

OBJECTIVES OF MEDIA ACTION IN THE SOCIAL JOURNALISM

Georgeta STEPANOV¹

¹Associate Professor, PhD, Moldova State University
Corresponding author: garseni@mail.ru

Abstract

The social journalism objectives which are realized in the process of the mediation of social reality improve the variety of models of media actions. Through it, in the informational circuit are putted materials which model a civil perception of the reality, induce to citizens the feeling of an ownership and the participation in social life, suggest the possible solutions for solving the problems, and generate the optimal conditions for free implication of citizens in public dialog etc. Constructive nature of these media actions lies in adjustment journalistic activities to social field's need and in cumulating of the journalistically actions and those of the other social institutions in view of satisfaction of the social objectives of a major importance for society.

Keywords: *social field, mass-media, social journalism, media action, citizen, governmental sector, nongovernmental sector, public dialog, social reality*

In the transition process from the totalitarian to the liberal market economy, mostly spontaneous, with political mechanisms and new social laws the former Soviet republics and former socialist countries were faced with global changes and 1 transformations that have embraced absolutely all the segments of society: the social and property relations, the distribution of resources, the purposes and means of economic and social development, the norms and values of citizens, the social status and the activity principles of the institutions etc. These social-political and economic changes disrupted the traditional relations of media with state, the power, the society in general, too, and led to the change of the media functions, of roles and objectives and the substitution of some subjects of reflection, of some old techniques tactics with new ones. Under these circumstances there has been certified the substitution of the totalitarian pattern of the press (according to which the State achieves its full coercive potential, controlling every activity of the mass media, these ones being branches or instruments of power) with

the liberal one and afterwards, but in parallel with model of public service of the press.

Those transformations occurred differently as duration, quality and impact, but all together contributed to the affirmation of a new social status of the press, which generated another view of journalism as a tool for the reflection of the social reality. The media has ceased to be an instrument of the authority, it was supposed to favor the citizen as main subject of reflection, to help him adapt more easily to the new social, political and economic realities, to guide him in relation to new social mechanisms and processes, to contribute to his socialization and the clotting of society. These processes have proven to be contingent "in that they were dependent on the specific historical conditions; if some of those conditions were different, it was very likely that they produce different results. But once these changes have unfolded, they acquired their own energy. There have appeared new institutions and they have expanded their range of activities. The traditional practices were gradually eclipsed by new types of action, new conventions and new forms of association."¹ In these circumstances there occurred the social journalism - a process and a product with an energy of its own, with its own concept and with a pronounced functional character of its own, which today has become both an attraction for the reader, and, respectively, an objective of both the editorial policies of radio broadcasts programs and the generalist newspapers and of the specialty ones.

The social journalism is a multidimensional media phenomenon that provides for different categories of public information, explanations, opinions, analysis, etc. concerning the events and the phenomena that occur in everyday life, on

regarding the social norms and principles of social individuals or social groups, or the whole system of social values existing in a society. Social journalism is a medium, which conditions the reporting of social individuals, the social groups, the policy makers, society in general, to the surrounding reality, thereby ensuring their social integration. At the same time, social journalism is an activity that gives the measure of the capacity of media to unite individuals and create social consensus through its media products. The links between the social individuals and social individuals with their own societies in which they live are generally based on the information and knowledge derived from the media. Similarly, their perceptions about the events, the happenings, the everyday problems specific of the social groups and communities, which they do not belong to or that they can not directly observe are largely shaped by the social journalism that offers knowledge of and about society.

The social journalism aims to achieve two major objectives:

- To publicize the social reality in which the social individual lives and develops, the social groups and the society as a whole to form the social and civic culture;
- To publicize the management and administration of social reality in order to distribute, explain and interpret the legislative initiatives, the administrative decisions, the social policies, the mechanisms for their implementation etc.

The importance of media action aimed at achieving the first objective is due to, first of all, the impact and integrating effects it produces in society. The concept of social journalism based on social inclusion, implies a kind of celebration of writing and photography, which tends to provide, in terms of various social groups, a representative picture of society, offering the citizens enough information for themselves to be able to form independent opinions and to be able to stand for and to make collective decisions on a number of issues they are confronted with. "The statutory situation in human societies is directly related to how decisions are made. Collective decision making is characteristic only of human societies."²

That pattern of action converts media from a neutral element into an element involved in the public life, which seeks to facilitate discussion among the common people and the authorities, being prepared at the same time to provide solutions for the problems society is confronted with. Media coverage of the various processes of solving social problems is one more reason to argue that the primary obligation of journalism is to present social issues so that citizens understand the objectives and to act accordingly. From this perspective, it must exist a kind of journalism which to unite people in the process of resolving the various issues that concern them. The first responsibility of the media is to try to explain the readers what has happened today, what happened and what can this mean tomorrow³, the point of view of the approach to the media being shaped in terms of the perspective of the man-citizen.

The media coverage of social practice "highlights the role and place in the community of the social individual, correlates the facts and the actions of the citizens and reports them to the social needs of the majority"⁴. The social journalism approaches the processes, the conditions and the situations arising in society, helps the different social categories to integrate, supports the stability of society, reduces the internal tensions and contradictions, thereby achieving the socialization of the social individual and of the social groups. Socialization, according to the Dictionary of Sociology, is a "concept that means the process by which individuals learn the ways to act and to think about their environment, they internalize them, integrate them to their personality and become members of groups in which they acquire a specific status. Socialization is also cultural learning, conditioning and inculcation, but also cultural adaptation, internalization and incorporation."⁵ Providing the contact between the individual and society, socialization ensures the reproduction of social practices, and through this – the stability of society as a system. Social journalism in this context, may be regarded as an "agent of socialization", as it provides topics of conversation, providing common interests; inculcates values that become norms; distributes

cultural representations that determine people's aesthetic vision etc. Thanks to these activities, the social individuals, are in particular, "in connection" to each other and, in general, "in connection" with the community and the society.

To achieve this prime objective effectively journalists should turn away from their independence and their traditional attachment and begin to be and feel concerned about what concerns first, the simple man but not a politician or public official. The consumers of media products in the social field are to be treated not only as a simple passive observers, but as a participating one. "The readers will not be treated as passive observers but as active participants in solving the most important problems, so they should not be given less attention than the elite representatives or experts, so often cited by journalists. The journalists who use the social journalism principles tend to see in readers sources of information and opinion too, and also participants in the public dialogue organized by the media as well as active partners in finding solutions for issues of public interest".⁶

This objective prevails the responsibility of social journalism to bring to the foreground those who are not heard by anyone, the idea of social contract that defines social work being of a major importance. The publication in the newspapers or broadcasting in audiovisual programs of the opinions and the views of the readers on the events that take place inside the various groups or social strata does not diminish the status and does not undermine the role of the journalist in society. On the contrary, it contributes to the completion of social priorities, to the identification of the problems, to exposing the negative trends etc. and facilitates their public resolution. In the attempt to give the public a voice there is not the danger that journalists would lose theirs, or this is done to ensure the social dialogue between all existing groups, social categories or classes in a society. The participation of citizens in the media activity demonstrates their level of involvement in the life of the communities they belong to and gain coverage due to the process of social involvement the communities become more active and participatory in terms of social integration. The unbiased and fair exposure in media of the issues

to the problems proposed both by experts and the members of social groups, validates the ability of the journalists to monitor the public life of the community.

The social journalism has sensible effects when the media institutions are much more constructively involved in the environment in which they act and when they build their media agenda according to the needs, values and principles of its development. Media must reflect phenomena or issues that have real social meaning and value so as to give rise to and lead the social groups to the search for common solutions. Journalism and democracy work more effectively when the information and the ideas circulate freely; when the news coherently presents the whole spectrum and the full range of life and cultural peculiarities of communities; when the public deliberation is encouraged and amplified; when the information helps the citizens to act as active social actors. "The social journalism social creates the media products primarily based on the information gathered from citizens and even by citizens, thereby trying to portray how citizens can see their social problems and what they think their solution could be. The journalists use this information to create a concept of newspaper more personal, more socially engaged, closer to the citizen".⁷

The journalists, in terms of ethics, may not engage in the social processes they cover, but they do not either have the right to stand aside when it comes to analyzing, observing and understanding the social phenomena and trends of a major importance. The public safety will be covered by the media so as to cause the people to actions seeking optimal solutions and their common implementation. The journalists must ensure a check-up, a leading of the civic culture by persuading the citizens of a democracy that the system in which they live is theirs, and that it belongs to them, that it is a system they create themselves, that this system is a public priority for each social individual.

The second major objective of the social journalism includes monitoring media activities of the coordination and the correlation mechanism of the economic policy with the social policy, designed and implemented by the Government as well as assessment activities of the social

system of administration. The management of the social domain is a mechanism for implementing the social policy objectives, based on legal imperatives that determine the real living standards, the social standards, the employment, the social support, etc. "The management is based on certain principles:

- the presence of objectives;
- ensuring the reduction of the gap between potential and actual value of the control parameter;
- the continuous circulation of current information concerning the state of the managed object as well as the control information on behalf of the subject on which this management is exercised;
- the consistency between the proposed and the actual value of management parameters;
- closed loop control".⁸

The researcher N. Guleaeva argues that the public administration is achieved thanks to a series of functions, such as: forecasting, planning, organizing, overall management and operational management as well as the regulation, the accounting and the control of the manner of administration and includes:

- the planning and drawing up of development plans and of social design;
- the organization of joint actions of the subjects who achieve the public administration;
- the distribution of functions and tasks between them;
- ensuring the implementation of plans or decisions;
- the coordination of the entities which interact;
- encouraging certain attitudes by motivating people;
- monitoring the implementation process of decrees or other administrative documents⁹

To achieve this objective, the social journalism mainly focuses on:

- drawing up the policies and the strategies in the field;
- drawing up the framework programs of social action;
- drawing up the real mechanisms for implementing social policies;
- the analysis and control of how the policies and the social strategies are implemented;

- the activity of state institutions in relation to the main directions and concepts in the field;
- the analysis and control the fulfillment of commitments taken by state institutions;
- drawing up the documents related to the national legislation and the coordination of their adoption etc.

The media investigations on the coordination and the correlation mechanism of economic policy with the social policy promoted by the government is a primary goal, or, to insist on neglecting the existence of this interdependence for a country in transition, the imbalance between the statements made to foreign financial institutions and the achievement of the requirements of these bodies on the social policies, only lead to the worsening of the internal situation and the decline in living standards. The debates the social journalist initiates are activities that confront different points of view to form an opinion able to influence the decision-making and thus to contribute to the improvement of the legislation to protect vulnerable groups. Journalism provides the social policies with a public character and achieves the social control, which is manifested by monitoring and analyzing the legislation acts, by evaluating the administrative structures and the social type organizations through the involvement in solving the personal problems of the citizens of different levels.

In the light of this objective, the media institutions have also task to form a new way of perceiving the role of the state in the social life. The transition from the Soviet totalitarian regime to a democratic one imposed by the necessity of reforming the social field and the shift from the paternalistic model of the state in designing and implementing the social policies to the liberal model, which generated, on the one hand, the trend of reducing the involvement of the Government, and on the other hand, the tendency to amplify the degree of involvement of the civil society and the social individual. Currently, the state is no longer the only one which can play the role of guarantor in managing and solving the social problems. The state can ensure the proper functioning and efficiency of its social actions only by its joint efforts with those of the civil society and those of its citizens. The impact

of the social, political and economic reforms on the civil society institutions becomes thus an important topic of reflection for the social journalism.

Currently, the interaction between the media, the government, the NGOs and the social individuals became a constituent factor of the social reality of any contemporary society. The social type of institutions that implement the social mechanisms are incorporated in journalism by publishing the materials about certain decisions they take in relation to a social issue or another; by reflecting the actions which they organize and undertake in order to reduce the impact or even solve certain problems; through media approach of the initiatives with a compulsory or meritorious character; by developing joint projects with the media, through social advertising etc. In their turn, the reporters turn to the representatives of these organizations to obtain factual information, statistical data, opinions, reviews, etc. There are several forms of cooperation of media institutions with the institutions implementing social policies, including:

- activities for promoting social values;
- social media projects;
- radio, TV and the press marathons;
- social campaigns;
- competitions, seminars, workshops;
- public opinion polls which, according to the researcher D. Popa "are a reflection of democracy in each state. Knowing the public opinion and its presentation to the public is an exercise related to the proper functioning of any free state in which individuals express their own feelings and beliefs without being influenced by an authority or people who represent certain interests".¹⁰

The efficient cooperation between media institutions and the key actors of social activity: the state institutions, the individual citizens and the NGOs is crucial to the successful achievement of these objectives and promote a quality social journalism.

The journalists, by promoting or even initiating community/social development projects act as actors of social processes. "Getting close to the citizen is made by initiating and supporting projects of public interest".¹¹ The journalists'

involvement in various social activities contribute, in particular, to the credibility of the message sent through in the information flow and the increase of the impact and of the effects of the newspaper in general.

The interaction between the media and the civil society is determined by their existential necessities: the government uses the media to achieve its goals, to come down to the citizens, but also to the central and local to public administration in order to convince them and to persuade them to act in a certain way, and the media uses the information coming from the NGO sector to diversify the thematic range, appeals to the views of non-governmental organizations in the media debates on social problems, calls for the surveys they conduct etc. The relations between the journalists and the civil society are different from relations with other actors in the social domain, first of all with the representatives of power. But, the nongovernmental organizations, in the media are not only subjects of reflection for the journalists, but also a professional form of organization, which asks them greater responsibility due to their double status.

The connection between the journalism and the non-governmental sector is made also through the 'inclusion' of the social practice actors in the category of non-holder correspondents. Although most authors of material on social issues are professional journalists, in the media there also appear materials about the activity of NGOs, signed by their members, by the representatives of various institutions implementing social assistance mechanisms or by common citizens. Attracting the actors of social practice in the coverage process of the social field can facilitate the completion of social priorities, determining the major issues, the impact and the potential effects of the social phenomena of social on the social individual, the social group, society in general. Involving the citizens in writing articles on social issues does not diminish the status and do not undermine the role of journalists in society, but on the contrary, this practice can create real prerequisites for "out" journalism from within its traditional neutral element, which would ensure a more efficient approach of the social

field media and increasing direct, powerful and long lasting media effects.

So achieve these two main objectives allows the social journalism to shape a civic perception of reality, to induce to citizens a sense of belonging and participation in society, to suggest possible solutions to solve problems, to create optimal conditions for the freeinvolvement of citizens in the public dialogue etc. The constructive nature of these media activities lies in adjusting the journalistic activities to the needs of the social of the social field and in getting together the journalism actions and those of other social institutions in order to meet social objectives of a major importance for society.

Endnotes

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