

Geography of news in the print media, according to the geographic level!

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is the observation and analysis of the geography of news in the print media in Albania. Six daily newspapers, which represent four different types of print media, have been studied for 30 days on news geography, based on five geographic levels. First, the continental news (European); second, Balkan news; third, national news; fourth, regional news (county), and finally, local news. The analysis has been carried out in several areas simultaneously; first, for each geographic area the Information topics have been monitored based on the common structure of the Albanian print media; political, economic, social, cultural, art, daily news, etc. Secondly, the genre through which the information is conveyed (news, analysis / commentary, reportage (feature), interview) has been highlighted and also it has been studied if the genre is defined depending on the country of the origin of information. Finally, there has been monitored the news authorship for each geographical level, and from where the news is reported.

This article ascertains the interrelation of the information, based on the geographical concept, the reasons for reporting, and specifics of this reporting.

The methodology used is that of the measurement and analysis of the product / information in the press, of course, based on the theoretical literature. There have been chosen some daily newspapers published in Tirana; daily newspapers that are the official papers of the main political parties, respectively "Zëri i Popullit" and "Rilindja Demokratike"; two self-declared independent media, respectively "55" and "Dita"; a daily newspaper of the centre "Panorama" and a daily newspaper which is an 'extension' of some other business activities, "Mapo".

This is a quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Key words: *geography of information; local, national, or international news; source.*

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The following paper aims to observe what is the geography of the news published in the Albanian daily newspapers, the genres through which this information is conveyed, as well as the authorship of this information. The hypothesis of the research is to control, confirm or explain the lack of local news, information and political dominance of anonymous journalism in the Albanian dailies. The conclusions reached while proving the hypothesis may indicate the reasons why the audience has abandoned print media.

The methodology used is mostly the quantitative analysis, based on some qualitative indicators of six Albanian daily newspapers. There have been selected four types of newspapers, which were analysed for the 30 days of April 2015.

"Panorama" has been chosen considering the widely accepted status as the best-selling newspapers for the moment in Albania. There have been selected the official newspapers of the two main parties in the country, "Zëri i Popullit", newspaper of the Socialist Party, currently in power, and "Rilindja Demokratike", the official 'voice' of the Democratic Party. These two newspapers have been analysed and considered as media that do not function as real media businesses. They are funded by the respective political parties. Then, there have been studied two other newspapers, which are declared independent ones and which pay more attention to analysis. They are "55" and "Dita". And last, "Mapo" newspaper.

News, a genre that still prevails in the printed press!

Nearly half a decade after the digital revolution that has hit most than anything the media, especially the traditional media, newspapers have not yet been oriented to meet the "whims" of new audiences. "Dailies cannot be satisfied any more just by publishing the news of a few days ago", says Eric Scherer.¹ Dailies must be filled with analysis, commentaries, reportage and deep investigative articles or genres that so far have been "property" of the weekly newspapers or magazines.

¹ Scherer.Eric, *A na duhen më gazetarët*, Tiranë, Papirus, 2012, fq.82

But, while monitoring the Albanian dailies, it can be seen that "informative news", continues to fill their pages. It is the main product that is offered to the audience, 12-24 hours after it has happened. Although the audience is "tagged" by news in every moment of the day, being it through tv news , at least four of them are in broadcasting 24/7 in Tirana, or online websites, some of which, websites of the printed newspapers.

Newspapers lack investigative reports and feature stories. Photography has remained as an element of form on a page, it is mostly illustrative and in a few cases, the picture of the day, photo of the news, informative picture. There cannot be found illustrative graphs/charts, etc. in the pages of the Albanian dailies.

Below there is the graph of the genres found in six dailies that were monitored.

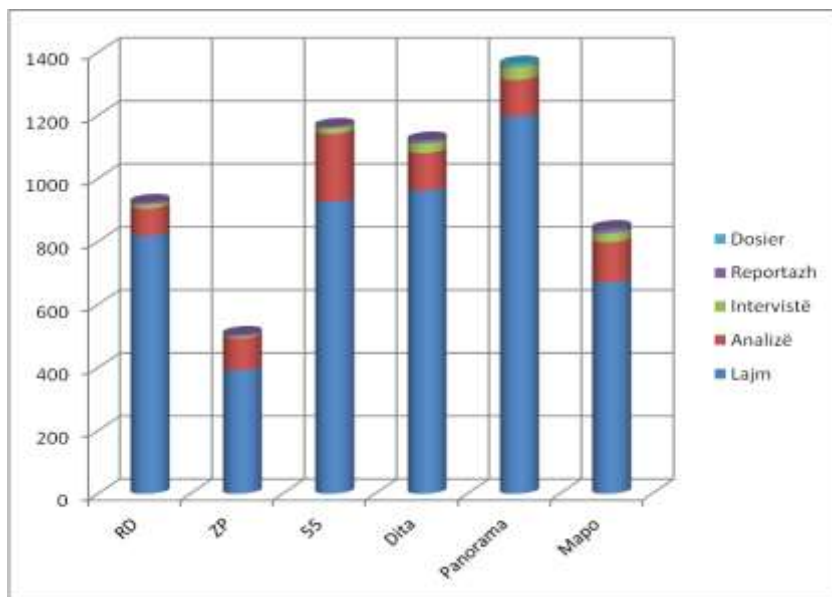


Chart No.1. On the genres studied in six monitored newspapers!

It seems that, the Albanian daily newspapers have not understood yet that people do not buy newspapers to read yesterday news.

The "news" analysis goes further, dividing and observing the information topics reported by the daily newspapers selected for this article.

It is obvious that in all monitored newspapers it is the political news that prevails. Moreover, in almost all daily newspapers, the political news takes more space, or in the best case, it is equal to the sum of all other topics in the newspaper (news on crime - 'crime news', economy, social development, culture, world or sport news). It is possible that the prevalence of political news during the monitoring period might also have an additional reason. April was the eve of the official start of the election campaign for the local elections of June 21, 2015², but the previous experience of political parties is that the campaign is launched two months (sometimes even earlier) before its official starting date.

Despite the "inflation" of political news in Albanian daily newspaper, the quality of reporting is far from professional standards, and even further from the characteristics of public journalism. In many cases news in the dailies is first hand information based on press reports, statements or information taken from TV, which also is prepared by the editing studios of political parties.

This is only one part of the symbiosis between journalism and media in Albania. The rest is exactly as described by Jamieson, 22 years ago, "In the strategy schema, candidates are seen as performers, reporters as theatrical critics, and audience as spectators. The purpose of the performer is to 'win the votes of the electorate, projected throughout the performance in the polls. The polls determine whether the candidate will be cast as a front-runner or the underdog, whether the candidate will be described as achieving goals or 'trying' to achieve them, and how the candidate's staged and unstaged activities will be interpreted. In the strategy schema, candidates do not address

² According to Article 77 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, the election campaign begins 30 days before the elections day and ends 24 hours before the elections day. Law No. 10 019, dated 29.12.2008, the Official Journal. No.189, pg.9305.

problems with solutions, but for 'issues' with 'strategies'. The language of the strategy schema is that of sports and war".³

After political news, in daily newspaper pages come police reports on crime news events. This way, dailies resemble to police bulletins. The greatest value of the last ones in that a newspaper, is only for enlarging the information map, which in their absence would appear much more limited.

After the news in the daily newspaper pages, readers could find genres of thought, (opinions, reviews and analysis), which are mainly about domestic and global political developments.

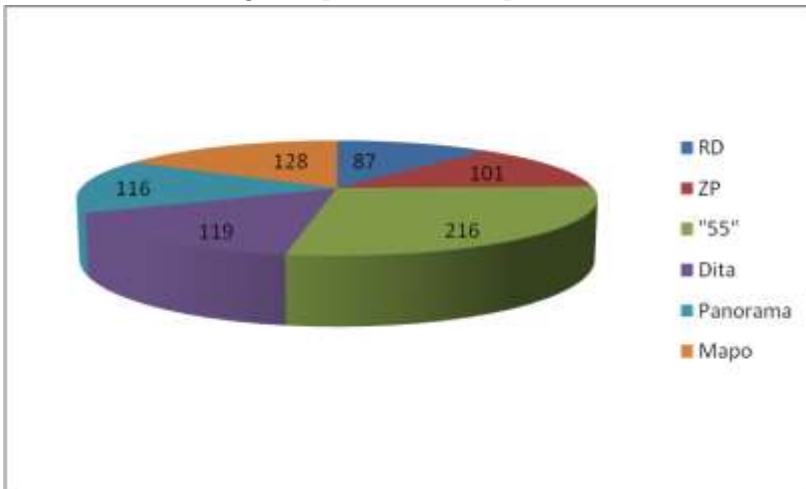


Chart no.2. Number of the genres of thought in the newspapers that were monitored

It is to point out that daily newspapers publish opinions, comments and analysis without stating the author. The largest number of these anonymous genres of thought can be found in "55" newspaper, which has published 25 articles without stating the authors. Then comes "Rilindja Demokratike" with 15 such articles and in the third place is ranked "Dita" newspaper with 11 anonymous articles. In "Panorama" daily newspaper there cannot be found any comment, analysis or opinion without the author. In "55" newspaper

³ Jameson, K.H. The subversive effects of a focus on strategy in news coverage of presidential campaigns', 1993.

there is the largest number of analytical genres taken from other media; a total of 58 articles published during April 2015.

In the third place comes the genre of interview. It is interesting that the number of interviews that were taken from other media is almost the same in all the newspapers monitored. Thus, the two political newspapers have the same number of interviews taken from other media, acknowledging the authorship of the interview. "Mapo" and "Panorama" newspapers also have the same number of interviews borrowed from other media; 8 borrowed interviews each. The newspaper "Dita" has just one less, 7. And the fewest number of interviews taken from other media can be found on the newspaper "55". There are only 4. But, this newspaper (55) together with "Mapo" newspaper, have the largest number of interviews with no author, 8 each. The smallest number of interviews without an author is in "Panorama" newspaper and in "RD" which is the official 'voice' of the Democratic Party; 4 each. While in "Dita" newspaper there are five interviews with no author. Interviews with no author result from two circumstances; First, the interview might be taken from other media and is not stated the other media, second, auto-interviews.

The largest number of interviews in general, as well as interviews by its own journalists, can be found in "Panorama" newspaper. During the 30 days of April, in this daily newspaper there is a total of 39 interviews, of which 25 carried by its journalists.

The rarest genre found in the daily newspaper pages is reportage/feature news. The largest number of reportage can be found in "Mapo" newspaper, a total of 15 during April, or one every two days. But only 30 percent of them have been written by its journalists, 7 have been taken from other media, and 4 others with no author. While, "Panorama" newspaper has the smallest number of reportage during the month of April.

Anonymous journalism!?

The curve of distrust on traditional media has continuously increased, but the speed of growth has lately become greater. Nearly half of Americans (46%) say that they get the news on national and state

events initially from on-line websites. On-line websites in US already leave behind the television, which is used by 25 percent of Americans for being informed, radio is used by 14 percent and newspapers are used only by 12 percent of Americans. ⁴

For Eric Scherer there are too many reasons for the growing distrust. "The public now sees perfectly well through the internet the lack of the reliability of the exclusiveness and sometimes of expertise. The public notes that the news coming mostly from press agencies or press releases is almost everywhere the same. It feels despair about the lack of courage and consistency of the questions addressed to the great people of this world. The multiplication of anonymous sources "unauthorized", "safe", "close to", "in the circle of", etc., does not have any influence, and the same with the opinions disguised behind vague wording such as "some think ..." and it increases the sense of distance.

The digital 'tsunami' which was accompanied by the economic crisis led to the shrinking of the editorial staffs and to the reduction of many reporter job positions. This situation led to the forced challenge of "doing more with less people". But traditional media has so far lost in this challenge.

Although there is no comprehensive research on the reduction of staff recently, by the editorial staff of the Albanian dailies, this is a phenomenon already visible. Besides the reduction of newsroom staff, journalists also face the irregularity of their salary payment. "In 23 socio-political daily newspapers in the country, only in 4 of them the salaries are paid correctly/on time, and they are; "Panorama", "Gazeta Shqiptare", "Shqiptarja.com", "Shqip". In 19 other newspapers, salary payment delays are continuous and also journalists leaving work without benefiting the remuneration for the work done is constantly happening", said on the international day of press, May 3, 2015, Aleksander Cipa, the Chairman of the Union of the Albanian Journalists. ⁵

⁴ We Media/Zogby Poll: Who will lead us to a better future? (Last seen on 04/07/2015).

<http://wemedia.com/2009/02/25/betterfuturesurvey/>

⁵ Marrë nga <https://www.facebook.com/UnioniIgazetareveShqiptare>

It is likely, that the phenomena of newsrooms reduction are bigger than in the US or other countries. "In the US, in a little more than 15 years, approximately one fourth to one third of the editorial staff of newspapers has been dismissed! ⁶ The same in Great Britain.

The newspaper "Rilindja Demokratike" is published six days a week, with at least 24 pages per day. At the weekend there might be some more pages. But the articles are signed by three journalists.⁷ A devastating ratio if the contribution that each newspaper reporter should face is calculated. These three journalists have undersigned 193 articles throughout the month of April. However, this figure is less than 30 percent of the published articles, compared to 717 other anonymous articles published in "RD" newspaper.

Almost in the same situation is in the other political daily newspaper, "Zëri i Popullit". Even in this paper, it results from the monitoring that there are 3 journalists who during April undersigned 74 articles, versus 348 other anonymous articles.

The most disproportionate ratio between anonymous articles and those with identified authors is in the newspaper "55" which has only 9 articles signed by journalists and 895 other articles where the author is not stated.

After this, there comes "Mapo" newspaper, in which from a total of 851 articles throughout April, only 73 are from identified authors, 631 other articles are anonymous, 88 are taken from other media and 59 articles, mainly analysis, comments and opinions are signed by the newspaper collaborators.

While, the smallest number of anonymous articles is in "Panorama" newspaper. In the total number of news published, 281 were undersigned by a journalist. While 790 articles do not have an author.

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⁶ Scherer, Eric. Scherer.Eric, *A na duhen më gazetarët*, Tiranë, Papirus, 2012, fq.98

⁷ Journalists that undersign the articles of "RD" newspaper are Rexhep Shahu, Entela Vrapi and Arben Shahini.

⁸ The biggest number of articles without the author in this newspaper belong to world and regional news and sports news.

Unlike other newspapers, "Panorama" is the only one that has correspondents in almost all prefecture centres in Albania, even in some small towns. Thus correspondents have signed 123 articles, news coming from the districts, although a significant proportion of these writings are briefings on crime news events that occur in every corner of the country.

The following two charts show best the ratio of the articles with authors and anonymous articles in all monitored newspapers.



Chart no.3. Number of articles undersigned by journalists



Chart no.4. Number of news without authors

The truncated Geography of Information

A monitored component of the 6 daily newspapers has been the geography of the reported information, dividing in five different places the location or the development of the reported event. Thus, first there is world news, or news from Europe. Second, there is the news that occurred in the Balkan region. The third is related to the news happened in Tirana, but mainly of national character. In the fourth place there are the news reported from the centre of 11 prefectures around the country. And in the last place is local news, information on events in small places around Albania.

In the structure of Albanian daily newspapers, the news coming from outside Albania is mainly devoted one page, but sometimes even two pages. This news is called "World news", "International news" or "Regional and World news". Usually news coming from outside the Albanian territory is in the last pages of the newspaper.

This section looks more like a vestige than an added value of the information 'menu' that daily newspapers offer to the public. You reach this conclusion, if you see the way and methodology of international news selection. Tirana daily newspapers seem not to worry about the answers to questions on how to convey international news, based on what specialization and to what audience.

Not going so far to the above mentioned questions, there is not yet a methodology to define what would be considered national and what international news. It becomes essential to solve this dilemma, if we consider the fact that the Republic of Albania is surrounded by compatriots, settled in other countries.

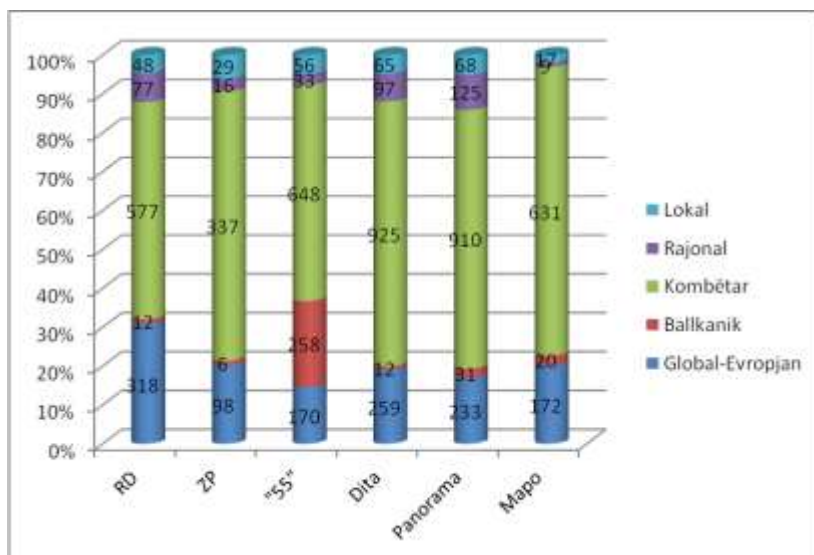
The fact none of the monitored Albanian daily newspapers have regular correspondents outside the national borders of the Republic of Albania. As sources of information on events happening out of the Albanian territory, serve the official websites of information agencies (international media).

However, because it is easier, more convenient and with a lower cost, news on international issues are taken from the international information agencies which have their own websites in Albanian, such as Voice of America. These reasons, i.e lack of correspondents,

little attention of the international media about the events in the Balkan countries, as well as the low level of reporting by the local media, are some of the circumstances or reasons of "the boycott" the Albanian media makes to the developments in neighbouring countries.

As it results from monitoring "Zëri i Popullit",⁹ the official media of the Socialist Party, the party that has the majority in the left government in Albania, during the 30 days of April 2015, it has published 98 pieces of news on events throughout the world, excluding the Balkan territory and Albania.

While "Rilindja Demokratike", the official media of the Democratic Party, now in opposition, during the monitored period has published 318 articles on the events that have happened around the world, of course excluding the news that occurred in the Balkan region and in the Albania.



Graph no. 5. Distribution of news in newspapers that were monitored in April 2015

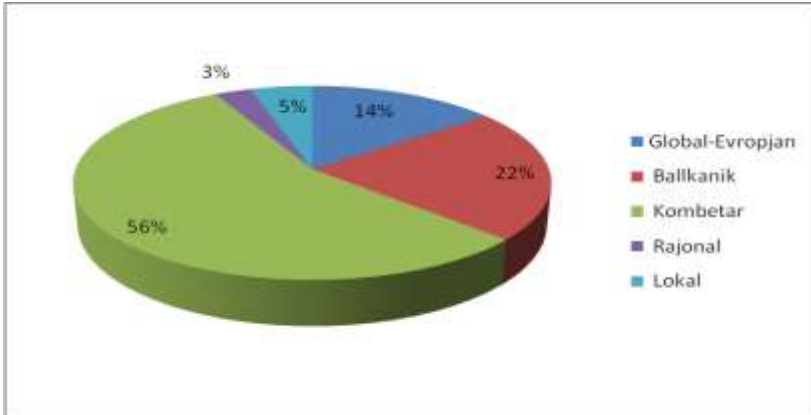
⁹ "Zëri i Popullit", during April 2015 has published 15 editions. The newspaper regularly issues only 5 editions per week, not being published on Sundays and Mondays. But, sometimes the paper is not published even on the other days of the week, making its periodicity a mess.

Albanian media seem to have refused or failed to use the pan-Albanian political area created over the last decade in the region, by converting this political area with the expansion of the market boundaries. Not only no Albanian newspapers are found in the market in Pristina, Tetovo, Skopje or Podgorica, but up to now, no Albanian newspapers have correspondents in these major Albanian centres.¹⁰ Even if it would not be about areas completely or largely inhabited by Albanians, but only considering their neighbour status, the intensity of information to and from these countries should have been greater.

But, in the monitored daily newspapers is found a phenomenon that is widespread in the print media, even in general in the Albanian media, the lack of information on the Balkan region is obvious.

News figures from the Balkan region show that the Albanian public is a little or not at all informed about the areas where his compatriots live.

Among the monitored daily newspapers, the one with the most news from the region, not remaining just on political news, but giving some space to cultural news, analysis, etc., is "55" newspaper.



Graph no. 6. Distribution of news in "55" newspaper

¹⁰ Albania is bordered, with Kosovo which is considered the second Albanian state in the region, with the Republic of Macedonia where Albanians are over 30% of the population, and with Montenegro where there is an Albanian minority.

While the least number of news from the Balkans is in "Zëri i popullit" newspaper. During the monitored 30 days of April, this newspaper has published only 6 pieces of news. In these pieces are included only some of the news on developments that occurred in Macedonia.

An indifference that cannot be explained, considering the fact that it is the official 'voice' of the political party that rules Albania.

This phenomenon has its own reasons and consequences! First, due to the fact that the Albanian media, even in places inhabited by Albanians in the region, have not "recruited" local journalists on the role of the correspondent. In these circumstances, the news from the neighbouring countries is received in two ways. First from information agencies, which because of the lack of importance of the countries of the region pay little attention to them, excluding cases of inter-ethnic conflicts?

The other way from which the information can be obtained, is through the local Albanian media. But, according to media managers in Tirana, the reporting made by their Albanian colleagues in neighbouring countries is far from linguistic and professional standards. This is a barrier for publishing in the media of Tirana articles prepared by colleagues in the region.

Another reason of the "boycott" that the media in Tirana makes to developments in the region, even to developments among Albanians, is the "indifference" of the Albanian public to these developments.

In an article published two years ago, among other things, I found out that one of the reasons for this phenomena has to do with the desperate isolation of each of the societies in the region, including the Albanian societies.

But this lack of information for and about the Albanian societies in the region, significantly obstructs the aim of integrating the region countries in general and the use of pan - Albanian space as a common media market, and then as an a common economic market.

National news occupies most of the reporting. The topics of the national news, which are mainly political, were discussed in the first part of the article.

Regional information occupies less space in the pages of the daily newspapers. This information has at least two important features. The first characteristic is that, the information from the region is mainly on crime news events, "hard" events. Second, there is the information coming from the offices of the institutions. The investigative articles, reportage/feature news on economy, social and cultural life of the region are missing.

The lack of regional news is a consequence of the lack of media correspondents, at least for the monitored media, excluding "Panorama" newspaper.

At lower levels is local news coverage. Local news is reported shortly in the daily newspapers, only criminal events are reported.

The geography of information, covered by daily newspapers in Tirana is much more incomplete if we remind that the printed media does not include articles about life in rural areas, of Albanian villages. Actually, newspapers are not distributed / sold in villages. It is easy to decide, which is the cause and which are the consequences of this situation.

After all these issues, obviously Albanian daily newspapers are far from the new missions set for this type of media. After this overview on the genres found in daily newspapers printed in Tirana, it seems that the argument of Prof. Eric Scherer best matches to this situation. "It is not the internet that is killing newspapers, but their old fashioned content, which is no longer in harmony with nowadays world," says Scherer.¹¹

The start of the print media crisis in 2007, a year before the start of the economic crisis in 2008, is the most compelling fact that the destruction of the print media was not a result of the economy. Media crisis was due to the internal crisis of the media system itself. The economic crisis may have been "the fatal shot" accelerating the collapse of the classical media empire.

¹¹ Eric Scherer, *A na duhen më gazetarët*, Tiranë, Papirus 2012, fq.84

Conclusions

Albanian media continue to insist in deserving the attention of the audience from "news", while the news is not their "monopoly" any more.

Second, within the news category, political news occupies most of the information space. Apart from other problems, reporting political news is far from the standards of a public journalism.

In the Albanian print media, the source of information is the administrative and political central institutions in Tirana. The geography of news is focused only in the capital. Reporting from all regions of the country is only a characteristic of police reporting.

Information has primarily an institutional approach; the sources are institutional and not human. Human stories are missing!

Only one of the monitored newspapers, "Panorama" has correspondents beyond Tirana. None of the newspapers use "special envoys" in other areas. So, the news is made **in** and **from** Tirana.

The information **for** and **about** the neighbours in the Balkans, namely Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, is almost zero in the printed press published in Albania. Among other things, this is an indicator of the communication between the Albanian societies located in these countries.

We are experiencing anonymous media. Most of the articles are with no author. First this shows the shrink of the newsroom staff of the daily newspapers published in Tirana. Secondly, it shows the kind of journalism that remains relying on the basic information, the kind of journalism that is the "spokesman of the spokesman" of the institutions. The journalism that relies on the press releases and statements.

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