

# MODELS OF TV NEWSROOM ORGANIZATION AND NEWS ROUTINES IN CROATIA: CASE STUDIES OF HRT, NOVA TV & N1

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**ABSTRACT** *The efforts of today's journalism to win back the audiences' trust and meet the expectations of audiences, while remaining committed to high-quality journalism, has been reflected in organizational and cultural changes in newsrooms. The digitalization of news production processes meant developing new newsroom organization models and news routines. As television is still the most trusted media in Croatia, this study focuses on three Croatian television newsrooms – the public broadcaster HRT, the commercial broadcaster Nova TV, and the most-watched non-terrestrial news channel N1 – and explores their different models of organization and how they have adapted to a transformed media environment and audience expectations. For this, a series of exploratory semi-structured interviews are conducted with a total of 28 journalists and editors. This study examines newsroom practices, the efficiency of newsroom integration or convergence implementation (if any), and the attempts to produce and distribute original innovative content across platforms. The study also tackles the main opportunities and obstacles that discourage or encourage them to produce what they perceive as quality stories and build engagement and trust in journalism. Findings point to three distinct newsroom integration and organization formats shaped by several important factors – past newsroom traditions, technology, ownership (Nova TV), foreign investors, international consultants, politics (HRT) and ultimately the format of the channel (N1). This is predominantly reflected in the news production process, or more precisely, in the ways editors and journalists create and shape the daily news program. Differences are identified in workflow between journalists employed by the public service broadcaster and its counterparts.*

## KEYWORDS

NEWSROOM, ORGANIZATION, NEWSROOM ROUTINES, JOURNALISM, INTEGRATED NEWSROOM, TV NEWS

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## INTRODUCTION

Research into news production processes and newsroom organization has often been in the shadow of media research on news values, journalists' beliefs, or news content. Yet, the development of digital media and technology has undergone rapid changes in recent years, thus forcing many newsrooms to modify their work process organization. Reese and Shoemaker, who recognize routines and organization as important for journalism practice, specify that this aspect is becoming even more important because "technology has brought news pressures on information workers in general, increasing the velocity of incoming information and need for multitasking" (2016, p. 399). With digitalization of news production and integration of news gathering and processing of different media on different platforms, there arose a necessity of the central editorial and planning (Šimunović, 2020, p. 92). These trends have resulted in diverse types and models of newsroom organizations across the world, particularly in television newsrooms as places of digital convergence. Having in mind the fact that newsrooms differ in terms of the models of organization adopted, we can easily deduce that the extent to which news routines differ and the way they influence media content are worth being explored.

In this study, conducted as part of the research project "Journalism Research Lab"<sup>1</sup>, we take a close look at the way Croatian television newsrooms are organized, the way news routines are developed and the way they operate within these different models of organization (Perišin et al., 2021). As television is still the most trusted media outlet in Croatia (Newman et al., 2021, p. 73), it is worth exploring and comparing the context of news production and organization models in three television newsrooms – *Croatian Radio Television* (HRT), the country's only public broadcaster; Nova TV, the commercial television station with the most-watched news program and N1, a news channel which has become one of the most influential TV media outlets in Croatia. While Nova TV and HRT are terrestrial channels with national concession, N1 is, according to the AdScanner audience measurement in year 2019, the most watched non-terrestrial channel in Croatia (AdScanner, 2020).

In this paper, we focus on three television newsrooms and their different models of organization. The newsroom of another commercial national channel RTL is omitted, as we estimate that the television news service at HRT, Nova TV news program, and the transnational regional news channel N1 are sufficient to represent the variety of news routines in Croatia. But first, it is necessary to expound the role of newsroom organization and processes in news production, and then describe the traditions of newsroom organization in Croatia and the background of these three channels in the context of the Croatian media system.

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## NEWSROOM ORGANIZATION

Organizational context is an important aspect of news production. The whole process – from choosing to publishing a story – is carried out through established routines in each newsroom, with some old routines persisting, and new routines emerging “in digital and increasingly data-driven newsrooms” (Westlund & Ekström, 2020, p.73). The first studies of newsrooms in the 1960s and the 1970s focused on news processes and found that journalists shared similar and consistent ways in which they were deciding what news was and how to make it, and what each role in the newsroom entailed; and interpreted this as the profession’s ‘unified’ response to different economic and organizational pressures (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Tunstall, 1971). However, studies later showed that news work is far more complex and much more than just routines, and that journalists have agency in their work “as active and thinking agents who purposefully produce news through their professional practices” (Cottle, 2000, p. 22). Today newsrooms are urged to adapt their organization and routines in a constantly changing environment, from new forms of organization, restructuring of news production processes and redefining roles (Anderson et al., 2014), including those with more specialized knowledge and skills, to even new physical organization of newsrooms (Usher, 2015). Business-driven demands have become central in most newsrooms where journalists are pushed to change the ways in which they work and, as in the New York Times, this often results with having less time to work on their stories (Usher, 2014, p. 239).

### CROATIA: FROM ‘REDAKCIJA’ TO ‘NEWSROOM’

In Croatia, a newsroom is referred to as ‘redakcija’. This term denotes ‘a news department’ and derives from the Latin word ‘redactus’ and is used in the same fashion in German (*Redaktion*), French (*rédaction*) and Italian (*redazione*). Also, just as in the German newsroom model, ‘Redakteur’ (*urednik* in Croatian) was a common job title for someone who used to do diverse jobs - gather information, overlook the editorial process but also write, report or be the anchor of the newscast.

While there are different contemporary models of newsroom organization and routines of news production, it is worth mentioning two types of news organizations that had been defined long before the emergence of the Internet and digital media that dominate our media landscapes today. Moreover, these two models have had an impact on the process of integration and the ways newsrooms across the world are organized, including ‘redakcije’ – the TV newsrooms in Croatia that are under scrutiny here.

On the one hand, the Anglo-American model, typical of the British and American news media, favors a centralized newsroom with a central desk, with a high division of labor (Esser, 1998; Grmuša & Prelog, 2020; Perišin 2013; Perišin & Škaljac, 2009; Vobič, 2009). The desk has always been the heart of the newsroom, with its editors around. In the old times, news was coming in by telephone, and was dispatched to the reporters or

to the copy editors (Shapiro, 2011). On the other hand, while the Anglo-American model is more process-oriented, the German model is department-oriented. Frank Esser (1998) explains the principle of division of labor. In British newsrooms there are different labels for different jobs, while most of the German journalists call themselves – ‘Redakteur’ (*editor*). The concept underlying the word ‘Redakteur’ in the German type of newsroom has a much broader profile (Esser, 1998, p. 378). The German model of organization tends to decentralize its work by maintaining many specialized departments which produce complete sections of the paper (Esser, 1998). With the introduction of online media, both models proved to be limited by the barriers within the organization structure (Perišin 2010, p.196). The Anglo-American model had barriers between job profiles (e.g., editors and reporters) and between platforms, while the German model had barriers between departments and between platforms (Meier, 2008). However, in Croatia there is still confusion around the term ‘desk’ which was used in the earlier days of the Croatian public radio-television for a smaller newsroom where newscast editors would put together daily newscasts (Perišin, 2010, p. 182). Besides this hub, there were other departments and many more rooms for individual journalists.

In order to understand traditional models of newsroom organization in Croatia prior to the emergence of the Internet and new technologies, it is important to place the country in its historical, social and economic context (Grbeša & Volarević, 2021; Peruško, 2013). Until 1991, Croatia was a constituent republic of the communist Yugoslavia. However, Croatia had relatively developed media even before the break-up of Yugoslavia (Malović, 2005, p. 13; Tkalec & Krušelj, 2019, p. 72). Its path to independence and the shift to parliamentary democracy was overshadowed by the war in Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1991 and 1995 (Kovačević and Perišin, 2018, p. 748; Šalković, 2000, p. 23-24). Šegvić (in Grbeša & Volarević, 2021, p. 2-3) says that media in Croatia went through three stages – the first one during the war when there was censorship, but it was not pervasive; the second phase after the war when there was strong state censorship, and the “Recovery Period” in years 1999 and 2000 when there was more media freedom. The circumstances of the war and post-war period could be one of the reasons why the changes in the media, the introduction of new business models and foreign investment in the media industry took place later than in some other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In this context, the tradition of news organization and journalists’ routines in Croatian newsrooms – before technological advances and new trends of digitalization in the 2000s – is very similar to the German model. The best-known national newspapers *Vjesnik* and *Večernji list*, the public radio and the television service HRT, consisted of a number of entirely separate departments/sections, each headed by a strong editor-in-chief (national politics, international politics, economy, culture, science, sports, etc.) (Perišin, 2020, p. 182; Tkalec & Krušelj, 2019, p. 70-75). All the journalists belonged to specific departments. In the hierarchy, chief editors of single departments were strong figures who decided what should be covered, published or broadcast. At the top of this hierarchy, there was solely the main Chief Editor and his/her team (Tkalec & Krušelj, 2019, p. 69).

With technological innovations, the Internet and the possibility of media convergence, the trend of redesigning news organizations took over the media across the world, including Croatia. Meier (2007, p. 5) discusses revolutionary changes that were taking place in the Central European newsrooms, focusing on Austria, Germany and Switzerland. In order to meet demands of the new technology, 'matrix' organization was introduced as a model where department organization is replaced by process-oriented organization (Šimunović, 2020, p. 92). Specialized departments and platform sections still exist, but the barriers are not so strict. Already in the first decade of the 2000s, the media companies were adopting their digital strategy with the focus on news integration and cross-media collaboration.

As in other parts of the world, the media companies acknowledged the necessity of change. In the digital landscape, speed and immediacy became priority, and already at the beginning of the 2000s, every Croatian news media outlet had its own website (Tkalec & Krušlin, 2019, p. 90). Parallely, with the appearance of foreign investors on the Croatian media market, the beginning of 2000s was the time the Croatian public service (HRT) was transforming itself from the state television to the public service and was, for the first time in history, forced to compete with other television channels (Car, 2006). The process was followed by the efforts to modernize its work processes. At the same time, there were television channels which emerged at the beginning of the 2000s or even later, thus having a chance to design their news organization from scratch. This was affected by Croatian journalists themselves, but also by foreign owners who, in collaboration with international media consultants, implemented certain types of organization.

Nowadays, newsrooms in Croatia have their own specific models, which is the result of their tradition, the impact of international consultants or media owners, along with the attempts to make the news media outlet an efficient organization. In Croatia's broadcasting media landscape today, the key players are the public service – HRT, two commercial television stations Nova TV and RTL, and N1. The fact that each of them has been exposed to different impacts may be the reason why they differ in terms of organization. Therefore, the historical background of the three channels under scrutiny in this study merits to be further explained before addressing the question of their current models of organization.

## NEWS MEDIA SERVICE OF CROATIAN PUBLIC TELEVISION

In the 2000s, the Croatian public broadcaster HRT started the process of digitalization of its radio and television news production (Brautović, 2009; Perišin, 2013; Perišin i Škaljac, 2009). Digital technology has made it possible for journalists working for different platforms to collaborate and share material. Parallely with the technological transformation, HRT put an effort in transforming itself from the state broadcaster to the public service. It was the time when the doors were open to media professionals and newsroom consultants, predominantly from the United States and the United Kingdom (Perišin, 2013). Along with in-house education, HRT as a member of the *European*

*Broadcasting Union* (EBU) encouraged journalists and middle managers to attend *EBU* seminars, workshops, mostly on digitalization of news production and newsroom integration. The first decade of the 2000s was the time when HRT introduced the concept of 'central desk' into the television news department (Perišin, 2010). Furthermore, it built a new open-space newsroom in 2003.

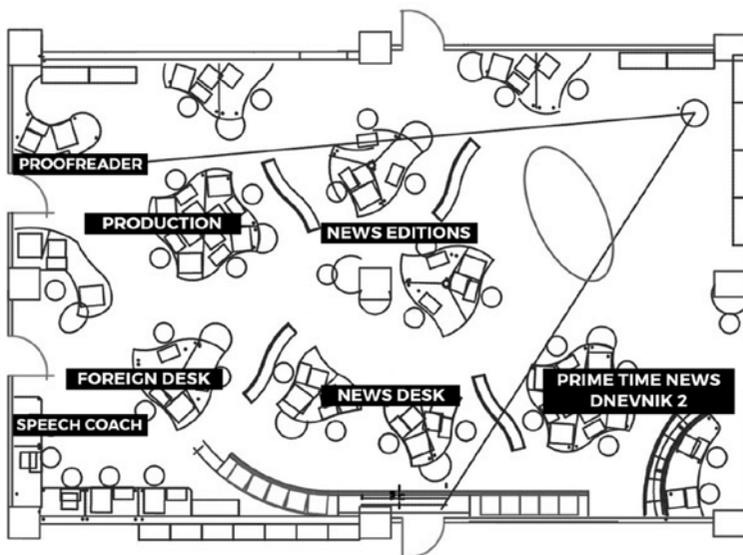


Image 1.

The first open-space TV newsroom at HRT designed in 2003

Source: Authors' archive; HRT's TV newsroom, designed by Danijela Boban

In this sense, it is worth mentioning that, subsequently, between 2012 to 2014, there was an attempt to integrate the three media – online, radio and television. The joint News Media Service was established as an integrated news operation which produced news for TV, radio, web portals and other platforms (Perišin, 2013, p. 159). It was responsible for the whole news production, which included the news channel HRT4 that was launched at the end of 2012. This channel broadcast other news genres as well – magazines, current affairs programs and studio talk shows. However, this was a short-lived attempt at integration as political changes in Croatia's government were reflected in the HRT and key managers who supported the model of the multimedia organization were soon replaced.

## NEWS PROGRAM OF THE COMMERCIAL CHANNEL NOVA TV

Nova TV was the first national commercial television station in Croatia. In 1999, a group of Croatian investors (consortium) – individuals and companies – obtained a concession to launch the first national commercial television. The channel started to broadcast, yet with no significant investments in the news program. However, from 2004 to 2018 it was

owned by *Central European Media Enterprises Ltd (CME)*. After *CME* had bought *Nova TV*, it decided to invest particularly in the news program. For this reason, several established HRT journalists and editors transferred to *Nova TV* and started developing a new TV news program.

Although foreign owners and consultants had some influence in the newsroom organization, there is no doubt that one of the key factors was the fact that the main editorial and reporters' staff came from HRT<sup>2</sup> (24sata, 2009; *Nova TV*, 2021; Premac, 2020) and brought not only experience, knowledge, understanding of the mentality, but also some of the already adopted news routines.

Within five years, in 2010, *Nova TV*'s main news program *Dnevnik* overtook *Dnevnik* HRT, and has since been the most-watched news show in Croatia (*Dnevnik.hr*, 2021). In 2018, *Nova TV* was purchased by the *United Group* which is also the owner of the news channel N1.

## TRANSNATIONAL REGIONAL N1 NEWS CHANNEL

N1 is a transnational regional non-terrestrial news channel, affiliate of *CNN (Cable News Network)*. It is owned by the company *Adria News Sarl*, part of the *United Group*, one of the leading media providers in Southeast Europe. N1 was launched in 2014, with production centers in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The channel has its website in English with up-to-date national and regional news, as well as interviews and TV content. Each production center produces its own daily news program, its own magazines and political talk shows.

While most of the transfers from HRT to *Nova TV* occurred as early as in 2005, N1 transfers started in 2014 when the television market was more diverse. Therefore, their most experienced journalists came mostly from HRT, but also from *Nova TV* and the commercial channel *RTL* (which went on the air in 2004). Besides obtaining higher salaries, for television journalists, switching to another television station was a challenge and opportunity to prove themselves.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

One would say that it is much easier for new channels on the market to start from scratch and adapt their workflow to new digital requirements. However, in Croatian market-oriented organizations more resources are invested in the equipment than in journalists. Besides producing good content, there is also another goal – to make profit. Like in many other commercial media companies, the efficient multimedia workflow is accomplished by the staff time and resources being stretched (Cushion, 2012, p. 28; Thomsen, 2018, p. 116; Usher, 2014, p. 33). For example, when the mentioned prominent

<sup>2</sup> During that time, one of the co-authors of this article was part of the HRT News department management as the Assistant News Director and was directly informed of all the mentioned transfers of her colleagues to *Nova TV* channel.

HRT journalists came to N1, some of them left the station after only a year. The news director of the regional channel Zoran Stefanović commented that “those people coming from the sleepy state system as HRT could not adapt to the serious, fast commercial television where there are high expectations and a lot of work” (Milla, 2015).

The three Croatian news services differ in terms of the time when they started to operate. This difference in age can be both an advantage and a drawback. For HRT – a bulky company with more than 60 years of tradition in production of news formats – the problem is that among the staff it is hard to change the old news routines (Kovačević & Perišin, 2018). In big traditional media companies, there are always ‘naysayers’ who are not ready to adapt. The expectations of journalism and journalists, along with differences in media ownership and levels of willingness and money to invest in news operations of these three newsrooms have created distinct models of both the way they are organized, and the routines implemented there.

No study yet has examined the way these three television newsrooms in Croatia are organized or how they operate today to understand how they have adapted to a transformed media environment and audience expectations. As newsrooms are places of constant change and innovation, it is worth looking at the ways in which HRT, N1 and Nova TV are tackling it.

The aim of this study is to identify different models of newsroom organization and established routines, including the factors that shape their development.

Therefore, this study examines the organizational model of each newsroom, along with the news routines or practices in the following areas:

1. physical organization of the newsroom
2. ‘news desk’ as the central place of a newsroom
3. editorial meetings and planning
4. integration of television with web and social media platforms
5. journalists’ perspectives on the efficiency of news production processes.

For the purpose of this study, a series of exploratory semi-structured interviews has been conducted with a total of 28 journalists and editors. This includes 5 journalists and 7 editors at the HRT newsroom, 7 editors-anchors and 3 producers-presenters at N1, and 2 editors and 4 journalists at the Nova TV newsroom. The interviews were face-to-face and conducted in newsrooms in 2019 and 2020. The sampling of interviewees was purposive – they were chosen according to their different levels of professional experience and roles within the newsroom.

Interviews were chosen as the principal method for this study as “they provide information that cannot be obtained in any other way” (Berger, 2016, p. 195) – in this case description of news processes, routines, and newsroom organization, but also journalists’ and editors’ ideas and understandings of how their newsroom operates. Even though the researchers created an interview guide that covered the five mentioned areas of interest,

they were semi-structured in order to establish “an active, open-ended dialogue with interviewees” (Deacon et al., 2014, p. 67) that would ensure richer responses and allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions about topics that arise.

Additionally, the researchers visited each newsroom with the purpose of designing illustrative models of how they are physically organized. Even though the initial idea was to spend a month in each newsroom and conduct ethnographic non-participant observation of news routines, this was impossible because of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## FINDINGS

### Organization and roles in TV newsrooms: The three models

In order to examine the news production routines specific to each of the three newsrooms, it is first necessary to understand the way in which each newsroom is organized. Physical organization of a newsroom, that is, its spatial layout, helps to understand different roles within it.

#### The HRT newsroom

Although HRT, as a public broadcaster, broadcasts radio program and has its web portal, our focus is on the organization of the television newsroom. HRT News Media Service produces three daily newscasts – *Dnevnik 1* at noon, prime-time *Dnevnik 2*, and late-evening *Dnevnik 3* as well as news content for the news channel HRT 4 and other news programs.

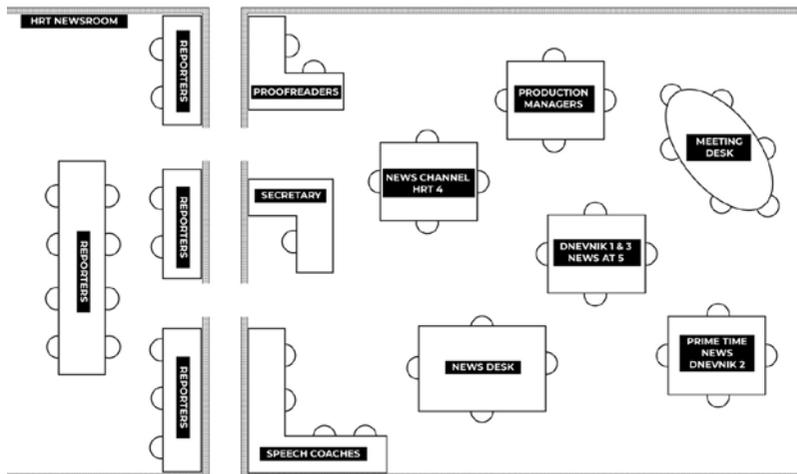


Image 2.

A section of HRT's television newsroom

Source: Authors

At HRT, we identify a newsroom with one central planning desk and daily editors coordinating the news input and output (Perišin, 2010). Furthermore, there are specialized news departments taking care of the fields they are responsible for. Image 2 shows the main newsroom which was built in 2003. Although it was subsequently extended, it is still considered to be the heart of the news program. By observing the spatial layout of the newsroom (Image 2), it can be easily evinced what HRT considers the three above-mentioned newscasts (*Dnevnik 1,2,3*) and HRT 4's news programs to be its main news brands.

The reporters of the National Politics department are stationed in the adjacent room, separated by a hallway. These are the ones working for the daily news program. Furthermore, there are dozens of journalists in other specialized departments that are physically detached (Regional News, Foreign Politics, Business and Economy, Culture, Education, Zagreb). The editors of these departments assign their reporters to produce stories for the daily program.

### The Nova TV Newsroom

Nova TV produces the prime-time newscast *Dnevnik* at 7.15 p.m. and three shorter newscasts (two in the afternoon and one in the late evening). The website *Dnevnik.hr* is one of the most visited news sites in Croatia (Gemius Audience, 2022). Moreover, the same department also produces the most-watched weekly current affairs magazine *Provjereno*.

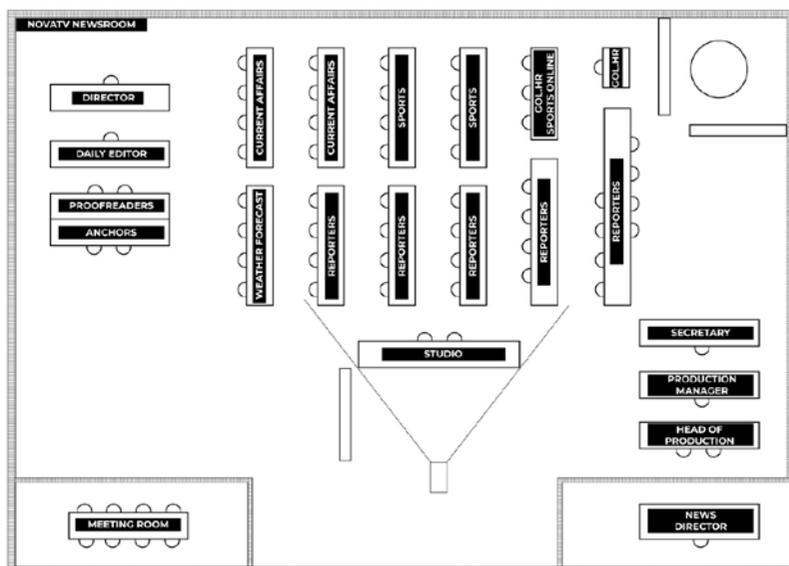


Image 3.

Nova TV's newsroom

Source: Authors

Nova TV has the open-space newsroom concept, but with no assignment desk typical for the Anglo-American model. It is interesting that the whole sports section is within the newsroom together with the specialized sports website, whereas the online news *Dnevnik.hr* is displaced. One of the reasons for this displacement may be the fact that the newsroom was designed in the times when it was still believed that the web should be a separate department.

### The N1 newsroom

At its beginnings, the N1 News channel was meant to be a transnational news channel with three subchannels N1 *Serbia*, N1 *Croatia* and N1 *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Each center produces its own program, yet they are technically connected. N1 *Croatia* produces almost half of its own news content (not including reruns). Although the editorial staff, reporters and anchors are stationed in the main newsroom in Zagreb, Croatia, the control room is in Belgrade, Serbia.

The launch of the channels in three regional centers occurred simultaneously. In this process, there was an obvious influence of foreign investors and top managers, which is reflected in organization and staff hiring. At first sight, the newsroom appears to be an Anglo-American style newsroom. However, when it comes to terminology, confusion abounds. English terms are often used, yet they do not refer to the same roles as in American newsrooms.

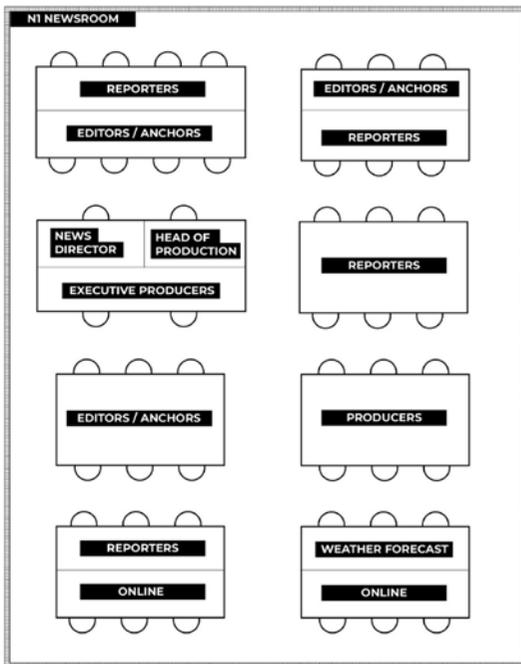


Image 4.  
N1's television newsroom  
Source: Authors

## The concept of 'news desk'

The 'news desk' is the central place in an integrated newsroom "where the news is gathered to be reported" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Desk editors select events that may be reported on, but they are also in charge of assigning tasks, making necessary production arrangements and keeping in touch with reporters in the field (Perišin, 2010, p.230). At the Croatian public broadcaster HRT, the news desk is physically implemented in their television newsroom organization. In the main newsroom, there is a cluster of tables for desk editors and desk coordinators or planners.

When HRT made its already mentioned first formal attempt at newsroom integration of the three media – radio, television and online media, the news desk was supposed to be in the center of news selection and production – the central place for planning and gathering. The integration at HRT was implemented even formally by creating the HRT News Media Service. Nevertheless, soon after the change of the government in 2016, a change of public service management followed and the idea of having an integrated newsroom was abandoned.

However, the news desk for television news program operations remained, along with the desk editor and the planning desk coordinator roles. The desk coordinators are in charge of gathering all information in one place. They communicate with specialized departments and follow what is going on in the field. Besides them, the main operative role in the newsroom is performed by the daily editor who is in touch with reporters and keeps an eye on new material that may be interesting for the news program – for example, newsworthy soundbites – and shares it with the newscast editors. Nonetheless, what these roles mean today at HRT seems to be quite different from the original idea. According to the interviewed HRT's editors and journalists, in recent years all the decisions about what should be reported on, have been centralized at the top of the hierarchy – with the chief editor and the deputy chief editor of the news division. As one editor said: "The desk editor is just the transmitter of the chief editor's decisions."

All the interviewed editors who were the frontrunners of the mentioned restructuring of Croatia's public service and digitalization of news program in the 2000s, expressed their disappointment with the way their efforts have been erased and almost forgotten.

Compared to the HRT News, the news production and operation at the commercial channel Nova TV is much smaller. The concept of a news desk is not implemented at Nova TV. Not only that there is no such a central place in their newsroom, but both the interviewed journalists and the interviewed editors confirm that they do not even use the term 'desk' in their daily workflow. At Nova TV, the daily editor, who is at the same time the daily newscast editor, is the one in charge of news gathering and production arrangements. This figure is in charge of content and selection of daily events that may be covered, while production managers, called 'producers' (*producenti* in Croatian) are responsible for ensuring planning and scheduling of the technical resources (crews, SNG, streaming) and coordinating the technical side of news production in the field.

Similarly, the news channel N1 does not have a news desk or a desk news editor. Nevertheless, some N1 journalists and editors confirm that they often use the term 'desk' to refer to the information gathering process. It was noticed that they colloquially use phrases such as "informing the desk" or "e-mails are sent to the desk" to refer to the so-called 'producers' who make the list of daily newsworthy events. At N1 the mentioned 'producer' is something between HRT's desk coordinator and Nova TV's production manager – they are in charge of both news gathering and technical details of news production. In this way, the desk is replaced by a person called 'producent'. However, this term is not understood in the same way as the term 'producer' which is used in the Anglo-American model of newsroom organization.

For news gathering, they also use social media groups, such as *WhatsApp*, in which journalists and editors send to each other hyperlinks and other information they may find newsworthy or consider to be good story ideas. They also have designated social media groups in which they share contacts and report progress.

### Differences in incorporation of editorial meetings and planning in the three newsrooms

One of the central daily events in all newsrooms in the daily editorial, is the newsroom meeting. In these meetings, editors plan and decide what stories are to be covered, who covers them and how. In Croatian, the term denoting this kind of meeting is 'kolegij' and it originates from the Latin word 'collegium'. This linguistic choice makes the meeting seem even more detached from the rest of the reporters and staff on the team. However, the way editorial meetings are positioned in the newsroom workflow and how they are organized is rather different in the three Croatian TV newsrooms.

At HRT's News Media Service, 'kolegij' is a meeting for the 'privileged'. It takes place behind the closed doors, in the presence of the chief news editor or deputy chief editor, the news desk editor, the daily newscast (*Dnevnik*) editors or anchors (one of the two editors of *Dnevnik* is also the anchor), the news channel HRT4 daily editor, the heads of specialized departments, the planning desk coordinator, the production manager and the director of the main evening newscast. The editors interviewed for this study – newscast editors, daily editors, desk editors – stress that the way decision making is carried out at editorial meetings now is a lot different than before. Many editorial responsibilities have moved to the top. Often, after the main part of the morning meeting, the chief editor and his/her deputy stay alone with the editors of the prime-time news at 7 p.m. to discuss the rundown and suggest what stories should be done and who should be interviewed. According to the interviewed journalists, there were times when there was much more talk about the content and the way the stories should be approached, and editorial meetings had a more collaborative atmosphere.

There are three editorial meetings each day in the TV news department. Reporters do not participate in editorial meetings in any way. The first one is the morning editorial meeting led by either the deputy chief editor or the desk editor. The daily 'offer' of events, set up by the planning coordinator the evening before, is discussed for all three

main newscasts of the day. At noon, the editor of the daily newscast program *Dnevnik 1* presents the rundown of the newscast that needs to be approved by the chief editor or the deputy chief editor. The specialized department editors (national politics, Croatian regions, foreign politics, economy) present events and story ideas, including ideas that are not particularly time-sensitive and can be broadcast during the weekend. Usually, national politics is at the top of the agenda and the meeting starts with updates about where top Croatian politicians are, and what to cover. One former editor said that in the past, the first rule was that the first story in the rundown should not be the Prime Minister or the President. However, now this rule seems to be forgotten, as national politics and protocol are a priority for the TV newscast. Live reports, studio interviews and what local or foreign correspondents can cover is also discussed in this meeting.

The afternoon editorial meeting, which is held around 2 p.m., is shorter. The newscast editors present rundowns for the news at 5 p.m. and the prime-time news program *Dnevnik 2* at 7 p.m. The daily editor reports on what has been shot so far and presents potential soundbites that can be used. The regional desk coordinator (editor) reports on whether there are any new stories that are being covered or can be covered by local reporters in various Croatian regions. Accordingly, the chief news editor and his/her deputy suggest changes to the rundown.

The third meeting of the day is at 4 p.m., and this is the planning meeting for the next day. One of the main complaints of present and former editors in the interviews is the fact that daily newscast editors who are planned for the next day do not participate in this meeting, which makes the planning process less efficient.

The interviewed reporters complain that despite all these planning meetings, they often get the assignments quite late. Also, they are sometimes given contradicting instructions concerning what they are supposed to do by the chief editor, the daily editor and the newscast editor. Additionally, they say that the planning meeting for the next day often becomes the planning meeting for the prime-time newscast on the same day although this should have already been arranged in the morning meeting. Therefore, the interviewees agree that planning should be more focused, and less time should be wasted on chasing soundbites at the last minute for the same day.

As far as weekly planning meetings are concerned, they were regular in the past, whereas nowadays they rarely take place. Behind the initial idea of weekly planning meetings, there was an attempt to gather editors of the weekly current affairs magazines and exchange ideas, but also to see if there are good stories to be included in the prime-time newscast.

Unlike the HRT, at the commercial channel Nova TV, morning editorial meetings are not limited to editors only. They are held in the open-space newsroom and everyone can participate. Apart from the chief editor, the daily newscast editor (who is not the anchor of the program, unlike at the HRT) and the web editor, all journalists who are present, participate in the meeting, including sports journalists. Many interviewees point

out that this is a good way to practice pitching story ideas, especially for young and inexperienced journalists. Editors give feedback, discuss ideas and explain why an idea is good or how it can be better. They also discuss context and in what way the story should be framed to make it understandable for their audience. In these meetings journalists exchange advice, information and contacts for their stories. Even though every evening the editors assign them tasks for the next day, journalists say that there is always room for their idea to be heard, accepted and included in the plan. In editorial meetings, unlike at HRT, domestic politics team is the last one to stay and discuss story ideas, because this takes up the largest part of the news program. This used to be the usual routine, but during the first months of Covid-19 pandemic, they did not have regular editorial meetings. The plan of coverage for the next day is completed the evening before. As there is a significant level of beat specialization, there is not much surprise. Although they do not have specialized departments for experienced journalists there are specialists - beat reporters who usually inform daily editors about updates in their field. One interviewed reporter says that, although she usually knows what her assignment is for the next day, what she misses most in the time of the pandemic, are open morning meetings and exchange of ideas.

At N1, there are only regional editorial meetings in the morning where all N1 chief editors from Zagreb, Sarajevo and Belgrade meet to present daily events in their country and coordinate reporting about the events that are potentially interesting for the countries in the region. Daily editorial meetings do not exist. There is only one monthly meeting where journalists make general plans for the near future, not so much related to the daily news production. As one journalist said: "We'd all like to have editorial meetings. But above all, have time for them."

Another editor explained that the size of the team makes it impossible to have two teams – one that would cover stories, and one that would plan what will be covered, when and how. In the morning, the newsroom is almost empty, except for the web team, because all TV reporters are already in the field. At N1, it is the executive producer who makes the daily plan of the items to be covered. Usually, this plan is sent to journalists in the evening for the next day. According to the interviewees, however, if something happens in the morning, the plan changes. Also, in the morning it is the editor/anchor of the N1 *Dnevnik* at 6 p.m. who decides who is needed for the newscast, who is planned for the live and who is doing a specific package. The executive producer is in touch with journalists in the field throughout the day.

## WEB AND TV (DIS)INTEGRATION AT CROATIAN NEWSROOMS

Television journalists and editors in all three newsrooms recognize the importance of web and social media in their daily workflow, but this is differently implemented in practice.

The interviewees at both N1 and Nova TV often include and mention these platforms when they talk about their news production routine. At HRT, one unsuccessful attempt

at integration of TV and web left the potential of these platforms largely unexplored, with no clear vision yet in place. This is also reflected in newsroom organization and daily workflow.

In many modern newsrooms around the world, web journalists nowadays are placed in the center of the newsroom. In their workflow they try to implement the rule 'digital first', which means that the news will be published first on the digital platform. The extent to which this rule is implemented is also partially reflected in the physical organization of the newsroom.

At the public broadcaster HRT, the web team is physically detached from the television newsroom – it is not even on the same floor. While the web editors at one point participated in daily editorial meetings with those in charge of the TV news program, this is not the case anymore. Now the role of the web team is often limited to rewatching raw material or TV stories created by TV journalists, writing excerpts and cutting video clips. Even though TV journalists are aware of the web team, in our interviews, they confirm that the cooperation is provisional and occasional. While there are cases where journalists from the web team produce original content or experiment with content from the archive and post it on social media, most publications on these channels are promotion of the existing TV content. The interviewed HRT journalists think that strengthening the ties between two teams could be beneficial for the news program, but they point out that this needs to start from their editors. Editors are also aware of this unused potential and shift responsibility to management, claiming that it should impose a clear strategy and changes in daily newsroom routines that are crucial for better integration.

Compared to HRT, the commercial channel Nova TV has recognized the importance of digital platforms in the context of TV news production. TV news editors and journalists point to changes in the workflow that now incorporates production of content for web and social media channels. This is not entirely reflected in the newsroom itself, as the web team is physically detached from TV journalists, similarly to HRT. Interestingly, the room is shared with a fairly large production team that makes promotional (native) content. Unlike at the public broadcaster, here the web editor not only participates in the editorial meetings, but also is the first one who lays out the agenda for the day. Editors decide together which stories should be published solely online, and which stories should also be covered in the TV news program. In this sense, editors and journalists think about what aspects of the story should be published as soon as possible, and what should be kept for the afternoon or evening broadcast. The Nova TV journalists interviewed point to regular cooperation with the web team while they are covering a story. However, some of the journalists regret not being in the same newsroom. For example, one of the reporters said that sharing the same room would improve communication and make it easier – for example – to make suggestions to the web team about which part of an interview to publish or what article title would work best. Journalists at Nova TV also understand the importance of social media and mention regular use of *Twitter* as significant for their professional visibility, but also the visibility of their channel. Web journalists say they are

encouraged to produce original content, but in reality, the majority of their daily work consists of following what the TV journalist is doing and converting TV scripts into online articles at the end of the day. Therefore, at Nova TV web is integrated in the daily news production process. However, web content is still in the shadow of the main TV evening news program.

The most successful example of newsroom integration among Croatian broadcasters, regardless of the already mentioned limited resources at hand, is the N1 news channel. The web team is integrated in the newsroom and all journalists sit together with their editors and producers. As one journalist says: "Even when we don't tell them directly about something, or don't have enough time to do it, the web team hears and notices everything we say in the newsroom and starts working on it immediately."

The N1 journalists and editors interviewed refer often intuitively to the importance of web and social media in their day-to-day work, but also in relation to building their channel's reputation as having information first. The rule at N1 is that everything needs to be published online immediately. Going digital first is also pointed out by its team as a way to boost TV audience ratings. TV journalists and web journalists communicate closely over the phone and share content on multiple social media groups. However, web journalists rarely leave the newsroom. The social media turn out to be vitally important at N1, especially *Twitter*. The official N1 social media channels, according to the N1 social media manager, are dedicated not only to getting the information across, but also putting it into context. These attempts are part of N1's vision to be recognized as the most relevant and reliable news outlet in the country. Social media were especially important when N1 first started. At the time, not many people knew they existed because they are a non-terrestrial channel.

## NEWSROOM STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ACCORDING TO JOURNALISTS

Journalists at the three Croatian newsrooms examined in this study pointed to different obstacles for doing what they consider to be good-quality journalistic stories. Some of these obstacles are shared. However, they can have different underlying causes, which predominantly depends on newsroom organization and production conditions.

In the context of the N1 news channel, the team is small and there is rarely any time to do research, prepare and work on the stories that are not in the daily news rundown and that journalists think are worth telling their audience. While they are encouraged to suggest story ideas, the format of their channel implies covering daily hard news events as a priority. As doing a non-stop daily news program often entails publishing the information first and without delay, both journalists and editors admit that this also means making mistakes or reporting without time to shape the narrative and provide additional context that the audience may need. Additionally, producers in the news

program are quite young and have limited prior experience in the field, and according to the interviewed editors and journalists, this is sometimes reflected in the news program. One of the interviewed reporters says: "There is a discrepancy between our top reporters and producers who should run the program which is mostly live. When we are reporting on location, they should lead us. The problem is that they have significant holes in good general knowledge which is vital for the job."

Other than time constraints and inexperienced producers, another obstacle at N1 is the size of the team. A small team means a lot of additional tasks for journalists – using social media, editing their own stories and sometimes writing text for the web. This makes it, on the one hand, more efficient, but on the other hand, for N1's small team this means that all journalists and editors need to be multiskilled and take on more tasks and responsibility for their stories. Journalists have to do research, organize and arrange interviews themselves and be constantly aware of deadlines that they need to meet throughout the day. Daily changes of tasks and responsibilities often creates confusion within the team, according to the interviewees at N1.

One editor said that, if there is no one available to cover a story, the editor himself/herself often makes a TV package he/she believes is important to be included in the program. In our interviews, the N1 journalists who previously worked at the public broadcaster expressed a kind of nostalgia for 'slow' stories about interesting people doing interesting things. However, they pointed out that doing good-quality journalistic work is possible at N1 when they conduct long studio interviews in which they can ask many relevant questions and provide context.

At the commercial channel Nova TV, the daily workflow is less hectic than at the 24-hour news channel. Here, journalists are obliged to pitch story ideas every day to their editors. The interviewees mention the importance of their editors who encourage them to discover topics they are keen to report on outside daily politics and events, and ultimately their ambition to develop as specialized reporters in certain areas.

Editors emphasize that they want each journalist to develop their unique style of storytelling. One daily editor said: "I don't ask journalists to report on each step they make. I think they need to be as independent as possible, nurture their individual creative approach and have the opportunity to show it. The editors don't need an extended arm and someone who is going to hold the microphone and ask questions by order. I want (and like) journalists who use their own heads."

However, sometimes the boundaries between departments or beats are fluid. Therefore, if necessary, a reporter covering world politics may also cover a sports story. The journalists here also mention lack of time as one of the reasons why they cannot dedicate themselves to the stories they think are important or cannot do it as much as they would like. As a reason behind this, they pinpoint the exhausting daily routines and tight deadlines typical of a daily news program.

Even though N1 and Nova TV have significantly smaller news teams than the ones at the public broadcaster, the journalists at HRT also pinpoint the lack of time as one of the obstacles for doing what they consider to be good-quality journalism. One of the causes behind this is poor planning already mentioned in the findings. According to the journalists we interviewed at HRT, putting a news story into the context depends on the daily rundown of events. Furthermore, the interviewees mention situations in which they were assigned tasks a few hours before the news program, while better planning and clearer instructions given by the editors could have saved them more time for research and better preparation.

Another obstacle is what journalists describe as poor and one-way communication with editors. Tasks are assigned, while story ideas and ways of covering a story are rarely discussed. Experienced journalists mention better times and express disappointment with the typical rundown of HRT's news program as well as with the ways news stories are covered now. They talk about the times when an active relation between journalists and editors resulted in stories that were more thorough, critical and that offered a different perspective. Now, as one former editor says:

Communication [between journalists and editors] as such doesn't exist. That's the biggest problem. There's a decision that something needs to be covered and that someone needs to do it. When they come back, they need to choose the most important fragments of information. So there are no instructions from the editors, they don't tell the reporters: 'Look, expect this and that, you should prepare for this, think about that ...'. If something like this is ever said, it's fluid and it stays somewhere in mid-air. And I'm not sure if it ever gets to the journalist who is doing the story.

Although HRT puts an effort in branding its prime-time newscast as the main product, there is no significant presence of experienced journalists in the newscasts. Many experienced journalists have left HRT and are working for the commercial channels now, while others dislike working for the daily news program. Many of them found a niche, for example, a current affairs magazine, where they produce longer stories or mini documentaries.

Younger journalists at HRT claim that what they lack is mentorship and clear guidance in their professional development. They are shifted from one topic to another, making it harder to explore them in-depth and specialize as beat reporters. Although they are encouraged by their department editors to look for stories and suggest story ideas, this is more the case for senior journalists. Former editors and senior journalists in the news program also notice that. They talk about shifts in management that pushed experienced journalists out of the newsroom, which led to employing many young journalists with insufficient experience to do good-quality hard-news reporting. One former editor said:

It is very unconvincing if a journalist who is 25 years old is telling you about unemployment, about prices rising or similar topics. The tone of voice, the sentences he or she says ... it is unconvincing from the very start and I don't think the audience

appreciates it. Not to mention that the editors do not make the effort to explain what they want. I think that for every task you need to have certain experience and age. I like having more young journalists, but I do not like the way they are raised.

It is interesting that, while the HRT prime-time newscast *Dnevnik 2* predominantly has young journalists doing packages and reporting live, N1 and Nova TV have a different strategy. For these two newsrooms, their top and most experienced journalists report about the most relevant topics in their prime-time newscasts. This is what editors at both channels point as one of the key factors of success and trustworthiness.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

N1, Nova TV and HRT make three interesting and distinct examples of newsroom integration and organization. The three models of newsroom organization and established routines are shaped by several important factors – past newsroom traditions, technology, ownership, foreign investors, international consultants, politics (HRT) and ultimately the format of the channel (N1). This is predominantly reflected in the daily news production process, or more precisely, in the ways editors and journalists create and shape the news program on a daily basis. Different job roles and job descriptions make comparisons of the three models at times even more confusing. This confusion is enhanced by the fact that many journalists and editors at N1 and Nova TV are former HRT employees. Furthermore, as we pointed out several times throughout this paper, when it comes to professional terminology employed in Croatian television newsrooms, confusion abounds. There are cases of cross-language (e.g., ‘producer’ in English vs. ‘producent’ in Croatian) and intra-language (e.g., ‘desk’) terminological ambiguity. These phenomena significantly hinder investigation into the issue of television newsroom organization, yet at the same time they indicate a necessity to embark upon semantic analysis of Croatian vocabulary in the field of television journalism.

Currently, at the public broadcaster HRT newsroom, the previously established hierarchy and roles of news desk editors and journalists are significantly modified by the fact that the decisions about ‘first minutes’ of the prime-time newscast are made at the top by the chief editor and the deputy editor-in-chief. In many other aspects, there is no clear chain of command, thus making relationships between journalists and editors more complex. Somewhere along the way, the idea of integration and convergence had been lost. The web department at HRT exists as a separate entity and there is not enough effort put to turn all HRT’s resources into its advantage. The current situation could be understood as one of HRT’s darker periods, all in the context of its decades-long attempt to establish itself as an independent public broadcaster in the country and to break its ties with politics and politicians.

The newsroom at Nova TV is specific because it does not have a ‘desk’, as is expected in modern integrated newsrooms. Also, the web team is physically detached from the main newsroom, but the cooperation between the teams is nevertheless efficient. Good

and collaborative communication between editors and journalists is one of the most important factors in this newsroom's success, according to our interviewees. While time pressure often undermines journalists' efforts to cover stories they care about, editors still encourage specialization and development of their individual styles of reporting. This team is branded as the most recognizable team of top reporters in Croatia that citizens can trust and relate to. Considering the fact that Nova TV's *Dnevnik* has been the most-watched prime-time newscast in the country, they must be doing something right.

Newsroom organization and routines at the N1 news channel could be seen as a fairly successful attempt of integration, while lack of resources – of both people and time – make the daily news production process comparably a lot more demanding and exhausting for journalists and editors. Also, as N1 is a *CNN* affiliate, there is a clear influence on newsroom organization and roles, such as the role of executive producer, which does not exist in other newsrooms in Croatia. Our research reveals that N1 is most successful in terms of going digital first and completely integrating the web team in the newsroom. Regardless of the size of its team, the news channel N1 is a good example of newsroom integration and good collaboration. In comparison with HRT and Nova TV, the demands of a non-stop news program make N1 a unique example of news routines both in Croatia and in the region.

These three television newsrooms share the same audience but have different backgrounds. Nevertheless, they are all good examples of different ways in which ideas of newsroom integration can be implemented. Needless to say, this is ultimately reflected in the news content itself. Newsroom organization and the way it works is a product of the mentioned factors, but also a response to the new position of the audience, changes in content preferences and uses of media. Like elsewhere, television in Croatia is trying to re-establish itself and find new ways to connect with their audiences and regain their trust. Changes in newsroom organization and attempts to re-evaluate the established news production routines are one of the prerequisites to meet these challenges.

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# MODELI ORGANIZACIJE TV REDAKCIJA I NOVINARSKE PRAKSE U HRVATSKOJ: STUDIJE SLUČAJA HRT, NOVA TV I N1

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**SAŽETAK** Najveći izazovi novinarstva u novom medijskom okolišu su kako zadobiti povjerenje publika, zadovoljiti njena očekivanja, a pritom ostati predano najvišoj kvaliteti izvještavanja. To se očituje i u organizacijskim promjenama i kulturološkim promjenama u samim redakcijama. Digitalizacija procesa proizvodnje vijesti donijela je nove modele organizacije redakcija, kao i nove novinarske prakse. Budući da je televizija i dalje medij kojemu u Hrvatskoj građani najviše vjeruju, ovo se istraživanje usredotočuje na tri televizijske informativne redakcije – informativni medijski servis Hrvatske radiotelevizije (HRT), informativnu redakciju komercijalne televizije Nove TV, i najgledaniji kabelski kanal za vijesti N1 – te analizira modele njihove organizacije i funkcioniranja, načine na koje su se prilagodile promijenjenom medijskom okruženju, ali i očekivanjima publike. Provedeni su polustrukturirani intervjui s 28 novinara i urednika kako bi se istražile redakcijske prakse u proizvodnji vijesti, učinkovitost integriranja redakcije i procesa konvergencije (ako je postojala), kao i proizvodnja i distribucija originalnog i inovativnog novinarskog sadržaja za različite platforme. Također, identificirane su glavne prilike i prepreke u proizvodnji onoga što novinari i urednici percipiraju kao kvalitetan novinarski sadržaj kojim grade odnos sa svojim publikama. Rezultati istraživanja upućuju na tri različita modela redakcijske integracije i organizacije koju su oblikovali različiti čimbenici, poput tradicionalnih i ustaljenih načina rada u redakcijama, tehnologije, vlasništva (Nova TV), stranih investitora, međunarodnih konzultanata, politike (HRT), kao i samog formata kanala (N1). Sve ovo ponajviše se odražava u procesu proizvodnje vijesti, tj. u načinima na koji urednici i novinari stvaraju i oblikuju dnevne emisije vijesti. Uočene su i razlike u načinu rada između novinara zaposlenih u javnom servisu i onih na drugim televizijskim redakcijama.

## KLJUČNE RIJEČI

REDAKCIJA, ORGANIZACIJA, REDAKCIJSKE PRAKSE, NOVINARSTVO, INTEGRIRANA REDAKCIJA, TELEVIZIJSKE VIJESTI

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