MANUFACTURING CONSENT AMONG NEWSWORKERS AT SLOVENIAN PUBLIC RADIO

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Abstract

This paper takes an often neglected labour perspective on journalism and investigates labour relations and processes at Slovenian public radio. By taking into account public radio's specific position in the media environment, which importantly shapes the dynamics between power, property, and work, and by drawing from the work of Michael Burawoy, this paper explores the strategies of manufacturing consent at the Slovenian public radio that minimise potentials of class consciousness among newsworkers and labour-management conflict on one hand and practices and possibilities for resistance and solidarity on the other. Investigation of labour relations and processes at Radio Slovenia was conducted a few months after the Slovenian government adopted austerity measures that have also resulted in layoffs and changes of the employment arrangements of a considerable number of atypical workers at the Slovenian public broadcaster. To gather, assemble, and analyse data, the authors used two research methods: first, participant observation in two newsrooms of Radio Slovenia, and second, in-depth interviews with public radio editors and journalists.

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Introduction

In contemporary journalism, introducing various kinds of freelance, informal, temporary and otherwise contingent work arrangements and eliminating regular employment positions have been normalised as standard managerial practices in media institutions (Deuze and Marjoribanks 2009; Deuze and Fortunati 2011; Paulussen 2012). Scholarly investigations in different countries acknowledge the rise of "atypical" work in the news industry (IFJ 2006), suggesting the rise of triangular, ambiguous, and disguised employment, particularly among younger newsworkers and newcomers. Additionally, in newswork environments where individuals are increasingly being considered on their personal attributes like flexibility and adaptability, social solidarity among journalists is eroding (Paulussen 2012). Many journalists have been laid off in recent years (Compton and Benedetti 2010); some are leaving the industry unsatisfied with the work and their future prospects (Nygren 2011), and others are leaving trade unions that have problems bringing notable changes through collective bargaining (Mosco 2009). Why are newsworkers complying with the normalisation of precarious labour and consenting to such arrangements? What is the role of journalists' trade unions in the rise of individualised and casual work arrangements? What do these shifts mean for journalists – their roles and values? This study attempts to answer these questions by taking an often neglected labour perspective on journalism and, unlike previous newswork studies – except rare examples (e.g., Mosco and McKercher 2009) – we investigates labour relations at the public radio service.

Media and journalism scholars (Deuze 2007; Deuze and Marjoribanks 2009; Paulussen 2012) suggest that changes in newswork are part of broader trends observed in different sectors of the contemporary labour market, reflecting a shift towards what Sennett (2006) calls "new capitalism," where corporations, including news organisations (Paulussen 2012), offer no long-term stability, social benefits, or interpersonal trust. At the same time, individualisation of newswork (Paulussen 2012), an ongoing process of convergence in journalism (Klinenberg 2005) and the emergence of audiences increasingly focused on individual rather than institutional voices (Deuze and Fortunati 2011a), increase management's control over workers by naturalising what Burawoy (1979) calls the "illusion of choice" in the work environment. Workers' participation in such co-optation creates consent and minimises the potential for class consciousness and labour-management conflict while maximising productivity. Thus, by taking into account the specific position of the public broadcaster, which importantly shapes the dynamics between power, property, and work, and by drawing from the study of Burawoy (1979), this study explores the manufacturing of consent at the Slovenian public radio service that minimises potential for journalists' collective struggle and stimulates co-optation of labour by management with the result being increased productivity at lower cost.

Investigation of labour relations and processes at public Radio Slovenia was conducted a few months after the Slovenian government adopted austerity measures that have resulted in layoffs and changes of employment arrangements for a considerable number of atypical workers at the Slovenian public broadcasters (Kričač 2012, 5). In order to discover how consent is manufactured among precarious newsworkers at Slovenian public radio and to identify what role the trade

union plays in these processes, the authors use two research methods to gather data: participant observation in two newsrooms of Radio Slovenia and in-depth interviews with public radio journalists working in precarious labour relations.

Precarious Newswork and the "Manufacturing of Consent"

As some authors (Hardt and Brennen 1995; Hardt 1996; Im 1997; Örnebring 2010) stress, journalism historians have rarely explored media as a place of employment, an environment of work, or a site of struggle over conditions of labour and ideas of freedom. These scholars claim that historical accounts have predominantly been concerned with the elites – the owners, publishers, and editors – and that this approach has served to support, maintain, and reinforce the dominant ideological perspective. Örnebring (2010) stresses the same point by claiming that media and journalism studies have always been more concerned with "work" in the general sense than with "labour." However, in recent years, with the proliferation of debates on "the brave new world of work" (Beck 2005), "workforce flexibility" (Sennett 2006), and "liquid work" (Baumann 2005), media and journalism scholars have begun to explore issues of employment types, salary levels, job security, degree of management control, and conflicts in the workplace (e.g., McKercher 2002; IFJ 2006; Deuze 2007, 2008; Deuze and Marjoribanks 2009; Mosco and McKercher 2009; Ryan 2009; Deuze and Fortunati 2011; Compton and Benedetti 2010; Reinardy 2010; Paulussen 2012). These studies suggest that media owners are reshaping the workplace to become precarious, characterised by endemic uncertainty, permanent change, and labour flexibility.

Until recently the news industry predominantly offered permanent contracts, including healthcare and other benefits, pension plans, and a formal voice in strategic institutional planning to its employees. Today most, if not all, of that is being eroded, particularly among young newsworkers (Deuze and Fortunati 2011a, 168). In 2006 the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) revealed that about a third of their members are "atypical" newsworkers working in precarious labour relations, engaged in short-term contractual, casual, temporary, and freelance work. In this context, Deuze and Fortunati (2011) write about "people formerly known as the employers" suggesting that employers in the news industry are withdrawing from taking responsibility for the hidden workforce, and are adopting managerial practices in which newsworkers are treated as variable assets that cost money.

In the last decade or so, media institutions in English, Italian, Spanish, and German-speaking countries have started practicing what Deuze (2009) calls "remote control journalism" by outsourcing or even off-shoring newswork to countries with cheaper labour. Additionally, during the current global financial crisis, mass layoffs have taken place in the news industry and job insecurity has become commonplace (Compton and Benedetti 2010; Lee-Wright et al. 2012; Paulussen 2012). In this context, surveys among journalists from several countries confirm that job satisfaction among journalists is negatively influenced by unfavourable working conditions – discontent with pay, workload, and employment insecurity (Paulussen 2012). Younger journalists, in particular, express intentions to leave journalism; many of them experience mental exhaustion and are at risk of burning out (Reinardy 2010). Yet, less than a handful of studies deal with the issue of why

journalists comply with such labour relations; for instance, Ryan (2009) acknowledges that freelance television newsworkers use the perception that permanent work lacks stability "as part of an arsenal of adaptive strategies to normalise their own employment risk" (Ryan 2009, 651). In order to better understand precarious labour dynamics in contemporary newsrooms and their implications for journalists as a collective, researchers should consider exploring relations among newsworkers that stimulate co-optation of labour by management and minimise potentials for collective struggle, what American sociologist Michael Burawoy (1979) calls "manufacturing consent."

Burawoy (1979) focuses on transformations of the workplace as a decisive factor in normalising capitalist class relations after World War II, when workers were able to secure – and were often allowed or even encouraged to do so by management – more tolerable working conditions, but started identifying with the interests of management by engaging with the work process as a "game." As the Taylorist discipline in the workplace weakened, workers gained more freedom to structure work according to informal rules. However, their influence on the rules of the game meant that their compliance with them required a lesser degree of enforcement from management, which needed to intervene forcefully only when profit was in danger. The satisfaction of playing the game became in itself an important reward for workers and, perhaps more importantly, workers acquired a stake in the continuation of the broader social conditions of the game. As Burawoy (1979, 85) says, "It is not so much monetary incentive that concretely coordinates the interests of management and worker but rather the play of the game itself, which generates a common interest in the outcome and in the game's continuity."

In this context, many authors (Deuze 2009; Singer 2011; Deuze and Fortunati 2011; Paulussen 2012) suggest that the game in the news industry has changed in recent years – from the pressures of workplace socialisation and a rather homogeneous journalistic population to an individualised dynamic of newswork routines and labour negotiations. Deuze (2009, 84–85) acknowledges the shift in the notion of enterprise – with its connotations of efficiency, productivity, empowerment, and autonomy – from the company to the individual employee and stresses that these alterations are becoming a part of each and every worker, however contingently employed or not.

Research in Slovenian journalism explores issues of precarious labour only when primarily dealing with other questions – larger issues of the crisis of journalism (Splichal 2005), self-perceptions of online journalists (Vobič 2011), the production process of advertorials (Poler Kovačič and Erjavec 2010), and university education of journalists (Poler Kovačič et al. 2013). For instance, Splichal (2005) identifies "pauperisation of journalism," signalling the proliferation of standardisation in newswork and the rise of precarious labour relations. Vobič (2011) explores self-deprecation among online journalists due to their flexible and insecure employment status. Poler Kovačič et al. (2013) acknowledge a "generation gap" in Slovenian newsrooms between "old" staffers with regular employment status and "young," mostly precarious, newsworkers. At the same time, in their accounts, journalists themselves (Lubej 2002; Nahtigal 2006; Jurančič 2007) highlight the falling number of journalists with regular jobs and the rise of labour relations that are mainly temporary, sometimes even without contractual and other stipulated responsibilities.

Hence, research in Slovenia and elsewhere indicates that labour for contemporary journalists is becoming increasingly atypical. However, current studies mostly deal with privately owned media and, unlike some rare studies (Mosco and McKercher 2009), mostly neglect explorations of labour relations among public broadcasters. Moreover, issues of how journalists understand their newswork relations and why some comply with precarious labour conditions, which importantly reflect the character of their societal engagement, are under-explored. Therefore, the *first research question* of this study is: *How is consent manufactured among precarious newsworkers at Slovenian public radio?*

Journalists' Trade Unions and the "Illusion of Choice"

Since the early 20th century, the organisation of labour interests among journalists has been at the intersection of the idea of professionalism and social mechanism of unionism (Hardt 1996; Splichal 2001), leaving journalists as a collective somewhat torn between the idea of a society of experts claiming to be above politics on the one hand and the idea of a labour-force engaged in struggle with corporate interests of the ownership on the other. There are accounts of long-term tension between trade unions, which are concerned primarily with collective negotiations on behalf of newsworkers, and employers (McKercher 2002; Ryan 2009; Cohen 2012). Yet, observations indicate that professionalism was not an antagonistic conception by the newsworkers against the owners, but was actively encouraged by the latter in an attempt to pacify collective labour struggle in the news industry by dissociating professions from wage-labour (Hardt 1996; Brennen 2004). In this context, Splichal (2001, 8004) stresses that journalists' trade unions serve as "tools of the employer" because an imbalance of power exists between unions and employers due to a lack of unity among unions and particular guilds, their weak economic and social position, and their goals being focused on individual rewards. Furthermore, with the rise of the "culture of the new capitalism" (Sennett 2006) and individualisation as its central element, work ethics and human relationships in newsrooms have fundamentally changed (Paulussen 2012); the potentials for organising labour interests among journalists have been weakened by the "erosion of the collective" (Lee-Wright et al. 2012).

A review of the literature (McKercher 2002; Devers and Le Cam 2006; Deuze 2007; Deuze and Marjoribanks 2009; Mosco 2009; Mosco and McKercher 2009; Steensen 2009; Cohen 2012; Paulussen 2012) dealing with labour relations and trade union organising of journalists suggests that unionism as a social movement has struggled to reinvent itself; whereas, newsworkers' trade unions have problems keeping up with the pace of the convergence in the fields of technology, industry, and labour. On the one hand, some authors (Devers and Le Cam 2006; Steensen 2009; Paulussen 2012) claim that journalism is faced with a crisis of unionism, suggesting that the organisation of labour interests is being eroded, social solidarity is weakening, and aversion to union membership is on the rise. In the context of individualisation and the erosion of collectiveness among journalists, Lee-Wright et al. (2012, 25) warn of the danger of a "self-fulfilling prophecy," when employees start to "disempower themselves by imagining the worst." On the other hand, McKercher (2002) and Mosco (2009) draw attention to positive developments by pointing out that workers are again organising in large integrated trade unions

and in new forms of worker organisations that resemble social movements. In this regard, Mosco (2009, 352) stresses that "it is encouraging to observe the profession returning to its roots to reinvent a tradition of labour organizing and labour action among journalists." Nevertheless, these authors more or less agree that trends of corporate conformity and unswerving loyalty reflect the centrality of individualisation in labour relations and difficulties in organising a collective struggle, illustrating what Burawoy (1979) calls "illusion of choice."

According to Burawoy (1979), two important factors in the process of "manufacturing consent" within corporations are the rise of an "internal labour market" and the consolidation of an "internal state." The internal labour market internalises the "competitive individualism of 'free and equal' laborers" (p. 107), defuses labour-management conflicts through internal mobility, and coordinates the interests of workers and capital by rewarding seniority. The internal state, that is, the "set of institutions that organize, transform, or repress struggles over relations in production at the level of the enterprise" is "embodied in grievance procedures and collective bargaining" (p. 110). As Burawoy notices in the case of the company he is observing, the union actively individualises conflict, focusing exclusively on individual rather than collective grievances, and, furthermore, displaces conflict from the shop floor, where it has the potential to disrupt the production process and reconstitutes it in a framework of (individualised) negotiations (pp. 114–115).

In journalism, the myth of professionalism played an important historical role in displacing and pacifying labour-management conflict. As Hardt (1996, 31) stresses, the professional status of journalism became a myth that was carefully constructed by the owners to isolate and downplay union activities and to individualise labour struggle since the 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, in recent years, media owners have attempted to undermine the collective bargaining position of journalists through their unions and trade associations by shifting towards contingent individualised employment deals (Deuze 2009, 87).

Slovenian communication, media, and journalism studies have not empirically explored negotiating labour relations since the fall of socialism about two decades ago, when the national Union of Slovenian Journalists (SNS) was established as a result of "awareness that the societal role and social status of journalists [wa]s changing" (SNS 1990). As a member of IFJ, the SNS represents most trade unions in Slovenian media institutions (Milosavljević and Vobič 2009). Only fragmented insights into the unionism of the Slovenian media – for instance, Splichal's (1992, 79) acknowledgement that organised journalists have been compliant with the privatisation and commercialisation of media and journalism in the early 1990s – are not enough to develop a broader picture of Slovenian journalists' collective labour actions. This alone calls for detailed theoretical and empirical explorations of unionism – not only in private media, but also public broadcasters. Thus, studies, particularly in Slovenia, neglect the issues of the precarious newsworkers' role in the trade unions and their implications for management-labour relations, especially in the structural realities of public broadcasting. Therefore, the *second research question* of this study is*: What is the role of unionism in the process of normalising precarious labour relations at Slovenian public radio?*

Methodology and Research Subject

The aim of this study is to answer both research questions, not so much by investigating the types of employment in which public radio journalists work, but by focusing on labour relations of precarious newsworkers and the reasons for complying with them. We chose a case study approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within the contextual settings that have been previously used to explore labour relations of journalists (e.g., McKercher 2002; Cohen 2012; Ryan 2009). The case of this research is public Radio Slovenia, more precisely, its daily news department (DND), which provides news flashes and bulletins for the three national programmes, and the current affairs department of the second programme (CAD), which develops more analytical programming and discussions on recent news stories. The daily news department of DND has 27 staffers, that is, journalists, presenters and editors. Fourteen have regular jobs and the others work in contingent labour relations. Types of employment range from "external associates," "regular contract employees," and "student workers" (Radio Slovenia – DND 2012). The current affairs department of CAD has 28 journalists, presenters, and editors: 14 with regular employment, 10 "external associates" and four "regular contract employees" (Radio Slovenia – Val 2012). Different groups of journalists are organised in the Coordination of Journalists' Trade Unions of RTV Slovenia as part of the national Union of Slovenian Journalists. Within the coordination exists a Section of Contractual Journalists that represents those who regularly work for RTV Slovenia, but do not have regular employment and that strives to improve material and social situation of its members (Jurančič 2007).

After the fall of socialism, aspirations of political parties to influence the public service broadcaster, RTV Slovenia, have not diminished (Splichal 1994, 45–66); conditions have been further aggravated by its "identity crisis", foremost by the commercialisation of programming and failure to establish modern management principles necessary for efficient handling of such a large institution (Bašić Hrvatin 2002, 6–8). In March of 2012, the Slovenian government adopted austerity measures that have resulted in layoffs and changes of employment arrangements of a considerable number of contingent newsworkers at the Slovenian public broadcaster. The Union of Slovenian Journalists protested against the humility of the management of RTV Slovenia and called upon them to stop with the "ostrich posture" (Kričač 2012, 5). In late August 2012, the Court of Audit gave a negative evaluation of RTV Slovenia for 2009 and 2010; for instance, RTV Slovenia paid fees to at least 242 contractual associates, even though in these cases the work itself contained all elements of regular employment, which is against the law in Slovenia (Court of Audit 2012, 39). At the same time, the government proposed a 10 percent reduction in the monthly public broadcasting fee and the general director, Marko Filli, responded that RTV Slovenia would be forced to "cut programmes" and "as a result from 300 to 400 staffers of RTV Slovenia would be out of work" (Škrinjar 2012).

In August and September of 2012, one of the authors of this study engaged as participant observer at the daily news department of DND and the current affairs department of CAD for two weeks in each newsroom in order to approach the first research question and collect data that would enable the authors to identify the process of manufacturing consent among precarious newsworkers. Participant

observation as a strategy was previously used to accomplish the goal of gaining an insider's look in small-scale newsroom settings and the process of self-negotiations among journalists (Boczkowski 2004; Colson and Heinderyckx 2008; García 2008). Literature on participant observations commonly distinguishes between four "master roles" of researchers in the field based on a degree of participation (Lindlof 1995; Hansen et al. 1998). The author played the role of observer-as-participant, where the observer remains an outsider in a professional group throughout the field research and, thus, may lose some of the insider's look, but who, on the other hand, have more autonomy in accomplishing the goals.

Furthermore, in September and October of 2012, the authors conducted eight in-depth interviews with public radio journalists that work as temporary contract employees or student workers, but are regarded by the management as regular workforce. To additionally investigate ways of manufacturing consent and to approach the precarious newsworkers' perceptions of the trade union's role in labour processes, the interviews were conducted with four DND and four CAD precarious workers:

DND interviewee A – year and a half at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker, presenter of news flashes, no previous radio experience, history degree;
DND interviewee B – two years at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker, presenter of news flashes, four years of local and commercial radio experience, no degree;
DND interviewee C – one year at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker, preparing news flashes, four years of student radio experiences, political science degree;
DND interviewee D – three years at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker, presenter of news flashes and news editions, no previous radio experience, no degree;
CAD interviewee A – three years at Radio Slovenia, student worker and a fellow of RTV Slovenia, programme presenter and journalist, several years of local radio experiences, journalism student;
CAD interviewee B – three years and a half at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker and a fellow of RTV Slovenia, programme presenter, editor and journalist, no previous radio experience, journalism degree;
CAD interviewee C – three years at Radio Slovenia, temporary contractual worker, radio and online journalist, no previous radio experience, journalism degree;
CAD interviewee D – four years at Radio Slovenia, part-time contractual worker, youth programme journalist and presenter, no previous radio experience, graduated journalist.

The interviews conducted were characterised with "problem centering," that is, the researcher's orientation to a relevant problem(s) (e.g., strategies of consent manufacturing among radio journalists); "object orientation," that is, developing or modifying interviews with respect to an object of research (e.g., institutional specifics of the DND and CAD departments within Radio Slovenia); and "process orientation," that is, understanding the object of the research (e.g., structural determinants of labour relations at the public broadcaster RTV Slovenia) (Flick 2006, 161).

Results

The ethnographic study based on data gathered by observations in the two Radio Slovenia newsrooms and in-depth interviews with their precarious newsworkers indicate differences between the daily news department (DND) and the current affairs department of the second programme (CAD) in terms of the news-making process, work satisfaction, and paid leave. At DND, daily news programmes are mostly made by computer-bound rearranging of news items from other radio departments and press agency news in order to accommodate news to be read live on air. Interviewees from DND did not express high levels of work satisfaction, often labelling it as "not really challenging" (DND interviewee C). Yet, irregular newsworkers have the right to paid annual leave. At CAD, the news-making process is more diverse and creative since they actively gather and assemble information in the field, edit their radio news items, and occasionally also connect with live radio programmes. Interviewees generally expressed high work satisfaction, but in some cases, they felt a degree of "work overload" (CAD interviewee B) and have "problems dividing work and leisure time" (CAD interviewee C). In contrast to DND staffers, CAD precarious newsworkers do not have paid annual leave; moreover, during the Olympic Games in London, some had to take temporary unpaid leave. By considering the two research questions the next three parts present the results of the ethnographic study in order to show consent manufacturing among atypical newsworkers at Radio Slovenia and to highlight the role of the Coordination of Journalists' Trade Unions of RTV Slovenia and its Section of Contractual Journalists in contingent labour relations.

Between the Internal and External Labour Market

The study shows that precarious newsworkers are in an intermediate position, neither fully on the external labour market nor fully integrated into the internal labour market of Radio Slovenia. Formally, they are independent contractors, paid according to the amount of work they do, but actually, as observations show, they are regarded as temporary workforce in the Radio Slovenia production. This type of arrangement suits the employer who is able to treat them as an "abstract mass" at a "variable cost," as CAD interviewee A puts it, that is, to easily reduce the amount of work they do in order to reduce costs. For instance, one interviewee said, "I am not allowed to work more than 150 hours a month. /.../ This is absurd because I have only started to do night shifts and over the weekends we work whole days, thus I spend more time at the job. At the end of the month I have to take a leave not to go over 150 hours" (DND interviewee A).

Yet, precarious newsworkers are integrated into the internal labour market to a significant degree. As newsroom observations show, the work requires training, of which only a part is formalised in the form of speech training. The rest is acquired through socialisation to implicit rules in the form of an apprentice-master relationship with more experienced colleagues. This offers some security to the apprentice, since he or she cannot be easily replaced and can expect to enter regular employment sometime in the future, although explicit promises are never made, say the interviewees. For instance, as CAD interviewee B said, "I also get a monthly scholarship from RTV Slovenia, and the other day I was at the human resources office to ask

whether I am entitled to it for another year. And it seems to me that while she was looking at my card that she kind of hinted something regarding the possibility of my regular employment: 'Well, we will see about employment later on.'"

On the other hand, such a socialisation process secures loyalty to the institution, creating a highly asymmetrical relationship, where precarious newsworkers can be put on stand-by when they are not needed (or if they are sick or take unpaid maternity leave); their workload can be reduced to save costs, yet they can be counted on to remain available so that the costs and effort of training a new worker can be avoided. They are expected to turn up for work regularly and risk losing their standing in the informal hierarchy and chances of advancement if they do not, even if there are justified reasons for being absent. Interviewees generally agree that criteria for advancement are unclear, dependant on the personal judgement of editors, yet most of them do not regard the criteria as unfair and believe advancement is largely based on merit and their willingness to take on new challenges.

Yet, it is likely that such an arrangement does not affect all newsworkers equally but works to deepen social inequalities, putting for example women, the disabled, and those who do not have access to child care at a significant disadvantage. While we cannot generalise from the small number of interviews, we did observe that some of the younger (male) interviewees were ambiguous about their precarious position, even praising the flexibility that it afforded them. While on the other hand CAD interviewee D, who was the only interviewee to have been on (unpaid) maternity leave, painted a far bleaker picture:

> I: What are the criteria for promotion in the newsroom?
>
> CAD C: I don't know. I don't know. Probably – as I see it – I feel that if somebody dies, gets sick or goes on maternity leave, that a position literally opens up and basically that some brutal, African-safari-like … a safari-like atmosphere, where you are literally being transformed into a sort of predator, that they literally want you to … you literally feel like that at times. Horrible. Horrible. And you have to put it out of your mind to …
>
> I: What, a fight for the position?
>
> CAD C: Depends on how ambitious you are, but yes.
>
> I: Do you have a specific case in mind?
>
> CAD C: Well, look, for example, some colleagues were there and when they went on maternity leave, they lost the position that they had before they went on maternity leave. Since they were absent for a year, somebody else occupied their place and when they came back, they practically started as sort of interns even though this person was there for nine years. Before she left, she was an announcer and was on air and then some of the programmes that are regarded to be of a higher calibre, she did not do that but she did just some basic stuff.

Generally though, observational and interview data show that precarious newsworkers express a high degree of loyalty to the institution, evident especially in their attitudes toward commercial radio stations. When asked whether he would

consider work at other radio stations, DND interviewee B responded: "You cannot do anything in the commercial [sphere], at least according to my standards."

Loose formal arrangements allow for significant individualisation in terms of newsroom status, working conditions, and workload, which is regulated largely through informal rules. While the only significant formal advancement for newsworkers is passing through the speech school, which significantly increases their income and allows them to fully participate in the newsroom, there is an implicit hierarchy of news programmes through which journalists can advance. In the case of DND, this hierarchy is unambiguous and based on the number of listeners, the most prominent being those at the times of the daily commute. The hierarchy is more ambiguous at CAD, where the work is less standardised and advancement is more dependent on personal relationships between journalists and editors.

In this context, the individual promises of advancement to a more stable position in the future and the process of informal advancement in both departments serve to dull discontent with current conditions. Some interviewees feel that their position is a sort of apprenticeship, that they are not yet "real" employees. Some feel confident that their position is such that they are more likely to advance to stable employment than their peers or that they are less likely to be laid off. For instance, one respondent said, "I have a RTV Slovenia scholarship, and I think that this is a certain message. /.../ Thus, if they have to choose among the three of us, they would probably take me to be regularly employed" (CAD interviewee A). While DND interviewee D believes her department to be relatively safe:

> If it did happen that they could not employ any more people and that – I don't really remember how it was – the news department is the last to suffer drastic measures. /…/ Because I believe that despite the fact that I sometimes feel that only DND people believe it … but I feel that quality news programme and reports are … I don't know, I would call them one of the pillars of the radio. And when we recover in terms of human resources a bit, so that we are not at the absolute minimum, I trust that management would protect us, that they would make cuts first in other departments.

The Internal State

The analysis of observations shows that very few functions of the internal state are performed by the union. Namely, atypical labour is organised within the Coordination of Journalists' Trade Unions of RTV Slovenia and its Section of Contractual Journalists, yet precarious workers mostly turn to the regularly employed editors with their problems regarding employment and work conditions. Editors tend to perform a managerial role, which becomes more pronounced the higher one moves in the hierarchy. While programme editors have hardly any managerial functions and are occupied primarily with content decisions, the interviews show that the function of executive editors is primarily managerial. As CAD interviewee B puts it regarding the role of the editor-in-chief at CAD, his function is "very managerial. Let us say bureaucratic and partly to do with content." The bureaucratic side includes, "paperology. Also, for example, human resource management, supervising or rather checking work reports, checking them off, rewarding and so on, signing contracts with outside partners if there are any" (CAD interviewee B).

Analysis of observational data indicates that precarious and other newsworkers often discuss the labour relations they work in, but, as interviews show, they are not familiar with the activities of the coordination of unions and contractual journalists' section. As CAD interviewee D put it:

> Exactly that is the problem, that I really don't know it [the union]. /…/ We students, when we were, we were not part this system, even though our colleagues were forwarding us their messages. So we were somehow on the side lines until now. You were just not part of it. You got the message from someone else and you didn't really know even when they came. For example, when the unions were in negotiations about what would happen to contractual workers and how to go on from there and the rights of contractual workers and so on, we found out through our colleagues, who are in the union, and even those were only indicative informations, nothing concrete. But I have to say that the fault is mostly on my side. … If I wanted to get informed, I would have gotten this information.

Interviewees more or less agree that unionism in journalism is something worth striving for, and they support the ideas of collective labour struggle and solidarity among journalists regardless of their employment status. Yet, none of the interviewees is currently a union member, and they do not have any intention of becoming one since they see unionism as something "exclusive for regularly employed" (DND interviewee B). They also regard themselves as "in the periphery" (CAD interviewee D) and "often forgotten" (CAD interviewee B) by the union. In one of the short conversations during the observation in the CAD newsroom, one of the precarious newsworkers was particularly critical of the union:

> As long as the union has its current leadership I am not joining. In one of the meetings after payments to contractual journalists were reduced by eight percent and salaries of regularly employed by two, the unionist said that it is okay because what we get is gross value. And then the director general the unionist should not forget that these are the risky types of employment. The world is upside down. At the same time we know that management will not do a thing.

After the government adopted austerity measures that involved RTV Slovenia despite different legal provisions, the management of the public broadcasting station stopped extending new contracts to all types of precarious newsworkers: "external associates," "regular contract employees," and "student workers." Interviewees from both newsrooms regarded going to the union as "pointless" (CAD interviewee D). Therefore, as a result of a long-term process of socialisation within what appears as apprentice-master relationship, they rather turned to editors-in-chief with their problems of contingent employment. "These measures caused confusion at that time. Thus, in the DND newsroom, we organised ourselves via e-mails and on the corridors, and then we expressed our collective disapproval with the situation to the editor-in-chief. He purely accepted our disapproval and bad situation, but he clearly presented that these things should change somewhere higher, somewhere out of reach to him" (DND Journalist C). In this context, editors informally take the role of unionists, and despite the fact that they are regarded as "compassionate" (DND interviewee A), interviewees in both newsrooms appear

not to be familiar with the (in)formal process of overcoming apprentice status and becoming regularly employed.

Manufacturing Discontent

During observations precarious newsworkers have often expressed criticism not only of specific problems of their labour relations, but the social system as a whole. Analysis of interviews provides a similar insight. For example, CAD interviewee C believes "revolutionary steps" are needed and stresses the belief that "demonstrations on the street with banners are a thing of the past in the sense of peaceful demonstrations." Although none of them seem to have a clear vision of what is to follow, they more or less agree that deep structural change is inevitable and desirable.

Generational solidarity emerges as another important factor with potential for social change. Respondents identify with a young generation that is forced into flexible working arrangements, receives lower wages, and will likely never receive old-age pensions. CAD interviewee C said:

> It also often happens to me that when I am reporting about someone and I say to myself: 'Hey, I am in the same position or even worse off, but I can't report on myself, can I?' Well, you try. I tried reporting on this generation Y: a mass of my peers who have some sort of degree and clean fish in a fish shop to survive or work sixteen hours a day for five hundred euros and do all sorts of unpaid stuff on the side. Basically, it seems to me that we are all encouraging this system by working pro bono, because we have some desire for work. We obviously don't cherish ourselves enough.

Furthermore, when asked about his views on the rise of precarious working conditions in journalism, CAD interviewee B responded: "Those are things that are happening everywhere. In the final instance, if I may say so, it is a crisis of the existing system."

General critiques of social conditions tie in with reconsiderations of journalism as it is practiced at Radio Slovenia. Some of the interviewees claimed that public radio journalists should depart from the norm of objectivity in journalism and take a more analytical approach to societal life, identifying problems and providing solutions to those problems. For instance, CAD interviewee A said, "The worst thing we can do is to adhere to these good old rules of objectivity and balance. /.../ If you have two sides, one neutral, one bad, and you strive for balance, the result will be something bad." DND interviewee C regrets the fact that at DND the idea of watchdog is not being realised and points out that some topics that seem important to him do not receive sufficient coverage:

> Yes, this institution as such is mainstream. And therefore topics that are very important are not there, because somehow in this vicious cycle … I don't know, that on the one hand it is assumed that this topic is not interesting to people, because people like mainstream topics and it is hard to reach them with these topics. But people on the other hand, if such news reaches them, then don't know how to make sense of it. I don't know, for example, an important topic, I don't know, the destruction of the tropic rainforest: why and how and such. But these things don't go through.

While very critical, interviewed newsworkers were at the same time highly fatalistic about the concrete possibility of change, show observational and interview data. Belief in the need for dramatic social changes is intertwined with the belief that nothing can really be changed or that nobody knows how change is to be brought about. To the question of what is to be done, one of them responded: "But I do not know. I do not see it. I just do not see a clear picture of this future. I don't know what should be done about it" (CAD interviewee A). Interviewees were sceptical about existing forms of organising collective struggle like unions, yet they could not envision different forms that would take their place. The result, as some of them see it, is atomisation that prevents effective struggle. For instance, CAD interviewee B said:

> What good would it do if it [union struggle] intensified in a situation, where people are totally unresponsive. … This laying off of not only contractual workers but others as well, this cancelling of, I don't know, a third of the programme. Probably there is a breaking point. I imagine it exists, but in RTV, it is like in society, more or less a collection of atomised individuals.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the study, maintaining various kinds of freelance, informal, and otherwise contingent temporary work arrangements are normal managerial practices in Slovenian public radio, where younger newsworkers and newcomers comply with precarious labour relations and diminishing labour rights, while entertaining the prospect of future regular employment. At the same time, our study indicates that journalists' trade union and its section for precarious newsworkers at Radio Slovenia has hardly provided a basis for collective labour struggle; on the contrary, unionism as a social mechanism appears as a maintainer of the status quo. Yet, despite being the leading Slovenian radio station in terms of audience reach, hours of programme, and size of its staff, Radio Slovenia cannot, in any simple way, be understood as typical or particularly indicative in terms of labour relations and unionist dynamics. Additionally, as the study is based on a rather small number of interviews, the authors attempt to avoid vast generalising in these concluding remarks. Nonetheless, the study can be a telling example of the normalisation of what International Federation of Journalists (2006) calls "atypical work" and at least a reflection of the "erosion of the collective" (Lee-Wright et al. 2012) and the rise of "enterprising self" among journalists (Storey et al. 2005), which reflect larger realities of journalism as a social institution, occupation, and cultural practice.

Regarding the first research question, the results show that consent among Slovenian public radio journalists working in precarious labour relations is manufactured through individualisation of their employment status putting them in an uneasy position somewhere between what Burawoy (1979) calls the "internal" and the "external labour market." In this context, Deuze (2009, 85) writes about "functional flexibility in the workforce," acknowledging the division between "privileged professionals" enjoying greater job security and career development and "a periphery of semi-affiliated professionals" in subcontracted arrangements. Within such an "abstract mass" (CAD interviewee A) individual precarious newsworkers during their socialisation period compete among themselves for assignments and

air time. This in turn, as Deuze (2009, 85) spots well, "partly shifts the control over labour to the company, as workers compete for employment rather than employers for talented, skilled workers."

Additionally, the study shows that the socialisation process of journalists that resembles a master-apprentice relationship strengthens the interviewed radio journalists' loyalty to Radio Slovenia as an institution and normalises compliance with precarious labour relations. Such ideological and structural pressures encourage journalists to accept the corporate logic and imperatives, reflecting what Storey et al. (2005) call "enterprising self," which is a central paradigmatic concept behind the rationale of precarious labour relations and self-identities. Thus, consent among precarious newsworkers at Slovenian public radio is continuously (re)manufactured as they perform as renowned voices of the national public radio with a respectable social pedigree, while at the same time, being peripheral members of the workforce with unstable employment arrangements.

In regards to the second research question, the participant observations and in-depth interviews at the two Radio Slovenia newsrooms show that Coordination of Journalists' Trade Unions of RTV Slovenia and its Section of Contractual Journalists are somewhat absent from negotiations of labour relations between the management and journalists, making some interviewed precarious newsworkers feel as they are "often forgotten" (CAD interviewee B). The study also shows that Slovenian public radio journalists within what Burawoy (1979) calls the "internal state" form ad hoc provisional and fragile coalitions within their departments in order to negotiate their employment arrangements with editors-in-chief acting as managers, rather than adopt more institutionalised ways of dealing with labour conflict. In this sense, our findings are in line with broader trends of journalists' collective pursuit of trade unionism becoming more and more contingent (Aldridge and Evetts 2003) and the "weakening of trade unions" (Steensen 2009), not only in terms of their bargaining power, but also in terms of their shrinking membership. Thereafter, it appears that the concept of "free agent nation" is not far-fetched in this sense. Deuze (2009, 87) acknowledges that individualised employment struggle has also become normal within single news organisations.

Recent changes in newswork represent an opposite trend to that observed by Burawoy (1979), a finding also supported by our observations at Radio Slovenia. As precarious newsworkers are only partially integrated into the internal labour market with its relative security, they are not only subject to the discipline of the external labour market, but the promise of entering stable employment functions as an important mechanism of securing their consent to unfavourable work arrangements. The hope of regular employment at some time in the future ensures that precarious newsworkers already behave as if it were a fact today. As regular employment remains the norm – at least at the public broadcaster – precarious work arrangements are seen as an anomaly or an apprenticeship status, which precludes the organisation of precarious newsworkers as a special group. Similarly, the union does not function as an institution of the internal state for precarious newsworkers. They do not see it as a way to resolve individual or collective grievances, which reflects objective circumstances to a certain degree since the union has been slow to adapt to changing circumstance, and its focus remains on the regularly employed workforce.

It seems that both subjective perceptions and forms of labour organisation are lagging behind changing circumstances, causing a rising gap between values and expectations on the one hand and reality on the other. This leads us to believe that the observed situation at Radio Slovenia is a transitory one. Rising dissatisfaction and disenchantment of precarious newsworkers is, at the moment, still kept at bay by the nature of relationships with older colleagues, where young newsworkers take on the role of apprentices, although advancement to regular employment is becoming progressively less certain, and by the absence of organisational forms to effectively organise precarious newsworkers. As trends of increasing contingent work arrangements continue in the news industry, reinventing collective labour struggle becomes a matter of necessity if existing worker's rights are to be at least protected, not to mention enhanced, and should be a central focus of future research.

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