THE ISSUE OF MEDIA REFLECTION ON SOCIO-CULTURAL RECOGNITION AND GLOBAL CHANGE

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Abstract

The problem of media reflection on social and cultural recognition has resonated in theoretical and practical discourse for decades; however, nowadays it is becoming even more important and literally urgent. On the other hand, we are confronted with media coverage related to international terrorism and, moreover, with subsequent feeling of fear and imminent threat. The media still continue in their long-term neglect of the issues associated with global hunger and poverty in so-called developing countries, in which violent attacks and outbreaks happen on a daily basis. In Africa and Asia, this struggle is about economic and social survival. The resistance against injustice (or rather misrecognition) is expressed by social groups as well as individuals, mostly in terms of their experience with violation of the expected recognition. Misrecognition is therefore transformed into a motivational force that functions as a basis for the resistance and critique. Information dissemination is, taking into consideration the current trends in global communication, closely connected to the existence of multi-national media conglomerates. These can be seen as key actors influencing the global system of communication. Large media companies may operate on a global scale, but their headquarters are still located in North America, Europe, Australia, Japan, or on the other 'side', in Russian Federation, China, Qatar. The concentration of media ownership results in increased selectivity applied to information processing – certain pieces of news often cannot be verified due to their nature and/or significant geographical and cultural distance from their places of origin. Web sites, weblogs or print and online magazines, which focus on spreading conspiracies, are often the only alternative to the widely absent media coverage and, as a result, they intoxicate this system by unverified information and half-truths. The aim of the study is to place emphasis on the long-ignored problems which escalate in the form of violent attacks – however, the fundamental and so-far-unresolved issue here is the much needed social change. The media should be able to normatively assume responsibility for informing about the current affairs happening in areas stricken by international conflicts.

Keywords: recognition, media ownership, global economy, solidarity, social responsibility

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1. Introduction

Recognition has become a key concept of our time. It was placed firmly on the agenda by Honneth and Fraser [1] when the struggle for recognition found itself at the centre of attention in connection with the development of modern society and attempts to eliminate fossilized social hierarchies. Social status is not necessarily a given reality, but may be a social construction of misrecognition, which the individual does not have to tolerate and can challenge [2]. In attempting to establish relationships of mutual recognition we can see the driving force lies in the development of local, transnational and global contexts [3]. Recognition is essential to every individual's self-realization, development, freedom and autonomy [4]. One of the fundamental motivations behind the issue of recognition seems to relate to investigations into how an individual's identity is formed [5] as an attempt to 'gain' mutual recognition from those with whom the individual interacts in the social environment [6]. Misrecognition is recognition's dynamic counterpart and the source of social conflict. When analysing misrecognition, we start with the social tensions and deprivations that both result from the misrecognition of the individual's normative expectations and constitute the driving force behind the development of society. Misrecognition has a major impact not only on the micro-level of everyday interpersonal relations, but is also manifest particularly at the level of socially and culturally defined relationships and increases substantially at the global and transnational levels which extend beyond national and local patterns, thus crystallizing the concept of misrecognition in all aspects and directions. Mutual relationships are more complex at global and transnational levels, while the simpler nature of local misrecognition means that is concerns more isolated elements. Logically, local misrecognition does not reflect the complexity of the elements occurring within the international order. Recognition and misrecognition beyond national borders require the articulation of new forms of misrecognition stressing the social dynamics of fights for recognition in the field of extraterritorial recognition of social human rights anticipated by socially misrecognized groups [7].

In this article, which takes as its starting point Honneth's recognition theory, we attempt to highlight the problem of social recognition in global and transnational contexts and to identify media indifference to issues of solidarity at the global and transnational levels. The way in which the media is organized in developing countries differs from the models of media systems defined by Hallin and Mancini [8], i.e. the media system relates directly to the political order, which is different in every country. We also consider issues related to the topics covered by the media, and the breaching of the audience's normative expectations, especially in relation to diversity [9]. The media select from a wide range of events on a daily basis and focus only on the smallest amount of information. At present, agenda-setting and preferential information are directly determined by interests groups who engage in communication with the public. The extent to which the topic is relevant also plays an important role.

News and opinions published in newspapers are defined mostly by their importance for the readers and less and less by the attributes of news values such as significance, actuality or impact on the whole society. Other important factors that influence the current trends in making print news include concentration and commercialization of print newspapers and omitting the information function of news in favour of profit. In other words, contemporary print journalism has become a specific kind of entertainment that is able to distract, stimulate, shock, and surprise the reader through attractive expressions and suggestive images. This trend is not evident only in the mass press that naturally works with such principles, but also in the segment of elite newspapers where tabloidization and infotainment are considered as deficiencies [10]. Therefore, journalism theorists frequently point out that the traditional boundaries between 'serious' and 'entertaining' or 'elite' and 'popular' have become vague and uncertain. Infotainment simplifies the discussed issues and situations, transforms their essence and meaning through dramatization or utter change of authentic events and statements. Since the process of gathering and making news had always been a very expensive part of the process of broadcasting, infotainment was (and in many cases still is) seen as a welcome strategy to make television news gainful instead of unprofitable [11]. On the other hand the presence of entertaining elements within news stories produced by public broadcasters tends to be seen as highly undesirable and faulty in its nature [12].

In considering recognition in the context of globalization and transnational economy, we cannot ignore the way in which media information is presented and subsequently interpreted or the way in which regional information is affected by the processes that ensure its dissemination [13]. In today's global communication, the exchange of information is linked to the existence of supranational communication conglomerates. These can be considered to be the key actors in the global system of communication. Although the large communication groups operate on the global market, almost all of them are located in North America, Europe, Australia or Japan. Developing countries often provide them with markets for media services and products, but almost none of the media companies are located in those countries. The development of communication conglomerates has led to the concentration of economic and symbolic power accumulated in the hands of private owners [14]. The concentrated ownership of media companies enables the selective picking of information, which, given its nature and the faraway location, cannot be verified. This also contributes negatively to the lack of interest in and marginalization of solidarity and recognition in developing countries. It is important to point out that the current era can be characterised by the strengthening of newly emerging great powers such as China, India, and Brazil. Russia's traditional power status has been restored and the significance of the Islamic world has been recognized. The era of 'Western' dominance is being transformed into the 'Rise of the Rest', which introduces the potential of a new global set of great powers. These trends can be seen in the increased significance of growing media centres like RT (Russia), CCTV (China), Al Jazeera, etc., that may have a considerable

influence on the way in which the public is informed about marginalized topics, especially news related to developing countries. It is evident in exploring this topic that communication systems are linked to the execution of economic, political and military power.

The first part of the article is devoted to Axel Honneth's concept of recognition, which was formulated at the interpersonal level and his three-level theory of recognition that deals with the local community. The second part focuses on questions of solidarity at the global level, particularly on issues related to the limited potential for implementing solidarity in a global and transnational economy. The third part points to the potential and limitations of the media in articulating struggles for social recognition in the global and transnational environment.

2. Recognition and its place in local and transnational relations

In his The Struggle for Recognition: Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts, Honneth defines three forms of recognition – love, justice and solidarity. His third form of mutual recognition (solidarity) is acquired by participating in the activities of the human community and contributing to its way of life. This type of recognition is not focused on universal recognition of statuses as in the case of rights, but on solidarity with a particular community instead. Honneth argues that the integration of mutual relationships depends on how deeply anchored are the relationships between the individual and the others. It is possible to go beyond this framework to establish solidarity with regional or continental intercultural communities, or with a cosmopolitan community. In our opinion, this kind of interpretation is a forgotten element in Hegel's philosophy, on which the Universalist perspective of the community is based. Honneth does not only subscribe to Hegel's concept of recognition, but also to his concept of community; however, he does not propose a neo-Hegelian concept that would go beyond the limits of the conception of international politics in order to analyse global and transnational issues. The main issue with Honneth's conception is that it underestimates transnational and global relations. Czech philosopher and social scientist Marek Hrubec [15] argues that Honneth's focus on recognition between nation-states prevents him from grasping major evolutionary dynamics taking place above the plane of nation states especially during the last decades, because transnationalisation and globalization significantly de-statize economic, political, legal, social and other national orders. It is important to note that Honneth is more interested in social theory in general [3] and despite the fact that the author does not consider what might occur as a consequence of implementing his theory of recognition within international and global relations, his point is representative of work that enables such considerations to be made.

Where solidarity, the third form of recognition, is concerned, the problem is compounded by the fact that solidarity is not sufficiently promoted in shared values at the international level. Hrubec [16] does not accept a passive approach to the problem, and explains the transnational and global struggles for

recognition developed by the global poor, the exploited and other marginalized groups. Since work at the transnational level is not valued equally, this apparently misrecognizes and thus discredits those whose performance is evaluated at a lower level than it would be in developed countries. Moreover, these issues have to be solved in the context of intercultural dialogue between different cultures with different value systems [17].

3. Articulating solidarity in the global and transnational economy

In this part we deal with recognition as a normative conception of economic-social issues beyond national borders. We focus on the articulation of extraterritorial recognition of social rights-holders at the international and supranational levels of justice. One of the main reasons rights-holders are misrecognized is the fact that the legal system does not clearly recognize the ties between strong economic actors in global capitalism. There is a need to eliminate global social injustice in a normative sense. When analysing intercultural recognition, we deal with cultural and diplomatic behaviour, i.e. how to adapt relations between different culturally defined groups and how to find and create transcultural overlaps in recognizing basic human needs.

In contrast to this, many countries in Africa and Asia struggle for economic and social survival. Resistance against injustice in these areas is expressed by groups and individuals within their experiences of the violation of expected recognition; misrecognition is transformed into a motivational force that forms the basis for all opposition and criticism. Every day around 50,000 people die of the poverty-related problems typically found in these countries [World Health Organization, The world health report 2003 – shaping the future, Annex Table 2: *Deaths by cause, sex and mortality stratum in WHO Regions, estimates for 2002*, http://www.who.int/whr/2003/en/Annex2-en.pdf?ua=1], which amounts to 18 million people per year [World Health Organization, The world health report 2004 – changing history, *Annex Table 2: Deaths by cause, sex and mortality stratum in WHO regions, estimates for 2002*, http://www.who.int/whr/2004/annex/topic/en/annex_2_en.pdf?ua=1].

If these people wanted to protest, they would have to find a way of expressing their disapproval, but the prosperity of the West renders this potential target for social change almost invisible.

If we seek to determine the normative requirements of the global poor who face social misrecognition, we cannot focus solely on publicly articulated normative goals. People expect dissatisfaction will be expressed as it is in the West against traditional targets of moral and political protest. The Western method of publically decrying experiences of injustice plays an essential role in the struggle for justice; however, simply expressing public dissatisfaction cannot be the most important element, not even if the suffering of the global poor was to be publicly protested. Measuring it like this prevents us from considering other non-public forms of social lack that deserve our attention. Indeed, this approach retains the limitations typically associated with the current level of

articulation of misrecognition. The so-called 'Western approach' to social lack disregards everyday forms of social injustice that escape public notice. People who live in developing countries formulate their claims through their everyday struggle for survival in very basic living conditions and in extreme poverty.

It is clear that these conditions mean they cannot show disagreement as we typically would, i.e. in street demonstrations. Their struggle for recognition is the struggle for water, for food, for shelter, etc. We witness efforts to redefine the economic, political and cultural recognition of individual actors and the gradual transition from unipolarism and unilateralism to multilateralism and multipolarism. Individual countries and entire macro-regions seek recognition for their own version of modernization, which they do not want to reduce to the western (global) model. The ultimate question of the future of terrestrial civilization will have to deal with the co-existence of diverse modernities, particularly social and cultural rights that are currently unheard and overlooked.

The dialogue between Fraser and Honneth [1] is representative of the discussions on this issue. We agree with Honneth's statement that in terms of the theory, Fraser underestimates social movements, which are deprived of the right to public social recognition. However, we believe that Honneth does not take into account the fact that Fraser deals with important global issues relevant to the changing role of nation states in the global context. An adequate theory should recognize that the disagreement among different misrecognized groups in the population have yet to develop into powerful forms. Yet, in order to understand the disagreement among the global poor and their normative expectations, there must be an analysis of the current international and supranational order. The needs of the global poor may be satisfied by removing the barriers that prevent them from being fulfilled.

Everyday struggles for recognition must be remembered even when virtually no attention is paid to them, and we must not forget to develop social investigation into the global order. The need to strengthen international law is only the first in a whole range of other requirements. The international legal system contains progressive elements that could be developed, thereby helping shape a cosmopolitan legal system. One important element achieving prominence is extraterritorial recognition. Hrubec [18] explains why the concept of extraterritorial recognition has become relevant to the global poor's struggle for recognition in the current global era, albeit in the historical framework of the Westphalian system of international relations. The concept of extraterritorial recognition has only been used in a limited number of cases, which did not affect large numbers of people, or the system of international relations. Extra-territorial recognition enables transnational regulation of the economy, but, at the same time, the latter limits the potential for extra-territorial recognition. Transnational corporations pursue their own interests and their policies result in losses to the most disadvantaged entities and to the poorest populations of the world. We are witnesses to two antagonistic processes. On one hand, global and transnational economic structures are emerging (such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank), and, on the other hand, global

and transnational social criticism are on the increase. People are rebelling against the negative impact the various kinds of liberalization enforced as part of structural assimilation programs have had on many countries. The negative impact these measures have had on the most vulnerable section of the world's population is a crucial argument in discussions about regulating transnational corporations and international financial institutions. Nation states have lost the influence they originally had, while corporations and international financial institutions have significantly strengthened their influence. Globalization has eliminated the ability of states to accumulate profits in poor countries, transferring them to transnational corporations. Young [19] discusses this arguing that the social relationship model of responsibility holds that the actors are responsible for the structural injustice, since their actions mean that they are involved in processes that cause injustice.

Neither the criticism nor the description of the global order thus far has developed sufficiently to lead to normative excuses for a global state, and so its normativity is questionable. Honneth works within a relatively modest extension of the status quo, revealing only minor emancipatory potential in developing patterns of recognition and does not deal with long-term civilization and technological development. Honneth deals only with positive or ambivalent development (which he identifies as paradoxes of capitalist modernization) and not negative development.

4. Potential and limitations of the media in the public articulation of struggles for social recognition

A country's political system and economic level determine the basic conditions for the existence of the media system and define its status within it. At present, we are witness to 'transnational concentration' and 'multimedia concentration'. Consequently, the media industry is increasingly influenced by a small group of owners who make all the important decisions. This relates to the monopolization of opinion disseminated by the dominant transnational media conglomerates operating on the various national and international markets [20]. The media are supposed to focus on matters of public interest. At the same time, they function as organizations whose primary concern is to generate profit and export their products. The current global information flows are controlled by a small group of news companies. Western Europe and North America dominate the international news conglomerates. Since these areas of the world control the majority of the international information flows, they can influence the values and opinions [21] on world events that are disseminated. Global broadcasting organizations thereby become a major source of news from developing countries, and news broadcasting has a major impact [22]. Globalization trends, transnational actions of media companies and the concentration of information sources affect the selection of topics and the way in which they are visually presented. According to normative media theories, journalism is supposed to offer objective news and pluralistic opinions related to current social events. On

the other hand, the economic imperatives of media industry and efforts to attract and maintain the attention of the readers are the main determinants of contemporary nature of journalism and its products [23]. The recipients are able to access increasing amounts of information offerings. The Internet, television and radio spread news much faster than press journalism. Using new information technologies such as smartphones, tablets or 'intelligent' TVs has become a part of common, everyday reality, especially for young and middle-aged people and there are also alternative ways of disseminating information, e.g. online social networks.

Journalistic ethics is a discipline within applied ethics and is older than media ethics. Just as journalism is the fundamental voice of the media, journalistic ethics are the basis of media ethics [24]. There are two levels in journalistic ethics – the institutional and the personal. At the institutional level, journalistic ethics is understood as a set of ethical principles, standards and requirements regulating the activities of the profession. At the individual level, they are reflected in the professional behaviour of all those performing professional activities or representing a particular profession. Professional journalistic ethics constitutes a set of ethical requirements, rules and obligations governing all members of the journalistic community. Professional ethics has accompanied journalists from the very beginnings of journalism, although the content and form are historically dependent on social development, historical events, the use of new technological and technical tools, and they are also influenced by social science knowledge, particularly knowledge of ethics. Closely related to the ethics of the media and journalism is a value that is becoming more significant and important given the greater opportunities to send and receive media content [25]. A tradition of social responsibility, whose philosophical basis came from the American Commission on the Freedom of the Press in 1947, was introduced with great determination and to great effect in Western Europe, particularly after World War II. There were three motivations: a) a desire to begin anew after the war; b) the general rise of 'more progressive' politics; and c) experience of a sudden and widespread concentration of the press, which renewed fears of a private media monopoly [26]. The current key social challenge facing the media industry is how to integrate business and media activities so as to preserve the primary mission of the media – to serve the public interest. This particularly concerns the revitalization of journalism as the fourth pillar of democracy and global public culture. Many media companies wittingly or unwittingly ignore this challenge, and the actions of the news staff, creative and editorial teams are primarily aimed at making profit. Extensive violation of journalistic ethics and fundamental principles of journalistic profession led to the rapid fall of British Sunday newspaper News of the World (1843–2011), whose last issue was published on 10th July 2011 due to infamous scandal related to illegal phone-tapping and monitoring of numerous victims of violent crimes. However, it is not clear whether this decision was really made under the pressure of public despise and disgust or it was rather a well thought-out strategic move; one way or another, the first issue of Sunday Newspaper The

Sun on Sunday that quickly replaced News of the World was published a few months later, on 26th February 2012. This case leads us once again to a wider discussion on how, in which ways and by what kinds of measures we are supposed to regulate the press in a democratic society.

Corporate social responsibility is a challenge affecting all companies, including the media, who have to realize that they do not exist in a vacuum, but in a particular economic, legislative, cultural and natural environment. Media companies emerged as part of the social division of labour to create values and products for others and, at the same time, to ensure a livelihood for the owner. However, media companies emerged within society and have a responsibility towards that society to perform two basic functions in one.

The concept of media social responsibility can be used in cases where the management or owners of a media company do not need to deal with issues of financial security. These kinds of companies are usually financially stable and typically have a high level of journalistic professionalism. Thus in the cultural and historical context of Europe, social responsibility can be seen as a tool for increasing competitiveness in relation to other companies and as the recipient perceives it as an added value, a sign distinguishing it from other entities on the market.

In developing countries the environment does not provide these conditions, so the local media are therefore not able to fully apply corporate social responsibility [27]. However, in several parts of this article, we have stated that the global flow of information (including information from developing countries) is, in most cases, controlled by corporations situated in Western Europe or North America. Localization and geopolitics mean that these corporations take into account the interests of various influential groups (including the public, the audience and the subject) when producing and distributing media content. Ways of recognizing the individuals who make up the social base in developing countries, however, do not generally constitute part of the topics covered by global media corporations.

Based on Remišová's conception of media company responsibility vis-à-vis the public, we can see that media companies should draw attention to the serious issues of the day, respect the public's right to truthful information, respect every person's human rights, guard democracy, refrain from propagating aggressive wars, violence and aggression or any form of discrimination and intolerance, and provide a platform for the publication of ideas [24, p. 188]. The way in which the communication channels are currently set up and the sheer variety of information sources blurs boundaries in space and time. The active individual is able to obtain information about events occurring in developing countries, but the habituation and trivialization caused by the long-term impact of the media mean that the issue of solidarity towards those in developing countries seems irrelevant. The ability to obtain information is the individual's right and prerogative, but changing the status of the target of our study on the basis of the information found is not within the competence of the individual.

The modern world is interconnected and time and space proximity have ceased to be indicators of ethical seriousness. Our thinking must be at least partly based on a sense of responsibility for others and awareness that people are responsible for the good of others and that they are engaged in the same commitment to others – that they will behave with dignity and respect [14, p. 113]. Adopting a critical approach to the consequences of globalization and the transnational extent of the various subsystems of societies opens up the way for a moral and ethical catharsis of the media. A plurality of information sources and technological progress mean that the receiver is no longer dependent on a dominant type of global information network. A variety of communication channels helps to set in motion the process of 'democratization of responsibility' in the sense that concern for distant human beings is an increasingly important part of everyday life. New ways of disseminating information and images encourage and reinforce a sense of accountability to the world of distant people living in diametrically opposed living conditions. Focusing on journalism and its place in the globalized societies of the 21st century, McNair [28] notes that the dominant model of journalism of the 20th century represented by professional journalists and objective and reliable journalistic information is currently fragmented; mainly due to the influence of new media and technologies. Despite many pessimistic visions, he does not worry about the future of journalism itself: "Journalism will not die out in this environment, because it is still needed on so many social, political and cultural levels. Journalism has a future. It will evolve, as it has evolved already, from the antique styles of the early newspapers to the gloss and sheen of the modern prime time news bulletin… But how will it change and will the change be for the better, or for the worse?" [28, p. 21] Taking into account these uncertainties, we also have to mention a significant shift in the sector of citizen journalism (also known as 'public journalism', or 'participatory journalism'). Basically all people who are able to connect to the Internet are also able to freely publish and spread their opinions, offering a certain critical alternative of not being dependent on dominant media. This form of participation, however, has started a discussion related to the quality of contents produced by amateur and/or civic journalists. Certainly, it is undoubtable that free dissemination of information across countries, regions and throughout the whole globalised world has become a threat to undemocratic political systems. Reacting to this problem, Hachten [29] mentions the Internet's extensive potential to function as a medium and technology of freedom that is necessarily confronted with limitations of autocratic regimes.

5. Conclusions

In his analysis, Honneth does not go beyond nation state borders, but defines recognition as essential to achieving full, unimpaired subjectivity based on the acceptance, respect and appreciation of the skills and performance of one person by the others involved in the interaction. In addition to the political and cultural dynamics, the social dynamics of the struggle should be accentuated in

the extraterritorial recognition of social human rights anticipated by socially misrecognized groups [27]. The struggle for social economic recognition refers to the fulfilment of the basic needs for survival [30]. We point out that states should place greater emphasis on the influence these have in transnational organizations and thereby positively regulate the extraterritorial activities of global and transnational economic actors, who should bear legal responsibility for their activities, so that it will be possible to see international standards of social justice being applied. There should be a legal relationship between financial entities and their home states (subject to international law standards), on one hand, and embedding, on the other hand, corporations' responsibility for transnational activities supporting extraterritorial recognition of individuals and social groups so as to eliminate harm and misrecognition. The inability of states to provide this kind of regulation encourages misrecognized individuals and groups to create transnational mechanisms that would ensure social justice on a regional and global scale. The functionalist and normative approaches to studying the media hold that these ideas should be enhanced to provide media reflections of the situation in developing countries. The media should thus strengthen their role as information-providers and provide relevant information on events happening in the parts of the world where many of the world's commodities are produced, such as cotton, coffee, salt, and fruit. These countries number amongst some of the poorest in the world. However, the economic intentions of transnational corporations will probably act as a brake on this process. Although we have witnessed the rapid development of alternative sources of information, their ability to shape public opinion has not reached the level of global information networks yet.

Acknowledgement

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