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Journalism that Matters

Views from Central and Eastern Europe

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Chapter 9

Russian journalism as a social lift: comparing journalistic attitudes in the period 1992-2008

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Abstract: While press freedom in Russia deteriorated over the past 20 years, the number of the journalists satisfied with their occupation did not decrease but increased. Moreover, journalism as a profession remains in high demand among the younger generations. Investigating this paradox, this study asks about the professional freedom of journalists in their editorial offices on the one hand, and about the sources of their satisfaction on the other. Comparing the findings of two surveys of Russian journalists, in 1992 and 2008, the analysis reveals that the number of independent reporters decreased, but the number of satisfied journalists increased. We used factor analysis to discover the sources of satisfaction of the contemporary journalists and to elicit their attitudes to the occupation. Using Bourdieu's approach, the analysis identifies a set of resources (capitals), which back the high satisfaction of the journalists: power, wealth and social mobility. They establish a privileged position in society, marking journalism out from other occupations in the general societal context, where the social lifts are broken and the social structure is frozen. Operating as a social lift, such a form of journalism favours openness in society, but at the same time it erodes the occupational ethos because it unavoidably forms the vector from the occupation as Goal to the occupation as a Means. As a result, the principal question of press freedom as the goal of journalism remains unanswered.

Keywords: popular profession; social mobility; journalism as a social lift; media freedom; post-Soviet Russia

Introduction

Journalism as an occupation in Russia has undergone a very thorough change over the last 20 years. In the Soviet time a journalist was "a party literary worker," as the famous Leninist phrase goes. The media organizations were the organs of the party committees, which decided on the staff policy and editorial line. At the universities the future journalists were carefully selected, mainly from those with a working-class background, literary talent and from the majority ethnic group. They were competent in understanding the needs of ordinary people and educated in the Soviet school of journalism as "social activists" (Talovov, 1990: 40). The prestige of the

occupation arose from the privilege of being co-opted into political authority in order to form public opinion, and also from informing the authorities about societal problems revealed by readers who wrote and called to the newsrooms.

In the era of *glasnost and perestroika* (1985-1990), the party, headed by Mikhail Gorbachev, encouraged this critical function of journalism as a good way to correct any societal problems and to speed up reforms in the country. The media turned out into a "glasnost-oriented propaganda machine" (Zassoursky I., 2001: 86) while the journalists became "knights of glasnost" (Pronina, 1997). The prestige of the occupation grew as the journalists began to pursue truth instead of propaganda. The first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, disbanded the Communist Party and its structures: the respective Decree came into force on 6 November 1991, and early in December 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed.

The media became free from party control, and state censorship was forbidden by the new media law in 1991. The status of journalism changed drastically from a closed state service of elite employment to an open market occupation without any of the previous guarantees that protected 'jobs for life.' The rapid development of the media market required new workers, and journalism became accessible to amateurs. Among them were some who had not been able to enter the profession before because of their social or ethnic backgrounds and who were not satisfied with the income, career prospects or creative opportunities of their former jobs (Pasti, 2005a: 193-194).

During the 2000s the Russian media market was on the rise: it was ranked the 10th largest in the world by economic indicators (Pankin, 2010). The state encouraged the media as an effective business and service industry for the markets of advertising, information and entertainment. The technical modernization of the media to the highest international standard was recognized as one of the priorities of state policy. Simultaneously, the political freedom of the media gradually decreased in the face of the increasing centralization of authority and state regulation. Government authorities in the regions began to establish newspapers in the middle of the 1990s (Resnyanskaya et al., 1996). Many journalists were keen to be employed by the pro-government media because, as distinct from the oppositional newspapers, they offered permanent jobs and good salaries (Pasti, 2005b).

The main trend in the media market in the 2000s was the proportional decrease of the commercial capital share and an increase of state capital and mixed (state and commercial) capital shares (FARMC, 2010: 13). The Russian government acknowledges that about 80 per cent of newspapers exist with subsidies from state bodies. State broadcasting has 75 per cent of the audience. In contrast, some post-Soviet countries, including Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Estonia, have introduced media regulation to prohibit and restrict the state's opportunity to operate mass media. In these countries, the authorities do not and

may not have their own media, with the possible exception of an official bulletin to publish legislation, government resolutions, and other instruments and comments (Richter, 2011: 202).

The process of the etatization of the media had a direct impact on media independence. In the World Audit Democracy (2011), Russia had a press freedom rank of 130, which identified it as a country without press freedom. Over 13 years its democracy rank (political rights and civil liberties) went down from 106th to 136th place. In comparison with the post-communist countries of Europe and Asia, and even with the remaining communist states (China, Cuba and Vietnam), Russia indicated the lowest criteria of democracy.

Nevertheless, even though the media lost political independence, journalism remained a popular occupation. Young Russians flooded into journalism, as seen in the growth of journalism schools and the number of applicants, many from wealthy families. In Russia, 123 universities trained students to be journalists, among these 92 (75 per cent) were state institutions and 31 (25 per cent) private institutions (Lukina et al., 2010). In comparison – 30 years before, in the middle of the 1980s, there were only 24 journalism schools in the universities in the USSR (Ovsepyan, 1996: 138-140).

When looking at the choice of jobs made by contemporary graduates in the Faculty of Journalism in the flagship university of the country, Moscow State University, in 2009, the hierarchy of their priorities was as follows: PR (23 per cent), magazines (22 per cent), television (20 per cent), internet media (11 per cent), advertising agencies (7 per cent), radio (7 per cent), information agencies (5 per cent), newspapers (4 per cent) and publishing houses (1 per cent) (Lukina and Vartanova, 2012). Thus, the new generation of journalists is strongly attracted by PR and commercial journalism.

This article considers the popularity of journalism when the media are not free in Russia, and makes two assumptions. The first is that journalism remains an open and liberal occupation with the privilege of market freedom, which seems to be more important for present journalists than political freedom: a wide choice of jobs (media outlets), residence, and forms of employment, staff positions, private practice (as a second job), and self-employment. The second assumption is that the process of etatization of the media inevitably leads to close relations between journalists and state officials, whereupon journalists often become the 'friends' of those who sponsor their media. The wellbeing of their families depends largely on the wellbeing of their media organizations. The state is no longer a brutal dictator for the media, but a welcomed buyer of the loyalty of the media and journalistic services. The government's contracts with the media organizations provide stability by protecting journalists from market uncertainty. In addition, the lasting alliance of the media and authorities opens up good perspectives for

engaging in personal promotion. Earlier research showed that many journalists left their newsrooms and moved to head PR services in the government or in business, or became members of regional parliaments, or established their own media outlets and even media holdings (Pasti, 2010).

Departing from these two assumptions, a hypothesis emerges that the popularity of journalism comes from the potential for mobility in the occupation and, via the occupation, in society. One could assume that journalism operates as a social lift in contemporary Russia, where other social lifts are broken and the social structure is frozen, as post-Soviet studies found (ISRAS, 2011). To test this hypothesis, the study explores the operations of editorial offices between 1992 and 2008 and the reasons why contemporary journalists were content with conditions at that time.

Social mobility in post-Soviet Russia

The concept of 'social mobility' was introduced by Sorokin – a Russian-American sociologist. In his opus *Social mobility* (1927) he provided the first systematic conceptual treatment that included a complex of movements across many different social dimensions. The approach was further narrowed and redefined in line with mobility through education and occupation in the seminal work *Social Mobility in Britain* (Glass, 1954) that was carried out at the London School of Economics. This established a paradigm for subsequent mobility analysis, stimulated comparative studies of other nations, and produced the empirical evidence for later accounts of class boundaries, the rigidity of the social hierarchy and mobility between classes in Britain (Payne, 1998: 596). New studies emerging abroad debated the openness of American and other societies and the mobility patterns associated with social democracy and liberal capitalism (Duberman 1976; Giddens 1973; Goldthorpe 1980, 1984; Marceau 1977).

The definition of social mobility includes both upward and downward movement in a stratified society. Sociologists distinguish *intergenerational* mobility by comparing people with their parents and *intragenerational* mobility by comparing positions across individual lifetimes. Societies differ in how open or closed their stratification systems are. For example, caste systems allow no mobility at all, while class systems allow limited mobility below the level of the upper class (Johnson, 2000: 291-292).

In the Soviet Union, as Radaev and Shkaratan claimed (1996: 196-197), social mechanisms of advancement differed from those in the West. At the same time many Western researchers, including Lipset (1973: 384) argued about the similarities of systems of stratification and the character of mobility in the West and in the countries under the totalitarian regime. In the opinion of Russian

researchers, in the open societies social mobility is mainly a spontaneous process, whereas in the totalitarian societies, especially at the top of the social lift the mobility is a guided and ideologically caused process. In particular, the numerous secret instructions determined who and what social position a person could occupy in the Soviet Union, taking into account social origin, ethnicity and, especially, loyalty to the political regime and readiness to accept the system of norms and values of the political elite (Radaev and Shkaratan, 1996: 199).

After the collapse of the Soviet system, a transition began from a hierarchical type of stratification – Soviet estates (*soslovie*), where the social position of individuals and social groups were determined by their place in the structure of the state power – to the class stratification, which dominates in the West. However, twenty years later the social structure in Russia has been described as ambivalent, consisting of the estates and underdeveloped classes. In Kordonsky's (2008: 132) opinion this led to the formation of a specific national form of anomie – where the individual accepts two conflicting statuses, for example, when they are a government official (estate status) and at the same time a business owner.

The majority of publications in Russia negatively appraise stratification change in the country. In particular, the surveys carried out at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s found a process of social polarization of the population and mass downward mobility (Chernysh, 1992; Rutkevich, 1992). In their study in Russia, over the period 1988-2000, Western researchers also found a trend of downward mobility when many Russians fell to a lower stage in the social hierarchy. The number of people who were born in the lowest income quarter of families and who were able to escape poverty was extremely small. The main reason, as Yulia Verlina, a head of research group of VCIOM argues was seen to be the absence of social lifts that really worked (Bzhezinskaya and Matvelashvili, 2007).

In 1993 the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in a national survey of social-professional mobility, revealed the contradiction between the conservation of the social-professional structure, on the one hand, and increasing property differentiation, on the other. The researchers predicted that this contradiction could result in an acute social conflict in the future (Chernych, 1994). The study argued that in the period from 1986-1993 the closeness of basic social groups increased in spite of economic reform. Modernization boiled down to the re-distribution of material and social resources. The role of social networks and informal networks increased and began to impede the mobility of some social groups and of those connected with the distribution system.

The studies carried out later, in 2002 and 2006, at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and then in the frame of the European Social Study (ESS-2006), affirmed that the social status of the majority of the population in Russia had remained unchanged for the last decade (Belyaeva, 2009). Although

statistical data showed the positive dynamics in the standard of well-being of the population: fewer poor people and more well-to-do and rich people, this did not influence the social status of the majority. Inequality of life chances persisted and depended not only on the material opportunities of the family, but also on other resources – the individual themselves and the social networks to which the individual and their family belonged.

In the opinion of Guriev (2007), the social lifts in Russia do not work as well as in the USA and Europe. On the one hand, society is still plagued by paternalism, but on the other hand, it is split by inequality of opportunities. Education, for example, could serve as a social lift, however, but there are too few high-quality educational institutions and securing places at them is plagued by corruption. In the economic sector, broken social ‘upward’ mobility created an environment in which labour productivity stagnated, innovations were not forthcoming and small businesses hardly existed. In society this causes social apathy, a low standard of living, the growth of radical groupings (for example, skinheads and nationalists), and ethnic conflicts (Bzhezinskaya and Matvelashvili, 2007).

In the Soviet time, education, occupation and the *Komsomol*¹ were effective social lifts and provided quite equal opportunities in the careers and standards of living of specialists regardless of their residence and region. Today favouritism and informal networks play a crucial role, instead of talent and competence. Yasin (2006: 281) wrote “In order for an elite democracy to remain a democracy, and not degenerate into an oligarchy or bureaucracy, political competition must operate as a beneficial social lift. In other words, elites must be constantly reinforced with an inflow of the best individuals. There must be the social blending, upward mobility.” The new political situation, with an increasing number of social protests in the big cities, shows that the question of equality of opportunities remains the key question for contemporary Russia and its future.

Method

This article is based on empirical findings from two surveys of journalists carried out in different political eras in post-Soviet Russia. The first one was conducted in 1992 at the Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University and was led by the Dean, Yassen Zassoursky. It was carried out immediately after the collapse of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union, at the peak of unprecedented political enthusiasm in the profession and society. The study sample included 1,000 journalists working in

1 The abbreviated name of the Communist Youth Union, public organization of advanced Soviet youth, reserve of the Communist Party. It was established in 1918 and by 1981 it had over 40 million members.

the press, radio and television from ten regions representing the basic geographic and social-economic features of Russia (Zassoursky et al., 1998: 10).

The second survey was carried out sixteen years later, in 2008, when the temptation of big money in a booming media market was not yet affected by the global crisis. The study was a part of the Academy of Finland project, *Media in a Changing Russia, 2006-2008*, headed by Professor Kaarle Nordenstreng at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, Finland. The partners in this project were the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Michail Chernysh) and the Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ) (Vsevolod Bogdanov). The survey was conducted in two different stages. The first one was conducted during the All-Russian Congress of Journalists in September 2008. From 620 delegate journalists, 260 completed questionnaires were collected. The second stage consisted of a survey of 536 journalists across the entire country, carried out in October-November of 2008. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences employing its nationwide network of interviewers. The cases of the survey (536) were merged with the data file of the first stage of the study (260), making 796 cases in total. The regional sample consisted of 36 cities from all six economic zones of the Russian Federation, including big cities (with populations of one million and over), middle sized cities (200,000 – 999,000) and smaller cities (under 200,000) and it included two capitals, Moscow and St Petersburg.

Both surveys, in 1992 and 2008, used questionnaires created on the basis of the research by Weaver (1986) and Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) that provided a number of the same questions and allowed for comparability.

Findings

Satisfaction

In 1992, two thirds (62 per cent) of all journalists were “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with their jobs (Zassoursky et al., 1998: 32). Their satisfaction came mostly from the new situation of almost unlimited freedom of the press, which came after the total party control. Many journalists felt themselves to be independent reporters. That period was later seen as “the Golden age of Russian journalism” and the emergence of “a new fourth estate media model” (Zassoursky Y., 2001: 161).

Sixteen years later, in 2008, the number of satisfied journalists had grown to almost 72 per cent. The decade of the 2000s, before the financial crisis of 2008-2009, showed economic growth in Russia and the growth of the information and advertising markets, with rich opportunities for the employment and earnings of journalists. In 2008 the journalists were asked to choose the two most important aspects of job satisfaction from twelve proposed aspects.

As Table 9.1 demonstrates, a clear majority of journalists were satisfied with their independence to decide which stories to write (65 per cent), their ability to help other people (64 per cent), and the overall political orientation of the media organization that they worked for (60 per cent). A third of the journalists were satisfied with their income (39 per cent), their career opportunities in journalism (38 per cent), the political independence of the profession overall (37 per cent), and the number of extra privileges that the job offered (37 per cent).

There were also notable differences between the older, Soviet generation, who entered the occupation in the Soviet time, and the younger generation who began working in the media after the 2000s. The younger generation was more enthusiastic about its moonlighting prospects and more likely to be satisfied with the political independence of the profession. Younger journalists also felt more secure and were happier with the career prospects and extra privileges in the media than their older colleagues. In general, the younger generation at the start of its entry in the profession seemed the most satisfied. This indicated that the present situation in the occupation met their personal expectations to have opportunities for self-realization, creativeness and wide communication (Pasti et al., 2012: 275-276).

Table 9.1 Job satisfaction by generation in Russia (in per cent, fully or mostly satisfied)

Reasons for satisfaction	Soviet 1991 or earlier	Transitional 1992-1999	Post-Soviet 2000 or later	All Journalists
Opportunity to decide what to Write	71	63	61	65
Opportunity to help people	65	64	65	64
Political line of media	61	61	58	60
Job security, social security	43	52	60	52
Opportunity for better qualifications	50	49	55	51
Opportunity to influence society	47	47	54	49
Opportunities for second job	45	48	53	48
Opportunities to grow in the Job	40	41	46	42
Income	43	40	34	39
Opportunity for other career <i>via</i> journalism	39	36	39	38
Political independence of the profession	34	32	45	37
Extra privileges	31	36	44	37

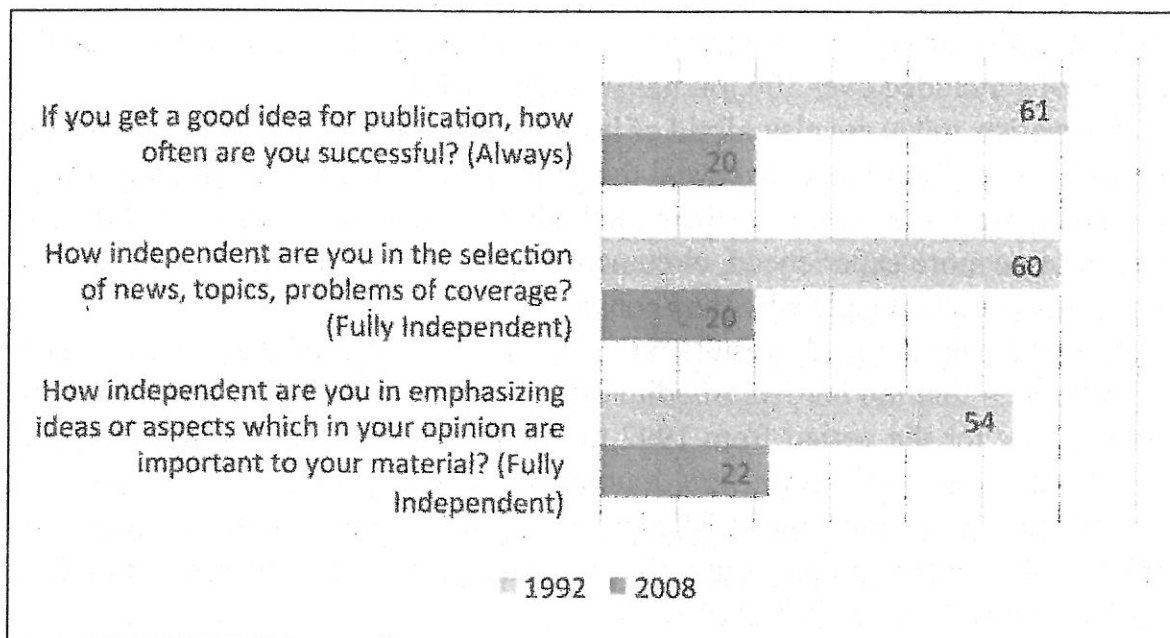
Source: Pasti et al. (2012: 275).

Autonomy

The editorial autonomy of journalists was explored in three questions. If you get a good idea for a publication and you consider it is important, how often are you successful in realizing it to make a story? How independent are you in the selection of news, topics and issues for coverage? How independent are you in emphasizing ideas or aspects which in your opinion are important to your story? The answers of journalists surveyed in 2008 were compared with the answers of the journalists in 1992.

As shown in Figure 9.1, answering the first question, in 1992 two thirds (61 per cent) of media professionals stated they were “always” successful in realizing their idea for a publication. In 2008 only one fifth (20 per cent) said the same. The professional freedom in selecting news, topics and problems for coverage decreased from 60 per cent of those who considered themselves fully independent in 1992 to 20 per cent of those who considered themselves fully independent in 2008. The number of those who were fully independent to emphasize ideas or aspects important in their material decreased from 54 per cent of journalists in 1992 to 22 per cent of journalists in 2008.

Figure 9.1 Editorial autonomy in Russia in 1992 and 2008 (per cent of respondents)



Source: Pasti et al. (2012: 277).

However, the number of ‘situational journalists,’ who were “sometimes independent, sometimes not” increased considerably in 2008 in comparison with

those in 1992 (from 5 per cent to 29 per cent as regards selecting news and from 6 per cent to 23 per cent in emphasizing ideas or aspects important in their material).

The situational character of journalists also appears in their attitudes to working methods. In 1992 the majority approved of methods such as paying for confidential information, getting employed in an organization to get inside information, using hidden cameras and microphones. In 2008 about 25 per cent approved of these methods, but half of the respondents declared that they would use these methods depending on the situation.

At the beginning of the 1990s some journalists objected to these dishonest methods and wished to work differently, by exposing the truth, adapting the Western idea of being an opponent of those in power, and establishing a new genre of investigative reporting. At that time the assassinations and persecutions of journalists had not yet begun.

By the end of 2008 the situation in journalism was completely different. Journalism had become a dangerous profession for those who tried to reveal the truth about those who had political and economic power. As a result there were only a few enthusiasts who were ready to take the high and even deadly risks for the sake of truth. When we analyzed the number of journalists killed in Russia since 1992, the most dangerous topics to cover were war, politics, corruption, business and human rights (Committee to Protect Journalists [CPJ], 2011). The tragic statistics of violence against the professional rights of journalists since the early 1990s included over 300 journalists killed (RUJ, 2011).

Journalists today are also afraid of lawsuits and therefore, avoid questionable methods, even if these help to reveal the truth. It is difficult to argue that today's journalists are more ethical in their methods than journalists in 1992, but they have become more experienced, circumspect and cautious about the subjects that they cover and the people who they contact.

Summing up the study results on the perception of professional autonomy, it can be seen that the borders of editorial autonomy in the newsroom narrowed considerably for the period from 1992 to 2008. However, this did not influence the job satisfaction of the working journalists, perhaps, because the majority of them (60 per cent) were quite satisfied with the political line of their medium. This indicates that contemporary journalists have adapted to the changed conditions and feel comfortable in their media.

We also asked the journalists about constraints in their work and asked them to choose the two most influential constraints from twelve suggested. As it turned out, the most influential factor constraining their work were the local authorities – one third said this. The second most influential constraint were their superiors in the editorial office – one fifth cited this. Ethical considerations were important for only 15 per cent of journalists, whereas the opinion of colleagues as

a constraint in work was unimportant for almost all journalists (3 per cent). From this we can assume that external factors served as the main regulators in their work and behaviour, whereas internal professional constraints had little influence. This situation in journalism is not unlike the Soviet situation, which justified the avoidance of professional responsibility by referring to state censorship.

Finally, this adaptation to external political control can explain the journalists high satisfaction with how their media work. The majority considered that their media organizations were pretty good at delivering information to their audiences. While 10 per cent said they were confident that the media do an "excellent job," 36 per cent were sure that they do a "good job" and 46 per cent felt that they do the job "well, though not without certain deficiencies." In the context of the media doing good work, the small cities they even were more confident (61 per cent) than in the big cities (41 per cent) and mid-sized cities (46 per cent). The number of journalists dissatisfied with their media was low, 8 per cent of all journalists.

Resources

The next stage of analysis aimed to elicit journalists' attitudes to their occupation. This was done by carrying out a factor analysis of the 12 variables measuring sources of satisfaction. The three factors that emerged are shown in Table 9.2.

The first factor included the four most loaded variables ranked in the following order: to influence society; to help people; the political independence of the profession; and to independently decide how and what to write. Its value indicates that this cluster is *political* and can be identified as *Authority* as it is based on power and independence.

The second factor included such variables as extra privileges, the security that the job provides and salary. Its value is *economic* – material wellbeing that presupposes protected conditions. Therefore, the second cluster can be identified as *Prosperity*.

The third factor included the prerequisites for advancement: a career in politics via journalism, state service, business, a second job, career advancement, and better qualifications. This can be identified as *Social mobility*.

In summary, journalists' attitudes to their occupation in contemporary Russia emerge in three dimensions: having authority, economic prosperity and upward social mobility. This shows that the journalistic occupation in contemporary Russia provides such opportunities or resources for its workers.

In sociology, Bourdieu (2004), Sorensen (2000), Beck (2000), Castells (2000) and Grusky (2001) developed the *resources paradigm* as an alternative to the traditional concept of stratification. In Russia the *resources paradigm* is seen

particularly relevant having considerable heuristic opportunities in the analysis of post-Soviet society. Shkaratan et al. (2003); Radaev (2003, 2005); Tihonova (2004) and others took development of the resources approach further in the context of Russia.

Tihonova (2007) suggests that the social structure of contemporary Russia consists of five main resources clusters: economic capital (income, property), qualification capital (education, practice, skills), cultural capital (level of socialization, life style), power capital (political and administrative resources) and social capital (social networks). In the framework of the resources approach, social inequality in Russia is the logical consequence of the different amounts of resources that different social groups or individuals possess. The resources are distributed unequally: only 7-8 per cent of the population in Russia have enough resources to achieve the quality of capital (Tihonova, 2007: 267). Different types of capital can be converted one into another, and into economic capital, and they can lead to the growth of aggregate capital (Radaev, 2003).

The place of an individual in society depends on the structure and amount of assets or capitals which they possess. That is, the capitals determine the class to which the individual belongs: to the class of owners of resources that are in short supply, which is inaccessible for the majority, to the class of owners of resources that are in bountiful supply or to the class of unnecessary, socially excluded people (Tihonova, 2006: 28-29).

The Russian journalists in the frame of the resources paradigm can be assigned to the class of owners of resources that are in short supply. First, because of their occupation the journalists often perceive themselves as owners of information, which is a scarce resource, especially in non-democratic societies. They seek and produce information, and they finally decide what information to give or not to give to the public. Second, the journalists are owners of exclusive networks with the officials, especially nowadays, when their media are attached to the government authorities. All this gives them the resource of authority and accumulates *power capital*. The market freedom in the occupation – combining staff employment in the newsroom with a second job outside, in media, advertising or PR, where earnings are high. This provides them with *economic capital*. *Cultural capital* arises from the formal and informal professional and social networks that the journalists have in abundance, and also from family privileges, which play an important role in contemporary Russia and also in the media market. The combination of these three basic capitals establishes the privileged position for journalists: to be in power and to influence, to accumulate wealth and to be mobile.

Table 9.2 Factor analysis of sources of satisfaction in Russia

	Component		
	1 (Authority)	2 (Prosperity)	3 (Social mobility)
To influence society	.756		
To help people	.687		
Political independence of the profession	.658		
To independently decide how and what to write	.654		
Editorial policy	.602	.458	
Extra privileges		.712	
Job security, social security		.673	
Salary		.614	
For a career in politics, state service, business			.773
Second job			.689
To grow in the post			.532
For better qualification		.404	.425

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in eight iterations.

Source: Author.

Social lift signs

Openness for educated people

Journalism remains an occupation open to any applicant. Over the last 16 years the number of journalists with other education increased slightly, from 44 per cent in 1992 to 48 per cent in 2008, although the vast majority (86 per cent) in both 1992 and 2008 had a high level of education. In the big cities (one million inhabitants and more) the editors-in-chief preferred to employ specialists – half of those employed in the media had a journalism diploma, whereas in the small cities (under 200,000 residents) only one in 10 had a diploma in journalism. The media in the small cities sought workers from among the local intelligentsia: one in five came into the field by a lucky chance, which was twice the number of ‘accidental’ journalists in the big cities.

Rising to a higher social class

In the small cities, as seen in Table 9.3, working class sons and daughters accounted for about half of all journalists. In the big and medium sized cities journalism is becoming bourgeois – the majority of practitioners come from middle class families: managers and professionals, but mostly professionals other than journalists.

Table 9.3 Parents' job position by city size in Russia (in per cent)

	Big city (<1 million)	Mid-size city (999-200 thousand)	Small city (>200 thousand)	All Journalists
Top manager	8	7	4	7
Middle manager	25	18	17	21
Supervisor	3	6	4	5
Journalist or Editor	4	4	1	4

Source: Pasti et al. (2012: 272).

Different generations in the profession show different social backgrounds – fewer now from working class families and an increase from middle class families, as shown in Table 9.4. In the Soviet generation (those who started in journalism before 1992) one third (30 per cent) came from the working class, whereas in the post-2000 generation only 18 per cent come from a working class background are. At the same time the number of those who came from families of other professional increased from 18 per cent in the Soviet generation to 33 per cent in the post-2000 generation. This finding suggests that today journalists from the middle classes in the big cities perceive journalism to be a proper profession, and gradually exclude the offspring of the working class when competing with them in the markets of cultural capital and social networks.

Table 9.4 Social background of Russian journalists by generation (in per cent)

	Soviet 1991 or earlier	Transitional 1992-1999	Post-Soviet 2000 or later	All Journalists
Top manager	7	6	8	7
Middle manager	22	20	20	21
Supervisor	6	6	3	5
Journalist or editor	3	4	4	4
Other professional	18	25	33	26

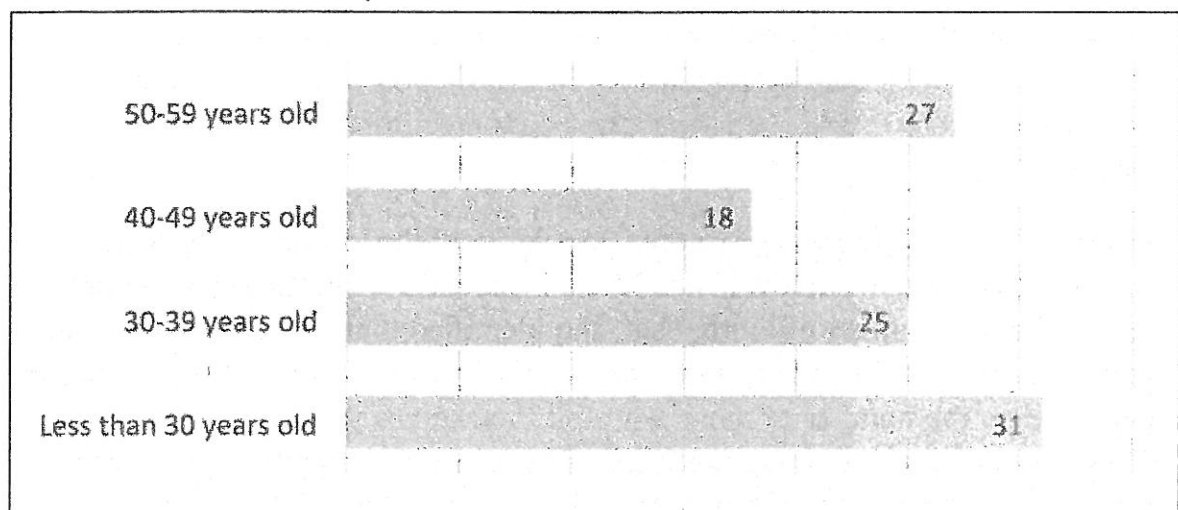
Clerk	10	9	8	9
Urban worker	20	20	12	17
Rural worker	10	5	5	7
Other	4	5	7	5
Females	50	62	67	60
Second job	42	48	47	44
Union membership	76	33	17	41
Journalistic education	51	37	44	43

Source: Pasti et al. (2012: 273).

Changing age structure

In 1992, all age groups in journalism were represented evenly. In 2008 the relative balance between age groups had changed. As Figure 9.2 shows, the age group of 40-49 years was, as a result of journalists either leaving the profession or changing their job status, significantly less well represented (18 per cent) than expected (25 per cent). An earlier study carried out in 2005 in St Petersburg found that young journalists were not going to stay in the occupation for long: “Today it seems journalism is held up by older people. Among young journalists, unfortunately, I seldom meet individuals who in the first place want to stay in journalism and, secondly, want to be of some use and really will be interesting for readers, listeners and viewers” (Pasti, 2010: 68).

Figure 9.2 Age structure of the group of surveyed Russian journalists in 2008 (per cent of respondents)



Source: The data of the survey of Russian journalists in 2008.

De-unionization

The results of our analysis suggest that professional group interests are decreasing. In 1992 the majority (60 per cent) of media professionals surveyed belonged to the journalists' union. In 2008 their number had decreased to 41 per cent, and the overwhelming majority were the older generation journalists, who began work in the Soviet time (76 per cent) and a small number from the new post-2000 generation (17 per cent), as seen above, in Table 9.4. The de-unionization trend stresses the temporary attitude, not wishing to join the union and the absence of group interest in the younger generations. It is fraught with the deepening disintegration of the profession, decreasing solidarity and inequality in terms of income, privileges and views about professionalization.

Occupational mobility

In 2008 the findings of the survey demonstrate that journalists actively moved into the media market. The overwhelming majority came to their news media during the 2000s: 82 per cent in weekly magazines, 89 per cent in monthly magazines, 82 per cent working for the radio organizations, and 94 per cent of newcomers in the internet media. Only newspapers, especially dailies, showed the lowest employee turnover rate, each having one third of older journalist who started working there in the Soviet time or in the 1990s. In the Soviet time occupational mobility was constrained. Journalists changed their working place while moving mainly not from the bottom up (from the district newspaper up to regional), but horizontally (from one district newspaper to another or from one regional newspaper to another). There were not enough prospects for professional growth (Kuzin, 1971: 157-158). In 2008 career developments depended on journalists themselves, they changed not only between media outlets, but also the town or city that they lived in.

Conclusions

This article explored the paradox of the popularity of the journalism occupation in the conditions when the media lost political independence in Russia. Our analysis revealed that the number of journalists who identified themselves as independent reporters decreased drastically from two thirds in 1992 to one fifth in 2008. At the same time the number of those who felt themselves sometimes independent, sometimes not, increased to one third. The main constraints to the work of journalists in 2008 were the local authorities and the editorial managers.

Nevertheless, the number of journalists who were satisfied with their jobs increased in 2008 (72 per cent) in comparison to 1992 (62 per cent). Among the

major factors for their satisfaction were professional freedom in the newsroom, on the one hand, and the editorial line of their media, on the other. The majority of journalists surveyed were content with how their medium informed the public. This showed that contemporary journalists found a happy consensus between their decision-making in work and the current editorial policies – evidence of their adaptation to the changed conditions in the media and the patronage of the authorities.

The etatization of the media gives obvious guarantees against market uncertainty and simultaneously it does not impede the commercialization of the media – the two main trends of development of the media system in Russia during the 2000s. Journalism finds itself in a privileged position between power and the market. It is clear that the media system is inseparable from the social-political system. Over the last decade, Russia, together with the countries of the former USSR, except the Baltic countries, showed similar internal political processes leading to the formation of similar social systems. Raybov (2011) characterizes them as ‘post-Soviet capitalism,’ which is based on the merger of institutes of power and property into the single institute of power-property. The state ruling bureaucracy concentrates holding not only political power but also concrete property. This is inherent, both at the level of national economies and in the regions and districts. An excessive concentration of finance-economic, political, administrative, informational and other resources at the one top impedes the real democratization of post-Soviet countries – real democratization meaning free elections, independent from the state media, and rule of law. Political and social institutions remain weak and unsteady because of the struggle of the elite for power, that is, access to the important bureaucratic resource.

Journalism provides access to three important resources: power, wealth and elite social networks which speed up social mobility. These resources establish the privileged position of journalism in society that principally distinguishes it from other occupations. The current form of Russian journalism seems to operate as a social lift, open to any applicant who seeks new life chances and take advantage of various forms of mobility: vertical, horizontal, geographical and occupational.

In the European Social Study (ESS), 2006-2008, with the participation of 25 countries contemporary Russia emerges as the country which is both similar and dissimilar to Europe (Andreenkova and Belyaeva, 2009). It leaves behind the Eastern European countries and some Western European countries in terms of levels of education and the number of professionals with high and middle qualifications. It demonstrates the strong advance of individualism, prioritizing values such as competition, individual success, power and wealth, while solidarity is diminishing. However, its population shows the lowest level of job satisfaction among the European countries. In comparison with the other countries, a large gap

exists between the high levels of income in the upper classes and the low levels of consumption of the majority of people; evidence of the limited opportunities for the majority of Russians.

In contrast, many Russian journalists share the European mood of being highly satisfied with the current conditions of their occupation; especially the new generation of journalists who have grown up in the successfully capitalizing urbanized Russia. The typical post-Soviet journalist is a happy journalist, combining two identities: a loyal staff employee in the media and a market freelancer. Some prefer not to call themselves journalists but media workers.

Modern journalism in Russia provides access to three important resources: power, as it maintains the political power and administers the information society; material wealth, because it feeds on both the state and the market; and social mobility, which is supported by elite relationships with the bureaucracy. These resources provide a high satisfaction among most journalists. Journalism is popular because through it you can find new opportunities in life and change your status in society. That is, journalism is used as a social lift. This leads to the loss of professional ethos, because it generates a vector of development journalism as a profession not as a goal but as a profession as a means. As a result, the fundamental question of press freedom as the goal of journalism remains unspecified amongst most practitioners.

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