MEDIA AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: ASSESSING DAYAN AND KATZ'S 'MEDIA EVENTS'

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ABSTRACT *While a convincing set of arguments exist in favor of the integrative role of media in contemporary societies, there remains suspicion based on the relative nature of what counts as 'common values' for whom. In this paper I delineate some of the key problems related to matters of mediated social solidarity, as instigated by Dayan and Katz's famous neo-Durkheimian perspective of 'media events,' the exceptional gatherings produced by live media coverage of events like 'contests, conquests and coronations', which, arguably, interrupt routine and affirm social cohesion. I review some of the relevant literature in the field, with a brief case study of the homecoming of Croatian Winter Olympic 2002 winner Janica Kostelić. I show that, in the context of the proliferation of new media and global broadcasting, media events should be understood more modestly as momentary encounters with media's representation of cohesion, while actual solidarity remains contingent upon the inter-discursive interaction with an event's program.*

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INTRODUCTION

There exist media through which members communicate to themselves in concert about the characters of their collectivities, as if these do constitute entities that are temporarily coherent. Public events are conveyances of this kind. (Handelman, 1998: 15)

How contemporary societies sustain themselves amid complex interconnections of individual and common agendas has been underlying an immense variability of sociological debates. This never-ending search for defensible arguments takes as its starting point that much of social life is now mediated (meaning knowledge, experience and behavior are informed by technologically produced images and sounds *referring* to rather than *reflecting* 'actual' social realities) and usefully seeks valuable indications in the media themselves. As Sonia Livingstone put it cogently, technologies change quicker than societies (1996), and though there may now be more forms of media communications used, with a broader (global) span, some essential issues, like that of the continuation of 'society' as a whole in a diverse media and cultural environment continues to attract commentators, especially when we are reminded, in live broadcasts, that - in the singular – "the nation/globe is watching." Unusual events like local homecomings (particularly in the aftermath of global sport events, such as Olympic Games), public funerals and political upheavals are ordinarily followed by estimations of record viewership and commentary about the "feeling" of belonging arguably felt via the mediated happening. Instead of approaching this problem from a more conventional social science perspective (tending towards neo-Durkheimian sociological conceptions on how societies "function"), I find it more productive to work inter-disciplinarily, broaden the horizon of debate and draw on a wider repertoire of literature (mainly from the perspectives of political science, cultural studies and anthropology). In doing that, I focus on the now classic, but still too little discussed, concept of *media events*, devised by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1994), as a name for situations in which media not only "record" the life of a society, but also when they, arguably, "stand in" for society (Couldry, 2003: xi), and offer some common understandings of certain social phenomena. Dayan and Katz observed the intense organization, gloss deliveries and dramatic aftermaths of televised public events in a neo-Durkheimian fashion, which suggests that 'media events' such as homecoming or coronation events, are necessarily *integrative*. I want to question this unreserved affiliation with Emil Durkheim's (1971) work, especially his concept of social "general effervescence," in the study of media in contemporary society. I want to suggest that the issue of mediated belonging requires a more sensitive post-Durkheimian differentiation in relation to parallel issues of non-belonging.

I shall begin this theoretically-based study by describing what Dayan and Katz mean by media events, and move on to situate their theoretical endeavor in the context of broader related discussions on sociability within media and cultural theory. In the second part, I seek out some possible improvements of their argument for a study of contemporary (converged and global media) by testing out Dayan and Katz's original paradigm on a brief case study of the mediated homecoming of the Croatian athlete Janica Kostelić to

Zagreb, after winning four medals in the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City.[1] Establishing that this empirical case meets Dayan and Katz's theoretical requirements to qualify as a 'media event,' I will critically assess their model with reference to a plurality of voices, via a variety, especially online, media, heard participating in and/or commenting the event. I will conclusively suggest that, as contemporary 'media events' converge in a variety of media, are increasingly global, and ultimately remain, like any other media text, *polysemic*, some important adaptation of the original concept is necessary. Alongside some useful Dayan and Katz's remarks – mostly those on the ritualistic quality of live media programming – giving more attention to the aftermath to the event and the opposing voices that may feel excluded from the media event itself, might give us better insight into the complexities of how contemporary societies might be said to (rely on media to) sustain themselves. Considering, at once, the (typically divergent) perspectives of the television experience and live experience, it is fair to say that, far from simply uniting the society by flicking a switch, media events are offered as spectacular occasions that encounter a gathering, staged as outstanding, where differential views on issues delegated on the occasion to serve as social glue, are consensually deferred, rather than absent (the need for integration would otherwise be superfluous). What studies into mediated social solidarity need to unravel is the particular power ratios and forms of articulation involved (symbolic strategies of representation and readers' tactics of resistances; global scale of production and local terrains of consumption; digital broadcast(s) and analogue interpretations) in particular contexts of event production.

DAYAN AND KATZ'S MEDIA EVENTS CONCEPT: STRICT CRITERIA FOR A BROAD TEXT

Acting as a shaman, television is inviting us to consider in vitro what the next [thing to happen in society] will invite us to enact in vivo. (Dayan and Katz, 1994: 186)

Amongst numerous theoretical approaches that emerged during the 20th century about how, if at all, society holds together, Dayan and Katz took on a bold revival of a classical functionalist account in the context of media studies. They assert that the central values on which social integration is bred, are to be found in, but are also reinforced through, 'media events' (1994: ix). The assessment of that claim requires an introduction to the core aspects of the media events concept.

Dayan and Katz draw on the anthropological conception of *ceremonies*, as events in which both the performers and audiences are drawn together in a focused interaction where key common values are made into an evident source of cohesion (Dayan and Katz, 1994: x, 93). More precisely, Dayan and Katz analysed "historic occasions … that are televised as they take place and transfix the nation to the world" (*ibid*. 1). According to Dayan and Katz's definition, a media event is a live, real time, television transmission of an extraordinary, pre-planned public event, which occurs outside of the broadcasting

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[1] I found this event to be exemplary, in many relevant aspects (scale of media coverage, scope of public attention), of ritualistic Croatian sport homecoming celebrations, as well as particularly useful in reading the typically heroic figure of the winner athlete around which Croatian society frequently gathers in public.

facilities (*ibid*. 4-11). It alone should demand and represent a disruption to the daily routines of both the viewers and the TV programming (*ibid*. 5). Media events are, arguably, intensely anticipated and received by an outstandingly big viewership, which shares the watching experience (*ibid*. 7, 21, 22). The dominant (preferred) meanings of the event are framed by the organizers—typically public bodies that media ask, or are asked, to join, whereby, according to Dayan and Katz, media (innocently) work as a mere bridge for the viewers to the "sacred center" of the occasion, referring to its key figures with reverence (*ibid*. 5-7, 10, 16, 32).

There is a "tripartite classification" of media events either as "contests", "conquests" or "coronations," which depends on what is found in the "sacred center" (*ibid*. 48). Contests, such as televised presidential debates or Olympic Games, embody "rule-governed battles of champions;" conquests are found in "the live broadcasting of 'giant leaps for mankind,'" whereas coronations are ceremonies seen in royal weddings and homecomings (*ibid*. 26). The televised royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, the Olympics, the visitations of the Pope John Paul II, President Anwar el-Sadat's journey to Jerusalem, and the Watergate hearings all exemplify media events in Dayan and Katz's study (*ibid*. 4, 26-33). All of them, in a way, had a similar "impact" on their viewers: "electrifying" them and "reviving their common spirit" (cf. *ibid*. 13).

While such categorical restrictions posed by Dayan and Katz about what might count as a media event stirred critique about the concept's applicability,[2] Dayan and Katz's essential contention that media events integrate society remains the most disputed. Their key criterion for a media events-proper concerns the highly contestable issue of the assumed integrity of participants (media audiences), based on shared understandings of the event broadcast. Viewers are both eyewitness to and participants in a wider social integration, since media events "celebrate not conflict but *reconciliation*" (Dayan and Katz, 1994: 8; original emphasis). The background to this claim is the classic functionalist claim that mechanical solidarity (characterized by the sense of familiarity between the group members) is a foundation for organic solidarity (generated by divisions of labour) (Dayan and Katz, 1994; see Durkheim, 1971). The authors insist that media events achieve the former: they "*integrate* society in a collective heartbeat and evoke a *renewal of loyalty* to the society and its legitimate authority" (Dayan and Katz, 1994: viii, 9, 196; original emphases). During such an event observers are highly favorable of "altruism and neighbourliness," while the event itself "offers, and affirms, shared membership in a national or international community" (*ibid*. 132, 197). The "spirit of communitas" is found, as Dayan and Katz argue, amongst anyone capable of watching television at the time of the event (*ibid*.). Setting aside the issue of connectivity, all viewers are assumed to be equally consciously aware that others are sharing the experience of watching (*ibid*.). It is the fulfillment of the technological possibilities of electronic media that makes the watching experience *per se* paramount to the 'media events', since: "social integration of the highest order is … achieved via mass communication" (*ibid*. 15). Dayan and Katz

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2 Many events, particularly those unplanned, with a global span, and relating to conflict, could usefully be analyzed as media events too, but do not meet this particular set of criteria (see Couldry, 2003: 64; Lee, et al., 2005; Couldry, et al. 2009). See also Dayan's (2008) and Katz's (with Liebes, 2007) later respective considerations for expanding the originally set criteria, to include unplanned broadcasts of disasters.

uphold their neo-Durkheimian sentiment in favour of the *general* effervescence, by linking it to notions of "cathartic experience", which a media event endows viewers with (*ibid*. 197). They suggest that media events are "electronic monuments … meant to live in collective memory", as interruptions "signalling the beginnings and ends of an 'era'" (*ibid*. 211, 212); however, this formalistic view of participation is incompatible with studies which suggest that no integrity is possible without its opposition.

THE POTENTIALS AND FRICTIONS OF MEDIATED SOLIDARITY

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming […] collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. (Durkheim, 1971: 427)

While some values unite men, others necessarily divide them. (Mann, 1970: 424)

Tackling the rise of individualism in modern societies at the very beginning of the 20th century (Giddens, 1986: 7-20), in his classic work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim analyzed the practice of religious ritual as a *social* form, in which individuals come together to share certain values in "general effervescence" (Durkheim, 1971: 210). In modern industrial societies this "stimulating action" (*ibid*.) is not possible "unless the individuals who compose [the society] are assembled together and act in common" (*ibid*. 211, 418). The integrated group does that "not by material coercion … but by the simple *radiation of the mental energy* which it contains" (*ibid*. 208; emphasis added). If we take (in an admittedly simplistic fashion, for pragmatic purposes of analytical illustration), *mediation* of the social energy for *radiation*, the 'neo-Durkheimian' formula for media studies is launched.

The second half of the 20th century saw important shifts in understanding social integration, whereby "common values" have been shown to be, in fact, a selection of particular criteria, regulated by a dominant, hegemonic order (Hall, 1994), while any adequate concern with social difference questions the possibility of solidarity in the singular. "Sociability", as David Morley rightly reminds us, "can only ever be produced in some *particular* cultural (and linguistic) form" (2000: 111, my emphasis), which, by addressing some members of the society, necessarily leaves out others. Morley's contention is part of his important critique of the famous argument made by the media historian Paddy Scannell that media connect us on a daily basis via patterned scheduling and broadcasts ("dailiness") (1996).[3] The problem with Scannell's view, according to Morley, is in its disavowal of issues of power (in favor of grasping the phenomenological oneness of the social role of broadcasting) and its assumed uniquely shared codes of participation. As Morley explains:

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[3] See also Benedict Anderson (2006) on the imagined national "we" in daily news. Claus-Dieter Rath (1991), on the other hand, usefully links watching live television events with basic requirements of cultural citizenship. He asserts that spectators are drawn "to become a part of an imaginary totality", whereby" the viewer becomes part of the social fabric through the sudden impact of the "world outside" upon a moment in his or her memory … [adding] fragments to his or her own life story" (Rath, 1991: 82-83, 89).

By the very way (and to the very extent that) a programme signals to members of some groups that it is designed for them and functions as an effective invitation to their participation in social life, it will necessarily signal to members of other groups that it is not for them and, indeed, that they are not among the invitees to its particular forum of sociability. (2000: 111)

Decoding a program – a requirement for participation – is in the main a complex practice; the viewer negotiates the meaning of the presented program by drawing into the decoding process a variety of discourses with which the viewer identifies (and which position the viewer as subject) (Morley, 1992). Put shortly, given the variety of national, transnational, subcultural and other subject positioning, when audience participation is in question, we can only assume that such inter-discursive positions can vary significantly, from acceptance of the program's claims about reality to refusal, within dominant discourses in particular societies (Morley, 1980a, 1980b). On that count, we might develop further the argument for integrating in our studies of mediated sociability an adequate sensitivity to difference and power, which we might usefully expand in the field of political science.

As Michael Mann contends: "cohesion in liberal democracy depends rather on the *lack* of consistent commitment to general values of any sort" (1970: 423, emphasis added). The problem is twofold. On the one hand, general core values that are meant to be integrating a society are ordinarily too vague and loose to work effectively in bringing the society's members together, and on the other, a certain degree of consensus among society's members about certain issues is always assumed (*any* individual action is not random, but is informed by some social "value") (Mann, 1970: 432, 423). Overall social integration is dependent on the prior integrations amongst individual structures, such as class (*ibid*. 425-436). Furthermore, it is crucial to inspect if sharing the same values also means sharing the same *interpretation* of those values. Steven Lukes (1975: 293-297), for instance, examined social integration as mediated in the form of 'political ritual', and studied in typically neo-Durkheimian Edward Shils and Michael Young's reading of the British coronation in 1953 (1953), Lloyd Warner's descriptions of the American Memorial Day (1959) and Sidney Verba's analysis of people's reactions to the Kennedy assassination (1965). Discrepancy between the researchers' positive presumptions and the overlooked complexities of social stratifications that Lukes found in those same cases suggest that neo-Durkheimian analyses tend to oversimplify the view of society's integration, by reducing it to the affirmation of a general value-consensus and neglecting the often conflicting coexistence of roles and activities (Lukes, 1975: 297). Lukes concludes that "value consensus is not merely not sufficient to ensure social integration; it is not even necessary" (*ibid*. 298), which is tellingly obvious from James Carey's research (1998), in the field of media studies.

Carey examined televised judicial hearings on nominations to the United States Supreme Court in the 1980s. Recognizing them as one of the most important media events in the history of American television, Carey sets forth the wider considerations of these broadcasts, which in fact places them in strong opposition to Dayan and Katz's romantic view of the integrative function of media events. Live transmissions of the hearings were, as Carey concluded "episodes in the production of dissensus, episodes in the recreation,

indeed redefinition, of the civil religion by social demarcation and exclusion" (1998: 67). In this case, such development produced a public discourse of struggle and bitter discord, which led to even deeper divisions amongst American citizens (*ibid*.). Thus the limitations in Dayan and Katz's concept are premised in the fact that their "focus on integration and reconciliation" sidelines "ceremonies that end in consolidating divisions, excluding groups and polarizing opposition" (*ibid*.). Moving on to even more recent cases, the live broadcasting of the British princess Diana's funeral in 1997 demonstrated, as Couldry (2003) summates, that Dayan and Katz generally neglect one more important aspect of any successful mediated cohesion: the non-viewers (i.e. the non-participants). Couldry points to Robert Turnock's study "Interpreting Diana" (2000), which suggests that there were many who did not watch the broadcast and that not all the viewers shared the same understanding of the meaning offered by the media (Couldry, 2003: 64). Even where the meaning had been agreed upon, as Couldry stresses (*ibid*. 69), another shortcoming of Dayan and Katz's concept appears: the underlying inequality of the distribution of power in society as articulated in the live broadcasts. Couldry claims that there is a backing "gulf between the media's privileged status as interpreter of the social world and non-media people's secondary authority to speak" (*ibid*. 69). It follows, as his analysis shows, that media institutions and industries find ways to utilize live transmissions of media events to reinforce their own power and assumed understandings of their privileged access to "truth" (*ibid*. 2). What such special occasions reveal may not be some core values of a society, as much as particular values *assumed* by the media to be dominantly shared by their major audiences (*ibid*. 70). According to Couldry, media might be bringing society's members together, albeit it is a *mediated* form of solidarity, in which audiences are positioned as subjects to a belief that media are at their *imagined* ("mythologized") society's center (*ibid*. 10). To return to my point of departure, Durkheim's idea of "general effervescence", Don Handelman's (1998) extensive anthropological study of public events, suggests that it is precisely within "public events" where one can indeed sense "relative unity of organisation." These forms of interaction "mediate persons into collective abstractions, by inducing action, knowledge and experience" (Handelman, 1998: 15), but society imagined as a whole remains an abstraction "whose phenomenal referents may only be intimated" (*ibid*.). It follows that "public events are locations of communication that convey participants into *versions* of social order in relatively coherent ways … not only may they affect social order, they may also effect it" (*ibid*., emphasis added). Thus, rather than something real being achieved through the (mediated) gathering, social order is one of the *themes* that public events select out as inviting, which is also why they appear not only as "cognitively graspable, but also emotionally livable" (*ibid*. 16).

This emotive aspect of public events, present plentifully in Dayan and Katz's paradigm, corresponds to many other discussions on the anthropology of public gatherings. Michel Maffesoli's idea of "society of souls" (1996: 58) is one such case. He argues that a "gregarious impulse" is immanent to postmodern societies, in various forms, as a curious reprise of the premodern social experience (Maffesoli, 1996: 58-60). In social gatherings Maffesoli reads "collective trances", offered to the members via the television (*ibid*. 65), whereby "one cries, laughs, or stamps one's feet in unison, and thus, without actually being in the presence of each other, a kind of communication is created whose social effects are still

to be measured" (*ibid*. 57). The emotive aspect to the mediated event was clearly sensible (amongst the ones who decide to participate in it) in the case of Janica's homecoming too, and strategically evoked by media institutions in hailing their audiences ("the excitement is palpable on every corner", the commentators said). However, I question whether this performative component can promise a long-term positive effect on social cohesion. Let me, then, move on to a case of a media event which I want to use to round up my discussion of Dayan and Katz's approach and offer some ideas for ways forward. The event I want to sketch out took place in Zagreb, Croatia, in February 2002, when the citizens greeted their Olympic "heroine", the skier Janica Kostelić, the representative at the Winter Olympic Games, who had won three gold and one silver medal in Salt Lake City, in February 2002.

"WE ARE ALL JANICA", BUT JANICA IS NOT ALL OF US

Nations live not only in historical time but also in media time. (Carey, 1998: 44)

Narcissus does not drown himself by wanting to rejoin his image with which he has fallen in love. … He loses himself in the cosmos symbolised by [the] pool. … It is the same with the television screen: the narcissism of the group drowns itself in it, recognising its own image, but, by these means, it is social globality with which one communes. (Maffesoli, 1996: 63)

It was only six years after the Yugoslav war-driven nationalism of the 1990s started to fade and give way to a revival of old inner opposing local identities, when Croatian citizens were to gather to celebrate Janica's victory. It was perceived as a colossal success of a humble, almost anonymous and endeavored athlete to bring a small, vaguely known country with its national symbols to the pedestal of the "World's Number 1" in the globally mediated Olympic Games. For Janica this came after an impecunious childhood of intense training both at home (in a Mediterranean country with virtually no ski trails) and abroad. Croatia embraced this success with a big homecoming celebration in her hometown of Zagreb, the capital.

Zagreb, however, at the same time happened to be perceived by Croatians as representing one of two major regions of Croatia (the northern Croatian inland territory and the coastal, southern, Adriatic region, represented by the largest town Split). Historical, cultural differences among the Slavs inhabiting the inland locales and the ones settling along the Adriatic coast were deepened throughout the medieval centuries and up into early modernism with the presence of Austro-Hungarian (central European) rulers of the inland country and the Italian (southern European) reign on the coast. The differences in cultural inheritances of the two different regions remain very much visible in various forms as a persisting antagonism among Croatians today.[4] Croatian sociologist Dražen Lalić (2003) expects that in this post-independence era "Croatians will be dividing themselves by confronting the local identities, especially in sport, political and other attrition among, unfortunately, a substantial number of the citizens of Zagreb and Split" (2003: 208).

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[4] For a more detailed insight into these historical instances see a classic study on social development of Croatians by Dinko Tomašić (1997: 61-87, 99-105) and discussions on cultural- and ethno-nationalisms in South-East Europe at the end of 20th century by Croatian sociologist Srđan Vrcan (2006: 123-128).

Within the thematic frame of the winner's homecoming, it would be plausible, I would argue, to expect a largely positive response from the Croatian public to this event. The then Prime minister Ivica Račan expressed his delight with the fact that "Croatia is finally experiencing mass gatherings around success, not only for dissatisfaction" (Lovrić, 2002). Dayan and Katz qualify such a context as media-eventful, as it is "the celebration of voluntarism—the willful resolve to take direct, simple, spontaneous, ostensibly non-ideological action—[that] underlies media events, and may indeed constitute a part of their attraction" (1994: 21). Nevertheless, that is only one of Dayan and Katz's criteria that I will briefly consider in regards to the homecoming of Janica. I will first seek to classify it as a 'media event', and then test the theorists' claim on its integrative role.

Croatian national public television produced a 4-hour, live broadcast of Janica's homecoming. Dozens of crews and cameras followed her uninterruptedly from the Zagreb airport, down the streets, to Zagreb's central square, where a staged celebration had been pre-planned5. The viewership in front of television sets was encouraged both by the audio commentary repeating how the celebration is a symbolic encirclement of Janica's heroic success, and the video transmission showing around 200,000 people gathered in person to greet her on the streets and on the main square. Cameras showed the airplane making two honorary circles above Zagreb, while the first official to greet Janica at the airport was the Prime minister. The climax was reached as Janica, enveloped with a Croatian flag, approached the main square. Long-shots of people cheering, mixed with close-ups of emotional faces and national flags portrayed a grandiose gathering. The audience was heard cheering as she was then greeted and awarded by various officials. The announcer addressed her repeatedly as the "Croatian snow *queen*." A short speech by a representative of the Catholic Church[6] perhaps best condensed the suggested thematic frame of the event as integrative, when he, at the peak of the celebration, concluded: "Dear Janica, you have been an outstanding representative of Croatia in the world, and in your home country you have become a symbol of all Croatian people's *unity*."[7] Zagreb's mayor addressed the viewership asserting that each citizen's participation in the homecoming event makes an important contribution to that historical moment for Croatia. National flags were waved, Croatian sport songs were played, cheered mostly when singing: "we have the champions, Croatia is number one in the world." After the event, on the same

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[5] Negotiation of Janica's homecoming as 'media event' in this paper is made on the basis of the television footage from Croatian national public radiotelevision archives (HRT) and the press coverage of the event, respectively, as quoted. The television broadcast took place under the program name "Janica Kostelić Homecoming—live transmission" on February 25, 2002 on Croatian Television Channel 2, (HTV2). I thank Tena Perišin for assistance in accessing the archives.

[6] The Roman Catholic Church rules the vast majority of traditionally religious Croatians. Note the presence of a traditional authority at the event. It brings to light Dayan and Katz's interconnection of "contests, conquests and coronations" respectively with Max Weber's three types of authority: rationality, charisma and tradition (1968). In that sense, "depending on their match with the situation being addressed, Coronations may highlight areas of continuity between traditional structures and rational-legal ones" (Dayan and Katz, 1994: 44).

[7] I refer to *social* integration loosely through the lenses of *national* integration, to maintain focus on the possibilities of mediated cohesion, but I acknowledge there may be other issues at stake, related more directly to nationalism (see, for instance, Edensor, 2002). Nonetheless, as Carey (1998) reminds us, nations nowadays live not only in physical geographies, but also in media time and media space: "nations are sociological organisms, but unlike crowds, gatherings, classes and status groups, they are boundary maintaining ones. ... [These] boundaries are both geographic and *symbolic*" (1998: 45, emphasis added). Although he appoints critique to Dayan and Katz's exclusiveness in what accounts as a media event proper, Carey acknowledges the more general premise that: "television permits a level of national integration in both large and small states that was difficult to achieve, except on reduced scale, in the age of printing press" (*ibid.* 44). When discussing reasons for normative integration in liberal democracy other than the 'value consensus,' Mann, on the other hand, also stresses *nationalism* (1970: 437). Dayan and Katz's account includes national integration, stressing that the shared experience of viewing will induce "the desire to give expression to national belongingness" (1994: 204).

Z. Krajina : MEDIA AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: ASSESSING DAYAN AND KATZ'S 'MEDIA EVENTS'

PREGLEDNI RAD / UDK 316.74:7.097, 316.73:316.774 / PRIMLJENO: 20.10.2011.

day, television reports showed *vox populi* saying that "Croatia gained a lot with [Janica's success]" and that her victory is "the evidence of how the Croatian soul can do so much." The current affairs press' headings reflected the same integrative effect of the event when writing: "We are all Janica" (Letica, 2002).

Another of Dayan and Katz's criteria, that of the event pausing everyday routines was met as: "[the whole city of] Zagreb came to its main square; school bells rang shorter lectures, many offices abandoned" (Klik.hr, 2002). The televised event was produced outside the studios, as Dayan and Katz prescribe, but, as many of the viewers went to the central square, the "sacred center" (Dayan and Katz, 1994: 32) of the event was approachable. This detachment from the definition will be read in the light of the events that authors also used as examples; Olympic contests and papal visitations always included spectators on the spot. In fact, "coronations … require audience approval. The mass audience is invited to attend and answer 'amen'" (*ibid.* 42). Therefore, the television broadcast of Janica's homecoming and her becoming the "Croatian snow queen," was a "coronation," which "remind[s] societies of their cultural heritage, provide[s] reassurance of social and cultural continuity, and invite[s] the public to take the stock" (*ibid.* 37, 26). This was particularly evident when Janica was shown, just before arriving at Zagreb's main square, exiting the bus in which she was driven from the airport, and entering a traditional horse carriage, which took her to the stage at the square, where she appeared bowing to the excited audiences (Ba.voanews.com, 2002).

There is a powerful resemblance between the language the reporters used to record the atmosphere of the Janica's homecoming and the classical Durkheimian rhetoric. When Durkheim describes "the general effervescence" energy, he describes a man speaking to a crowd with an "abnormal over-supply of force which overflows … [whereby] the passionate energies he arouses re-echo within him … it is a group incarnate" (1971: 210). Let us relate that to extracts from press reports on Janica's arrival: "when she arrived at the main square, the gathered people's blood started boiling;" "*all this energy spread all over* the Airport, the streets, the terraces of the buildings, and 'poured' onto the central square, which embraced Janica and the whole Olympic representation of Croatia" (Klik.hr, 2002, emphasis added). The majority of online discussion praised the media event: those who watched it via television stressed the "excellent job done by producers to show details of what people on the stage were doing," while those who were on the square mentioned, with evidently less excitement, "the good choice of bands and music played" (Forum.hr, 2002). As we learn from a classical study on audiences' experiences of such events, by Lang and Lang (1969), the difference in experience (televised event more appealing than the actual one) had to do with the audiovisual (symbolic) work media do in portraying an event as attractive in a particular way. In their study of the television experience of the homecoming of general McArthur in Chicago (Dayan and Katz's example of "the first television coronation", 1994: 26), Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang contrasted how the television commentator described the space captured by the cameras, then how the television viewer comprehended that and finally what the spectators witnessed. Whilst the commentator insisted that "you can feel the tenses in the air [and that] you can hear that crowd roar," and in line with that, the viewer registered that the crowd "was

Z. Krajina : MEDIA AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: ASSESSING DAYAN AND KATZ'S 'MEDIA EVENTS'

PREGLEDNI RAD / UDK 316.74:7.097, 316.73:316.774 / PRIMLJENO: 20.10.2011.

going to be hard to control," the spectator sketched the situation conversely, depicting that "a few seconds after [the general] had passed [onlookers] merely turned around to shrug" (Lang and Lang, 1969: 551). Their dissatisfaction with "reality" spoke back to the power of mediation, noting: "we should have stayed at home and watched it on TV" (*ibid*. 550). Cameras not only transmitted but also interpreted the event (*ibid*. 550, 551). In other words, to refer to Stuart Hall, events cannot signify by themselves (1994). More importantly for this discussion, there was a significant absence in all the positive remarks by Janica's homecoming viewers or witnesses of any acknowledgment of feeling *social unity* during the event.

As one online forum user stated, with a series of approvals by others,

the most annoying element of the homecoming events is this thing [state and town officials call] about 'togetherness' – what's that all about? I love when our athletes win, but I'd never agree with being stuck into this 'togetherness,' which is nothing but a political phrase. Reducing one great athlete's success to some idea as abstract as 'togetherness' is nonsense, and unfair (Forum.hr, 2002).

Another user added, "I hate when politicians take over the stage, as if *they* won those results…perhaps this is characteristic of celebrations in Zagreb" (*ibid*.). The sense of unfairness and repulsion related to political elites (located in the capital) smuggling (political) ideas of nationhood and oneness was an important indicator of the variety of discourses the audiences of media events bring into their resistant viewing of the same event (here the cynicism towards politics, which disabled identification with the discourse of national unity), and their inter-discursive positions that generate differential decodings (cf. Morley, 1980a).

The charm of the neo-Durkheimian sentiment connoting the integrative effect of the media event that "evoke[s] a *renewal of loyalty* to the society" (Dayan and Katz, 1994: 9, original emphasis), cannot pass yet another test: *the day after*. "[The success of the winter sport project of] Janica is not the best promoter of the *coastal* tourism", said the minister of tourism, as published in the headline of an interview (Kovačević, 2002, emphasis added), on whether the tourist board had come up with the way to make Janica's success a branding symbol of Croatia and promote Croatian tourism throughout the world. Thus, the same unifying symbol of Janica was not good for *all* of Croatia any more. Split's press brought to the public's attention a previously neglected 2001 statement of Zagreb's mayor that "Zagreb will greet *its* Janica better than Split greeted *its* Goran Ivanišević", made when Split-born Goran Ivanišević had won the Wimbledon tennis cup (Gall, 2002, emphasis added). Though Janica's homecoming was framed as national, it operated with codes of location. Janica and her brother Ivica (both Zagreb-born) said, "Zagreb is the only city in the world able to prepare a celebration of this kind" (Ba.voanews.com, 2002). The "magnificent homecoming to be held at the [main] Square," the headlines said (Monitor. hr, 2002), which Janica herself mentioned already upon reaching the airport, stating "I can't wait to reach the Square!" (HOO.hr, 2002). Given the metaphorical affinity between a city square and a social center, into which media claim to be taking us (Couldry, 2003), it is unsurprising that the center of Zagreb was also represented as the center of Croatia. However, according to the participants in online discussions, there are at least two such

Z. Krajina : MEDIA AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: ASSESSING DAYAN AND KATZ'S 'MEDIA EVENTS'

PREGLEDNI RAD / UDK 316.74:7.097, 316.73:316.774 / PRIMLJENO: 20.10.2011.

centers, the other one being Split's promenade (Forum.hr, 2002). Users located in the Croatian south were keen to compare celebrations and state that Split "throws better public parties." The exultation-based mediated mechanical solidarity, as we have seen, was disturbed by the mediated visibility of difference within Croatian social "unity." A media event that was semantically saturated by connotations of social integration via national unity, was in fact encoded within a particular (Zagreb) locale, to which another locale (Split) reacted doubting its universal appeal.

Dayan and Katz, on the other hand, insist that media events produce a long-term integration, alleging that: "it is characteristic of [media] events that they bring former antagonists to reconsider, or at least to suspend, their antagonism" (1994: 132). "Coronations", moreover, "demand that conflicts defer to shared symbols of tradition and unity" (*ibid*. 39). In this respect, theorists draw on anthropological perspectives, particularly Victor Turner's account on liminality.[8] Turner does assert that: "major liminal situations are on which society *takes cognisance of itself*" (1974: 239-240, original emphasis). He recognizes liminality as social "transition rites" in which "communitas emerges, if not as a spontaneous expression of sociability, at least in a cultural and normative norm" (*ibid*. 231-232; see also Rothenbuhler, 2009). For Dayan and Katz it follows, in the case of media events, that "we take leave of everyday routine together with our heroes; experience the liminality of their sojourn; hold our breaths awaiting, or despairing of, their return; and reposition ourselves to resume everyday reality when the event is over" (1994: 119-120). This description works well to support the neo-Durkheimian formula, finding a useful conceptual correlate in Turner's division of the stages in the liminal ritual (i.e. separation from the old structure, the liminal period of ambiguity and the return to the normal, yet changed state (1974: 231-232)). However, in a contemporary context, there is an important social aspect to liminality which in Dayan and Katz's disposition remains fairly neglected.

Couldry (2003: 33-34) points to Turner's equally relevant contention that the *liminal* ritual with compulsory participation as seen in less complex societies cannot be applied to *liminoid* rituals of complex societies, where participation is voluntary (just as it is in watching television during media events). When values (such as national unity in case of Janica's homecoming) are used to foster participation in big live televised events, "these are largely rhetorical, but that does not mean that they are trivial" (*ibid*. 34). It is precisely the *mediated simulation of liminality* where Couldry sees a contemporary incarnation of Turner's concept of the liminoid. I would argue that Janica's homecoming is an example of precisely that perspective – it is a mobilization of audiovisual resources in producing an attractive television program ("bringing you live to Zagreb's center, today's center of Croatia," as the commentator said) rather than a conscious enactment of some unifying project.

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[8] For a relation of the concept of liminality with media events see especially Dayan and Katz (1994: 119-121).

CONCLUSION

As exemplified and as discussed with reference to some of the key arguments in the field, this paper argues that Dayan and Katz's thesis, that media events produce social solidarity, appears to be overstated. This generalizing view bypasses media's own *ungenerality*, i.e. the diverse interpretations of the mediated content, the multiplicity of channels on offer for the recipients, and the non-consumers of media in the occasion. What Dayan and Katz successfully demonstrated, was the possibility for such a development. On the face of it, the solidarity of Croatian people during Janica's homecoming was indeed sensible, in a neo-Durkheimian fashion, but the aftermath, an equally important segment, did not support such claims. Whilst the Janica homecoming event pointed to what Croatian institutions consider important (national unity), and while it may have well given impetus to integration at other levels, like class or education, it also reactivated an old intra-national split. Mechanical solidarity produced during the event was as evident as the rivalry that became visible after the event (and perhaps this started precisely *during* the event). It was, in fact, the media event in question that served as a handy occasion for the two regions to discuss which one stages better celebrations. Hence, in the case of Croatia, the homecoming media events worked as both performatively integrative (given the underpinning voices heard during the broadcast) and foundationally disintegrative (in the aftermath, some admit feeling less invited than others, while national unity is denounced as a politically profitable, otherwise "abstract" and "unfairly homogenizing" idea).

I would argue Dayan and Katz's convincing, richly elaborated and eloquent study (a classic in television studies) should be further explored in terms of *mediated mechanical solidarity*, which, by and large, rests on the various aspects of participants' involvement (identification, emotive investment, attendance, commentary, resistance – depending on what we take to count as participation, whether with audiences' acceptance or refusal of dominant codes). Such a contemporary form of mechanical solidarity is structured as an event by the media (announcing the event, producing the live broadcast, interrupting schedules) and lasts as long as the program itself. The aftermath, when participants bring in their respective discursive positions into reflecting on the meanings of the event, provides insight into the inner variety of a society's landscape, more-less masked during the event. In the particular case of Croatia, the aftermath shed light on the continued intra-regional repugnance as one constitutive element of the Croatian identity and solidarity. Perhaps, staging a variety of celebrations in more than one city at once, might be more convincing to Croatian audiences that the event really is about national unity.

To wrap up, "unity" (national, political, social) can only ever be *imagined* (and as such invited and enacted, however partially, via media events) rather than merely re-presented. It is constructed upon a consensual leveling of any strong disintegrating factors (micro and local identities in the face of macro and national/global conceptions). If an undifferentiated "we" is unimaginable without a "they" (cf. Billig, 1995), and if a staged media event, as any other media text, can only ever be encoded as a communicative form in a particular way, necessarily addressing some more than others (cf. Morley, 2000; Hall, 1994), the mediated unity can most usefully be defined relatively, as constructed by media and contingent upon the changing varieties of discourses which position the participating subjects.

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MEDIJI I DRUŠTVENO ZAJEDNIŠTVO: ISPITIVANJE PRIMJENJIVOSTI DAYANOVA I KATZOVA KONCEPTA 'MEDIJSKIH DOGAĐAJA'

Zlatan Krajina

SAŽETAK *Iako mnogo tvrdnji ide u prilog tezi o integrativnoj funkciji medija u suvremenim društvima, ipak se u nju sumnja, i to na temelju rasprava koje pokazuju da je ono što se često spominje kao 'zajedničke vrijednosti' relativno. U ovome članku autor se osvrće na nekoliko ključnih problema vezanih uz medijski posredovano pripadanje, kako ga na agendu medijskih studija postavljaju Dayan i Katz svojom neodurkheimovskom perspektivom o 'medijskim događajima', izvanserijskim živim prijenosima javnih događaja, poput natjecanja, pobjeda ili krunidbi, koji prekidaju rutinu i učvršćuju društvenu koheziju. Analizirajući relevantnu literaturu te testirajući Dayanov i Katzov koncept na slučaju povrataka hrvatske skijašice Janice Kostelić u domovinu sa Zimskih olimpijskih igara 2002., autor tvrdi da je, osobito u kontekstu proliferacije tzv. novih medija i globalnih komunikacija, medijske događaje potrebno shvatiti skromnije – kao tehnološki posredovane susrete s medijskom reprezentacijom društvene integracije koja u osnovi zavisi od interdiskurzivne interakcije s emisijom (prijenosom) događaja.*

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
MEDIJSKI DOGAĐAJI, JAVNOST, TELEVIZIJA, DRUŠTVO, ZAJEDNIŠTVO, DRUŠTVENOST

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