialization of the program in recent years and decreased program quality. HTV started producing programs such as game shows “Who wants to be a Millionaire”, and “The Weakest Link” consequently neglecting educational programming (Peruško, 2005).
- Big businesses influenced HTV; reporters accepted gifts from different companies, and product placements and side deals between producers and large corporations were obvious (MSI 2009).

Methods used in studies on Croatian Television station range from historical analyses, in-depth interviews, observations, program content analyses and panel discussions. For example, Leo A. Gher studied the development of Croatian Radio station (HR) in Croatia. In a period of six months, Gher collected data from Croatian newspapers, web sites, magazines, law reviews, newsletters and archives from the Croatian government and the U.S. Embassy. He also observed HR journalists and conducted three in-depth interviews with media experts (Gher, 2003). Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights did a study in 2002 on politics in HTV’s program through

content analysis of 140 shows on HTV from news, political, documentary and educational and entertainment programs to establish to what extent HTV functions as a public television in terms of political influences, especially after the government changed in 2000 (Stantic et al, 2002). The remaining studies were either panel discussions or historical analyses.

Relevant studies on HTV looked at this television station in general. Very little research has been done on HTV news specifically. No studies have done an in-depth view of the news department at HTV or conducted in-depth interviews with the people working at the news department at HTV. There is no data on how employees see the situation at HTV today and what they think about the freedom of speech at this station.

This study will do an in-depth analysis of news at HTV today. It will identify influences on HTV news content today through in-depth interviews with journalists and producers working in the news department at HTV. In addition, it will provide a 20-year examination of HTV's main newscast Dnevnik. Utilizing these methods, it will attempt to explain the current state of HTV's transformation from being a state TV in Yugoslavia to becoming an independent public broadcaster in Croatia.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

For this study, two types of data were gathered. These included primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with current and former employees at HTV. The secondary data were gathered through a content analysis of HTV's main newscast, Dnevnik. With the use of in-depth interviews and program content analysis, the researcher combined qualitative and quantitative methods of research.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative methods, such as focus groups, field observations and in-depth interviews, allow for research to be done in a natural setting that increases the researcher's deeper understanding of phenomenon under investigation. These methods are flexible and researchers can pursue other interests during the research. On the other hand, data gathered with qualitative methods cannot be generalized, and data reliability can be questionable (Wimmer, Dominick, 2006). Quantitative research methods consist of measurable variables that allow for greater precision in reporting results. Using both approaches allowed the researcher to obtain the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods and to fully understand the nature of the problem (Wimmer, Dominick, 2006).

### ***3.1 In-depth interviews***

In this study, in-depth interviews were employed to obtain primary data from respondents about political and advertising influences on HTV's news. In-depth interviews provide rich, deep data and are used in studies when researchers want to study people and "understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve their experiences from the past, to gain expert insight or information, to obtain descriptions of events that are normally unavailable for observation, to foster trust, to understand sensitive relationships and to create a record of discourse that can subsequently be analyzed" (Lindlof, Taylor, 2002).

In order to determine what effect the government, the politicians and advertising influence have on news at HTV, a total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and one former employee at HTV from mid-May until the beginning of July 2009. To ensure data would be accurately gathered, certain criteria were used in the selection of participants. The qualified participants had to be current or former employees at HTV and had to work at the news department. This qualification ensured that the participants understood and were able to answer the questions, making the interviews easier to execute. The researcher also attempted to interview participants who had been working at HTV for 20 years and participants who came to work at HTV in the last 10 years to ensure multiple points of view. Generations who have been working for HTV in the communist system in the 1980s and nationalist system in 1990s when HTV was under strict political influence might have a different point of view on the current situation in HTV's news department than newer generations of employees. Participants were

recruited through the principal investigator's personal connections. They were selected based on the researcher's personal knowledge of how long they have been working at HTV. The participants were selected based on a convenience sample.

The participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study. An informed consent (see Appendix 1) was provided in both English and Croatian. No external media experts in Croatia were interviewed because there are very few experts on HTV who do not work there. The researcher also was looking to interview a more homogenized group of participants to gather more accurate data.

Most interviews took place in the HTV building in Croatia. One interview took place at Nova TV, also in Croatia. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Croatian language. All interviews were audio-recorded with a digital audio-recorder. After every interview, the researcher transcribed the audio recording. Interviews were conducted following an interview guide which consisted of 11 questions. (see Appendix 2) The researcher asked the participants to describe their careers at HTV. Questions that followed were intended to gather data on governmental and advertising influences on the news. Questions on governmental influence included the presentation of news in the 1990s, and today, editorial decisions on news coverage and presentation, censorship and self-censorship. Questions on advertising influences included the nature of relationships with public relations companies and advertisers and HTV's mission as a public broadcaster. The researcher also included some general questions such as the major problems in the news department today, how technology and external training from western companies have influenced news at HTV.

All interviews were voluntary with no penalty for refusal or withdrawal. The interviews were recorded with mention of names of the participants. This research did not promise confidentiality. Information recorded during the interviews was linked to the actual persons interviewed. However, the participants had the right to request confidentiality. One interviewee requested confidentiality because his contract with HTV states that the participant cannot make any negative comments about HTV. The researcher made sure that the name of the participant was not mentioned on the audio recording. The table 3.1 shows the participants who did not request confidentiality.

### ***3.2 Program content analysis***

A secondary method used was news program content analysis. Content analysis was conducted because of the small sample used for in-depth interviews. Content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969). Some of the studies on HTV have done a content analysis. For example, a study in 2002 on politics in HTV's program did a content analysis of 140 shows from news, informative political, documentary, educational and entertainment program on HTV looking into actors, themes, ethnic hate speech and national speech (Stantić et al, 2002).

The content of the main newscast Dnevnik was analyzed for this study. For the analysis, the researcher chose one half hour edition of Dnevnik per year since 1991, when Croatia gained independence, until 2009. All selected editions were broadcast in September. The researcher chose September because this is a regular month in Croatia

**Table 3.1 Interviewees who did not request confidentiality**

| <b>NAME OF THE PARTICIPANT</b> | <b>SINCE WHEN AT HTV</b> | <b>PREVIOUS POSITION</b>                                      | <b>CURRENT POSITION</b>                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tena Perišin                   | 1980s                    |                                                               | news director assistant at HTV and professor of journalism studies at the University of Zagreb                 |
| Darija Marijanović             | 1988                     | executive producer of the morning show “Good Morning Croatia” | HTV’s coordinator for international production and professor of journalism studies at the University of Zagreb |
| Tomislav Špoljar               | 1993                     | producer of Dnevnik                                           | HTV’s education center                                                                                         |
| Tomislav Šprajc                | 1993                     |                                                               | producer and ancor of Dnevnik                                                                                  |
| Mislav Bago                    | 1994 - 2008              | Producer and anchor of HTV’s political show Otvoreno          | A political journalist at Nova TV                                                                              |
| Siniša Kovačić                 | 1996                     |                                                               | Executive producer and anchor of Dnevnik                                                                       |
| Josip Šarić                    | 1997                     |                                                               | Foreign news reporter                                                                                          |
| Lamija Alečković               | 2002                     |                                                               | Journalist and producer of newscast                                                                            |
| Anka Bilić Keserović           | 2004                     |                                                               | Political journalist                                                                                           |

when the tourist season is over, and the parliament is back in session. The elections or other important political events are never held in September. Simple random sampling was done to select the particular day of the broadcast of Dnevnik in September.

The researcher chose the following categories to analyze: the number of government, political, social and commercial stories broadcast in each edition of Dnevnik, what the lead story was, video of politicians in stories broadcast in Dnevnik and the number of sound bites from politicians.

A government story is defined for this research as any story about the president, the prime minister and the parliament. A political story is everything else that is in the realm of politics. A social story covers stories that are of interest to the people and about the people, such as education, health and economy. Commercial stories are stories promoting a business without a real news value. The lead story is the first story in the newscast that covers the most important news of the day. The researcher counted the number video clips of politicians doing something, such as walking on the street, sitting in a meeting or coming in or out of a building. The number of sound bites of politicians means how many times they were asked to give a statement in front of a camera. Tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 are examples of how the content analysis was executed.

The purpose of content analysis of Dnevnik is to establish whether the news coverage broadcast in Dnevnik has changed significantly since 1991 until 2009. The results should provide a clearer understanding of the effects of political and advertising influences on the news on HTV since the independence of Croatia and to establish a pattern that should help to understand the future of HTV. In addition, this content analysis will compare and contrast data gathered from in-depth interviews.

**Table 3.2 Categories used to examine the number of governmental, political, social and commercial stories from 1991 until 2009**

|                                          | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Government Stories</b>                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Political Stories</b>                 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Social Stories</b>                    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Commercial Stories</b>                |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Total</b>                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Length of the newscast in minutes</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

**Table 3.3 An example of table used to examine video and sound bites of politicians broadcasted in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009**

|                                     | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Video of politicians</b>         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Sound Bites from politicians</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

**Table 3.4 An example of table used to examine the lead story in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009**

|                         | Lead 1991 | Lead 1992 | Lead 1993 | Lead 1994 | Lead 1995 | Lead 1996 | Lead 1997 | Lead 1998 | Lead 1999 | Lead 2000 | Lead 2001 | Lead 2002 | Lead 2003 | Lead 2004 | Lead 2005 | Lead 2006 | Lead 2007 | Lead 2008 | Lead 2009 |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Government Story</b> |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Political Story</b>  |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Social Story</b>     |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Commercial Story</b> |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

This study examined the government and advertising influences on HTV news to determine if HTV has transformed from state to public TV. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews and newscast content analysis. A total of 10 semi-structured interviews consisting of 11 questions were conducted with older and younger journalists and producers in the HTV news department. The content of the main newscast Dnevnik was also analyzed for this study. The unit of analysis was one half-hour edition of Dnevnik per year since 1991, when Croatia gained independence, until today. The first part of this chapter reports finding from in-depth interviews, and the second part includes findings from the content analysis of Dnevnik.

#### ***4.1 Interviews***

##### **4.1.1. How has the definition of news changed over the years?**

All of the participants agreed that the coverage of news has drastically changed since new technologies arrived at HTV. Coverage of news is much faster and more dynamic. One of the biggest challenges for HTV news today is to be the first with news in the market, not to be sensational and commercial.

The producer's approach to news also has changed. In the past, reporting meant covering a press conference or a parliament session. The main newscast Dnevnik broadcast only political stories. Some of the younger journalists said there is still a lot of such news today. The late-night news producer said there are many cameras available for the newsroom, but it is very difficult to get one.

*"...they follow politicians all day long, from the president, to prime minister; we have to know everything about them. We have to have their opinion on everything because today a story is not complete without their commentary."*

The majority of older journalists said they believed that news on government and politics is broadcast to a lesser degree than in the past, and that there is a lot more problem solution stories. A former executive producer gave an example that when there is a gas crisis, HTV broadcasts follow ups on how restaurants are closing and how citizens are coping with the crisis. She said the government stories make up for about 30 percent of the newscast, as opposed to 60 percent in the past.

*"The coverage of government is not so much about the pressure or government influence as it is about the habit. HTV covers government out of pure habit."*

A producer and anchor of Dnevnik pointed out that Croatia is a highly politicized country and that politics is dominant as in most of the developmental countries. He said because of that, the news is political as well.

*"We are not covering government news as much anymore. However, we should not think that there will not be any government news on public TV."*

All of the participants agreed there is no way covering news can go back to the 1990s when parliament sessions were covered lengthily, and in detail. Today, professional-journalistic standards are followed when deciding which parts of the sessions are newsworthy. However, a political journalist pointed out that HTV lacks investigative journalism. News mostly consists of reports of what happened. There is no in-depth analysis. One interviewee called HTV news “light news”, where nobody questions anything.

#### **4.1.2 How are news coverage and presentation decisions made?**

Some participants explained that most decisions on news are made in morning meetings. Every day daily producers meet with the news director and discuss stories and the main events of the day. The news director has the right to say which event has to be covered and which people need to be interviewed. Journalists are not a part of the morning meetings. A couple of younger participants questioned the decision-making process in the morning meetings. The late-night news producer said decisions on which stories are newsworthy do not make sense. She recalled when the story on the new law on artificial insemination was not selected as a lead story and was placed toward the end of Dnevnik, before the kicker.

*“It is not important what people might be interested in, that there are couples out there who cannot have children, and their life depends on this law. The most important news is to know where our president is and what happened with our generals in Haag.”*

She also pointed out that government news is the most important, and that the news director in the morning meetings can decide that a certain story is not newsworthy, while it might be.

*“We know that you cannot place a story about the rain in Slavonija, which will save the crops and farmers from bankruptcy in the first five minutes of Dnevnik.”*

A former-leading HTV political journalist criticized the organization of the morning meetings. He said at these morning meetings, there are too many people who discuss too much but do not make many decisions.

*“Often I would sit on a morning meeting that lasted 60 minutes, and at the end, I wouldn’t know what happened.”*

#### **4.1.3 How has politics influenced news programming?**

Older participants who have been working at HTV since the 1980s remembered that Dnevnik would always start with news about politics. Yugoslavia started falling apart at the end of the 1980s and democratic changes came. The former executive producer remembered that 1989 and 1990 were two years of the greatest journalistic freedom at HTV.

*“Here at HTV, we could do whatever we wanted. We would give fashion advice to politicians at the end of Dnevnik and analyze their appearance in front of the camera. It was the only time that journalists at HTV were completely free from the governmental influence. We were convinced that we were heading towards democracy.”*

Then the war started, and instead of democracy, Croatia became a nationalistic country. Older participants said every day Dnevnik would start with news about the former president, Franjo Tuđman, and that was indisputable. In the 1990s, HTV was the only television station, and the government paid a lot of attention to what was broadcast in Dnevnik. The former executive producer said that what was not news in Dnevnik did not happen.

*“Habits are the worst in this system because you could really see that the ones who were the most devoted journalists in the socialistic system all of a sudden became nationalists and got better positions at HTV. And again this group of young, enthusiastic journalists got censored and we still didn’t recover from then. We are still trying to heal those wounds from the war.”*

All but one younger participant agreed that in 2000 the situation at HTV changed. The new government came into power, allowing greater freedom of speech and expression. A political journalist explained that in that period, the government could not influence HTV much because nobody really knew who the boss was, and the parties in the power did not have determined goals and interests. Former producer of Dnevnik described the period between 2000 and 2007 as one of the freer periods when it was a pleasure to work at HTV, and journalists did not have to think about politicians and whether news would have any consequences for somebody.

*“We were really trying to do our job as professionally as possible; I even think we were too bold at some point.”*

All but one younger participant agreed that the political influence has been stronger again in the last three years, although not as bad as it was in the time of Franjo

Tuđman, the former president of Croatia. The former HRT director, Mirko Galić, got a position as an ambassador in France, and a whole new group of people came to key positions at HTV. The prevailing feeling among the participants was that the new leadership at HTV had strong ties with the government. The host of a very popular talk show explained that the new leadership at HTV consisted of the same people who were in high positions in the 1990s. However, as the political journalist explained, it is not so much about the influence from the government as it is about balancing between all of the political parties in Croatia, which is equally bad.

*“There is HDZ, there is SDP (Social Democrat Party), there is the president, and now what they talk about, ‘Why it is important to have all that covered?’”*

The assistant news director pointed out that since the former HTV director left, the party in power has greater control over HTV’s news department.

*“We would always criticize our former director Mirko Galić before, however it turned out that he played the game very well, with the government, the parties, both left and right.”*

#### **4.1.4 How free do you think HTV is to cover news?**

One of the ways the politicians exercise control over HTV is calling the executive news producer with their complaints and demands. Most of the younger participants and a couple of older participants agreed that the phone calls started happening more often in the last three years. The political journalist explained that the producers made a big mistake when they allowed the politicians to call them about everything because they

became the ones who produce the newscasts and talk shows. The former producer of Dnevnik described a recent event when a phone call from a politician took place.

*“There was a situation a couple of months ago when we were doing a story on possible changes to the Constitution, and we asked the politicians from HDZ and SDP to comment on that. However, Milanović, the president of SDP got angry because nobody asked him for a comment, so he was invited to be a guest in Otvoreno (a political talk show) even though the subject that day was something completely different. He talked about his opinion on changes in the Constitution for 15 minutes, after which the host switched to the subject of that day. So, how did he show up there?”*

A political journalist also described an event when she did a story that the opposition did not like. She said that she still believes she did not misrepresent any facts in her story. The next day, Dnevnik broadcast the corrections without informing her.

*“They published almost one minute of the opposition’s corrections, and I almost fell into a shock. They had to broadcast that because of the pressures from that party, but they treated me in a wrong way.”*

Another political journalist pointed out that there is no difference between domestic and foreign politicians when it comes to influencing the news program.

*“The foreign diplomats behave here in a way that they would not be able to in their countries. There were situations when the British embassy asked for something to be published or when Americans tried to intervene during President Bush’s visit to Croatia.”*

The majority of participants pointed out that political influence on HTV today is not as present as it was in the 1990s. Then, HTV was the only news source for Croatians because commercial stations were not allowed, and newspapers were weak and too

expensive. Today, the political influence is not as strong because television in Croatia is not the only source of information.

#### **4.1.5 Has there been censorship in news?**

All of the participants agreed that direct and obvious censorship at HTV news today does not exist. However, the majority of the participants said that there are some other unprofessional, subtle methods that are utilized to promote certain ideas through HTV news programs. The political journalist said that one of the methods is to give important news stories to young, inexperienced journalists who are easier to influence. On the same note, the producer and anchor of Dnevnik said that lately HTV has been hiring young journalists who are dedicated and thankful to their bosses for hiring them and would do everything they ask them to do. The late-night news producer explained that sometimes they are told if they don't do something they won't have any work to do.

*“We joke here at HTV that it is a dream of every journalist to get paid and walk around the building telling everybody that he is not allowed to work.”*

The former HTV leading-political journalist said that HTV does not like to have beat journalists. The journalists are switched from one subject to another.

*“Very often journalists who have been following culture, for example, are sent to do a story on politics. Of course that journalist is going to need months to find his way, and in that moment, the producer can manipulate him.”*

The former producer of Dnevnik said that HTV's reactions to certain stories are very slow and behind other media in Croatia.

*“It happened several times that all of the media in Croatia publish some news story, and HTV does nothing about it for two days. When weekly magazines start publishing the story then HTV will jump in. It is difficult to say whether somebody censors directly. However, there are subtle methods; they would say there are no cameras available or journalists to cover the story.”*

The former producer of Dnevnik described a situation he witnessed when a producer told the journalist whom to interview, and whom not to interview.

*“That is censorship, especially when you know that the journalist was told not to interview a person that has information about the other side of the story. That is not objective and professional.”*

A political journalist said that there is no taboo simply because HTV is a huge television station that broadcasts on two channels 36 hours a day. However, he said that the producers use this fact as an excuse not to broadcast certain stories in Dnevnik because they were already broadcast in some other show. He pointed out that this is a form of manipulation because if a story is newsworthy, it should be broadcast in Dnevnik because this newscast is the most influential newscast. The producer and anchor of Dnevnik explained that the model of censorship is different today than it was in the 1990s.

*“Today the goal is to undermine the news program at HTV, and make it benign, so you don’t cover the most important issues, the controversial issues, especially if they are not in accordance with the government.”*

The majority of participants said they personally have freedom in their work most of the time. However, some participants had bad experiences when they were censored in some way, directly or indirectly. A political journalist said her beat was the government for four years. The new leadership took her off that assignment.

*“I guess I was too ironic and cynical. I think the main quality of the journalist is to question the government, but that was a problem. I was not working here in the dark times of 1990s, but I think what is happening today is a more elaborate method of censorship, because now journalists who have been famous political reporters for 15 years are sent to report on an unimportant story that will not be published at the end.”*

Another political journalist said he was reporting from Haag court for five years, but the new news director did not like the way he was doing it.

*“Now I am following foreign politics and I have greater freedom because nobody cares whether you report on the causalities in Pakistan or the earthquake in Sierra Leone because that does not affect Croatia.”*

The talk-show host said he can feel the political influence through his producers who care more about not offending the government through the show, than talking about the problems and injustice.

*“Last year, I had a big fight here at HTV because I noticed that a person who does not have big financial or political support cannot be a guest in my show. It is not a problem if I want to have the president of the opposition as a guest in the show. But if I want somebody who personally had some experience with the corruption, and other injustice, that is a problem, and that person is not welcome on the show.”*

The producer and anchor of Dnevnik explained that he has complete freedom in his work, but he does not have anyone to share it with.

*“In other words, if your journalists are not so free I cannot do 20 stories for Dnevnik, so I have to rely on people I work with.”*

Some younger and older participants said these things keep happening because HTV does not have a clear mission and a stand on important issues in the country, and it allows politicians to call and demand whatever they want. Because of the lack of a

mission, the resources are spent on covering every press conference and parliament session just to have everything covered in case somebody from the government calls. The prevailing criticism was on the lack of protection of journalists and professionalism. The talk-show host said the leadership at public television should be independent and protect the journalists.

*“If something goes wrong, deal with it internally, and don’t allow the politicians to call and arrange to be quest speakers.”*

The producer and anchor of Dnevnik said the main problem is the fact that HTV cares more about the interests of a couple of important viewers than about the general public.

*“The idea is that we shouldn’t be critical but just public relations officers of one, two, three political parties; it really does not matter.”*

A political journalist thinks that HTV today is no different than the government and the politicians who try to influence the program.

*“Television, whose sole purpose is to question government actions, lost the battle because now the station is doing the same thing as the government. The worst thing is that everybody finds it completely normal. Once you open the doors and allow these things to happen, it is over.”*

One younger participant, on the other hand, did not think censorship existed at HTV today. A couple of older interviewees said it doesn’t happen as much as everybody said it does. The news director assistant pointed out that when you talk about censorship you cannot take into consideration only the main newscast Dnevnik. There are other shows in the news program that openly talk about the most important issues in Croatia

today. The late-night news producer said that she was never forced to broadcast something that was not true.

*“I think one of the reasons for that is the fact that I produce a late-night newscast that has only 4 or 5 percent audience ratings. It is not like Dnevnik where these things might happen.”*

The former executive producer said the journalists at HTV have freedom in their work, and that nobody is going to force them to write something they do not want.

*“That’s why when somebody tells me that he did something because he did not have a choice; I think it was because he did not fight hard enough.”*

The producer and anchor of Dnevnik pointed out that sometimes the politicians do things on purpose just to be the news.

*“Politicians sometimes influence the program in a sense that they would have a press conference on Saturday when nothing special is going on, and in that way they impose and promote their ideas because you cannot really ignore them.”*

#### **4.1.6 Does self-censorship exist among reporters?**

Consensus was reached among the participants that self-censorship exists among the employees at HTV today. Half of the younger and older participants found the self-censorship to be a bigger problem than censorship. A political journalist criticized stories broadcast in Dnevnik as convenient to what the government wants to hear. She said that the government does not have to call the producers any more; they know what they can broadcast and what they cannot. Some younger participants said financial problems are

the main reason for self-censorship at HTV, especially because Croatia is going through a severe economic crisis. People at HTV might not want to get into conflicts and risk their jobs. A political journalist said that all of the journalists who love this job fear of not having anything to do.

*“Sometimes that happens, and it is not a pleasant feeling, when you come to work and nobody is paying any attention to you. There is also this fight for broadcasting stories in Dnevnik. I have to admit that everybody who works in the news department at HTV wants to do stories for Dnevnik; other shows are just not compelling enough.”*

In addition to political influence, some older and younger participants pointed out that big problems in the news department at HTV today are lack of organization, audience research, experienced journalists and multi-platform production. A political journalist said the lack of organization is evident in covering stories that are never going to be broadcast.

*“People here at HTV think that our cameramen, cameras, editing, that all of that is for free. It is not for free; it costs a lot of money, but nobody seems to care.”*

Another political journalist found lack of experienced journalists a big problem at HTV today.

*“...lack of what British at BBC call “grey heads,” journalists who would vouch with credibility that what they are saying is true. The average age of journalists at HTV is 35. There is a void after that because here being a journalist after 35 is considered a failure. Instead we have a lot of young, inexperienced journalists who are easy to manipulate.”*

#### 4.1.7 How has commercial advertising influenced news content?

Most of the older and younger participants said that advertising influences the news programs at HTV, especially Dnevnik. The influence comes mostly from big advertisers, such as the phone company Croatian Telecom or the gas company Ina. The producer and anchor of Dnevnik said that HTV does not question these advertisers because of the money those companies invest in the program, not just through advertising.

*“The fact is that we never questioned the biggest company Agrokor because they give us gift certificates for Christmas and Easter.”*

A talk show host described a meeting he attended where the conversation was about a company that had not been advertising at HTV for a year.

*“The idea was not to broadcast anything bad about that company in the next three months so they start advertising with us again.”*

Former executive producer said that when HTV is in a better financial situation advertising influence is not so present. However, sometimes HTV has to borrow money from the Croatian lottery to be able to pay employees at the end of the month.

*“...one of the stories in Dnevnik was the biggest jackpot in Croatian lottery ever. It was not clear which part of this story was news and which advertising.”*

The producer and anchor of Dnevnik mentioned that show hosts and producers take money directly from public-relations agencies or advertisers to promote certain companies or products in their shows.

*“We had a situation when one mayor said he paid \$33,000 to a public relations company to arrange his appearance in two HTV shows.”*

A late-night news producer added that there are people at HTV who work for public-relations companies and people who promote their own companies and clients.

*“There was a scandal with Dijana Culjak, a host at HTV, who was producing a show with one public-relations agency and then selling that show to Nova TV.”*

The former leading HTV political journalist criticized the lack of regulations of these kinds of deals. There is no specific regulatory body that controls the program to prevent these situations from happening.

One older and one younger participant did not agree that advertising and public-relations companies have any major impact on HTV’s news programming. They argued that HTV is still the most watched television station in Croatia and the biggest advertiser. Therefore advertising companies will always want to advertise with HTV, and consequently HTV has the freedom to criticize and question advertisers in an open and independent way.

#### **4.1.8 Do you think HTV is a state TV, a commercial TV or a public TV?**

Participants could not agree on whether HTV is state, public or commercial television. Nevertheless, consensus was reached among four mostly younger participants, who agreed that HTV today is state television, which is, in their opinion, a definite step

back because HTV was on its way to becoming a public television station. A former leading political journalist said that it is difficult to expect that HTV is going to be public as long as the Croatian parliament selects members of the program council at HTV. Politicians then try to influence the program through council members. A producer and anchor of Dnevnik said the problem is there is not a clear definition of what public television is and what its mission is.

*“Often colleges refer to HTV as state television; they do not see the difference between public and state. HTV is state owned, so logically we are state TV. We still cannot manage to free ourselves from thinking in a way that the state is our owner and mentor.”*

He added that formally HTV is a public television because there are a lot of shows that talk about nongovernmental aspects of life, such as church or retirees.

*“The problem is that these shows are not quality programming that is interesting; they are done just so we can say we are public television. In news we lost criticism and credibility that a good public television should have just because of short-term interests that will, I am afraid, hurt us in the future.”*

Only one younger and one older participant said that HTV is a public television. A couple of older participants said HTV is a combination of all three: state, public and commercial, but the commercial aspect has been predominant, especially since the ratings of commercial stations started growing rapidly in the last couple of years. The problem, they said, is that HTV is financed through both subscription fees and advertising. HTV has not decided whether it is public or commercial station, but it is trying to be both at the same time. A former executive producer said HTV is in a very difficult position because it is financed by the state, the viewers and the advertisers simultaneously.

*“You have to carry out public-service programming because you owe it to your viewers who finance you. You have to have good ratings to stay in the market, so a part of your program has to be commercial. Other television stations think this is our advantage because we get our finances from three sources. However, in reality, you answer to everybody and nobody. This creates a schizophrenic situation that nobody knows how to deal with.”*

She added that, in the end, being a public television is HTV’s only option to stay on the market. Being state or commercial station is not an option because that will lead to destruction of the station. HTV has the possibility to be the only real public broadcaster, and the station should take advantage of this unique opportunity.

#### **4.1.9 Have new technologies affected the news?**

All of the participants found digitalization of the production of news at HTV the biggest accomplishment in a long time. HTV installed I-news software that allows journalists to view their footage on 70 computers in the newsroom just minutes after they come back from the shoot. They say this allows HTV to stay competitive and broadcast news as it is. This ability also minimizes censorship. An executive news director assistant said that if not careful, it might lead to superficial and incorrect broadcast of information.

*“Technology, and the desire to be the first in news broadcasting, can bring us either very good journalism, or we might get stuck in superficiality.”*

#### 4.1.10 Has external training from western companies changed the news?

HTV employees have received a lot of training throughout their careers, mostly while attending various conferences and workshops. Many distinguished journalists and professors from Western Europe and the United States came to HTV to offer in-house workshops. The participants were divided as to whether western training makes a difference or not. Half of the participants, most of them the older ones, considered training to be a very positive and welcoming experience. They said training makes a huge difference in their work. The former executive producer said that the possibility for comparison is always welcome.

*“Going to seminars abroad gives you a form of training which is impossible to get here. This is so positive because we are still in development, and from these trainings I can take whatever I find useful, which will allow me to develop in a way that I find the best.”*

The producer and anchor of Dnevnik said that the training offers a new way of looking at the ways of broadcasting information, which makes journalists faster and more accurate. He said training is always welcome; however, lately there has been fewer and fewer workshops because now Croatia is considered to be a more developed country.

*“They think we are capable enough. We are not; we always need somebody to push us to achieve better things, especially now when we have a lot of young journalists who don’t have anybody to learn from.”*

The other half of the mostly younger participants, on the other hand, were more critical of western training. They said the biggest problem is the difference in journalism in Croatia, and western countries, which leaves people at HTV confused. The people who

come to Croatia to do workshops live in countries with completely different moral values, experiences, history and ways of life, and whatever they know how to do, cannot be implemented in Croatia. Another problem is HTV itself. The political journalist criticized the system at HTV.

*“Every time I came from a seminar, either here in Croatia or abroad, I thought I would start using everything I just learned. However, that never happened because HTV still has this socialistic characteristic that prevents implementation of innovation.”*

#### **4.1.11 Where do you see HTV news in the future?**

Two younger and one older participant agreed that HTV is still in a very good position due to the fact that in other developmental countries public televisions have not been doing very well. A former executive producer mentioned that in Hungary, public television practically disappeared. They pointed out that HTV is fighting the competition well and is managing to be No. 1 in the market. The producer and anchor of Dnevnik said HTV will remain the most viewed station in Croatia, especially the news program.

*“I think we are headed in a good direction. I am certain HTV will continue to broadcast quality programming and will preserve the No. 1 position it has not only in Croatia, but in the region as well.”*

Most of the participants were not so optimistic. They said HTV will have to change some things in the future if it wants to survive. They said there are too many employees working at HTV who don't have anything to do and there are too many young journalists who do not have enough experience and make too many mistakes, politics is

present in every decision making process and the recession is causing a lot of financial problems because of HTV's lack of organization and poor management. They said downsizing, specialization and a change in management is necessary for this station to survive. The former executive producer had an idea on how to solve the problems HTV is facing today.

*"One year I seriously told the director to fire everybody. We have an idea how you can make things better. Fire everybody and then hire people with great ideas and who are willing to work."*

The late night news producer was very pessimistic and did not think HTV will survive.

*"I am waiting to hear that sound of reaching the bottom, of everything falling apart. Then we can start all over again, hire smart management that will defend the profession, defend the program and journalists and work for the public and their interests. This is not my vision, this is my dream."*

#### **4.2 Key findings: in-depth interviews**

- All of the interviewees agreed that news coverage at HTV today is much faster and more dynamic.
- The coverage of politics is still excessive. However, news on the government and politics is broadcast to a lesser degree than in the past, and there is a lot more of problem-solution stories.

- The political influence has been stronger again in the last three years, although not as bad as it was in the time of Franjo Tuđman, the former president of Croatia. A new group of people came to key positions at HTV, and the prevailing feeling among the interviewees was that the new leadership has strong ties with the government.
- Lately, the politicians have been exercising control over HTV by calling the executive news producer with their complaints and demands.
- Direct and obvious censorship on HTV today does not exist.
- There are some unprofessional, subtle methods that are utilized to promote certain ideas through HTV news programs. The important news stories are done by young, inexperienced journalists. HTV has been hiring young journalists who would do anything their bosses ask of them. Journalists are sometimes told that if they don't do something, they won't have any work to do.
- Self-censorship is the biggest problem at HTV today. Reasons are financial problems, love for the job and fear of not having anything to do.
- Big advertisers such as phone company Croatian Telecom or gas company Ina influence the news program at HTV, especially Dnevnik.

- Interviewees could not agree whether HTV is a state, public or commercial TV. Four mostly younger interviewees found HTV today to be a state television. Only one younger and one older interviewee said that HTV is a public television. A couple of older interviewees said HTV is a combination of all three, state, public and commercial, but the commercial aspect has been predominant.
- Half of the interviewees, most of them older considered training to be a very positive and welcoming experience, but the other half of mostly younger interviewees said the problem is the difference in journalism in Croatia and western countries, which leaves people at HTV confused. Western countries have completely different moral values, experiences, history and ways of life.
- Problems at HTV today are that there are too many employees at HTV, too many young journalists who do not have enough experience, politics is present in every decision making process and the recession is causing a lot of financial problems because HTV lacks organization and good management.
- Downsizing, specialization and a change in management is necessary for HTV to survive.

### **4.3 Content Analysis of Dnevnik**

A total of 19 editions of HTV's main newscast Dnevnik was analyzed following these categories: the number of government, political, social and commercial stories broadcast in each edition of Dnevnik, the number of video clips of politicians broadcast in Dnevnik, the number of sound bites from politicians and the lead story.

#### **4.3.1 The number of analyzed stories**

The number of analyzed stories broadcast in each Dnevnik varied greatly since 1991. The most stories were broadcast in one Dnevnik in 1997, a total of 28 stories, while only 12 stories were broadcast in 2002. An average of 19 stories per Dnevnik was broadcast in the past 19 years. The most stories were broadcast in the period between 1991 and 2000; with a number of stories generally higher than 20, with an exception in 1992, 1994 and 1996, when the number was in the teens. Since 2001, the number of stories never was higher than 19 per newscast. The length of the newscast varied as well. The longest newscast in the analyzed period was in 1997 when the newscast lasted 41 minutes and 43 seconds. The shortest one lasted 22 minutes and 5 seconds in 2002. In the period between 1991 and 2000, the average length of the newscast was 37 minutes and 18 seconds, while in the period between 2001 and 2009 the average was 26 minutes and 19 seconds. The average newscast was 10 minutes shorter in the second period. Table 1

shows the detailed results of the analysis of the number of stories and the length of Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.2 Governmental stories**

A total of 91 governmental stories broadcast in Dnevnik since 1991 were analyzed, making it an average of five stories per newscast. The most governmental stories were broadcast in Dnevnik in 1993, a total of 13, while only one governmental story was broadcast in 1992, 1999 and 2002. The results show that generally the number of governmental stories per newscast was higher in the period between 1991 and 2000, with an average of seven stories per newscast, than it was between 2001 and 2009 when an average was three. Table 1 shows the detailed results of the analysis of the number of governmental stories in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.3 Political Stories**

A total of 116 political stories were analyzed. That makes an average of six political stories per Dnevnik. The most political stories were broadcast in 1991, a total of 13 stories. Only one political story was broadcast in 2007. The general number of political stories per Dnevnik was higher in the period between 1991 and 2000, making it an average of eight stories per newscast, than it was in the period between 2001 and 2009

when an average was four. Table 1 shows the detailed results of the analysis of the number of political stories in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.4 Social and commercial stories**

A total of 152 social stories were analyzed. According to the results, an average of eight social stories was broadcast per newscast. The most social stories were broadcast in 2008, a total of 14, and the least number of social stories were broadcast in 1991 and 1996, only four stories. There were fewer social stories broadcast in the period between 1991 and 2000 than in the period between 2001 and 2009, an average of seven and nine, respectively. There were no commercial stories broadcast in Dnevnik in the period analyzed with an exception of one commercial story broadcast in 2007. Table 1 shows the detailed results of the analysis of the number of social and commercial stories from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.5 Video clips of politicians**

An analysis of the number of video clips of politicians broadcast in Dnevnik in the period between 1991 and 2009 was conducted. A total of 907 video clips were identified, which makes an average of 48 video clips per newscast. The most video clips in a single newscast was identified in 1994, a total of 91, while in 2006, there were only nine video clips of politicians broadcast. The number of video clips of politicians in

Dnevnik was significantly higher in the period between 1991 and 2000. The number of video clips of politicians in that period was never lower than 34 clips per newscast, and averaged on 67 video clips per newscast. In the period between 2001 and 2009, the numbers of video clips of politicians were significantly lower, with an average of 27 video clips per newscast. For example, in 2003 there were 14, in 2004, 20, and in 2006, only nine video clips of politicians were identified. However, the results show an increasing number of video clips of politicians in the past three years. In 2007, there were 18 video clips of politicians, in 2008, 30, and in 2009, that number jumped to 54 video clips of politicians, the highest number in this period. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the number of video clips of politicians broadcast in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.6 Sound bites from politicians**

An analysis of the number of sound bites from politicians broadcast in analyzed editions of Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009 was conducted. A total of 203 sound bites were identified, with an average of 11 sound bites per newscast. The results show that, as it was the case with video clips, the number of sound bites was higher in the period between 1991 and 2000, an average of 12, as opposed to an average of nine sound bites per newscast in the period between 2001 and 2009. However, the difference in the average number of sound bites between these two periods is not as significantly different as it is for the video clips. A total of 25 politicians were interviewed for Dnevnik in 1998,

which is the highest number in the period analyzed. Only three politicians were interviewed in 1992, the lowest number. The same trend as with video clips can be observed with sound bites in the past three years. In 2007, the number of sound bites of politicians was five, in 2008, 12, and in 2009 that number jumped to 16, the highest number of sound bites of politicians in the period between 2001 and 2009. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the number of sound bites from politicians broadcast in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### **4.3.7 The lead story**

A review of the lead stories in analyzed editions of Dnevnik in the period between 1991 and 2009 revealed that the lead story most of the time was a governmental story. Dnevnik started with a governmental story 10 times, with a political story six and with a social story only three times. A governmental story was the lead story in every analyzed Dnevnik in the period between 1992 and 1997. For three consecutive years, 2002, 2003 and 2004, the lead story was a social story, and that is the only period when these kinds of stories were broadcast at the beginning. In the past three years the lead story was political: 2007, 2008 and governmental in 2009. Table 3 shows detailed results of the analysis of lead stories in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009.

#### ***4.4 Key findings: content analysis of Dnevnik***

- More stories were broadcast in Dnevnik between 1991 and 2000 than between 2001 and 2009.
- Dnevnik was on average 10 minutes longer in the first period.
- The number of governmental stories was higher in the first period with an average of seven stories per broadcast, as opposed to the second period when the average was three.
- The number of political stories was higher in the first period with an average of eight stories per newscast. An average in the second period was four.
- There were fewer social stories in the first period when an average was seven. In the second period, an average was nine.
- There were no commercial stories broadcast in Dnevnik in the period analyzed with an exception of one commercial story broadcast in 2007.
- The number of video clips of politicians was significantly higher in the first period.

- The results show an increasing number of video clips of politicians in the last three years. The same trend was observed with the sound bites from politicians.
- The lead story in the first period was mostly a governmental story. Social story was the lead only in 2002, 2003 and 2004. In the past three years, the lead story was political: in 2007 and 2008 and governmental in 2009.

**Table 4.1. The number of government, political, social, and commercial stories from 1991 until 2009**

|                                          | 1991  | 1992  | 1993  | 1994  | 1995  | 1996  | 1997  | 1998  | 1999  | 2000  | 2001  | 2002  | 2003  | 2004  | 2005  | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  |
|------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Government Stories</b>                | 7     | 1     | 13    | 10    | 5     | 7     | 10    | 5     | 1     | 5     | 5     | 1     | 5     | 4     | 2     | 3     | 2     | 2     | 3     |
| <b>Political Stories</b>                 | 13    | 8     | 9     | 9     | 6     | 6     | 8     | 10    | 9     | 6     | 5     | 3     | 3     | 5     | 5     | 5     | 1     | 2     | 3     |
| <b>Social Stories</b>                    | 4     | 7     | 5     | 8     | 6     | 4     | 10    | 9     | 10    | 9     | 6     | 8     | 11    | 10    | 7     | 6     | 11    | 14    | 7     |
| <b>Commercial Stories</b>                | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 0     | 1     | 0     | 0     |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 24    | 16    | 27    | 27    | 17    | 17    | 28    | 24    | 20    | 20    | 16    | 12    | 19    | 19    | 14    | 14    | 14    | 18    | 13    |
| <b>Length of the newscast in minutes</b> | 39:14 | 36:23 | 41:07 | 53:03 | 34:12 | 30:56 | 41:43 | 33:06 | 30:05 | 33:15 | 23:00 | 22:05 | 25:15 | 29:21 | 25:02 | 26:18 | 28:06 | 27:58 | 29:51 |

**Table 4. 2. Video and sound bites of politicians broadcasted in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009**

|                                     | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Video of politicians</b>         | 72   | 42   | 89   | 91   | 56   | 70   | 81   | 69   | 34   | 61   | 37   | 24   | 14   | 20   | 36   | 9    | 18   | 30   | 54   |
| <b>Sound Bites from politicians</b> | 4    | 3    | 6    | 18   | 6    | 11   | 22   | 25   | 9    | 16   | 11   | 8    | 7    | 8    | 11   | 5    | 5    | 12   | 16   |

**Table 4. 3. The lead story in Dnevnik from 1991 until 2009**

|                         | Lead 1991 | Lead 1992 | Lead 1993 | Lead 1994 | Lead 1995 | Lead 1996 | Lead 1997 | Lead 1998 | Lead 1999 | Lead 2000 | Lead 2001 | Lead 2002 | Lead 2003 | Lead 2004 | Lead 2005 | Lead 2006 | Lead 2007 | Lead 2008 | Lead 2009 |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Government Story</b> |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           | 1         |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         |           |           | 1         |
| <b>Political Story</b>  | 1         |           |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         |           | 1         |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         |           |
| <b>Social Story</b>     |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Commercial Story</b> |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### ***5.1 Summary of the study***

The goal of this study was to examine the influence of government, politicians and advertisers on the content of HTV news. This research examined whether HTV has remained state TV and under high government influence as it was in former Yugoslavia, if it has transformed into public TV, which has been the goal since Croatia gained independence in 1991, or if it became commercial TV.

The data were gathered through in-depth interviews and newscast content analysis. The primary data were gathered through 10 semi-structured interviews with older and younger journalists and producers in the HTV news department from mid May until the beginning of July 2009. The secondary data were gathered through a content analysis of HTV's main newscast, Dnevnik. The unit of analysis was one half hour edition of Dnevnik per year since 1991, when Croatia gained independence, until today. The content analysis examined the number of governmental, political, social and commercial stories broadcast in each edition of Dnevnik, the lead story, video of politicians and sound bites from politicians in stories broadcast in Dnevnik.

The results suggest there is still a lot of coverage of politics in Dnevnik, but not as much as in the past. The number of governmental and political stories was higher in the 1990s. There have been more social stories in Dnevnik since 2000.

The results also show that the political influence has been stronger again in the last three years. There has been an increasing number of video clips of politicians and sound bites of politicians in the last three years as well. The interviewees said self-censorship is a bigger problem at HTV today than actual censorship.

The results indicate the big advertisers like the phone company Croatian Telecom or the gas company Ina influence the news programming at HTV, especially Dnevnik.

## ***5.2 Analysis of findings***

Three research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: What influence does the government have on the content of news?

RQ2: What influence does advertising have on the content of news?

RQ3: What is HTV today – state, public or commercial television station?

### **5.2.1 RQ1: What influence does the government have on the content of news?**

The results of both interviews and the content analysis of Dnevnik show that the government still has considerable influence on HTV news. The content analysis showed

that Dnevnik still broadcasts a lot of politics, but not as much as in the past. In the period between 1991 and 2000, the governmental and political stories were still dominating the news. Since 2000 there have been more social stories in Dnevnik. Nevertheless, younger journalists think there is too much politics in the news. The older journalists do not think so. These findings suggest the biggest difference in opinion between the younger and the older journalists. This could be due to the younger journalists not working at HTV at the beginning of the 1990s when newscasts had to start with the president. The results show that in the past nine years approximately half of the stories in Dnevnik were governmental and political. Covering governmental and political news became a fundamental part of a public television station in the minds of people at HTV. Croatia is a highly politicized country with a lot of problems every developmental country is facing. A lot of these problems influence everyday life and might justify political stories in newscasts.

HTV has been under political influence for most part of its history. The results show there was only one period when the situation seemed to have been improving. The beginning of the 2000s was marked by the majority of interviewees as a period of greater freedom of speech at HTV. The content analysis revealed that the years of 2002, 2003 and 2004 were the only period when the lead story in Dnevnik was a social story. The lead story in the 1990s was mostly governmental so these findings show a definite change. However, the majority of the interviewees said the situation has been getting worse in the past three years. The influence of the government and politics is stronger again and can be seen mostly through phone calls of politicians to the news director. The content analysis confirmed this with the results of an increased numbers of videos of

politicians and sound bites from politicians in Dnevnik. It seems that HTV is still vulnerable to political influences and that with every change of the government there is a change in this station's freedom to cover news.

A consensus was reached among the interviewees that censorship does not exist today to the extent it did in the past. Most of the interviewees said it has been observed more in the past three years. The results show self-censorship has been a bigger problem. Why self-censorship is a bigger problem is not very clear because the interviewees said no one ever got fired for something they said in their stories. The possible reason for self-censorship when it comes to advertisers might be monetary gain, but what is the reason for self-censorship on the government if there are no serious repercussions? It might be that journalists were so used to censoring themselves in the past that they do it automatically today.

### **5.2.2 RQ2: What influence does advertising have on the content of news?**

The results from the interviews indicate that advertising has an influence on the journalists and producers in the news department at HTV. The big advertisers are not questioned in newscasts, and some employees at HTV take money directly from public relations agencies or advertisers to promote certain companies or products in their shows.

Advertising is relatively new to HTV because in the communist era it was not allowed. Today, there are no strict regulations that would prevent these things from happening, and some people see deals with advertisers as a way to earn extra money.

In addition, HTV is financed mostly through advertising, an estimated \$250 million per year. When compared to \$150 million that HTV earns from license fees, it might be concluded that HTV needs to keep advertisers or it will be in a serious financial trouble.

These results have not been supported by the content analysis. There was only one commercial story broadcast in 2007.

### **5.2.3 RQ3: What is HTV today – state, public, or commercial television station?**

The participants could not agree whether HTV is a state, public or commercial television station. Four participants said it is state TV, a couple saw it as public and the remainder said it is a combination of all three with an emphasis on commercial aspect. Officially on paper, HTV is a public TV. But, according to the definition, public television is “a system that is nonprofit and noncommercial, supported by public funds, ultimately accountable in some legally defined way to the citizenry, and aimed at providing a service to the entire population – one which does not apply commercial principles as the primary means to determine its programming” (McChesney, 1999).

According to the results, HTV has failed in reaching its goal to transform into a public TV station. HTV today is not purely state anymore because governmental and political influence is not as strong and dominant as in the past. However, HTV is still state owned, and the results suggest the governmental and political influence is still

present to a certain degree. It seems that some in the government still see HTV as a government tool.

The results also indicate that HTV is becoming more of a commercial station today. Commercial stations provide fierce competition to HTV, forcing it to chase viewers just to stay in the market. Poor financial stability does not allow HTV not to broadcast advertisements and commercial programs. By broadcasting commercial programs and chasing viewers, HTV stands little hope that it will be successful in transforming into a public service television station.

HTV as a station might be too big, too unorganized and still operates as an old system from the communist era. However, it is not realistic to expect anything different at this point of time because the transition started only 20 years ago. The time when HTV was state television completely operated by the government, is still fresh in the minds of the people who work at HTV. The change came almost overnight, and HTV might not have had enough time to adapt. A couple more generations will have to change before we see a definite move forward. Until then, HTV will remain to function as state-supported TV with commercial influences in order to survive.

### ***5.3 Discussion***

HTV from its beginning was not designed to be a public television station. It was state-television owned and regulated by the government. For most of its history it was the

only station in Croatia. HTV never had to think about the audience or fight the competition.

In its transformation HTV might have taken two steps forward, but one step back. The goal to transform into public TV has not been met. Instead HTV opted to become a commercial station. The results suggest that goal will never be met. The idea of becoming public TV has been put on the back burner because of financial difficulties and attempts to stay in the market. The current situation suggests there is no way to go back and becoming public TV is not an option for HTV anymore. Instead, HTV is becoming more commercial than public.

The results showed that government and politics still influence HTV to a great degree. HTV has not moved forward in this regard. Instead, it seems things have been getting worse in the last three years. The system in which HTV operates is set in a way that it is easy for the government and politicians to influence. The government appoints the leadership and most of the members of the councils. The distinction between public TV station and state TV station has never been made and many politicians and HTV employees think these two terms are synonyms. It seems today that not only the government has influence, but all of the people in the political scene in Croatia think they have the right to promote their views and opinions through HTV. This might suggest that HTV, when it comes to this issue, has taken several steps back and that the situation today is even worse than it was in the 1990s. At least then every one knew whose views were promoted and protected. Today it might be the views of who ever has better connections at HTV.

The results lead to the conclusion that HTV today is a commercial station that is owned, operated and highly influenced by the government. It appears that the public service sphere exists only on paper and several marginal programs produced just to satisfy the norm. The goal of becoming a public service television station has become a thing of the past and HTV has never been further from achieving it.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations for HTV**

The fact that HTV has been more influenced by the government in the past three years shows that it is vulnerable to external influences. This might have happened because HTV does not have a clear mission statement. Until this is resolved, the situation at HTV will not improve. HTV needs to have a clear mission statement, fight for it and act according to it.

In case the goal of HTV would remain to become public TV, this station would need to downsize because it would be impossible to finance a public station this size with limited state funding and no commercials. HTV would also need to stop chasing ratings and broadcasting commercial programs.

Another option is to reorganize the programming on the two channels HTV is currently using. One channel might broadcast public-service programming, while the other one remains commercial. This way HTV would fulfill its public-service mission,

but it would not lose advertisers and the ability to compete with commercial stations for viewers.

The results suggest that politics might be needed in HTV programs. One option is to incorporate politics into the program is to create a channel that would be a combination of C-SPAN and public television. C-SPAN in the U.S. is a public-service channel created by the cable-television industry in 1979 to provide public access to the political process.

The results also suggest there is a definite need for a regulatory body to monitor the content of HTV programs. This would ensure that HTV programs satisfy professional and ethic standards.

## ***5.5 Limitations***

The current study has some limitations that should be addressed. The sample of both participants and newscasts was very small. Only 10 journalists and producers from the news department at HTV have been interviewed. Also, only one edition of Dnevnik per year has been analyzed. The research was conducted in Croatia, and the researcher had limited time and resources to gather data.

The results of interviews represent views of only 10 employees at the news department at HTV. It would be useful for future researchers to interview a larger sample of employees, or to conduct a survey to gather data that would represent the views of most of the people working in the news department at HTV.

Likewise, only one edition of Dnevnik per year was analyzed. Future researchers need to look at more editions per year and analyze more categories to strengthen the

results. Textual analysis of Dnevnik might also be helpful in understanding how far HTV news has gotten with the transformation from state television to public television. The results of this study suggest that Dnevnik is the most influenced newscast at HTV. Future study might analyze other news program such as talk shows or daily newscasts to examine whether and to what extent these programs are influenced as well.

A future study of this nature should also interview different groups of people working at the HTV news department. The current study interviewed younger and older employees to see if there is any difference in opinion. No significant difference in opinion between these two groups was observed. In fact, all participants but one had very similar opinions on how much HTV is influenced by the government and advertising. Only one participant said that HTV is in a very good position today, that it is not influenced by the government and advertising and that it is heading in a very good direction. These findings might suggest that employees at HTV are grouped by their political views. A future study that will conduct in-depth interviews with employees at HTV should take the political views of employees into consideration.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Case Study: Evolution of Croatian National Television from 1995 until today**

**Purpose:** This study is to evaluate the evolution of Croatian National Television from being state TV to public TV in the past fifteen years since the end of the war.

**Interview:** You are invited to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will interview you about your experiences and opinion of the evolution of Croatian National Television in the past fifteen years. The interview will be audio recorded, and I will take hand notes. You may participate in this study without being recorded, and with the researcher taking notes. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Interview recording and transcription will be stored on a laptop locked in a personal, locked home office while in Croatia. Upon researcher's return to the United States, laptop will be locked in the researcher's office.

**Confidentiality:** This study does not promise confidentiality. However, you have the right to retract information collected during the interview. I will not transcribe retracted information. You also have the right to request confidentiality. If you request confidentiality I will not mention your name in the hand written notes and on the audio recording, and information exchanged during this interview will remain confidential. Audio recordings will be locked in the office of Faculty Advisor on the campus for a period of two years after which they will be destroyed.

**Risk or Benefit:** There should be minimal risk for you to participate in this study. A conceivable risk might include your supervisors finding out that you participated in this study. Potential benefit of this study is that the author plans to seek publication of findings. Publication can help extend knowledge to other researchers and practitioners. By signing this form you acknowledge that findings may be published.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not involve any penalty. You may withdraw from the study at any point. I will destroy the notes and erase the data.

**Permission to Record:** I am seeking your permission to record this interview using digital voice recorder. If you do not wish the interview to be recorded, I will take notes only.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, please contact Iveta Imre while in Croatia at M. Kovacevica 10, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia, phone number (385)01 6692-946. Iveta Imre's contact information in the United States is 333 Communications Bldg., 1345 Circle Park Dr., Knoxville, TN, phone number 001(865) 974- 6637, and e-mail iveta.imre@gmail.com. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the UT Office of Research Compliance Officer at 001 (865) 974-3466.

I have read the information above. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the information above. I have received a copy of this form. I agreed to participate in this study, but opted to not be audio recorded.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I have agreed to participate in this study, but requested confidentiality.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guidelines:

1. Greet and introduce self.
2. If subject is willing to participate read and have the participant to sign the informed consent form. Provide an alternative consent forms for the participants who do not wish to be recorded, or who request confidentiality.
3. Start recording process.

*There are nine basic questions that seek information about the evolution of Croatian Television since 1995. Any additional questions will concern the specific job profession.*

1. Tell me how are programming decisions on HTV made?  
*AREAS TO PROBE: government influence fifteen years ago, now, to what extend is the government involved, examples, what has changed in fifteen years, what influences programming decisions the most?*
2. Tell me, prior to 1995, how has the Government influenced the programming on Croatian Television? How has it been in the past 15 years?  
*AREAS TO PROBE: news program, public affairs program, talk shows, in what aspects has politics influenced programming*
3. How has news coverage presentation changed in the last fifteen years? Why?
4. Tell me, how does funding relate to decision making on Croatian Television?  
*AREAS TO PROBE: problems with funding, major sources of funding, to what extend funding influences decision making,*
5. Tell me, how has advertising affected programming?  
*AREAS TO PROBE: news program, public affairs program, talk shows, influence from the commercial stations, to what extend*
6. Tell me how has advertising affected HTV's mission as a public broadcaster?
7. According to your opinion, what are the major changes that have occurred on Croatian National Television since 1995?
8. Tell me to what extend is the Government involved in what you do?

*AREAS TO PROBE:* Who do you work for?

9. Tell me where do you see HTV going in the future?

*AREAS TO PROBE:* independence, freedom of the press, changes in funding

## **VITA**

Iveta Imre was born in Zagreb, Croatia, on August 5, 1982. Iveta got her BA in journalism and political science at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. She worked as a reporter and producer assistant at the Croatian National Television Station.

Her research interest is in production and broadcasting. She plans to work in production upon finishing her study at UT.