

SCTMG 2020
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»**

**JOURNALISM OF THE XXI CENTURY AS A CULTURAL
INSTITUTION**

Sergey Grigorievich Korkonosenko (a)*, Marina Arkadievna Voskresenskaya (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Saint Petersburg State University, 7-9, Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia,
s.korkonosenko@spbu.ru,

(b) Saint Petersburg State University, 7-9, Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia,
m.voskresenskaya@spbu.ru

Abstract

The authors of the article proceed from the fact that in the XXI century the information and communication revolution in the media industry leads to a critical analysis of the journalism development concepts and research techniques in studying this issue. In addition, there was a danger of excessive pressure on the journalism discourse from technological determinism. To resolve the contradiction, authoritative scientists suggest developing an institutional analysis methodology. The article considers the grounds for the study of journalism as one of the cultural institutions. For this purpose, cultural studies of journalism are characterized, which is a relevant and promising scientific and disciplinary direction. It still has not gained considerable attention in the global scientific community, although experiments on studying the relationship of journalism with culture are invariably productive and very valuable in theoretical terms. Cultural studies of journalism can be in line with such successfully developed disciplines as sociology of journalism, psychology of journalism, political science of journalism, ethics of journalism, etc. In academic practice, a variety of methodological solutions included in the complex culture of journalism research will be applied: substantive, functional, relational, praxiological and other approaches. In this respect, research at theoretical and conceptual level will be supported and tested in empirical projects aimed at collecting data on the interaction of journalism with everyday spiritual practices and the realm of value, as well as the activities of other social institutions of culture and communities.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Journalism, institutional methodology, cultural studies, institute of culture.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

The XXI century, with its explosion of information technology and the unprecedented intensification of the ideas and theories exchange on a global scale, has generated a need for rethinking established ideas in almost all areas of social and humanitarian knowledge. This process has also affected such a sensitive area to change as the theory of journalism. It should respond to the sharp modernization of the production and technological base of the mass information industry, as well as to updating the relations between practical journalism and society as a whole and its institutions. As the researchers reasonably point out, "it becomes obvious ... that digitalization has led to the need to reassess the theories by which we draw the meaning of journalism" (Steensen & Ahva, 2015, p. 2). In this context, the concerns of well-known theorists about the hasty breaking or "closing" of journalism itself and its understanding in science deserve attention. In response to troubling events in the media industry of some Western countries, scientists called to "rebuild," "revise," "remake," "reconstruct," "rethink" and "reinvent" journalism ... and even "rethink again" (Hanitzsch, 2019). Russian scholars express concern about substituting journalism for media in the theoretical discourse, finding this a manifestation of sociologism and the "vulgar economism that came from the West" (Dmitrovsky, 2019). Journalism undoubtedly preserves itself both as a social and professional practice, and as a sovereign area of theoretical research (Berezhnaia, 2018; Korkonosenko, 2016).

The way to overcome a simplified understanding of journalism in a technocratic way lies through a deep understanding of its identity as a social institution. Such a methodology reveals essential characteristics that, under other approaches, are indistinguishable behind the cover of chaotic episodes and technological details. Famous researchers write in this regard: "We agree with advocates of an institutionalist view that journalism is a social institution. While there is much disagreement about whether journalism should and could be regarded as a profession, occupation, craft, or trade ... most people would agree on the idea that journalistic work is largely carried out within an institutional framework" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017, p. 115). Developing their ideas about journalism as an institution, they propose to consider it in two institutional dimensions – in the political field, as is most often the case in Western tradition, and in the field of everyday life: "In a world, however, where working on one's identity is increasingly an individual exercise ... journalism is not just about providing orientation in the political arena. Journalists are also expected to perform in the domain of everyday life by providing help, advice, guidance, and information about the management of self and everyday life" (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018, p. 148). Researchers from different countries, including Russia and Brazil (Gadini, 2005; Shkondin, 2016) share the idea of journalism immersing into the world of everyday life and helping people to self-determination in the current reality.

2. Problem Statement

It appears that at the level of identity search – both individual and socio-group, institutional, national – the analysis is moving from everyday life to a broader coordinate system, namely, socio-cultural. The help, advice and recommendations do not exhaust the contribution that journalism makes to the arrangement of cohabitation of human communities. The volume and significance of this contribution

become clearly visible, if we adopt the cultural tools. One of the few (and therefore especially notable) monographs on the cultural dimension of mass media says: "From a cultural perspective, media content is not merely news, advertising or entertainment ... the influence of media is not limited to understanding the experience of reading the newspaper or watching television, or the direct effect of these activities on behavior. Media subtly influence the very nature of how we communicate with others, thus altering basic human relationships in modern society" (Hallahan, 1997, p. 74). Other proponents of cultural understanding of journalism raise the interpretation of its institutional roles to pathetic heights:

If one examines a newspaper under a transmission view of communication, one sees the medium as an instrument for disseminating news and knowledge, sometimes a divertissement <..> A ritual view of communication will focus on different range of problems in examining a newspaper. It will, for example, view reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass <..> Newspapers do not operate as a source of effects or functions, but as ... presentations of what the world at root is ... it is a representation of reality that gives life a cumulative form, order and tonality. (Carey, 2009, p. 94)

3. Research Questions

An analysis of views and concepts existing in modern literature makes it possible to conclude that there are serious analytical prerequisites for studying journalism as a social institution of culture. Moreover, in the current century, there is an urgent need for such a research project, at least for the reason that there is an increasing opportunistic risk of "re-subordinating" journalism to the context of information and communication technologies development. In particular, foreign researchers of the Russian press directly point out that global-universal digital innovations should be adapted to a specific cultural and professional environment:

Machinery does not lend itself well to the creation of deep, thoughtful, and morally uplifting 'literature' as journalism, which is the foundational ethic in Russian journalism. From this traditional Russian view, a disconnect between morally uplifting journalism (rich in cultural and social capital), on one side, and intentionally targeted digital information ... on the other, makes this new generation of digital surveillance and dissemination seem even more alien. For digital journalism to gain vibrancy in this region, it will need to be viewed as consistent with the appropriate cultural capital... (Erzikova & Lowrey, 2017, p. 923)

As the study of national-specific characteristics of Russian scientific and pedagogical schools of journalism shows, they are traditionally close to the socio-cultural point of view on the press (Khubetcova, 2018).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to identify the basic characteristics of journalism as an institution of culture and possible methodological approaches to its study in this context.

5. Research Methods

The authors undertake a critical analysis of literature considering the functioning of journalism as a participant and a factor in the cultural and spiritual life of society. Priority is given to institutional research methodology. Based on a synthesis of scientific provisions on the development trends of journalism in the XXI century and its potential in the cultural sphere, the general idea about this influential institute of culture is formed.

6. Findings

Paradoxically, with the obvious expediency of using the culturological methodology, the culturology of journalism both in Russia and in the world is just beginning to acquire citizenship rights as a scientific discipline. It is common for the Russian and international scientific community to use concepts such as cultural journalism and, even more, journalism culture, which in no way correlate with cultural studies. In the disciplinary and methodological terms, it is necessary to separate those journalism properties that are more correlated with the sociological dimensions of the object from those that carry an explicit cultural essence, despite the relative nature of such a separation. For sociology, the organizational and structural characteristics of institutions and cultural establishments, the ways of their functioning, relationships with social actors, socially significant effects, etc., come to the fore. Note that often in these aspects, functional and relational, the analysis of journalism is built by inertia. Meanwhile, the processes and consequences associated with the formation, preservation and dissemination of cultural wealth, norms and values, both at the level of individuals (inculturation) and at the level of human communities (cultural integration) are specific to cultural studies. It would be logical to assume that this is where the field of activity for the cultural studies of journalism opens. Further, sociology emphasizes the importance of communications, which create a network of contacts and interaction between all kinds of participants in cultural life. It is unlikely that the study of this supporting, accompanying role is enough to understand the position of journalism in the cultural process. It is aimed at the active development, regulation and creation of the cultural world, in its characteristic segments.

In generally assessing, the term "cultural institute" is used in modern scientific literature, but it is poorly developed theoretically – there is no single interpretation, and there is no holistic concept. In relation to journalism, the concept of the cultural institute is almost completely not considered. Since there is no generally accepted definition, it is appropriate to formulate a working definition. The institute of culture is a social institution that ensures the satisfaction of the spiritual needs of society and the continuous dynamic reproduction of culture through maintaining the smooth functioning of its mechanisms (such as mental attitudes, concepts, formal and informal norms, behavioral stereotypes, traditions, etc.). In other words, it is a form of spiritual life organization. The degree of development and effectiveness of cultural institutions, which, on the one hand, reflect the nature of thinking and the way of

life of society, and, on the other hand, influence them, ultimately determines general cultural state of society.

Cultural institutions traditionally include science, education, art and religion. Sometimes the media is added to this list, which seems to be incorrect, false, in fact, and virtually meaningless. It is impossible to deny that in the 21st century, the introduction of people to spiritual values and their cultural socialization are carried out to a large extent (if not primarily) through the media. However, the media is an organizational and technological resource, a tool designed to solve mass communication problems. While journalism is the social and cultural institution, representing the field of mass media and mass communication. In this capacity, it has functions that are universal for all cultural institutions, intersecting with the functions of each of them, and specific, that is, peculiar to it and performed only by it.

The universal functions of all cultural institutions include their participation in processes such as the formation of a world picture, a system of values, criteria of socio-cultural identity of a person at all levels of social life (individual, group, society), generation of ways of cultural integration of society, accumulation, preservation and translation of cultural experience, analysis, media reflection and transformation of the cultural state of society. Each cultural institution solves these general tasks in its own way, based on its own specifics, building a hierarchy of "supervised" aspects of the cultural process and selecting the necessary tools within its "specialization".

Thus, journalism fulfils its mission through the mass distribution of socially significant information. It should be emphasized that informing a wide audience is a method, not the essence of a journalistic mission. Through the collection, processing, interpretation, special presentation of information journalism is realized in a variety of different social roles. In relation to the sphere of culture, it can act as an educator, moralizer, organizer of leisure activities, a guardian of cultural values, a myth-maker, a propagandist, an agent of cultural socialization, a regulator of sociocultural processes and relations, a researcher, even a creator ... And this is a non-exhaustive list.

In many of these roles, journalism correlates with other cultural institutions, while not duplicating them, but adapting the corresponding directions of sociocultural activity to its addressee and to its own mission. Acting as a specific way of knowing the surrounding reality (especially social reality in its current state), it is based on facts and rigorous evidence (in any case, this is the requirement of professional standards), although it does not pretend to be the prerogative of science focused on understanding the objective laws of the universe. In its educational hypostasis, it does not replace systematic education, but journalism is indispensable in introducing the broadest masses to cultural values with the help of accessible information from any field of knowledge. The aesthetic exploration of the world by journalism does not turn it into art, and yet a journalistic work, based not only on facts but also on images, is designed to influence not only the mind but also the feelings, which can cause an emotional response from the audience (Berezhnaia, 2019). In no way replacing religion, journalism in its own way directs the spiritual quest of man.

The improper performance of social roles, that is, their distortion, under-realization, etc., leads to undesirable effects, and ultimately to dysfunction of journalism when it loses the ability to fulfil its true purpose, and its activities, outwardly meeting the needs of the mass audience, in reality, ceases to correspond to the true interests of society. For example, for one periodical, the impeccable literacy of the

posted texts (speech culture) is an indispensable rule, while the other easily neglects it. Some editorial offices publish analytical materials about art, while others prefer to give superficial information about the life of the "stars" of show business. Publicistic speeches can serve as a moral tuning fork and can sink to base aspirations. Reducing the cultural standard, the exactingness of the language and content of published materials, the media benefit commercially, but at the same time erode the essential core of journalism. Undoubtedly, they have a negative impact on the general cultural level of the audience, and ultimately – on the cultural image of society as a whole. The journalism paradigm (model) developed in a particular society directly correlates with the state of culture of a given society (if culture is understood as a space of meanings and values).

Understanding journalism as an institution of culture opens up a promising direction for its further study and outlines possible scientific approaches to its cultural research. Cultural studies of journalism can be in line with such successfully developed disciplines as sociology of journalism, psychology of journalism, political science of journalism, ethics of journalism, etc. In this area, various methodological solutions, which are included in the cultural complex of journalism research, will find application (Khubetcova et al., 2019). Thus, the substantive approach involves identifying the essential characteristics of journalism as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The functional approach is designed to clarify its general purpose, leading and latent functions in the cultural life of society. In the context of culture, the relational approach will allow us to consider the external relations of journalism with other institutions: state, government, business, audience, etc. The praxiological approach is aimed at the analysis of professional and practical activities from the perspective of cultural tasks and effects. It is also necessary to attract approaches that are self-evident for cultural studies – axiological, anthropological, ethno-cultural and others. On these methodological bases, it is possible to develop specific algorithms for cultural analysis at the empirical and applied levels.

7. Conclusion

The conducted analysis proves the effectiveness of the institutional approach to understanding the current state and prospects of journalism. This approach can be extended to its functioning in the sphere of culture. In particular, it helps to overcome the technocratic determinism, the manifestations of which are observed in the theoretical discourse about journalism of the XXI century. Journalism as an institution of culture not only has a high potential for influencing public life but also daily realizes itself in this capacity, participating in the formation of a value system, socio-cultural identity of a person and social communities, spiritual integration of society and closely interacting with other institutions, etc. In the cultural context, a variety of research methodologies, mastered in the theory of journalism, are used, which opens up prospects for the implementation of original projects at conceptual and empirical levels.

References

- Berezhnaia, M. A. (2018). Theoretically proven: journalism is alive! *Media Education*, 2, 22-24.
- Berezhnaia, M. A. (2019). Aesthetic criteria in journalism in the aspect of professional education. *Media Ed.*, 59(2), 207–215.
- Carey, J. W. (2009). *Communication as culture: essays on media and society*. Routledge.

- Dmitrovsky, A. L. (2019). Journalism theories: why they do not work? (The problem of a synergistic approach to journalistic phenomena). *Theoret. and Pract. Issues of Journal.*, 8(1), 36–56.
- Erzikova, E., & Lowrey, W. (2017). Russian regional media. *Digital Journal.*, 5(7), 919–937.
- Gadini, S. L. (2005). *Contemporary journalism: in search of a constructive theory. Brazilian Journal. Res.*, 1(2), 137–158.
- Hallahan, K. (1997). *The consequences of mass communication. Cultural and critical perspectives on mass media and society.* McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publ.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2019). Journalism studies still needs to fix Western bias. *Journal.*, 20(1), 214–217.
- Hanitzsch, T., & Vos, T. P. (2017). Journalistic roles and the struggle over institutional identity: the discursive constitution of journalism. *Communicat. Theory*, 27, 115–135.
- Hanitzsch, T., & Vos, T.P. (2018). Journalism beyond democracy: A new look into journalistic roles in political and everyday life. *Journal.*, 19(2), 146–164.
- Khubetcova, Z. F. (2018). Russian academic schools of journalism as a part of the global research and educational process. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Language and Literature*, 15(2), 312–326.
- Khubetcova, Z. F., Korkonosenko, S. G., Blokhin, I. N., Kolodiev, N. N., & Kurushkin, S. V. (2019). Theoretical and methodological culture of journalism research in Russia. *Ad Alta: J. of Interdisciplin. Res. Spec.*, 09/01-VI, 81–84.
- Korkonosenko, S. G. (2016). Journalism theory: from schematics to realism. *Theoret. and Pract. Issues of Journal.*, 5(4), 536–545.
- Shkondin, M. V. (2016). Journalism as an intelligent system: integrity aspects. *Bull. of Irkutsk State Econ. Acad.*, 26(2), 175–182.
- Steensen, S., & Ahva, L. (2015). Theories of journalism in a digital age. *Journal. Pract.*, 9(1), 1–18.